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Twice as good: A constructivist grounded theory study on the socialization process of black middle-class families and how this shapes the parent-child relationship

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain the socialization process of Black middle-class families and explore how this shapes the parent-child relationship. The methodology that was used for this study was constructivist grounded theory. Also included within this methodology were theories and frameworks such as: Narrative Family therapy, contextual therapy, and the Intersectionality framework. Using semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to reflect upon their middle-class upbringing and to share how their socialization process shaped their relationship with their parents, both in the past and currently. There was an array of themes that were discovered from the results. Education being mandatory appeared to be participants' stories as they reflected upon education held as a high priority and participation in extracurricular activities was a requirement within many households, often used to help participants to become more well-rounded and to keep busy to stay out of trouble. This appeared to serve to support participants in becoming more well-rounded as well as to decrease involvement in risky activities. Racial socialization was another critical component of this process, where participants reported intergenerational experiences of navigating having "two strikes against them, and a concern about created a third and final strike against them."

Racial socialization also looked different regionally, where participants from some areas of the country received more explicit messages about race compared to others elsewhere who received more implicit messages. Participants also noted conversations about religion, frequently referred to as the cornerstone within the Black community, an important aspect both within the Black community as well was interwoven in between values and lessons that were taught. The role of the extended family was found to be a source of support in mental and emotional ways for individuals in their families. Gender appeared to be another important aspect of this process that

may have determined the types of messages that were received. Participants with siblings of opposite gender living in the home with them noticed this more than only child participants or participants with large age gaps between them and their siblings. Participants shared that when it comes to gender, "It's easy to baby the girls." Lastly, it was found that class played a significant role in their upbringings through affording them more opportunities, access to highly competitive education and other important resources.

Additionally, this study indicated that there was a central theme around "doing one's best" which carried a different message than from the way in which we typically think of what this means. Participants indicated that they received underlying messages around doing your best really meaning needing to work harder than those around you, because of race. The role of the extended family can come in the form of many different types of support, for the Black middle-class, participants reported that their role served more so as a means to develop a sense of community and closeness in comparison to prior literature on low-income families who may also rely of extended family for additional means of support such as financial. All of these factors appeared to play a significant role in the socialization process of Black middle-class families. Many participants shared it to be challenging growing up within their households but despite those moments grew a closeness and appreciation of their parents that still continues. They also shared stories of compassion in acknowledging that their parents "did their best." While other participants continue to repair their relationships with their parents as result of their socialization process. Future studies should include parents of participants to gain more insight into parts of the socialization that only the parents of participants can provide.

Keywords: Black middle-class, Black families, Education, Race, Parent-Child Relationships, Gender, Constructivist Grounded theory

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Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the socialization process of Black middle-class families and understand how this process shapes the parent-child relationship. There is limited research that explores the middle-class in the Black community and fewer that focuses on their socialization process. Much of the literature focuses on the deficits within the community such as low-income families, poverty, crime and violence, to name a few. The socialization process is one of the most critical aspects of children preparing to join society as fully functioning adults, and to not only join this society in which they are born into, but in the many ways they are also expected to contribute to society by helping make this world a better place (Tatar, 2022). The socialization process, in short, is the process in which a person learns the basic values and norms of their society, as well as the skills necessary to sustain their life (Tatar, 2022). This learning takes place through parents, siblings, relatives, neighbors, peers, teachers, and other people with whom the person interacts, although their levels of influence may differ (Tatar, 2022). As Levy (2018) puts it: We aren't born human; we become it." Simply put, we as human beings are not born into this world already equipped to maneuver throughout its intricate crevices without the teachings of those who have come before us.

The socialization process can look different for each of us. For we all differ at every intersection of our identities. Whether this be through sex or gender identity, race and ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliations and practices or even class and level of education; all of these important pieces are what work together to make each of us the unique individuals that we are. On the other hand, when these intersecting identities are combined, this can also create difficulty in being easily accepted within society; a unique set of hardships that are very specific to those

intersecting identities. In the literature review to follow, I reference Kimberlé Crenshaw's Intersectionality theoretical framework but must also acknowledge the Combahee River Collective's concept of simultaneity. According to the Combahee River Collective, their concept of "simultaneity" and "intersectional feminism" captures the signature contribution of Black feminism which stated that race, class, gender, and sexuality are in play at the same time, they intersect and operate simultaneously (Brewer, 2018). As a result of these differences, what is to be prioritized during children's socialization process is not the same for everyone, particularly as it relates to members of the Black community, even more specific, Black middle-class families (BMC) (Dow, 2019).

An example of this is found in Dawn Marie Dow's study in which a participant notes their very specific hardship in her book titled, "*Mothering While Black: Boundaries and burdens of middle-class parenthood*." The account of one of her participants, Christine, illustrates the limited existence of research on middle-class families that focuses on how socio-economic status impacts mothers' parenting practices without giving much consideration to how racial identity and gender further complicate those practices (Dow, 2019). With this in mind, the purpose of this study will be to further address these challenges but to also add to the current available literature and research on this particular demographic and to take this a step further. Using two theories from the family systems framework, contextual therapy (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986), Narrative family therapy (White, 1990) and the Intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1984), along with grounded theory as the method of choice to explain and describe this specific middle class socialization process in Black families and explore its influence on the parent-child relationship.

Structure and Relationships Within Black Families in the United States

Throughout this study I use the terms “Black” and “African American” interchangeably to reference people who are of African descent and born in the United States. Starting with the Atlantic slave trade and the beginning of the separation of the Black family unit, we can examine how shifts in structures of Black families were impacted by systemic forces of power and oppression. During slavery, when many slaves were auctioned off and separated from their families, they joined new plantations where they formed new kinships in place of their family of origin (Hays et. al., 1973). This provides the historical context for understanding shifts in the Black family structure, impact of continuing discrimination and its manifestation in disparities. Black families have a more intensive and extensive kin network and were more likely to have kin living within the home outside of their children as well as were more likely to have help from their extended families compared to White families (Hays et. al., 1973). Additionally, the network of extended family members is highly valued within Black families and play a critical role in the socialization process in the children’s upbringing. In many ways, the extended family is seen as a support structure and serves as a source of aid and comfort.

The structure of the Black family unit is comprised of any variation of a single adult, a two-parent household or any member(s) of the extended family unit (Barbarin, 1983). Black families also continue to face inequalities, discrimination and financial hardships as well as a lack of education. These factors likely played a significant role in the Black father’s traditional gender role as being the protector and provider when having to face these adversities on a daily basis and to the rise in more female-headed households and a more egalitarian approach to gender roles within the Black family unit (Hill, 2002). Furthermore, the progression of the Black woman towards becoming more financially independent, educated and the demand that these

exact same qualities and characteristics within their male partners are present in order to raise a family are noted (King et. al., 2009).

McLoyd and others (2000) highlight other changes that occurred over time. For instance, African American individuals aged 15 years and older who were married, declined 3.8% among the Black community. In the same period, the percent of never-married individuals in this age group increased 3.7% among African Americans. African Americans during this time have also had a higher divorce rate than those in the general population. We also see the progression of nonmarital births having an impact on the structure of the Black family unit as Black women became less likely to marry as a result of pregnancy as this was often the case during the 1960s. Additionally, other contextual factors such as high unemployment rates played a significant role in the structure of the family unit, as stable employment was positively associated with marriage rates.

Moreover, Black fathers often experience disproportionately higher rates of under- or overemployment and poverty, reside in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, complex paternity, and various losses such as health, divorce, and widowhood and not to mention, higher incarceration rates (Coles, 2009). Black fathers have often been stereotyped as being absent from the home (Neville et. al., 2009). Furthermore, much of the early research on Black children in the United States has been matricentric, or mother centered in character, and not until recently has there been substantive discussions about and investigation into the roles Black fathers play in rearing their children (Neville et. al., 2009). In addition to single-parent headed households and the relevance of the extended family, within the extended family, there is also intergenerational parenting that occurs within the Black family unit.

Gibson (2005) notes that the most common intergenerational parenting that occurs within these families, is the role of grandparents who are stepping, once again, into the parenting role. Maternal figures within the Black family unit, such as great aunts, cousins and especially grandmothers, often take on the role of the second leg of childrearing. As of 2021, there were 2.7 million children being raised by grandparents. In this intergenerational parenting role, this also changes the dynamic from grandmother-grandchild to a parent-child relationship (Gibson, 2005). This role of kinship caregivers, that is assumed by the grandmother, happens more often than other relations and genders.

Racial Socialization in Black Families

In addition to the relevance of extended family within the Black family's socialization process, racial socialization is another critical component of this process. Racial socialization is described as parenting practices within families that involves the conveying of both implicit and explicit messages from parents and caregivers about the meaning that is attached to their ethnic and racial group membership (Leath et. al., 2021). In addition to racial socialization, it is important to consider parenting styles as well as how this looks within the Black community. Parenting styles can range from authoritative, authoritarian, permissive to neglectful developed by Baumrind, based primarily on her observations of European American families. Baumrind notes patterns within Black and White schools such as African American parents who generally adopted an authoritarian parenting style (McAdoo & Younge, 2009, p. 107-108)

Studies that developed a typology of African Americans family function yielded three types of African American families (Mandara et. Al, 2002): a. cohesive-authoritative, where families are encouraged to be assertive and practice proactive racial socialization; conflictive-

authoritarian, which is characterized as high internal conflict and involved lack of communalism or commitment to family members, a strict authoritarian parenting style that creates an environment where children feel uncomfortable in expressing emotions; and defensive-neglectful, where family is thought to be at greatest risk for dysfunction and is characterized by neglectful and authoritarian parental disciplinary practices in addition to defensive racial socialization where children are socialized to dislike other racial groups and are not taught to be proud of their own racial group. Thus, this finding in the literature supports an additional element of the racial socialization process and the outcomes for those types of families (Mandara et. al., 2002).

Education

In addition to various important aspects of the socialization process like exploring some of the historical context of the Black family unit, parenting styles, and racial socialization, education is another key component of socialization. For many middle-class families, education is placed at a high priority, and this is especially true for the Black middle-class families, there is a strong commitment to educational success (Vincent et. al., 2012). Within social science research much of the literature shows individuals' social class having an impact on their access to and performance in the key gateway institutions, like higher education. The literature demonstrates this level of importance within Black middle-class families by exploring the lengths the educational disparities related to gender and class in the Black community as well as the lengths at which Black middle-class families go to ensure that their children received a good education, such as determining a good school fit based upon a healthy social mix (Ball et. al., 2013).

Parental Monitoring

Another element is the level of parental monitoring that takes place. Studies on parental monitoring support the claim that due to lack of resources and support for lower-income families, and the demands of work to provide financially, it is much more challenging to keep up with the whereabouts of and to be more involved within the day to day of their children's lives. Examples of this are for both boys and girls, parental monitoring being a significant predictor of problem behaviors among adolescents whose mothers worked full time (Jacobson et. al., 2000). In adolescence, parental monitoring increases more for boys whereas for girls, it is lowered (Jacobson et. al., 2000). Moreover, Laureau (2002), notes within their study that parental monitoring in middle-class families looks different, in comparison, to working-class families, as middle-class families have more support and financial stability. Within these families, parents are able to be more engaged within the day-to-day activities of their children. Middle-class Black parents in this study provided more structure and planning around activities in which their children are involved. There are also more restrictions placed on available leisure time compared to children of lower-income families, leaving less room for children to engage in activities that might lead to delinquency.

Villarreal (2018) noted mothers to be more involved in parental monitoring in comparison to fathers. Moreover, there are also some consequences of differential treatment based upon gender in Black families. Prior literature findings regarding the absence of fathers and its impact on Black boys and girls show that for young boys, it was found that these boys reported lower levels of masculinity (Cunningham et. al., 2012). Young girls in the same study were reported to have the highest levels of masculinity with regard to absent fathers of all African American girl participants (Cunningham et. al., 2012). These findings point to the

salience of how differently cis-gender boys and girls are socialized within Black families. Black families tend to emphasize racial barriers when socializing Black boys, whereas when socializing Black girls, they tend to focus on instilling messages of racial pride and self-esteem (Turner, 2020). Other differences include women receiving more socialization on racial discrimination and violence as they got older (Brown & Lesane-Brown, 2006; Hughes et al., 2009), and some recalled receiving fewer socialization messages than did their brothers (Leath et. al., 2021). Furthermore, at the intersection of both gender and class, prior literature supports their being specific experiences of middle-class Black girls. For young Black girls and women, class places a schism in between the sisterhood bond that women within the Black community share based upon gender identity and ethnicity (Butler-Sweet, 2017). Black middle-class women who have recounted their experiences in school settings with regard to class noted experiences of intimidation and being bullied by their peers. Many of those peers, according to the study, were almost always young girls who had come from lower-income families (Butler-Sweet, 2017).

There is also the notion of the "Welfare Queen" and "the strong Black woman." Dow's (2015) study on middle-class Black women where the topic of focus was centered on the tension that lies between the two, shed light on the internalization that occurs for Black middle-class women in not wanting any part of being compared to the "welfare queen" who is characterized as the stay-at-home mother that collects welfare, shunning work and passing on her bad values to her offspring (Collins 2009: 79; as cited in Dow, 2015). Throughout this study a theme that stood out was that many were raised by Black mothers who socialized the young women of this study in a way that would allow for them to distinguish themselves from the concept of the "welfare queen."

In continuing with gender socialization, research also notes the different ways in which Black boys and men are socialized. Black children in general are taught to adhere to European gender norms (Wallace, 2007). Prior literature shows us that in comparison to Black girls who "come into womanhood", when it comes to Black boys, the concept of manhood is not something that is gradual in which they come in to but is something that is automatic from the moment they are born (Wallace, 2007). Whereas for young Black girls growing up, it is okay to fluidly move between gender norms, for young Black boys, this is not the case (Wallace, 2007). There is an expectation set early on that young Black boys are not to engage in any behaviors that are associated with femininity or childhood, leaving young boys with no ability to expand and take interest outside of those set standards of "being a man" (Wallace, 2007). This also impacts the level of expressiveness that is to be shown as part of the socialization process of Black men growing up. As a result, this leaves little room for young men to express other emotions outside of anger and happiness and to also be able to articulate other emotions, as they are viewed as non-masculine (Wallace, 2007).

Additionally, gender roles and ideologies are largely shaped by class and race in Black American families (Hill, 2002). Studies have acknowledged the historical context in how slavery did not allow for slaves to adhere to traditional gender norms (Hill, 2002). Although researchers have acknowledged this, it is also believed that gender role distinctions have stemmed from African cultural heritage (Hill, 2002). Hill also reported in their study that at the intersection of race and class, with regard to gender socialization, that many first-generation middle-class parents (educated parents who came from poor and/or disadvantage families) were usually more ambivalent in their support for gender equality (Hill, 2002). To further this point, the researcher notes the long-standing yearning for acceptance, respectability and middle-class status by

conforming to the gender and marital norms of the dominant society (Hill, 2002). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier regarding the differing ways in which young girls and boys are socialized, there is also the rigidity that lies in the lack of fluidity in young boys being able to engage in anything that does not encompass masculinity. Because feminine traits are devalued, young boys are more likely to be stigmatized for engaging in "feminine traits" and young girls are less stigmatized for engaging in "masculine traits" (Hill, 2002). This study also notes where class comes into play, class being defined within this study through education, by noting that for participants within this study who only possessed a high school or lower education, held an even more narrow view on traditional gender roles (Hill, 2002).

African Americans families have had disproportionately negative attitudes toward same-sex relationships and gender non-conforming individuals. When it comes to individuals who identify as queer or gender queer within the Black community, homophobia is largely predicted through family practices, formal religious practices being one of them (Negy et. al., 2010).

> Understanding the reality of being an African American lesbian or gay man requires a careful exploration of the impact of factors such as ethnic identity, gender, social class, minority sexual orientation, and the dynamic interactions of these within the individual. The nature of the traditional gender role stereotypes within African Americans, the way those stereotypes have been shaped by institutional racism and its ethnosexual stereotypes of both men and women, and the role of religion and spirituality in the lives of African Americans, are important factors in shaping the reality of these group members. Such factors may be used to mitigate or reinforce societal heterosexism and homophobia

> among African Americans. These factors also contribute to the wide range of diversity among African American lesbians and gay men as a group (Greene, 2009).

Authors such as Majied (2013) echo the rigidity that occurs within Black culture, particularly with older generations, in crossing the line of femininity and masculinity for Black men. Most African American families do not give their children real information on the meaning of sex, how it is related to love and the importance of healthy intimate relationships (Majied, 2013). At the intersection of race, gender/gender identity and class, ethnographic studies have examined the ways in which LGBTQ young people experience marginalization across these intersections. Hatfield (2021) found that African American parents working to mitigate the marginalization of race and LGBTQ identity in the context of Black heteronormativity and anti-Black racism may inadvertently distance their LGBTQ children from notions of gayness, HIV education, and LGBTQ support as a racially-informed form of care. The author's recount of participant's experience of navigating being both Black and gay, as well as incorporating class into the mix materialized a theme that was prevalent within families of LGBTQ youth. This theme is rooted in fear of not wanting their children to have to battle marginalization for their sexual orientation and be compounded by the marginalization already of being Black in the United States (Hatfield, 2021).

Regarding class in the socialization process as it relates to Black families, prior literature tells us that class can open and provide various levels of access to resources and opportunities (Turner, 2020). One's socioeconomic status determines access that families may have to live in certain neighborhoods, it determines what schools children have access to attend, financial

freedom and most importantly, stability (Turner, 2020). In addition, research also notes some themes that are common among different classes as it relates to the socialization process. Examples are specific worries that are unique to mothers of lower-income such as the safety of their children because of the neighborhood in which they live in, which for many may consist of high crime rates and gun violence (Vincent et. al., 2012). At the intersection of both race and class, prior literature has shown that priorities in parenting can range from "hoping for the best" which was a theme for lower-income families and "determined for the best" a theme for middle to upper class families and the ways in which members of the middle-class Black community work to separate themselves from what is deemed as "stereotypical Blackness" (Vincent et. al., 2012; Laureau, 2002).

In sum, these are some of the key components, according to the literature, that creates a blueprint for what this process may consist of for the Black middle-class. The purpose of this study was to bring about the already available literature that provides some insight into describing and explaining what the socialization process of middle-class Black families is and how this process shapes the parent-child relationship. The synopsis above points to Black middle-class families working hard to separate themselves from the way in which society has often negatively viewed the Black community as a whole. Additionally, within the context of the middle-class, there are still levels of inequalities that exist for members of the Black community, which in turn is why members of this community work so tirelessly towards upward mobility (Darity et. al., 2019). Even more so, the literature also tells us that the Black middle-class is proportionately much smaller than the white middle class (Darity et. al., 2019). Because of this, members of the Black community who desire a better life and better opportunity for their families must work twice as hard to ensure the well-being, safety and opportunity of their

children (Darity et. al., 2019), but at what lengths and how does this impact their relationship with members within this family as a result? This is one of the questions I intended to explore with the interviews of my study.

This study adds to the limited available research on Black middle-class families. The African American/Black community is an already understudied population, and it is important to shed light on all aspects of the Black community. Many times, when this community is being researched with regard to class, the focus is typically on those in poverty or in underserved communities and is mostly reflected negatively (Ispa et. al., 2007; Elliott et. al., 2018; Foster & Kalil, 2007). The goal for this study was to provide clinicians with insight into the challenges of the Black middle-class families and to add to the current available literature on the Black community in the marriage and family therapy field, by equipping clinicians in ways that they can better service this population.

In the next chapter, I explore the available literature on the socialization process both as it is traditionally known and how it presents within Black families. I summarize available literature that explores areas regarding class, education, racial socialization, parenting styles, parental monitoring, and gender as the literature notes these important aspects of the socialization process as well as how this is relevant to Black middle-class families' socialization process. The prior research was used in support of working to create a template that can help describe and explain the Black middle-class socialization process and how this shapes on the parent-child relationship.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Historical Context and Structure of the Black Family

Although African American history did not start with slavery and extends to centuries prior, for many who identify as being of African descent, slavery marks the start of our history and journey in America. First, we were counted as property and then we were considered human beings. During this time period, many Africans who had forcibly traveled through the middle passage were auctioned off and separated from one another. Prior literature has shown there to be a negative correlation with the income of the parent who lived in 1860 and the probability that a child in 1880 lived in a single-parent household (Miller, 2018) which means that as income decreased, there was a higher likelihood that the child was born into a single-parent household or born outside of marriage. According to the concept of slaveholding, the number of slaves owned by a single farmer or planter, farms that contained a smaller slaveholding, were 49% more likely to live in a single-parent household than a child whose mother had been on a farm with 15 slaves.

This literature speaks to the intergenerational pattern of what occurs in many families, but particularly impacts the African American family even more so, in that if one's mother or even grandmother came from a single-parent home, the following generation were just as likely to live in a single parent home. By the time of the 1900s, research had demonstrated the intergenerational pattern aforementioned. Moreover, with regard to the intergenerational trauma of slavery and its aftermath, Graff (2014) references to an excerpt by author Gump in which Gump discusses the ways in which master's took their slaves' feelings into "consideration." However, she first discusses the concept of shame and its centrality. She states that in addition to the shame and trauma of being enslaved itself, to be the victim of human induced trauma is the ultimate mortification, because there is no shame as profound as that which destroys subjectivity,

"which says through word or action, 'What you need, what you desire, and what you feel are of complete and utter insignificance' (Graff, 2014, pg. 189).

During this time period many slave owners as well as the culture at large were completely unempathetic. Graff follows this up with a profound excerpt that states:
"A slave's feelings, if one could conceptualize their existence, were meaningless. Grief and anger were explicitly forbidden...If there were no empathetic other...pain must be dissociated, disavowed...A self-diminished cannot modulate, soothe or contain dysphoric affects in a child. Rather it becomes necessary to prevent them..." (Gump, 2000 p.626).

Thus, this template of the master-slave relationship, during this time, served as such for all human relationships, whether this be within a marriage, employer and employee or even a parent-child relationship for slaves. This template served as the start to challenging parenting. As a result, the trauma of slavery is an intergenerational pattern that has impacted one generation after another, with particular focus on its impact on the parent-child dynamic. This transmission has been described in a myriad of ways, of which includes poor parenting, connected to master-slave relationship as the main template, the dominant one parent family structure created by slavery and transgenerational haunting (Graff, 2014). Other authors have noted a similar consensus on the history of slavery and its impact on the Black community as a whole. For example, DeGruy-Leary (2005) attributes a great deal of these transgenerational hauntings' connection to slavery by discussing the role that history has played in producing some of the negative perceptions, behaviors and images that we see too often within the Black community. DeGruy-Leary (2005) stresses the importance of the adaptations that occurred within Black Americans in order to survive the stifling effects of chattel slavery, effects that are evident today.

In DeGruy-Leary's 2005 book, she names several examples which lead to Black Americans demonstrating a particular perception that she links back to slavery. One example was that of a Black and White mother who were sitting next to one another as they attended their children's basketball game. The Black mother complimented the mother on how well her child was doing. The mother, feeling very proud of her child, proceeded to brag about all of her child's accomplishments. When the White mother finished, she began complimenting the Black mother on her child, only for the Black mother to interrupt and instead focus on her child's challenging behaviors at home. DeGruy-Leary (2005) talks about this as a mechanism that slaves used to protect their children from their master's selling or molesting them through attempting to dissuade the master when they paid a compliment to them about their children.

DeGruy-Leary writes about this initially appropriate adaptation to an oppressive and danger-filled environment as being transmitted down through generations. This behavior causes the child to feel confused as they do not understand why as proud as parents are of the children, they would also speak poorly of them. These demeaning criticisms become internalized by the child creating feelings of pain and vilifying remarks on self-esteem (DeGruy-Leary, 2005). I would also add that with this behavior occurring, this has the propensity to further perpetuate the need for that child to work harder in order for the parent to speak less poorly of them and more positively about them. This conceptualization within DeGruy-Leary's book provides some support to this concept of "being twice as good." It is a phrase that courses throughout generations. It is often used in relation to speak to the inequalities that are experienced by those of marginalized groups and the necessity to work harder to get half of what their white counterparts have (Cavounidis & Lang, 2015).

Furthermore, prior studies also note the importance of acknowledging the connection of the legacy of slavery to the Black family structure. It is well documented that structural factors significantly impact families and subsequent racial inequalities (Baker & O'Connell, 2021). An example of this is that because Black individuals are much more likely to face racial discrimination in all facets of the labor market (Reskin, 2012), this can adversely impact Black families' ability to generate income and accumulate wealth to avoid or combat poverty (Baker & O'Connell, 2021). Additionally, Baker & O'Connell (2021) state that Black married couple families are less likely than their White counterparts to reap the benefits of having two earners because of the potential "double-disadvantage" of having two spouses who are Black and face racism in the labor market. The legacy of slavery is—by and large—conceptualized as an institutional legacy, which refers to the "reproduction of material resources and cultural conditions of the social institution despite its formal deinstitutionalization" (Chandler, 2010, p. 917). This means that the legacy of slavery is a component of contemporary society despite its origins in an institution that was formally dismantled over 160 years ago (Baker & O'Connell, 2021).

According to prior literature, three main components make up the Black family structure: the single adult, the dual workers, and the extended family (Barbarin, 1983). Although the majority of Black families are two-parent, more than 40% of black children and youth live in households administered by a single adult, usually the mother, and in more than half of the two-parent families both parents work (Barbarin, 1983). There also lies an unspoken rule centered around all hands being on deck when it comes to childcare as well as household maintenance. Moreover, the institution of slavery changed the nature of intimate relationships because, although slaves were allowed to marry, they were still not allowed the traditional rights afforded

from marriage (Frazier, 1966) Often these couples may have functioned and lived as husband and wife, but women were still subject to sexual exploitation by slave owners and couples were torn apart when individual family members were sold to different plantations (Thomas et. al., 2009).

Given the historical context of the Black community, the Black family household, in comparison to other households, has had to formulate a non-traditional family process and way of being (Umaña-Tayler & Hill, 2020). The household appears more egalitarian than most others and prior studies have argued that the existing Black family formation is a function of slavery (Thomas et. al., 2009). During this time, many slaves were separated from their blood relatives and forced to create other kinship ties with those whom they were not related to on a new plantation. Outside of their blood relatives, this newfound kinship was their only source of support and served as critical and even necessary to survive (McAdoo & Younge, 2009). Based upon the prior literature included above, it seems as though slavery has and continues to have a legacy impact on the formation of the Black family as it exists today.

In the transition from slaves to citizenship, we began to see a significant shift in the makeup of the Black family unit on several different levels. On a societal level, although no longer slaves, now in the world to establish themselves as more than just property, we see that many Black Americans faced inequalities, discrimination, economic hardship and lack of education (Graff, 2014). Thus, factors made it very difficult for men of the household to care and provide for their families, as during this time, women were not yet allowed within the workforce (Graff, 2014). Moreover, over time we began to see a transition of more female headed households and a transition of roles. Roles within the Black family household transitioned from traditional to more egalitarian where both genders within the household shared the workload

equally. With the progression of Black women becoming more economically independent, higher incarceration rates for Black men as well as increasing mortality rates and a large gender disparity in both men and women in furthering their education, these disparities can make for a difficult foundation, especially when factoring in institutionalized racism and discrimination.

In continuing the focus in the understanding of Black women overtime stepping out from a traditional role as they gained more financial freedom, prior studies have revealed that when considering the types of qualities that Black men and women looked for in their ideal partners, many Black women considered the educational and financial status of men of high importance (King et. al., 2009). This is in addition to other qualities such as someone who was kind, respectful, caring etc. I believe these to be important backdrops to consider when situating the nuclear Black family.

Furthermore, when expanding from the scope of understanding the complexities of the Black couple dynamic and to look at the family unit as a whole and understanding how it thrives and functions, we see that with this particular household structure, consists of helping hands from everyone within the home. This prevents the development of stereotyped sex-roles (Barbarin, 1983). Just as much as husbands and wives contribute to the household income, husbands also contribute a fair amount into various household tasks including childrearing. Moreover, the decision-making process in the black family household also has a more egalitarian design. Wives within these household assume an important role in determining the outcome of important family issues (Barbarin, 1983). In another study, Hauenstein (1977) compared White and Black wives and found that Black wives reported fewer difficulties in coping with their lives, were more achievement oriented, gave greater emphasis to personal and financial advancement, and had a more optimistic view of their futures than did White wives.

Black women found more satisfaction in their maternal role, felt it important to be good mothers and earn the respect of their children.

As we continue to look at the progression of the timeline of the structure of this family unit, other prior literature points to there being a shift overtime in structural changes. Trends in research in the year 2000 focused on several key factors: the overall decline of marriage rates, later age of marriage, concomitant trends such as higher proportions of unwed mothers, higher percentage of single-headed households, and higher numbers of poor households (McLoyd et. al., 2000). Between 1990 and 1998, in comparison to the general population, the percentage of African American individuals aged 15 years and older who were married declined 3.8% among the Black community. In the same period, the percent of never-married individuals in this age group increased 3.7% among African Americans (McLoyd et. al., 2000).

Prior authors have attempted to hypothesize explanations for the changes in the family structure overtime. One of the important key factors is said to be employment and although it is a critical factor to African American family formation, it represents only one set of factors (McLoyd, et. al., 2000). Another key factor that was of focus during this time period was the growth in the rate of nonmarital births. Nonmarital births significantly impacted the structure of the Black family unit due to Black women being less likely to marry because of pregnancy than they were in the 1960s (McLoyd et. al., 2000). It is also believed that economic factors have played a significant role in the family structure during the late 90s. In looking at employment within the Black community, for Black men, stable employment was indeed positively related to marriage rates (McLoyd et. al., 2000). Meaning that marriage rates were higher for those Black men who had stable employment. Moreover, prior literature has also shown the imbalance in the

gender ratio of the Black community, where there is a disincentive for both genders to marry and a reduced commitment of men to stay married (McLoyd et. al., 2000).

Following this line of inquiry into gender differences, a recent study (Brown et al., 2022) examined marital status and educational attainment of unmarried Black men aged 35-39 years between 2005- 2019. Results showed that in 2005, nearly two-fifths of those with a high school diploma or less had never married, compared to just one-fifth of those with a post-graduate degree. Between 2005 and 2019, the share of Black men who never married rose to 57% among those with a high school diploma or less, but the largest absolute increase was among those with some college, rising from 26% to 48% (Brown et. al, 2022). Conversely, those with a bachelor's degree but no postgraduate degree had the smallest change—36% had never been married in 2019, up from 29% in 2005 (Brown et. al, 2022). This study indicated that within this particular age range, there was a recent significant increase in the trend of Black men with lower education not being married.

Studies have also examined the associations between childhood and adolescent outcomes and parenting styles. For instance, Querido et al (2002) investigated problem behavior in children and parenting styles in a sample of 108 African American female caregivers of three- to six-year-old children. Participants were recruited at a pediatric dentistry clinic in a large health sciences center, where they were asked to participate while in the waiting room. Several measures were used: the ECBI which is a 36-item parent-report measure of disruptive behavior; The Parenting Styles and Dimensions (PSD), a 53-item parent-report measure of parenting practices and the AAAS-33 (African American Acculturation Scale), a 33 item that measures 10 different dimensions of African American culture (Querido et. al., 2002). Through a correlational analysis, researchers found that authoritative parenting style, which is a parenting style that

consists of a constellation of parent attributes that include emotional support and clear, bidirectional communication, firm limit-setting, reasoning, and responsiveness, was most predictive of fewer behavior problems in their sample of African American preschool children (Querido et. al., 2002). Moreover, African American adolescents who described their parents' parenting stye as authoritative, reported better interpersonal relations than adolescents with authoritarian and permissive mothers. This particular focus on the mother when referencing parents is quite common throughout research with a lack of research regarding the father's roles within the home as well as the impact of the father as a parent in the household (Church et. al., 2016). Querido et. al's (2002) study in particular uses the mother's education as a variable, but it is unclear who is included within the variable of parental income and educational level. Moreover, the study noted that 53% of the families were single mothers or female care-givers but the authors did not make note of the other 47% percent of the sample that appeared to be two-parent households.

This above article is one of many that highlights a common theme in literature that the single-parent home serves as the typical structure of the Black family. Although not all prior studies adhere to this, in a vast majority of them, the Black father appears to be out of reach or often not noted with regard to his impact and role within the family unit. In fact, Coles (2009) makes reference to father absence in literature by calling attention to the fact that they are frequently assumed to be nonresident fathers or if they happen to co-reside with the child, it is assumed they must be co-residing, in a married or cohabiting state, with the mother as well. Cole (2009) goes on to note that the father parenting is often viewed as nonnormative. There are many variations of what the Black family structure can look like and when one considers the single parent household, which is commonly noted in literature, often the single black father is not

considered. It is often the single mother that goes noticed throughout literature, which thus adds to the gap in literature regarding what the Black family structure entails.

For the Black father, he sits at the backdrop of many challenges, including but not limited to his disproportionate higher rates of under- or overemployment and poverty, residence in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty, complex paternity, and various losses such as health, divorce, and widowhood and higher incarceration rates (Coles, 2009). Another study by Richards and Schmlege (1993) reported that fathers in comparison to single mothers appeared to be less stressed despite their lack of preparation in their new role as single fathers.

With these elements in mind of context of the couple dynamic, we shift to zooming even further out into the family dynamic by understanding the role and importance of the extended family to further our understanding of the family structure. The extended family for centuries has played a critical role in the thriving and survival of the community. For many Black families extended family served as the immediate family's lifeline. Early studies have indicated that Black families have a more intensive and extensive kin network, were more likely to have other kin living within the home outside of their children and received more help from their extended families than White families (Hays Et. al., 1973). This concept of the extended family network continues to carry on for the Black community to this day.

The Black extended family can be viewed as a support structure which acts as a source of aid and comfort in what externally can be characterized as a somewhat hostile environment (Hays Et. al., 1973). Moreover, it is common in many Black families for intergenerational parenting to exist. Maternal figures within the Black family unit, such as great aunts, cousins and especially grandmothers, often take on the role of the second leg of childrearing. Many of these

family members have most likely already raised their very own children and have now taken on the role as the primary caregiver of the children within their family.

To quantify the percentages of just how common it is for grandparents within the Black family unit to transition to the primary caregiver role, in 2000 there were approximately 2.1 million children being raised by their grandparents, of which thirty-eight percent were African American (Gibson, 2005). Since then, as of 2021 this number has risen to an estimated amount of about 2.7 million children currently being raised by their grandparents. When grandmothers accept the role of parents for their grandchildren, the intergenerational relationship changes; grandmothers are in the role of parents and relate to the grandchildren in their care as if the grandchildren were the grandmother's biological children (Gibson, 2005).

In the Black community grandmothers assume the role of kinship caregivers more often than other relations and genders. Gibson (2005) also notes the concept of "mothering." In the African American community, mothering is not necessarily or exclusively based on biological ties. The title of "mother" is often given to older women in the community who are wise, experienced, and willing to help with the needs of the community. This understanding of the interpretation of mothering sheds significant light on the levels of non-traditional family structuring that occurs within these families.

Socialization Process

In the socialization process, from childhood onwards, the family is the foremost context for socialization and individual development, and parents represent one of the most powerful influences in their children's lives (Axpe et. al., 2019). Far from being restricted to childhood, however, this influence continues throughout individuals' entire lives, becoming particularly

relevant in moments of change, such as adolescence, which is now considered the most complex period of the life cycle due to the multiple simultaneous challenges faced by young people during the teenage years (Axpe et. al., 2019). The socialization process is a complex process in that there are many different factors that play a major outcome in the child's future. Many of these factors include elements such as how many members of the family live within the home, whether it was a maternal vs a paternal headed household, financial status and parenting styles. Priest et. al. (2014) supports this claim in their systematic review of the ethnic-racial socialization process for both minority and majority groups, by also noting that there is a need to consider how multiple social and environmental factors and multiple influential agents differentially impact the types of messages used with children and young people (Priest et. al., 2014). As a result of socialization processes, people are "taught the skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up" (Maccoby, 2007;Holm, 2012). For families within the Black community, there lies an additional critical piece that is also a part of this socialization process, and it is none other than the racial socialization component.

Racial Socialization

Racial socialization is defined as a normative parenting practice within Black families and refers to the process by which parents or caregivers convey implicit and explicit messages to their children about the meanings attached to their racial group membership such as - (a) racial pride messages—teaching about the positive heritage and history of individuals with African ancestry; (b) preparation for bias messages—highlighting the racial inequalities that exist among racial groups and discussing ways to process and cope with experiences of racial discrimination; (c) self-worth messages—emphasizing positive individual traits (e.g., honesty, compassion, and

generosity) to help youth develop a positive sense of self; and (d) egalitarian messages—drawing attention to the harmony and equality that can exist among racial groups (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes et al., 2006). The racial socialization component that is included within the child's socialization process is also critical to their survival within society. Furthermore, as time has progressed and in considering today's climate for this community of parents, parents have also begun having conversations with their children about safety when dealing with police authorities, amidst the many police brutality and fatalities that have occurred within the past several years (Thomas & Blackmond, 2015).

Conversations as such have centered around parents educating their Black children on their rights as citizens, coaching around appropriate attire to wear so as not to appear threatening and even stressing the importance of procedures to follow when getting pulled over or detained by law enforcement. Prior literature has also discussed various themes that come with conversations situated around race and the safety of Black youth, particular after the Trayvon Martin shooting, such as issues of the justice system, Black boys being at a greater risk than Black girls, the reality of racism as it exists for the Black community and has existed throughout decades (Thomas & Blackmond, 2015). Moreover, prior research has demonstrated that Black mothers of higher education tend to have more conversations around this with their children compared to other Black women. For example, Black mothers who have higher formal education are more likely to be involved in the racial socialization process (Leath et. al., 2021). Moreover, related to gender, more women received more socialization on racial discrimination and violence as they got older (T. N. Brown & Lesane-Brown, 2006; Hughes et al., 2009) and in comparison to some of the women who had male siblings, they reported having received even fewer conversations than their brothers (Leath et. al., 2021).

Parenting Styles

Franklin et.al (1985) contend that traditional African values and beliefs have been transmitted from generation to generation and continue to influence African American parenting. Moreover Diana Baumrind, the most well-known researcher regarding parenting styles, theorized that families are classified into variations of four prototypical family types, according to their relative level on two broad dimensions: parental demandingness (control and restrictiveness) and responsiveness (warmth and non-coerciveness). In addition, the four family types identified are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful. Based upon her observations of European American families, she later went on to examine the family patterns of Black and White school children (Baumrind, 1972, as cited in Neville (Eds.) et.al, 2009). According to her research, African Americans were generally characterized as having an authoritarian parenting style, which is characterized as being highly demanding and low in responsiveness — low in warmth and high in control (Baumrind, 1972, as cited in Neville (Eds.) et.al, 2009). In addition, although the authoritarian style was linked to negative outcomes, this was not the case for African Americans. In fact, Black females in Baumrind's study were more independent and self-assertive.

Overtime, these various parenting styles were adapted to better accommodate the contextual pieces of the Black families. In 2002, Mandara and Murray developed an empirical typology of African Americans family function. The results of their finding yielded three types of African American families: cohesive-authoritative, conflictive-authoritarian, and defensive-neglectful (McAdoo & Younge, 2009, as cited in Neville (Eds.) et.al, 2009). Each of these styles of parenting also includes ways in which parents engage with their children regarding racial socialization. The cohesive-authoritative exhibits the highest overall level of family functioning

and is characterized as having a high level of family cohesion and an authoritative disciplinary style. These members in a family unit are encouraged to be assertive and practice proactive racial socialization. Those family units who are within the conflictive-authoritarian family are characterized by high internal conflict, lack of communalism or commitment to other family members and a strict authoritarian disciplinary parenting style. This creates an environment in which children may not feel comfortable expressing emotion and focus on racial socialization is moderate. There is also high emphasis on achievement.

Lastly, in a defensive-neglectful family unit, the family is seen as at greater risk for dysfunction and is characterized by neglectful and authoritarian parenting styles. In addition, they are also characterized as by having defensive racial socialization. The children within this family unit are socialized to dislike other racial groups and are not taught to be proud of their own racial group. Mandara and Murray also found within their study that children who were a part of the cohesive-authoritative had significantly higher self-esteem than adolescents from the other two groups. This was more likely because parents were highly expressive to children about how appreciated and valued they were. Whereas in the other groups, the parents were more likely to express how unhappy they were with their children's performance and abilities. Within the cohesive family unit, there was also a balance of control and nurturance in the way that Baumrind theorized would be most beneficial to children and adolescence (Frazier, 1966).

Other parenting styles such as permissive parenting have also been seen to have an impact in the outcome of child rearing. Church et. al., 2015 completed a study that examined the longitudinal trajectories of the delinquency of adolescents, ages eleven to eighteen in relation to permissive parenting regarding family rules, curfews, and parental monitoring. Data were

collected from low-income Black families of Mobile, Alabama in a Youth Survey. The findings showed that males with minimal family rules, minimal curfew expectations, and minimal parental monitoring were at greater risk for delinquency. For females, no significant relationship between parental monitoring and delinquency overtime was found. Additionally, when curfew and family rules were held constant, adolescents with lower levels of parental monitoring exhibited higher levels of delinquency at age eleven, which decreased slightly throughout adolescence (Church et. al., 2015).

Other studies have looked at parenting style outcomes of children (Hill, 1995) in a sample of 174 African American ninth graders, eleventh graders and college freshmen. They completed the Buri's Parent Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) and Moo's Family Environment Scale (FES) during their class periods. The results from this study revealed that authoritarianism was positively correlated with control and negatively correlated with expressiveness and independence. Authoritativeness was shown to be positively correlated with cohesion, organization, achievement, and intellectual orientation and was negatively associated with expressiveness. Lastly, permissiveness was negatively correlated with conflict and positively correlated with expressiveness (Hill, 1995). Furthermore, in this study, the authors note prior literature which supports that authoritative parenting may not be related to positive outcome and a positive family environment in the ways in which would be in White families, this study was able to prove that it was related to positive family characteristics such as cohesion, intellectual orientation, organization and achievement (Hill,1995). Additionally, like previous research that indicates that more controlling parenting may lead to better child outcome in African American families, the current study found that authoritarian parenting was not related to positive aspects of the family environment (Hill,1995).

Another longitudinal study examined middle-class African American adolescents' and parents' conceptions of parental authority and parenting practices (Smetana, 2000). The sample size consisted of 82 middle-class African American adolescents and their parents, which consisted of 82 mothers and 52 fathers. Results from this study found that all parents and adolescents were in agreement around parents' legitimate authority to regulate rules about moral conventional, prudential, friendship, and multifaceted issues but did not quite agree on parents' authority for adolescent personal issues. African American mothers of this study felt that they should retain the authority to regulate personal issues such as adolescents' clothes, hairstyles, choice of music, how to spend allowance, however adolescents of this study disagreed on this.

The study hypothesized that African American parents' restrictions of adolescents' personal choices may reflect cultural attitudes and also may reflect adaptive strategies to protect adolescents from harm. Other findings of this study found that regarding class, African American adolescents from upper-income families rejected parents' legitimate authority to regulate personal issues at younger ages that did middle-class African American adolescents. A theme with this study that is very common throughout the Black community is the overwhelming view that children have an obligation to comply with rules, once made. The authors note that these findings reflect the hierarchical structure of African American families and suggest how values of obedience and respect towards elders are instantiated within the family. Lastly, one of the most important notes from this study was how as the years go by, parents adjusted their parental practices based upon the adolescents' conceptualization of authority (i.e. imposing more rules). Adolescents and their parents being on the same page regarding authority made a difference in predicting adolescent outcome.

Theoretical Frameworks

My research questions were informed by several theories: Contextual therapy, Narrative family therapy and the Intersectionality framework. In this section, I examined the main constructs of these theories and frameworks in an attempt to enhance transparency and situate myself as a researcher. Due to constructivist grounded theory's emphases on the researcher's subjectivity and methodical self-consciousness, the use of theoretical frameworks, prior literature and by identifying my preconceptions, this allowed for me to help create a description of what the socialization process of Black middle-class families may look like.

Contextual Family Therapy

Contextual family therapy was developed by Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy & others, whose primary focus is in relational ethics and in understanding how to create balance and fairness within the context of a system. It is an interpersonal as well as systemic approach in which the goal is to promote intergenerational healing through restoring fairness, reciprocity, acknowledgement and accountability. The theory suggests that the force driving human development and relationships is the consideration for the posterity of next generations and the mutual care for the growth of each other (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). Human beings are embedded in an intertwined web that requires reciprocal caring for the survival and growth of individuals. When a person offers care to others, merits are earned and constructive entitlements from those actions may promote relational support. When one receives care, the person is under an ethical obligation to return that to other persons (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986).

Moreover, because the basis of contextual therapy is in fairness and justice, it makes sense that this framework can be used in the context of the parent-child relationship, as much of

the theory's focus is in breaking those intergenerational patterns so as to create less destructive entitlement. According to Boszormenyi-Nagy (1986), destructive entitlement stems from a child's inherent right to be cared for. This intrinsic entitlement escalates into overentitlement in direct proportion to the degree to which factors accrue such as the child fails to receive adequate nurturance, their own needs for trust, devotion and love are exploited, or the child receives mistrust, deceit and mystification in return for their trust and devotion or the child is eventually blamed for adult, relational failures ((Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986, p. 415). Contextual therapy's elaboration of justice as relational ethics and the conceptualization of the unique innate tendency that people generally have to care for one another is a perfect fit for marginalized communities. Although there is sparse literature on the application of Contextual family therapy being applied to Black/African American families, there is quite a bit of literature that supports its application to other groups. Dutta (2014) showcases this in their application of Contextual therapy to Indian immigrant families. In this study's application Dutta notes the hardships that Indian immigrant families face in assimilating into Northern America's individualistic culture.

The author notes the significance at the rate of acculturation between the parent and their children (Dutta, 2014). The children can embrace both the new and old cultures while their parents have much more of a difficult time. This adaptation contributes to parent-child conflict because of the stress between what parents want for their children and what children want for themselves (Baptiste, 2005, as cited in Dutta, 2014). In this study, Dutta (2014) meets with a family and works with this family to address contextual themes such as entitlement, symmetry, trust, balance and accountability. While maintaining the important cultural values of the family, Dutta was also able to respectfully introduce Contextual interventions to help bring the family together. Through the use of Contextual therapy, Dutta is able to accomplish this by

externalizing the problem to immigration and away from the blame being placed on defiant children influenced by Canadian society and also removing blame from parents who find it challenging to keep their children within the confines of Indian culture. Contextual Therapy provides a method for this expression to emerge respectfully, while maintaining the integrity of the family based on its own terms (Dutta, 2014).

Another group in which studies have shown Contextual therapy's effectiveness and application is in work with gay father families. After reviewing several studies that highlighted the activist nature of parenthood for gay fathers, Rootes (2013) proposed Contextual family therapy (CFT) as a new paradigm for understanding gay father families, given its social justice concepts of entitlement, loyalty, and legacy. The article notes that because there are two parallel marginalization histories that can be readily identified through CFT by recognizing the rights and abilities of gay fathers as attuned caregivers while simultaneously acknowledging the social injustices and stigmas they and their adoptive or foster care children have experienced (Rootes, 2013). The conceptual use of relational ethics provides the psychotherapist with a “road map” for identifying the interconnection of entitlements and injustices present for both the father and their children (Rootes, 2013). CFT is centered on self-of- the- therapist as an active agent of fairness redistribution.

In clinical examples given in Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986), Rootes surmises that the therapist in the room matters because some self-disclosure is needed in order to push families towards action and dialogue (Rootes, 2013). The ability of the psychotherapist to embrace broader definitions of family and relinquish gender norms allows for identification of strengths in gay father families (Rootes, 2013). CFT seems to be a useful new paradigm for

understanding and therapeutically approaching gay father families that acknowledges their unique social context. Despite a myriad of injustices suffered, gay fathers are orientating towards relational connection and contributions to social change (Armesto & Shapiro, 2011; Mallon, 2004; Lewin, 2009) and seem to desire to "right the wrong" of living in an invalidating society by engaging in parenting (e.g., "unwanted fathers" adopting "unwanted children"; Broad et al., 2008, p. 513) and the generative process of constructive entitlement.

This approach is called 'contextual' because context not only refers to the structure of the environment but also to the consequences of previous, and the responsibility for future generations (Meriden et. al., 2020). Sometimes relationships are disturbed, and contextual theory describes how this impedes the balance of give and take, leading to serious disruptions. In summary, the intergenerational consequences of relational ethical injustice threatens the development and functioning of the person concerned. Consequently, the injustice may turn into destructive entitlement, which can be passed on as a revolving slate: playing out unfaced and unresolved, unbalanced intergenerational unfairness against their partners, their children, and the world at large (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1987, pg. 271; Krasner and Joyce, 1995, pg. 98).

The ultimate goal of contextual therapy and its methodology is the 'prevention of dysfunction and the rehabilitation and strengthening of the family's own "immune system" – the resources of care, concern, and connection' (Boszormenyi-Nagy and Ulrich, 1981: 210). This aligns with the premise that a fair balance of giving and receiving benefits all family members, as well as their relationships within the family context (Meriden et. al., 2020). Furthermore, at the background of racial discrimination and institutionalized racism, is the fight for justice and equality; and that is on the macro level, battling these challenges has an impact at the micro level

of the family unit. Both just and unjust actions from one generation influence the next, which means that current generations also have a responsibility to the coming generations. For many marginalized families much of what is experienced within society provides a ripple effect of ways in which the family unit can be impacted. For many, in the home and with family is a sense of safety and a place in which things that occur are more likely to be within their control in comparison. Hence, it impacts the ways in which parents engage, attune as well as interact with their children and with one another and can determine the messages and narratives that pass down from one generation to the next.

With relation to the Black family unit, and in considering the generational patterns and traumas that have been passed down from one generation to the next whether this be the physical and psychological trauma of slavery, the civil rights movement, and present day, there lies years of ledgers that have been passed down through generations, coupled with various aspects of entitlement that overtime has grown into destructive entitlement and appears in a myriad of ways. Destructive entitlement occurs as a result of needs and hurt going unacknowledged. It is a consequence of reality or the unfortunate vicissitudes of injustice (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). As a result of this, the destructively entitled may continue this cycle because of unacknowledged hurt as well as may overlook the fact that they are not entitled to take out this basically justifiable grudge on innocent others (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). In other words when individuals are exhibiting destructive entitlement, it can be done in both a conscious or unconscious manner and in best supported in mutual crediting and acknowledgement to family members and a fair redistribution of relational benefits and burdens (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). It is when this reciprocal behavior and acknowledgement is not present within relationships that this pattern of destructive entitlement can develop. A destructive entitled

person is often blocked from experiencing remorse as a consequence of their unjust treatment of an innocent party (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner 1986).

Many parents who grew up in these various generations in time in which hardships and discriminations occurred often instill these experiences into how they socialize as well as parent their children. One of the biggest that has stood throughout each generation lies within racial socialization. With racial socialization's focus centering around how children receive direct and explicit messages about the existence of racism and the meaning of race, it makes sense how many within the Black community today have come to understand the history of their race and the types of messages that have been passed down from one generation to the next, including but not limited to the common phrase of working to be twice as good (Jackson, 2015).

Another hallmark of Contextual family therapy is in the concept of loyalty as it relates to family, in particular the parent-child relationship. 'Giving' in relationships stems, ethically speaking, from loyalty or responsibility: children are loyal to their parents, and parents are responsible for their children. In turn, both receive constructive entitlement or merit, by which they gain freedom to live, a crucial element of human well-being (Meriden et. al., 2020). Loyalty can be understood as the glue that holds many individuals within a family unit together. It is a preferential commitment to a relationship, based on indebtedness born of earned merit (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). This glue is what allows the members of the unit to hold themselves and each other accountable in order to be the catalyst that drives give and take in the relationship.

From a Contextual lens, loyalty is seen as synonymous with the essential irrefutability of family ties. No matter what, the primary commitment basis of family loyalty remains untouched (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). Boszormenyi-Nagy states that parents beget offspring

and become obligated to their survival and nurturance. In return, they also earn their child's commitment to return for mother's and father's unique, unrepayable contribution (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). A healthy relationship, specifically a parent-child relationship, is one in which loyalty conflicts are acknowledged and worked to be resolved. If one feels indebted and loyal, such as that of a parent to a child and a child to a parent, then I believe them to be more likely to engage in the qualities of contextual that Nagy deems as a healthy relationship. One of the ways in which a healthy relationship exists is through self-delineation and self-validation.

According to Nagy, self-delineation is defined as the use of relationships for defining oneself (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). Furthermore, self-validation is defined as the validation of self-worth through entitlement earned by offering due care (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). Personal identity is a person's own unique, psychological product and is influenced by chance circumstances such as the parents we are born to as well as constructs such as gender religion, race and ethnicity (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). The ability to let go and create space in which an individual can achieve this level of individuation aids in decreasing the loyalty conflicts.

Intergenerational Patterns

Nagy refers to the ledgers of justice as a revolving slate that establishes a chain of displaced retributions in families and becomes the source of repetitious, cyclic feedback, a dynamic system force to be considered in its own right (Boszormenyi-Nagy et. al., 1984). In other words, within families, there exists ledgers which are these interpersonal balances of entitlements and indebtedness that are overtly and covertly maintained by both members of a dyad and multiple members of a family system. As a result, this becomes the source of repetitious cycles of intergenerational patterns of displaced unfairness or injustices.

Additionally, individuals can be “caught” in existential guilt through the actions of others as one inherits a place in the multigenerational network of obligations and becomes accountable to the chain of past obligations, traditions, etc. One may not readily be aware of the long-range quid pro quo moves, only of short-term obligations and repayments (Boszormenyi-Nagy et. al., 1984). Based upon this concept of existential guilt being inherited from the actions of others and the multigenerational network of past obligations, this would a direct delineation of what happens when loyalty conflicts are not dealt with, hence where loyalty can become detrimental.

This conceptualization of how intergenerational patterns flow through generations in a family unit is very eye opening. So much so, that when one considers how upward mobility occurs within different generations, one can see how split loyalties can come into play. For many parents who work extremely hard to provide various lifestyles, resources, and can afford opportunities for their children that they, at the time, were not able to have, it can often result in the child carrying this sense of guilt around maybe needing to be twice as good or completely feeling the need to be indebted to the parents, who worked so hard to get the child to where they are today.

This can also work in the sense of other family members seeing a particular family unit within their family as disloyal due to now belonging to a different class. Some family members may read this transition as though the family is disloyal to their roots and through the fear that those individuals will forget where they have come from, this has the potential to place a lot of guilt on that individual and fear in being disloyal and cut off from their family members due to wanting better for themselves. An example of such could be when a child who comes from a lower-income family goes off to further their education and has started a family of their own that

is now considered middle, upper-middle or upper class and faces a lack of support or a strong sense of obligation to perhaps financially support their family of origin out of fear of rejection or being considered disloyal because of the new opportunities and lifestyle they now live.

Loyalty

Contextual family therapy sets out to reintroduce the truth of personal uniqueness into systemic therapy, and to bridge with individual therapy through relational linkages and balances (Boszormenyi-Nagy et. al., 1986 p. 7). Furthermore, the consequences of one person's decisions and actions can affect the lives of all the people who are significantly related (Boszormenyi-Nagy et. al., 1986 p. 8). From a Contextual perspective, we know that loyalty is what binds family members to one another. Loyalty is also a commitment to a relationship based on indebtedness born of earned merit. In the case of the parent-child relationship, parents beget offspring and become obligated to their survival and nurturance. Parents also earn their child's commitment in return for mother's and father's unique, unrepayable contribution (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1986, p. 15).

For many members of the Black community there lies not only a sense of loyalty to their family and/or family of origin but there also lies an additional loyalty to the Black community as a whole. When one factors in upward mobility, a transition from one class to another, loyalty becomes tested even more. For the Black family unit, the sense of community that is seen in both the nuclear family as well as the extended family is something that is unmatched. From one generation to the next, since the beginning of time, the extended family has always served as the ultimate resource for survival for the nuclear family. For many Black families, living in intergenerational and extended networks, the reciprocal process of helping each other and

exchanging and sharing resources and support is an important cultural and survival mechanism (McAdoo & Younge, 2009, pg. 105). Thus, the individuals within this network must learn to balance a healthy ledger. This not only includes their nuclear family or even their family of origin, but their extended family as well. Within this network, everyone lends a helping hand to aid in advancing the next generation. As a result, these various different networks of family will grow to develop a sense of entitlement with regard to the next generation that they helped to raise. Additionally, the next generation will feel a sense of loyalty and indebtedness to these multiple systems that paved a way and played an intricate role within the family's lives.

Hence this leads me to the next explanation of Contextual with regard to how entitlement plays an equally major role within the family dynamic. Entitlement, earned through offering due care, flows from the resolve to accept active and personal responsibility for the consequences of relational reality. It is not to be confused with the "shoulds" or "oughts" of idealism and moralism (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). This sense of entitlement stems from the "give and take" that occurs within the system. When one considers the various intricacies of the Black family unit, the concept of entitlement not only stems from the nuclear family but also to the extended family and even to the community as a whole. Each generation prior to the next worked to be twice as good in order to pave the way for the next. As a result, that next generation comes to "owe" the generations prior for the sacrifices that were made for them to be where they are. In addition to these intergenerational patterns, stories or narratives of families are powerful ways of transmitting relational ways, especially as we think about the power that exists within the meaning that is created around what values are important to the family unit.

As a result of this, questions such as what is every man's due in his family? What does a child deserve? What do his parents owe him? How do parent and child evaluate the justness of their quid pro quo? How much gratitude will any child owe his parents? - may begin to plague these individuals. (Boszormenyi-Nagy et. al., 1984, p. 68). Moreover, in addition to the example of a nuclear family now having progressed into a new socioeconomic class than from their family of origin, there can also be instances generationally in which lessons, behaviors, ways of thinking can be passed down from one generation to the next, without accounting for the change of times and ensuring that those lessons that once worked for the previous generation are still well-suited for the next generation. This is very common within the Black community, that old fashioned rules, rituals, values, and lessons are passed down without question or room for negotiation. Ultimately this can result in a sense of unexamined loyalty, where no one is sure as to why these are to be followed and valued but have an unspoken understanding that "this is the way that it is." This concept of loyalty in this instance serves as the connection between the past and present and when this is questioned or one generation sees a need to address this, it can often be met with critical comments of beliefs that the person is ungrateful and disloyal (Boszormenyi-Nagy et. al., 1984).

Narrative Family Therapy

Narrative family therapy was co-constructed in the early 1980s by White and Epston and grew in popularity during the 1990s. It currently is a widely practiced modality of therapy (Suddeath et. al., 2017). According to White, Narrative family therapists are less interested in facts, and more concerned about the stories that couples and families have constructed as well as how clients organize their lives around the meaning that they create (White, 1990). Through the

Narrative lens, the goal and strength of this theory lies in its drive to separate the person from the problem through the use of externalization. The purpose of externalization is to aid in mapping how much influence the person has on the problem and the problem on the person (White, 1990). With the help of externalization, the individual is able to see the problem as a separate entity, thus allowing for individuals to begin to recognize the exceptions to their problem saturated stories. Moreover, when it comes to Narrative family therapy, there lies privilege and power around what stories get told over others and who gets to determine this. Dominant discourses are also what often perpetuates this cycle of what messages can become privileged over others within our society. For many clients who represent minoritized communities, this phenomenon can be quite problematic, especially with regard to the socialization process in determining how we should socialize children and what narratives around this get passed down from one generation to another.

Moreover, because we live in a world where society holds much of the power and privilege in dominant discourses, for many minoritized families working to raise children in a society that doesn't see them as equals, it can be very difficult for parents to gain access to the necessary resources to prepare their children to be strong enough to withstand anything that the world throws at them. For Black families who are in the middle-class sector, there is a dominant narrative around middle-class being seen as this predominately White space. To support this claim researchers have also quantified this and found that the middle-class population consists of 52% of White adults in comparison to 47% both Black and Asian adults and 49% Asian adults (Pew Research Center, 2021). Additionally, Lacey (2007) talks about this makeup's impact on how middle-class Black families maneuver within predominately white spaces. In a concept called "strategic assimilation." This process refers to the negotiation of racial dualism Blacks

believe is required of them in daily life (Lacey, 2007). The author talks about two important aspects of the assimilation process, one of which is the boundaries middle-class Blacks erect against the White world (race-based identities) and the other being the boundaries middle-class Blacks draw against lower classes in the Black world (class-based identities) (Lacey, 2007). Although having access to predominantly white neighborhoods, colleges, and workplaces, they continue to maintain ties with their Black community. Many middle-class Black families have created ways in which they move through both spaces through negotiating parts of their identity between both worlds (Lacey, 2007). Through these strategies, the Black middle-class has created a certain meaning around what being a part of this class meant. As many perceived the prevailing view of "Black" as carrying the meaning of identifying with the Black poor and working-class (Lacey, 2007), we also see that class-based identities represent middle-class Black's conception of their place within the Black world. Furthermore, the strategies used to signal class identity, vary by residential context (Lacey, 2007). With this standard, families begin to create meaning around what it means to be a part of varying social classes in addition to being a part of a specific racial/ethnic group.

White (1990) also notes the weight language carries. From a social constructivist framework which states that language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate, and understand reality (Akpan et. al., 2020), White suggests there is much power in language and how we define ourselves and make sense of the world around us and those within it. Language is so powerful that it is the medium by which family members story (create meaning from) their experiences, and how family's language (express meaning about) their interactions is largely dependent on the dominant cultural discourse available to them (White & Epston, 1990). When it comes to having only access to the dominant cultural

discourse that is made available and with regard to this intersection of race and class, there are layers of messages that Black middle-class families receive around what is the appropriate way to raise a child.

Within the Black community, there are a multitude of intergenerational patterns, traumas and narratives that get passed down from one generation to the next and many of these narratives often go unchecked and unchallenged until the next generation tries to interrupt this generational cycle. Evidence of this is viewed within intergenerational trauma which is seen as an unwanted inheritance (Glass et. al., 2022). It is the passing down of traumatic events and memories to later generations. The curse of slavery in the U.S. and the continued racial trauma experienced have marked the lives and legacies of Black families (Glass et. al., 2022).

These authors suggest that Black Millennial parents are determined, however, to end the cycle of trauma and welcome a new era of parenting. In addition to these generational traumas that extend over many generations that serves as both a community and cultural experience (Glass et. al., 2022), there are many different narratives that exist within the community, especially as it relates to class. One example of this is the usage of the word “ghetto” which is used to reference any actions or behaviors that represent poverty or of lower income. It is a term that is often used to distinguish the practices of one class of Blacks from another (Patillo, 2003). Patillo (2003) refers to William Julius Wilson definition of ‘ghetto’ as an area of residences that have weak attachments to the labor force, strong attachments to the welfare system, and behaviors that differentiate them from the main- stream world of married-couple families, routinized work and play schedules, and non-criminal activities.

Many middle-class parents through their own lived experiences have often either lived through this exact experience of what they now consider “ghetto” in cases of upward mobility or have also come from families who held these same dominant narratives to be true, that were passed down to them. These lived experiences often reinforce the negative narratives that stand as dominant and through that reinforcement in how they might have been treated or saw others treated because of this, these messages become internalized, thus driving the very way in which many parents socialize their children and the pressure and need for the parent to belong to networks of class that will afford them and their family the best possible advantage within society.

Based on the above, it could be hypothesized that when it comes to the socialization process, the way in which the practice of parenting looks has much to do with what is individually internalized and how those narratives of socializing one’s children gets passed on and also reinforced based upon the dominant discourse and narratives made available. An example of this can be the narrative that exists within society around those within the Black community not being able to receive equal opportunities within the workplace environment. Parents may then internalize their experience of this and integrate this into the values and lessons that they instill into the socialization process of their children.

Narrative family therapy has been used with many different groups of minoritized communities and although there is limited research exhibiting its use with the Black community, there have been powerful uses of it with regard to stories centered around the injustices and unfair treatment of the Black community with regard to racism (Mbilishaka, 2018). White and Epston (1990) state that the human mind is storied and telling stories to a validating listener

delivers therapeutic value and thinking about race and telling stories about racism are no different (Winston et. al., 2010). Mbilishaka (2018)'s approach to using the Black community's community-based spaces in collaboration with mental health professionals puts this to action through having given birth to a unique phenomenon known as "PsychoHairapy", which is a technique of Race Narrative Therapy used to deconstruct racial experiences in Black hair care spaces. Within the Black community the barbershops and beauty salons are a few of the main community-based spaces in which it is not only a space for self-care and grooming for members of the community, but it is also a time of coming together and a safe haven to discuss many things such as a race, politics and activism (Gill, 2010). Furthermore, Mbilishaka states:

> Narrative therapy is a psychotherapeutic approach that translates clients' feelings from problem saturated stories to purposeful actions (White & Epston, 1990). The PsychoHairapy approach to mental health ventures into the cultural worldview of the client by examining the meaning making process through the stories about race and racism. Not only is the technique important for unpacking racial trauma articulated by Black Lives Matter healing justice approach, but healing is needed in a supportive space to express outrage and receive empathy (Mbilishaka, 2018, p. 31).

This use of Narrative family therapy has been tailor made specifically for the Black community through its explicit inclusion of Race Narratives (Mbilishaka, 2018). The goal of Narrative family therapy is ultimately to deconstruct dominant discourse narrative and work collaboratively with clients to reconstructive a new narrative (White & Epston, 1990). Lived experiences only account for and fall into a fraction of the dominant story (White & Epston, 1990). It is these lived experiences that fall outside of the dominant story that provide a rich and

fertile source for the generation, or re-generation, of alternative stories (White & Epston, 1990). Dating back centuries the concept of the oral tradition of storytelling within the Black community goes back long prior to enslavement in America (Hamlet, 2011). Africans lived in societies developed around a worldview that was predicated on highly sophisticated religious systems and an impressive oral communication style. The Africans believed in "Nommo", which means the generative power of the spoken word (Hamlet, 2011). Nommo was believed necessary to actualize life and give man mastery over things (Hamlet, 2011). Through this oral tradition, cultural mores, values, histories and religions were transmitted and in so many ways are an oral tradition that is still prevalent within the community today.

Other minoritized groups that Narrative Family therapy has been applied to are in the work with Latinx families in a ritual known as alter making (Bermudez & Bermudez, 2002). The authors explored the meaning behind creating alters to commemorate loved ones who have passed away by combining art and Narrative Family therapy to create alters in sessions with families (Burmudez & Burmudez, 2002). Bermudez & Bermudez (2002) discuss the importance and meaning that is attached to spirituality within the Latinx culture with alters. They also explore several steps and phases that are involved within this creative therapeutic process: The clients choose altar-making as a therapeutic resource, decide on the theme or topic of the altar, gather information about the topic, collect images and objects (made or found) related to the altar, assembling the altars, and finally punctuating the process with a ritual or ceremony (Bermudez & Bermudez, 2002). They demonstrate their use of alter-making with clients through illustrating a case study in which the therapist worked with a nine-year-old female client and her mother who had recently suffered the loss of their father and husband. The end outcome of this process was that the nine-year-old client had created a visual reminder of her father and their

relationship. This created a space in which the therapist was able to take the meaning that is organized around the construct of spirituality within the Latinx community and utilize this in therapy sessions to create a new narrative that supports their healing as a way to process the death of their loved one (Bermudez & Bermudez, 2002).

Narrative family therapy is based upon this conceptualization of understanding the meaning that individuals create and how they organize their lives around those particular meanings (White & Epston, 1990). At various intersecting identities, there is also a different set of values and meanings that exist that may not be extended to those individual identities. With regard to this study, at the intersecting identity of a Black middle-class family, their values will look slightly different from solely considering the identity of being a member of the Black community or a member of the middle-class. Hence, this is why an intersectional framework is important to incorporate.

Intersectionality Framework

In considering the ten domains of the ADDRESSING model (Hayes, 1996) (age, disability (developmental or acquired), religion, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, Indigenous background, nationality and gender), which serves as a framework that facilitates recognition and understanding of the complexities of individual identity, much of the model is geared towards expanding our understanding of cultural identity. The model brings recognition and "understanding" of the complexities of the individual identity, it is the Intersectional Framework that goes deeper into acknowledging the intricacies of these complex intersecting identities. Although there are many ways in which the intersectional framework has been defined, for the purposes of this study, I will be referencing, Kimberlé Crenshaw's 1989 theory

of the concept as well as the Combahee River Collective's statement on Simultaneity on which Crenshaw's intersectionality theory was built. Her theory behind intersectionality stemmed from several legal cases that dealt with issues of both racial and sex discrimination. In these cases, the court decided that efforts to bind together both racial discrimination and sex discrimination claims — rather than sue on the basis of each separately — would be unworkable.

Additionally, her conceptualization also includes a way of thinking about identity and power (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw (1989) states that the focus on privileged group members marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination. She notes that to focus on simply one of these identities becomes grounded in experiences that actually only represent a subset of a much more complex phenomenon. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated (Crenshaw, 1989). Although much of her conceptualization of this theory rests at the intersection of race and gender, I believe that there are also many other key intersectional areas that have still been untouched as it relates to families within the Black community. At the intersection of race and class creates a special experience that is unique at each level and brings different challenges for each of the families involved within various socioeconomic classes.

At each level lies a different struggle or different set of messages that are received and thus become internalized overtime and passed down from one generation to the next. At each level there lies different ways in which individuals have come to place meaning behind their lived experiences. My study will focus on the intersection of race and class with particular focus on the middle-class socialization process. For we know that within these varying levels of social

class that in comparing one class to another, there may not be fundamental difference in the goals of child rearing, however, there does lie a considerable difference in their socialization practices and when this is compounded with the addition of race, at this particular intersection lies a unique set of additional challenges. The ways in which parents socialize their children can look one way, with the addition of class and race, there lies a myriad of different ways in which parents socialize their children in order to best prepare them for the world.

An example of the importance of considering intersectionality is with mothers of color (MOC). Mckinney & Meinersmann (2022) used this framework to bring recognition to the specific experiences of motherhood, specifically as it relates to MOCs. The authors explored the impact of the Coronavirus and the recent racial uproar of unfair treatment of unarmed Black men and women and how this impacted the mental health state of MOC (Mckinney & Meinersmann (2022). For example, women identifying as mothers of Color (MOC) are not only responsible for the "typical" responsibilities of intensive motherhood (e.g., child-rearing, decision making); they are also responsible for navigating the world's perception of their child(ren) as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) (Mckinney & Meinersmann, 2022). Black mothers, for example, are expected to meet the ideals of intensive mothering while facing greater scrutiny than White mothers due in part to derogatory societal narratives (Hamilton, 2021). In spite of these narratives, mothers identifying as Black and Latina have relied on their mothering roles to support and sustain their communities (Clark, 2012; Lawson, 2000).

Additionally, within this study, the authors performed a systemic review of prior literature where they investigated the socio- cultural forces that impact MOC's mental health during the context of the double pandemic through a review of existent literature on this topic.

The authors' analysis and incorporation of intersectionality theory and Black feminist thought uncovers the ways in which these forces may influence the experience of MOCs (Mckinney & Meinersmann (2022). From this, authors were able to highlight important themes that surfaced within the literature. One important finding was that through the influx of racism within the US during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly hate crimes (e.g., police brutality, Asian hate) toward Black and Asian mothers and families, may have inadvertently intensified disparities within these populations. The authors also note structural inequalities as another area that is critical in working with MOCs. Structural inequities (e.g., access to healthcare, provider bias) may explain MOC's hesitancy toward seeking medical help in formal healthcare settings (Burgess et al., 2022; Crenshaw, 1991).

In addition to this, there is also a theme of social isolation that is experienced with where MOCs were reported to have experienced higher levels of pandemic- related stress than their White counterparts (Janevic et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). The absence of social support in the lives of MOC is a fundamental component toward understanding the mental health burden of the double-pandemic (i.e., overt racism, COVID-19). Further, physical and emotional isolation from friends, family, community, and other loved ones provides an opposite context to the collectivistic spheres in which MOC may thrive (Mckinney & Meinersmann, 2022). In regard to child rearing the authors note the significance of racial socialization and how Black parents have historically communicated racial socialization messages to prepare their children to cope with racism, discrimination and prejudice that Black individuals encountered in the US (Mckinney & Meinersmann, 2022). These researchers acknowledge the role that intersectionality plays in the role of identifying as BIPOC as well as a mother and how this has impacted the mental state of these mothers in the midst of the COVID pandemic and the recent racial uproar. Through their

analysis of empirical findings using the intersectionality theory and Black feminist thought, within the context of these frameworks authors were able to make noteworthy recommendations around social policy, education and training and academic research to increase support for MOC amid what they deem as the double pandemic (Mckinney & Meinersmann, 2022).

Now that I have introduced my theoretical frameworks that will guide and inform this study as well as inform my research questions, I'll next discuss the role of parenting styles and the outcome of various types of parenting styles as it relates to gender in the Black community.

Education

Another important aspect of the socialization process of parents with their children can been through the importance placed on education. Many children of families within the middle-class category often place greater emphasis on educational success (Vincent et. al., 2012). Furthermore, with regard to upward mobility, social science research finds that individuals' social class backgrounds impact their access to and performance in the key gateway institutions such as that of higher education and professions workplaces (Stephens et. al., 2019). In higher education, students from working- compared with middle-class contexts often attend lower quality high schools and, as a result, may develop fewer academic skills (e.g., advanced math) in critical areas that would help them gain access to and perform well in college (Crook & Evans, 2014). Likewise, after enrolling in college, they typically have less access to the material and social resources that would enable them to obtain the unpaid, high-status internships that lead to elite job opportunities.

When one factors in race to this equation, we find that for African Americans, in recent years there has been significant evidence suggesting that black women achieve at higher rates

than black men both in earnings and educational attainment. Fewer black men receive college degrees than black women at both predominantly White and traditionally Black colleges. Black women have also earned advanced degrees, where they outnumber black men by more than one-third. The academic achievement of black women has translated into jobs where they have also surpassed black men in white collar ranks (Butler-Sweet, 2017). Additionally, in a study that looked at the lengths at which middle-class and affluent Black parents would go in order to place their children in beneficial settings across the region's vast sprawl, they found that maneuvers such as significant increase in drive time was common among middle class parents. Parents who lived in areas with the distancing of the inner city and its youth rippled across neighborhoods. For example, parents in Southeast Los Angeles had their child on a waiting list for a public school in an area with less poverty in Southwest LA; a family in Southwest LA sent their child to a public school in affluent West LA; and in a West LA area that bordered South LA, parents said that they put their children in private school to avoid children coming in from South LA.

For some parents, placing their children in distant schools also increased their time burdens related to their children's leisure activities. In addition to these, parents also supported their rationale for this in their conceptualization that they lived in some of these areas because of their bonds to elderly kin, ethnic bonds, nostalgic or idealistic notions of community, and desires to avoid racism (Montgomery, 2006). Concerns about their children pushed them to engage in selective flight, hence seeking out better opportunities for their children, in this case around education and socialization. These parents also found the local schools in their southern Los Angeles areas to be dissatisfying and lacked the basic materials such as sufficient books, low school score rankings and that although they felt safe within their neighborhood, they would not

however feel comfortable with their children venturing outside of that neighborhood alone due to concerns regarding the surrounding areas.

Ball et. al. (2013) examined middle-class Black parents' choices regarding choosing the proper school and social environment for their children and found that many based, at the root of this decision, had based their decision on their own experiences in being in good or bad social mixes. They go on to describe these 'social mixes' as a mix of both ethnic identity and class. It also sometimes consists of gender. The concept of social mix is a common setting that many Black middle-class families strive to have their children be a part of. Black middle-class families reported that an ideal social mix consists of a good amount of ethnic diversity, such as a good proportion of Black children, but with no single predominant ethnic group, and a significant presence of children from families who place a high value on education, which was usually related to social class (Ball et. al., 2013).

It was felt that 'good' social mixes, that is particular combinations of ethnicity and social class, can serve to minimize the likelihood of the experience of racism at school, create learning environments conducive to the academic achievement of minority ethnic students, reinforce a positive ethnic identity, encourage and teach tolerance and develop skills and dispositions for coping with ethnic 'others'. Such 'good' mixes are concomitantly, ways of avoiding 'bad influences and negative expectations. However, none of these things are guaranteed by mix in and of itself, there are sometimes 'trade-offs' made against other factors (Ball et. al., 2013). The BMC socialization process appears to consist of racial socialization as a critical component of their parenting. When this is intersected by class, many of these families often grow concerned when upward mobility occurs and families are transitioning from one class to another, there is a

lack of representation the higher one goes up in class. As a result, parents often prioritized finding school and various extracurricular programs that have as close as an equal representation of their ethnic group as possible to provide access to positive affirmation of their children's Blackness, despite the new class that may not have as much representation.

Ball et. al (2013) also talks about the varying levels of a "mix" which ranges from a "a very good mix", "a nice mix" and "a good mix." Many of the BMC parents of this study considered "a very good mix" as a diverse group but containing a predominant ethnic group which for many parents is a less than optimum situation. One of the mothers of this study stated, "I didn't want her going to a predominantly White school because I wanted her to relate to Black people and White people ... I didn't want her going to a predominantly Black school because I think sometimes not all parents are interested in their children's education . . . But it's got a nice mixture here." (p. 270) This concern is a common experience for many BMC families. The comment above hints at the second element of this mix where in addition to a balance of race and ethnicity as being priority for many BMC families, there also lies an element of class, which provides other levels of opportunity as well as access to resources and a certain level of care for education that is considered.

The many parents within this study carried a stigma which in turn deemed how they associated those of less means. This appeared in the form of a view of belief that those of a lower class did not share in the same level of prioritization of education as is most typical within the middle-class families, as supported by Vincent et.al. (2012) who also found this same similarity of high importance placed on educational success. For some parents this prioritization of education requires some form of a trade-off. These trade-offs include but are not limited to

parents considering public vs private programs, of which many private programs often consist of a dominant ethnic group rather than the ideal mix of ranging in diversity with regard to class and ethnicity.

The following section will discuss the role of parental monitoring in the context of Black middle-class families. This section will cover the differences in how classes engage in parental monitoring, level of parental involvement as well as the outcome of parental monitoring as it relates to predicting lower or higher levels of delinquency.

Religion

Religion has been the cornerstone of the Black community. It has been utilized a moral guide, provided a sense of comfort in times of uncertainty and served as a coping and protective factor. McBride (2013) stated religion has historically and generally been a strong cultural protective factor in the African American community and continues to have this effect (Boyd-Franklin 2003; Frazier 1974; Molock et al. 2006; Taylor et al. 2004). Religion, regardless of culture, has been found to be a protective factor for youth against risky behaviors and other ill conditions, including smoking, depression, delinquency, sexual activity, and alcohol use (Goldston et al. 2008; Sinha et al. 2007), through the enhancement of affect and self-regulation.

Religion has even provided the Black community overtime with a sense of psychological protection during times of experiencing racism and discrimination (McBride, 2013). Indirectly, the religiosity of the parent can also have positive effects on youth behavior. Pearce and Hayne (2004) found that parent religiosity has significant impacts on child delinquency— the higher the

parent religiosity, the lower rate of child misbehavior. These findings indicate religiosity, either in parents or youth, can act as a strong buffer.

Parental Monitoring

In addition to placement of education as a high priority for many middle-class Black families, the level of parental monitoring that occurs within these households makes for an easier time for children of these families to be able to not only excel in the areas of school but also in the areas of preventing risky behaviors as well as to be properly set up for success in their future. Jacobson et. al. (2000) conducted an ecological framework to examine the associations between parental monitoring and a variety of indicators of adolescent adjustment. Specifically, investigators examined whether higher levels of parental monitoring were associated with higher adolescent grade point average, lower levels of adolescent depression, and lower levels of adolescent sexual activity and minor delinquency, and whether these relations were moderated by gender, grade level, or mothers' work status.

According to this study, gender and grade level simultaneously moderated the relationship between parental monitoring and adolescent delinquency, with the effect of parental monitoring increasing across grade level for boys and decreasing with grade level for girls. For both boys and girls, monitoring was a significant predictor of problem behaviors among adolescents whose mothers worked full-time (Jacobson et. al., 2000). Aside from this study, there is limited information regarding what parental monitoring looks like in Black families as well as with the additional factor of one's socioeconomic status. From the limited available research, we know that parental monitoring is viewed as the parents' knowledge of their child's whereabouts and friends (Jacobson, 2000). We also know that parental monitoring, if used effectively can have positive results in children. With regard to academics, the combination of parental

monitoring and teacher support, it directly and positively affects motivation and self-efficacy over time for students but the highest impact is that of the influence of the parent in parental monitoring (Gaetana et. al., 2022). So with this regard, we are aware of parental monitoring's power influence however, extrapolating from existing literature, it could be hypothesized that when comparing this concept of parental monitoring with those of the working-class and those of middle or higher classes, when it comes to the working or lower classes, it can become difficult to keep up with the whereabouts and the friends in which their children are associated with when families of these particular classes must spend more time working to provide for their families.

Without effective parental monitoring, there is a greater risk for delinquency. For middle-class families, we find that parents play an integral part in their socialization process and when it comes to parental monitoring, much of the activities and people with whom their children are associated are generally handpicked by their parents, along with the activities in which they partake. These families provide more structure in their organization of their child's everyday life compared to working or poor families and there are more restrictions regarding the child's leisure time such as watching TV, playing video games, hanging out with friends etc. (Laureau, 2002). Furthermore, parental monitoring is said to be of even more importance during a child's middle and adolescent years as they are now in the stages of spending more time away from home and therefore have more opportunities to engage in risky behavior (Fosco et al., 2012).

Many early adolescents experience an increase in substance use and delinquency, poorer school performance, and worse psychological adjustment when their parents are not involved or do not show consistent disciplinary skills (Roche et al., 2007, as cited in, Herman et. al., 2020). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, when the opposite occurs, where their parents are more

actively involved in monitoring their children, it results in fewer behavioral problems and better academic performances. Moreover, parents in high-stress and high-risk circumstances may be less able to buffer their children from the contextual risk experiences that are directly linked to escalating youth delinquency and poor academic outcomes (Herman et. al., 2020).

For many families who are of the lower income sector, this might be very difficult due to their obligations to work long hours and possibly multiple jobs to provide for their families, thus making it sometimes difficult to provide the increased amount of parental monitoring that comes with children as they age into their early and late teens. Many families of lower income often live in high-risk neighborhoods. Within these high-risk neighborhoods studies have shown low parental monitoring was associated with escalating behavioral problems for youth (Herman et. al. (2020). To further this point, prior studies have revealed that adolescents from more disadvantaged families are more likely to experience a primary care arrangement that is both out of their own home and removed from adult supervision. Second, these types of care arrangements, out-of-home and unsupervised settings, are related to heightened trajectories of problem behaviors among young adolescents, particularly drug and alcohol use and school misconduct (Coley et. al., 2004).

On the other hand, when applied appropriately, parental monitoring is also associated with stronger parent-child bonds, which supports the development of resiliency (Herman et. al., 2020). There is a difference with regard to how gender can also play a role in the level of parental monitoring that takes places. When it comes to parents raising sons and daughter, there are differences in how the two are monitored as well as parented. Young girls are more likely to internalize symptoms of risky behavior such as smoking, drinking, sexual behaviors, etc. in

comparison to their male counterparts. The amount of parental monitoring that is received is also dependent upon the gender of the child and the gender of the parent (Villarreal et. al, 2018). Mothers may have a stronger impact on the prevention of their adolescent engaging in risky behaviors than fathers, and parental monitoring may have a stronger protective effect among girls' sexual behaviors than boys' (Villarreal et. al, 2018).

Gender based differences become more important during adolescence. In Cunningham et. al.'s (2012) study, the results reported that older, adolescent girls received more parental monitoring than all other participants, which speaks to the fact that parents believe girls, especially older females, need to be monitored more than boys. These results coupled with previous research on differential treatment in childhood demonstrate the power of gender, of the child, as a predictor of parental behavior (Cunningham et. al, 2012). This heavy focus on placing a higher need to monitor girls more than boys brings to light how the disproportionate monitoring has a significant impact on the outcomes of African American boys. In this study the authors hypothesized that parental monitoring would serve as a moderator in the relationship between stressful events and nonacademic expectation.

However, this was only the case for adolescent African American females. For Black boys this was only partially supported, thus suggesting that African American boys are actually more vulnerable than they might appear, and this demonstrates the need to effectively monitor them. The findings highlight a clear negative consequence for African American males who are not properly monitored. Because African American males overwhelmingly make up the United States' incarcerated population (Cunningham et. al, 2012) better parental monitoring as well as having other supportive adults might protect these young males from future criminal justice

challenges (Cunningham et. al., 2012). This study also noted another important finding in that because young girls receive more parental monitoring than young boys already, overtime, it will not have as much of a significant impact as it would on the increase in adolescent male outcomes. Considering the lesser amount that Black young males receive, to increase this would actually make more of an impact on them (Cunningham et. al., 2012).

The following section will discuss gender as it related to the socialization process. Here, I will go in depth to describe the different socialization processes of gender at the intersection of class in the Black community. I discuss the different ways girls and women, boys and men as well as queer identifying youth are socialized within the Black community.

Gender

Women and Girls

There is adequate research to suggest that when it comes to gender in socialization, it looks different depending on the gender of the parent and the gender of the child. Villarreal (2018) noted this in their study where they found mothers were more involved in parental monitoring than fathers. Moreover, they found that fathers were less likely to engage in conversations about daughter's sexual behaviors but were more willing to discuss substance use with daughters. The study also notes another important finding. Girls are a lot more likely to internalize symptoms in comparison to boys who are more likely to be more external regarding their distress.

When it comes to how parents socialize their children according to gender, for Black families it is especially important to understand the gender-based differential treatment of boys and girls in early childhood has a more holistic view of its consequences in adolescence

(Cunningham et. al, 2012). For example, the presence or absence of a father has differing effects on African American boys in comparison to African American girls. For young boys, it was found that these boys reported lower levels of masculinity (e.g., self-defined traditional notions of maleness as assessed on a scale of "Adjective Q-sort of ideal masculine to ideal feminine"). Young girls in the same study were reported to have the highest levels of masculinity with regard to absent fathers of all African American girl participants (Mandara et. al, 2005). This finding demonstrates the different ways in which boys and girls are socialized and how it can become more salient as they enter into adolescence.

The sample in the study mentioned above consisted of Black women from upper-middle class families who recounted how other Black female peers viewed them due to their class and level of education throughout their upbringing. These young women recounted stories of their interactions with other young girls who often times labeled them as “acting white” or who ridiculed them for taking pride in their appearance or for having a certain texture of hair or even skin color (Butler-Sweet, 2017). There was also a central theme around those young girls of lower-income families being of the majority of girls who would go out of their way to call out these differences or would engage in some form of bullying or intimidation. These women within this study also reported to have a strained relationship with other young black girls during their upbringing because of class. Moreover, Black women within the middle-class category have also been referred to as the “Black step-sister”.

The Black stepsister is characterized as being of higher social economic class. She is also one who has not dealt with a number of the tribulations of those of lower income including single motherhood, living in unsafe neighborhoods, and unreliable housing. Class seemed to act

as an invisible force in these encounters, with informants inclined to personalize the experiences to individual traits and characteristics (Butler-Sweet, 2017). Relationships between black women have often been characterized in terms of a ‘‘sisterhood.” This sisterhood is reflective of the unity that black women presumably feel based on shared experiences of race and gender (Butler-Sweet, 2017). These class differences in experience create a schism between poor and middle class black women. Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins has long noted that unity among black women is threatened by differences among them, including class differences. In Butler-Sweet’s (2017) study this very concept of the “Black Stepsister” is very much so represented in the stories of the participants’ reflections of their experiences as young girls, who were indeed treated as “outsiders” to the friendship groupings of Black girls in high school.

Reid (1982) discusses the concept of sex-role socialization and notes this concept as one of the most important aspects of personality and social behavior that defines how individuals react to themselves and how others react to them (Reid, 1982). During this sex-role socialization process, young boys and girls are taught specific values that are appropriate for their sex. However, the complexity of this process does not seem to account for cultural differences, and this is best seen in minority groups. Black women have been historically characterized as unfeminine and seen as possessing negative characteristics (Reid, 1982).

In the socialization process, one must consider various other factors for different cultures that plays a role in what this socialization process looks like. It is evident that with the lack of research that is available on this topic and with articles as such that bring to light that for the Black community, this process looks very different due to factors such as the structure of the family unit and the integration of both male and female roles, of which has worked to maintain

the stability of the family unit. Moreover, Black girls have often received significant family support and recognition regarding their academic achievements (Reid, 1984). Traditionally Black girls, more than Black boys, have been encouraged to stay in school and to become high achievers. Historically, this has been thought to protect young girls, known as the "the farmer's daughter effect" (Reid, 1984). This practice was based upon Black parents' realistic consideration that education offered more opportunities of success for their daughters, than their sons and it also offered some protection for their daughter. This protection was seen as physical protection from sexual involvement or harm.

Moreover, educated Black women had more alternatives than working in the homes of White women. Although in today's world this option of "work" is far from the only option and opportunities made available to Black women, the element of the prioritization of education is still very much alive and relative even today. This is especially the case when considering the statistical rate at which Black women excel over receiving more degrees in higher education as well as being enrolled into higher education institutions (Reid, 1984). In addition, to the ways in which Black girls are socialized towards achieving higher education, they like their White female counterparts, are also socialized to become mothers (Reid, 1984).

In Dow's (2015) sample of middle-class Black women, the concept of being a mother is tainted in some ways due to the tension between the concept of the "Welfare Queen" and "The Strong Black Woman." To the middle-class Black mother, the welfare queen is seen as the stay-at-home mother who collects welfare, shunning work and passing on her bad values to her offspring (Dow, 2105). The middle-class mothers of this sample saw this assumption regarding the welfare queen and some may say even internalized this view, thus feeling the strong need to

counter this in order to gain access to, and acceptance in, white middle-class mothering activities such as mothers' groups, "mommy and me" activities, and extracurricular activities (Dow, 2015). Young Black girls also had differing images in their socialization process of what the stereotypical mothering role looked like. Because Black women have often worked outside of their homes, this reflected upon what many young girls saw, which seems very similar to how we understand the Strong Black woman today, consisting of Black women preferring and expecting to combine marriage, children, and employment. Thus, reinforcing the desire to move even farther from the conceptualization of the welfare queen.

The mothers in the Dow's study in their interviews also hint closely at what I hope to study, which is that many of these middle-class Black mothers reported a particular way in which they felt they needed to socialize their children in order for them both to be accepted into the White middle-class. This included much of what previous research studies have mentioned earlier in my writing from prioritizing education, to internalizing certain ways of being such as vernacular, or visual cues such as the way one dresses, accessories and the way one combs their hair. In many ways it would appear as though these mothers were overcompensating and working twice as hard to prove that they belonged to this group. To be accepted in this realm in some ways may have served as the confirmation needed to distinguish themselves from what they internalized as the welfare queen. This challenge is something that appears to be very specific to Black women of the middle-class and leads one to question how this might impact their dynamic with their offspring as a result of this. For many Black women raising young black girls into Black women, the notion of the strong Black woman can be argued to be a part of the socialization process, almost a rite of passage for young Black girls.

Men and boys

The socialization process for young black boys is quite different from that of Black girls. Black children are often taught to adhere to typical European gender norms. As a result of both racial and gender socialization, one finds that Black men try very hard to be the most rational of the irrational and the most unemotional of the emotional – defying those racial stereotypes that position Black people as irrational and animalistic and adhering to those pertaining to gender which position men as human and rational (Wallace, 2007). The general socialization process for boys and girls is set in a position that adheres to typical European gender norms. Within that context, for Black families raising their young boys and girls there are a series of contextual factors that play a significant role in how this looks, particularly for Black boys. Young Black girls are presented with the phenomenon of coming into womanhood. It is presented as something that they grow in to. Whereas, for young Black boys, the understanding of manhood is not written with the same narrative. For young Black boys, manhood is considered something that is both natural and automatic from the moment they come into the world (Wallace, 2007).

While it is typically considered okay for girls to be tomboys up to a certain point in their adolescence, Black boys are regarded as adult men from young ages and therefore are expected not to participate in behaviors associated with girls or childhood. It is not uncommon to find Black parents referring to their young (sometimes infant) sons as “Little Man” or “Man-Man” and dressing them in outfits similar to their fathers – a clear indication that these boys are already well on their way to being perceived as men (Wallace, 2007). This notion of automatic manhood places these boys into a very specific box and leaves no room to expand or take an interest outside of the Black male standards of what it means “to be a man” (Wallace, 2007). This dominant discourse set within the community around the meaning that has been made of what it

is to be defined as a man could potentially have damaging individual and relational effects (Wallace, 2007).

There is also a double standard regarding how young boys are socialized. It is more commonly acceptable within the Black community for young girls to engage in play and activities that are more masculine but the same does not apply to young boys. Prior literature notes that this may be due to young girls being socialized and encouraged to be strong and intelligent, thus, allowing for more toleration of "cross-gendered behaviors" (Wallace, 2007). The authors also note another phenomenon that occurs within Black boys' socialization process through the level of expressiveness that is allowed to be shown. For young Black boys, there is an association between level of expressiveness and femininity. Therefore, if a young boy chooses to express his thoughts and feelings in a way that is considered to be above the threshold of expressiveness for men, then his manhood is immediately questioned and speculated. Thus, this association of expressiveness and femininity deters Black men from expressing their feelings and emotions in intimate relationships. Although today many Black men are challenging this negative assumption, it is still a work in progress for many men in the Black community to unlearn this behavior.

While Black girls receive messages around being able to be independent as well as provide for themselves alone, without a partner or spouse, they also receive messages about needing to prepare themselves and be in a position to be ready to find a "good black man" who can provide for them; Black boys receive messages centered around having to be aggressive, dominant and sometimes violent in order to be bestowed the title of a "true man." However, with this message, comes a secondary message that is seen as a component of the racial socialization, of needing to be cautious of this primary message to be aggressive and dominant, for this can

also lead to severe repercussions from white supremacy (Franklin, 1984, as cited in, Wallace, 2007).

Even though Black males appear to be bombarded with messages centered around the man as the aggressor, this serves as only half of the message that White men receive which is centered around the role of the provider. Historically, this has not necessarily been a role that Black men have been able to fulfill due to issues like high rates of unemployment and the underemployment of Black men – issues which serve to show that the "man as provider" role is not only a luxury, but largely a matter that only White men and women grapple with (Wallace, 2007). Moreover, there is limited available literature on understanding the specific socialization process of Black boys in middle class families. Much of the literature that is available focuses generally reflects young boys or men who grew up in lower-income environments. Under the light of a different class, at this particular intersection the men of the middle class share the same basic concerns that trouble the community as a whole with being a Black man in America, however, there also lies other variables that are very specific to this group of men that has not yet been explored.

In a study by Laureau (2002) that looked at two black boys, one of whom was from a working-class family and another was from a middle-class family, the researcher noted differences such as young boys of middle-class environment consisting of parents having organized multiple developmental activities and even through their intentional parenting provided concerted cultivation throughout their engagement with their sons. The parents of these boys also incorporated elements of racial socialization by teaching them about their cultural history and place high emphasis on educational success. For the family of the lower-income

Black boy, researchers found that there was a significantly lesser number of activities that he was involved in compared to the boy of his same age from a middle-class home. The activities were more of leisure activities such as playing outside or playing video games rather than developmental activities that would later prepare to compete in dominant White spaces.

Sexuality and Gender Expressions

When it comes to queer individuals, studies have shown that many parents were not aware of their child's sexual orientation until instances of bullying occurred (Majied, 2013; Majied, 2008). As a result, this further solidifies the importance of their being a need to integrate diversity of human sexuality in all discussions whether this be in school settings, with healthcare providers or even at home (Majied, 2013). Black parents have been said to not provide their children with real information about what the meaning of sex is, how it is related to love, and what is involved in a healthy intimate relationship (Majied, 2013). There is also a negative stigma attached to sexual behavior among adolescents within the Black community and many parents. Oftentimes these parents feel that if they simply say nothing about sex or threaten their children with severe consequences, this is enough to thwart any sexual behavior or inquiry (Majied, 2013). In actuality what this does is creates a space in which children begin to seek information elsewhere and will gain it through mediums such as social media, music and other environmental sources (Majied, 2013).

Much of the values and believes that are held around sexuality and the stigma attached to this for gender within the Black community is also rooted in religion (Gates, 2021). For the Black community, religion has been steeped strongly into the culture. It has served as a guide for the Black community as well as a protective factor for the community to buffer against

challenges and was the cultural cauldron that Black people created to combat a system designed to crush their spirit (Gates, 2021). To further the role that religion plays within the queer community, other literature notes the Black queer population's relationship with religion may be adversely affected due to the negative religious rhetoric, conceptualized by the authors as sermons, teachings, conversations, or words that degrade and stigmatize queer populations through religious texts (Garrett-Walker & Torres, 2017). Religious institutions have a long history of denigrating and oppressing same-sex relationships and behaviors while simultaneously providing community and support for Black Americans (Garrett-Walker & Torres, 2017).

Additionally, when it comes to intersectionality, queer youth who hold other minoritized identities are often burdened with multiples oppressions, thus their increasingly open and playful gender fluidity and sexual identity is complicated by unique intersections of class, race, religion, and immigration (Harvey & Stone Fish, 2015). Harvey & Stone Fish (2015) note that the concept of resiliency is either nurtured or not through our relationships through the presence of absence of key elements. Queer youth face a disruption of these relationships due to their lives and lived experiences being viewed as foreign and even threatening to parents and mentors (Walker & Longmire-Avital, 2012). The authors also note the stigma of being a sexual minority youth and it having been so historically devastating that the vast majority of queer youth will hide their sexuality, compartmentalizing it away from the people in their lives who are unable to nurture them (Walker & Longmire-Avital, 2012). Furthermore, when queer youth are members of a minority group, these youth face a double jeopardy because these groups tend to be less accepting overall and due to this, often face the possibility of being cut-off from the very people and contexts which affirm their racial or ethnic minority identity and buffer against oppression (Walker & Longmire-Avital, 2012).

Although there is scant literature that discusses the specific socialization and parenting process of parents of Black queer youth, other racially minoritized queer individuals have been noted within literature. Ryan et. al (2009) reported in a study the health outcomes of queer Latinx adolescents, which included mental health, substance abuse and sexual risk. Within this study, it was found that higher rates of family rejection were significantly associated with poorer health outcomes (Ryan et. al., 2009). The participants received scales to assess retrospectively in young adults the frequency of parental and caregiver reactions to sexual orientation in their adolescence. Of the participants, consisting of 224 White and Latinx who self-identified as lesbian, gay and bisexual, aged 21-25, Latino men reported the highest number of negative family reactions to their sexual orientation.

Furthermore, there is limited available literature that explores the racial socialization experiences of Black queer women and who identify as trans. However, prior literature has shown that queer Black women often report challenges, especially in the experience of erasure (Meyer, 2020). Meyers discussed the implications from queer erasure in the movie Black Panther. Although a fictional movie, Meyer explores how parts of the movie provide a narrative around queer bodies being invisible and unwelcomed, which is frequently reiterated within society (Meyer, 2020). In the movie one of the female warrior characters, Ayo, her sexuality appears to be erased as well as muted. The film communicates to Black queer women that the most important aspect of their identity is Blackness, reproducing a narrative that Black women must “leave their sexuality at the door or better yet that race supersedes sexual orientation,” a tension that many queer women of color experience daily in contemporary U.S. American culture. Furthermore, Black queer women are often overdetermined by sexuality (Lewis, 2017).

Additionally, previous research has indicated that queer people of color are frequently targeted by individuals with pro-racist beliefs in society, which makes them particularly vulnerable and heightens their desire for acceptance and love from their own racial and ethnic communities. When queer people of color face rejection from their own communities, they experience a dual exclusion (Perez, 2005). They feel disconnected from the primarily white queer community and also struggle to fit into heterosexual communities of color. These complex dynamics present significant psychological, emotional, and social challenges for queer people of color to navigate continuously (Perez, 2005).

Class

"Middle class" generally refers to people with higher levels of formal education or postsecondary degrees, white-collar workers, middle-income earners, and those who own certain assets, like a home. Though homeownership is sometimes considered, wealth-based definitions are less common (Ford, 2023). One's social economic status can open and provide access or lack thereof to an abundant number of opportunities. For those who come from lower-income backgrounds there lies a series of worries and concerns that come with raising Black youth within this environment. Black mothers of lower-income have reported major concerns regarding the safety of their children, especially their sons and are unable to use their status such as their class to work to prevent discrimination occurring with their children. The socialization practices of lower-income black parents are heavily influenced by social class (Turner, 2020). Furthermore, with the impact of race this significantly impacts what parents prioritize. When class intersects with race, priorities in parenting range from a "hoping for the best" parenting style to a "determined for the best" type of parenting (Vincent et. al., 2012).

There is an abundant amount of literature that focuses on the lower/working class when it comes to understanding Black families, but there is very limited research that focuses on Black families who are in the middle to upper-middle-class. Much of the literature that is available positions Black families in a narrative that only sees them in one light. Although the Black community as a whole will always be positioned with a backdrop of having to face racial discrimination and inequality, very little acknowledgment is made regarding their fight for upward mobility and providing better opportunities to their children than they had growing up. As a result of what many Black parents did not have growing up, they socialize the next generation in hope of giving them a life that they never had, by any means necessary.

For middle class Black families, they have moved from a position of pure survival to positioning themselves in a way that grants them the ability to be utmost prepared to compete within society by having gained access to a new level of financial freedom, opportunities and resources (Laureau, 2002). Of course, with this new level of accessibility and attainability, comes a different set of challenges in addition to the ones that they must face as a whole by being members of the Black community. Many Black Americans in the middle to upper-middle class sector work to socialize their children and expose them to environments and opportunities that separate them from them from what they deem as the ‘stereotypical’ versions of Blackness (Laureau, 2002). This serves as a major reason regarding the amount of extracurricular activities and organizations that they involve their children in. This exposure is what many middle-class Black families believe will aid in developing their children into better people, helping them to become more well-rounded and to expand their worldview. Notably, values associated with middle-class status have long been associated with whiteness; thus, obtaining and portraying a middle-class status for Blacks is also in some ways about achieving proximity to whiteness

(Turner, 2020). Respectability politics originated as a practice of "uplift ideology" in the early twentieth century, as middle- and upper- class Blacks attempted to resist stereotypes of Black people as lazy, uneducated, and sexually immoral (Turner, 2020). Respectability politics is an effort to educate children their children about being Black in America and hopefully prevent them from becoming targets of racism and racist violence. For the middle-class, the use of respectability politics is said to be used differently in that it may allow them to avert racism by asserting their class status (Turner, 2020).

Another element within middle class Black parenting that works to separate them from other Black families lies in the phenomenon of concerted cultivation. Concerted cultivation is the deliberate cultivation of a child's development, in other words it is the type of parenting that is classified by Laureau (2002) as "determined for the best" parenting style. This level of engagement that takes place within the parent-child's interactions works to help the child to exercise their critical thinking skills. It allows for parents to actively foster and assess the child's talents, opinions, and skills (Laureau, 2002). Other common parenting practices within BMC homes are the use of language through reasoning /directives that gives children the opportunity to exercise negotiating with parents and challenging adult statements. The social connections of the middle-class home also looks different from that of the working/lower-income family home environment. BMC families tend to have weaker extended family ties and most of their social connection lies in their network with their professional colleagues and friendship, whereas for the working class, they tend to have stronger kinship ties and are more likely to have households of multiple generations. Leisure time for the children in these families is often spent hanging out with family and extended family rather than having multiple child leisure activities that are organized by adults such as, club memberships, organized sports, or involvement in the arts.

Families of the working class also adopt a more natural growth type of parenting style, also known as a “hoping for the best” type of parenting due to some of the limited amount of available resources. These parents are also more likely to give more directives to their children leaving very little room and making it rare for the child to question or challenge adults. Moreover, when it comes to intervening for their children and maneuvering within eternal systems or institutions, working class parents because they are largely dependent upon these institutions for financial support or resources, there is a sense of powerlessness and frustration in comparison to the BMC families who have more freedom to be critical and provide more interventions on the child’s behalf. BMC families also work with their children in providing more exercises around helping their children to become more assertive in these environments as well as and to learn to intervene on his or her own behalf. Furthermore, with regard to interventions in institutions working class parents have reported conflict between childrearing practices at home and at school. BMC families on the other hand have been observed throughout this study, in being able to teach their children to be assertive as they work within various external systems and institutions, that this has created space for an emerging sense of entitlement in children (Laureau, 2002).

Summary

Overall, as one can see, there is quite a bit of research that works to understand this sector of the Black community, the middle class. However, there is a significant lack of literature available that works to explore and provide information on exactly what the socialization process of this particular group entails and almost no information available on the impact this process has had on the relationship between the parent and the now adult child. From the previous literature that is provided, we can make good inferences that includes elements of the basic foundation of

how all parents socialize their children. At its foundation, the socialization process consists of children being taught the skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up (Maccoby, 2007). We also have come to know on an even more specific level that for BMC families, there is an additional element of socialization that occurs that involves phenomenon of racial socialization. For members of the Black community, this element of socialization regardless, of the intersecting identities, but with particular focus on the element of race and ethnicity, is crucial in order to ensure the survival and flourishing of the next generation within this community.

When it comes to parenting, there's no doubt that some aspects of parenting such as parenting style, parental monitoring, how parents socialize and even discipline their children, that some of the ways in which parents operate in these areas are largely connected to their own childhood and how their parents performed in these areas. The script for the socialization process for parents can look different for each parent. Much of this is largely dependent upon a variety of contextual factors such as race, gender, class or age and when it comes it comes to the intersectionality of these contextual factors, there lies even more of a difference in how parents decide to socialize their children. Furthermore, although there is more and more emerging data and literature that works to better understand the Black community and even parenting within this community, there is still a large gap in the literature on how the intersecting categories of parenting and class within this community impact the parent-child relationship in the long term. With limited amount of current information on the Black middle-class families, I believe that my study could help in providing an explanation to what this process is and could contribute significantly to the gap in literature in providing therapists with tools towards best being able to

support individuals and families whom might suffer from the intergenerational patterns and narrative effects that might have occurred as a result of their upbringing.

My research question is: What is the socialization process of middle-class Black families? Does this socialization process influence the parent-child relationship?

Chapter Three: Methodology

Problem Formulation

Over the years more and more research has come available that studies the Black community. Most of the available literature explores the deficits within the community such as lack of access to resources, equity, poverty, and discrimination based on racism. A few studies focus on the strengths of this community and resilience within the community as well (Holman, 2012). However, there is a significant lack of literature available that works to explore and provide information on exactly what the socialization process of Black middle-class families entails and almost no information available on the impact this process has had on the relationship between the parent or caregiver and the now adult child. From the previous literature that is provided, we can make good inferences that includes elements of the basic foundation of how all parents socialize their children. At its foundation, the socialization process consists of children being taught the skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up (Holman, 2012). We also have come to know on an even more specific level that for Black families, there is an additional element of socialization that occurs that involves the phenomenon of racial socialization (Mckinney & Meinersmann, 2022). For members of the Black community, this element of socialization regardless, of the intersecting identities, but with particular focus on the element of race and ethnicity, is crucial in order to ensure the survival and flourishing of the next generation within this community.

The parent-child relationship dynamic, from a contextual therapy lens, states that human beings have an innate need to care for one another and this reciprocal care enhances the well-being of everyone (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1986). Contextual largely focuses on relational ethics and creating a sense of fairness and justice within family dynamics (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1986). Contextual therapy theorists also discuss this sense of responsibility and being able to acknowledge and take accountability especially as parents because it is children who will inherit hypocritical values, traditions, poor parenting, and lack of trustworthiness and stability. Boszormenyi-Nagy states that children are captive legatees of past and present behavior (p. 12). Meaning that they are the recipients of what generations prior have passed down from one generation to the next and as a result of that are likely to pass on these same values, traditions etc. in their current relationships or created families.

Moreover, with regard to Narrative family therapy, this theory tells us that problems come about through the ways in which people organize their lives around this said problem and create meaning regarding this (White, 1990). It also focuses on these dominant narratives that are prevalent within society and when it becomes internalized that one does not fit or encompass what that dominant narrative is, it leads to other narratives becoming privileged over others, leaving out all of the other narratives in between. Thus, individuals become stuck and must be separated from the problem to be able to see the exceptions to which those dominant and unhealthy narratives are not true (White, 1990).

The script for the socialization process for parents can look different for each parent. Much of this is largely dependent upon a variety of contextual factors such as race, gender, class or age and when it comes to the intersectionality of these contextual factors, there lies even more

of a difference in how parents decide to socialize their children. For instance, prior studies have noted the ways in which those of racially minoritized communities will include racial socialization as an additional component of their child's socialization process, this is especially true for Black families (Mckinney & Meinersmann, 2022). Additionally, if we are looking at the intersection of race and class, prior literature also notes that there is a difference in messages that are received and ways in which parents are involved within the day to day of their children's lives. Examples of this are in studies where it was observed that Black lower-income families had their children involved in less extra-curricular activities and there was more time allotted for leisure in comparison to middle-class families (Laureau, 2002). Furthermore, although there is emerging data and literature that works to better understand the Black community and even parenting within this community, there still exists a large gap in literature on how the intersecting categories of parenting and class within this community impact the parent-child relationship in the long term.

Self of the Researcher

Much of my interest regarding this topic has stemmed from my experiences in my middle-class upbringing and from shared experiences in conversations with close friends and family members. I grew up in a middle-class home which consisted of my mother and my aunt. We lived in a suburb of Los Angeles, CA known as Carson. The general make-up of the neighborhood were all people of color who were thriving within the community and identified as middle to upper-middle class families. Within our home, I grew up seeing two Black women who each owned their own businesses and were very successful. They were both driven and ambitious and highly educated. My mother was the owner of her own Information Technology company, a UCLA graduate and was one of the first Black women to branch off from IBM to

start her own small business. I grew up seeing her win an array of accolades for her hard work and dedication. How she balanced all of this, running a small minority owned business and raising a child, I will never know. I recall many of the extracurricular activities that I was involved in from sports, plays, various organizations and societal programs to involvement within our church through participating in the choir, praise dance, delivering the morning announcements, and the many speeches that were rehearsed to perfection to present to the congregation on special holidays and occasions.

I recount the many times where for every time I practiced a speech or a poem for school or church, being told over and over again to, “Say it again, but this time with more feeling!” or “Don’t forget to enunciate.” I also participated in essay competitions and an international student ambassador program called “People to People” where I got to travel to Europe at age thirteen with a group of other student ambassadors. There, we participated in educational activities and had the chance to meet different local leaders, where we visited Paris, Italy, and Malta. The overall purpose of the program was to aid students in their development of leadership skills, community involvement, civics education and college preparation. Like many middle-class families, there was a lot more structure and organization to my day to day and parental involvement in my daily routine (Laureau, 2002). There was often not much time spent in leisure activities. In fact, most of the extra-curricular activities that I was involved in were geared towards my mother’s way of working to help me to become a more well-rounded, cultured, and educated young person.

This day-to-day rigor, coupled with the lack of free time, was occasionally a point of contention in the relationship that I had with my mother. There were days that my involvement

in many different activities in addition to still having to attend to my school work, became stressful and sometimes I felt as though they were met with a necessity to continue to push forward, to always put my best foot forward and the endless reminder of having to be twice as good in order to get where I wanted to be and to compete with others, but more specifically to complete with my White counterparts. Looking back on these moments and reflecting on the many heart to heart conversations with my mother, I now realize that much of this pressure was the result of my mother wanting to mold me into being prepared to handle whatever the world threw at me, particularly as a Black woman; for she had already walked this path as well as weathered this role for years. For her, the way in which she parented and socialized me, went beyond wanting me to be a functioning adult within society but it also served as armor that she placed upon me to ensure that I succeeded and was equipped to handle any and everything that came my way. My mother knew that one of the secrets to success was that there was power in knowledge and accessibility. For the Black middle-class, studies note that this sector holds a strong commitment to educational success (Vincent et. al., 2012) as well as that there is power beyond measure in education and in simply knowing. The concept of education, access to knowledge and what one does with this knowledge is what separates this class from others. As a marginalized group of people, we are often made to feel small and taught to play small to fit in and to assimilate within this world. In my household, my mother created a space in which this was not an option. In the words of famous author Marianne Williamson who stated:

> "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

This quote embodies a great deal of what I imagine many marginalized groups must feel as far as playing small and what it means to feel inadequate. Many of the middle-class Black families that we knew within our community often talked about this feeling of having to work overtime, while balancing trying to maneuver in White spaces. Although they were in a place of having their basic needs met and were very financially stable, many often spoke of the emotional and psychological price this all came with. Despite this, many families wanted to provide better opportunity for themselves and their families. For many, this started with where they lived and the availability of resources this provided them where their children attended school.

Many families did not have children that attended the nearby schools, many of us after elementary school all attended middle schools and high schools that were at least 20-45 minutes away from our homes. For my mother, education was always held at a high standard. As a result of this, it mattered where you went and in a community where many other middle-class Black families shared this same mindset, it was highly competitive in deciding and preparing one's child or children, to get into many of the highly coveted educational institutions in the southern California area. It in some ways served as a status symbol to say that your child attended a certain institution. For high school, Chadwick, Marlborough or Harvard Westlake were the top schools of choice. The second-best schools were the college preparatory catholic schools, which is where I ultimately ended up attending, or charter schools.

In addition to education, as mentioned previously, it was the involvement in other productive activities, the complexities of understanding race and ethnicity and what that means for you that I learned from my mother and many members of my family, along with high expectations that set the tone for my own upbringing. My mother was hard on me, but she had no other choice but to be because she knew from her own experiences, the narratives and messages that she received, that at the intersection of being both Black and a woman, it meant that the world would not be so easy on me, so forgiving or too kind to me. At times, this did impact our relationship negatively. It caused me to rebel against some of the rules and expectations she set for me because at that age I could not understand that how she raised me was not done as a means to restrict me, it was not done to be mean, but was done out of a form of love to prepare me to be a functioning member within society that was knowledgeable, cultured and took pride in her community and where she came from.

In reflecting back upon my own mother's values, seeing the transition of her family of origin being of lower-income, her decision to further her education and eventually secure a job and position in which ultimately moved her to upper middle-class, I recall the weight and even resentment that she carried sometimes in being considered the person in the family who "made it." This often meant that as my grandparents grew older, she became solely responsible for taking care of any financial or physical challenges they may have faced. I also could recognize the obligation to repay the debt she felt she owed to her family of origin. This even extended to extended family members as well and served in her drive to work hard in being able to provide support to family. It also meant that in many of the spaces in which she occupied, in her case these all White, male-dominated spaces in the field of technology, she was forced to be twice as articulate, more well versed in the field, more innovative and as a woman, even more assertive to

go after what she wanted, because others were counting on her. It was almost as though there was this invisible string that tied one generation to the next and no matter how far one traveled, there was this tether to the generations past and a sense of loyalty and indebtedness to those who came before. On the hardest of days when she felt she was not able to measure up to this, I look back as an adult through my then child-like lens only to now be able to interpret the anger and resentment as the guilt she felt of feeling responsible for her family of origin's well-being, compounded by carrying the weight of the world as a single Black woman and mother.

With this weight, it makes sense why I was socialized in the way in which I was, and this process was rigorous, and, in some ways, it had to be in order to prepare me for how the world would see me as a Black woman. Being raised by a Black woman as well, later as an adult, I began to see that a lot of ways in which I was raised had to do with the experiences that she had experienced. I think many parents often desire to shield their children from the hardships that they have had to deal with but sometimes, it is that very fear of not wanting their children to go through what they have gone through, that can either help or do more harm than good when it comes to their relationship with their children. For me, I appreciated and can now understand why I was raised in the way in which I was, however I also know there was some healing that needed to happen along the way. There were times where my relationship with my mother was ruptured due to the pressure to succeed and do well. I grew up having a hard time with feeling as though I had to be perfect and could not mess up. Expectations were set high and sometimes if not met, there were consequences for that, whether it be in school and needing to work harder because anything less than a B was not acceptable, to being critiqued for how I dressed, how I spoke, the need to be involved in more extra-curricular activities and who I "should" associate with.

It weighed on me not having a voice and not being able to create my own path. Being born into a world where your path not only was created based upon who you are as far as race, class, and gender, but also who your parents desire you to be. In my experience, I felt the sense of entitlement to the life I was expected to lead. Perhaps this could have been because I was viewed as an extension of my mother and with all of the love, resources and support she poured into me, it makes sense on some level how she might have felt entitled I live the life *she* desired for me. Since then, we have come a long way and I have more comfort than ever as I've grown to experience the world on my own and developed my own autonomy in creating my own meaning around what my purpose is within this world. I've experienced both outcomes; one of ruptures that occurred because of my own socialization process and one of healing and mending of our relationship which wasn't an easy task. I see the emotional scars that I still wear and how this impacts me to this day in certain areas of my life, but I also can look back and see that there is much value in the sacrifices that my mother made and her persistence in setting me up to have a life where I could go twice as far as she did.

Although this is my own personal family experience and journey within my own socialization process of growing up in a middle-class home, I am aware that this varies for many other Black middle-class families. Through conversations with close friends and families, I have come to learn this experience can vary from individual to individual and that sometimes it does not always mirror that of my own, however through my literature search and these conversations, I have also come to see a pattern that there are some commonalities in values that appear to be particular to this community that is not as prevalent or intense as in others.

The self-reflexivity process was a very insightful process for me. It provided me with further questions about my own experiences that I often wondered if others shared the same. It even helped me to expand on questions that I wanted to ask to really put to words what the Black middle-class experience and socialization process was. Additionally, I kept a small journal where I placed all of my memo-writing notes and any other thoughts that arose throughout this process as I completely immersed myself into the data. I met biweekly with committee member and supervisory consultant, Dr. Gangamma where we discussed my interpretations of the data and emerging themes and self-of-the- researcher reflections. Dr. Gangamma provided additional confirmation of these themes and offered other perspectives and interpretations based on her own reading of the transcripts. This process allowed for sorting of themes, identifying excerpts to support themes, and to ensure my own biases did not dominant my interpretations. I also frequently engaged in member-checking throughout the interviews to ensure participants' voices were heard accurately.

Methods

For this study, to answer my research question I used constructivist grounded theory as my methodological approach. Grounded theory (GT) was founded by American sociologists: Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss. Upon the completion of Glaser's PhD, he later joined a research alliance with Strauss in the University of California, San Francisco where together, they undertook a study relating to interactions between medical staff and terminally ill patients in hospices, which they later titled the *Awareness of Dying* (Kenny et. al., 2014). During the course of this study the researchers noted that there was a greater emphasis on the generation and verification of theories within the medical field compared to social research. Strauss and Glaser criticized this and stressed the need to generate theory which arises from (and accurately

corresponds to) social research which they believed would be “more successful than theories logically deduced from a priori assumptions” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 6, as cited in, Kenny et. al., 2014). Glaser and Strauss contended that marrying theory construction with social research would produce a robust and astute hypothesis *grounded* in research (Kenny et. al., 2014).

Glaser and Strauss reiterated that the ambition of GT is not verification of a preconceived theory, or capacious description, rather it is unambiguously defined by its exclusive endeavor to *discover* an underlying theory arising from the systematic analysis of data (Kenny et. al., 2014). The approach of this study is completely inductive, in which researchers are not to set out to prove or disprove a preconceived hypotheses about the phenomenon that is being studied, but instead to allow for the collection of the data to speak for itself. This inductive approach to research created space for conceptualization in research rather than a deductive approach to a study with the objective of verification (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1, as cited in, Kenny et. al., 2014).

For the purposes of this study, I used Charmaz's Constructivist Grounded theory. Charmaz (2014) notes that methods extend and magnify our view of studied life and, thus, broadens and deepens what we learn of it and know about it. Through our methods we first aim to see this world as our research participants do, from the inside (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) states that grounded theory methods offer sharp tools for generating, mining, and making sense of data. This method also provides flexible guidelines in which allows for the data that is collected to take the lead and provide an explanation for the studied phenomenon. Through the process of using grounded theory in order to come as close as we can to grasping the participants' experiences through the collection of data, Charmaz (2014) notes that with grounded theory it is

important consider how participants act on ideas, practices and world-views from both the larger and local cultures of which they are a part of. This concept alone makes for a perfect fit for the use of this method in working to create a theory that explains what the socialization process looks likes for middle-class Black families and how that process impacts the parent-child relationship. Through understanding the participants' experience in the context of the larger and local cultures, this can create a space in which can come to understand the meaning that is created, how this is created and how that informs the ways in which these families socialize their children. The process of coding helped me to interpret and compare participant experiences and be able to raise analytic questions about the data from start to finish of the data collection process.

Grounded theory is particularly focused on working to explain the action and process of a particular phenomenon and to construct a theory from the collected data. It invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps the researcher interacting and involved with the data and emerging analysis (Charmaz, 2014), stipulated that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously and should be conducted through the specific procedures of theoretical sampling, coding, constant comparison, saturation, and memo writing (Kenny et. al., 2014). Moreover, the emergence of GT was to the development of qualitative research, particularly at a time when qualitative research was disparaged. Charmaz insisted that The Discovery of Grounded Theory (1967) “made a cutting-edge statement” as it critiqued the prevailing methodological assumptions and pioneered a systematic procedure for qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006, p. 5). Glaser and Strauss proved that qualitative analysis could be methodical, rigorous, and structured (Charmaz, 2006, p. 5). They also demonstrated the

compelling logic and potent capacity of qualitative research to generate theories intimately connected with data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 5).

Participants

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling. Purposeful or judgement sampling is a specific form of sampling that allows researchers to select participants that best fit the research study with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). When the data collection and analysis has been completed and themes begin to arise, theoretical sampling is then used to create theories and from there, making these theoretical categories more robust (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). For this study participants were required to be between the ages of 18-35 years of age. Both participants and their parents must have been born in the United States, identified as African American/Black, which was defined as anyone born within the United States having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022), having either grown up in a single or two-parent/ caregiver household and having grown up in middle-class. Middle-class was determined through participant experiences in upbringing and the median household income amount which was listed at $69,717, as of 2021 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). So, a range of 50k-80k was used for participants to identify their parental household income.

The age range was narrowed down to experiences of young adults due to several key factors: developmentally, this is an age group where individuals begin to take on roles and responsibility of adulthood such as being financially independent from their parents, developing partner relationships, becoming parents, and growing into an emotionally mature person. By expanding the age range to include additional age groups, such as middle-age or older adults, it

may have demonstrate other developmental processes not consistent with those of young adults. A sample size of ten individuals were interviewed by the researcher, of which included eight female-identifying participants and two male-identifying participants. Additionally, this sample size consisted of one set of siblings, a brother and sister. The participants of this study represented various regions of the United States such as the Pacific Northwest, the West Coast, the East Coast and the Southern region of the United States. Participants were recruited through several social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok) via a flyer that provided detailed information of the study which included the title of the study, the researcher's contact information, a brief overview of the purpose of the study, information regarding incentives as well as the risks and benefits of participating in the study. Although multiple social media platforms were used to recruit participants, many of the participants who expressed interest were recruited through Instagram.

An interview schedule was created which included days and times that participants had agreed to be interviewed. Participants were emailed a copy of the informed consent to look over prior to the scheduled interview. On the day of the scheduled interview, oral consent was retrieved from the participants and a thorough review of the consent form was conducted with the participants. Some participants were also given resources as needed after completing the interview if they required additional emotional support. Furthermore, all participants were interviewed via zoom with the exception of one participant who was interviewed over the phone due to experiencing some technology connection issues.

Data Collection and Analysis

Individual, one to one interviews were used to collect data. Participant's contact information as well as availability to schedule the interview over Zoom was collected via a direct message on Instagram. Participants were required to have access to the internet as well as a computer, laptop or smart phone that can launch the Zoom app in order to complete the interview. In the event that participants were not able to interview via Zoom, interviews were held over the phone and participants were notified that the call would be recorded using an audio device to collect data from the interview. After obtaining oral consent, participants were notified when recording would begin and were informed that all interviews would be collected and stored on an external secured drive through Syracuse University. During the course of the study, participants were given breaks as needed and were checked in with periodically throughout the study to ensure that they were not experiencing any emotional distress as well as to mitigate any coercion to complete the study.

Individuals were asked a series of questions that required them to reflect upon their childhood upbringing as well as both the state of their relationship with their parents then as well as now (Please see appendix for interview schedule). Throughout the entirety of the study as a trained therapist, I was able to utilize therapeutic skills such as building trust and rapport, active listening, not interrupting, being sensitive to non-verbal responses, being empathetic, offering breaks and rephrasing questions in ways that felt comfortable for the participants to understand and to answer.

Once the data was collected from interviews, each interview was transcribed using a transcription software called Cockatoo. Transcriptions were then assigned to transcribers to

quality check each of the transcriptions to ensure that the audio retrieved from the interviews matched the transcription verbatim. Completed transcriptions were then de-identified for confidentiality purposes and placed into a secured folder where supervisory consultant and dissertation committee member Dr. Rashmi Gangamma and myself began analyzing each of the participant interviews. After each interview I began memo writing and reflecting upon my own thoughts and experiences both personally as well as the researcher. Memo-writing is the pivotal intermediate step. When you write memos, you stop and analyze your ideas about the codes in any – and every – way that occurs to you during the moment (see also Glaser, 1998).

Self-reflexivity was a continuous process throughout data analysis. This is where I frequently reflected upon my role as the researcher and explored ways in which my own experiences, values and beliefs helped to shape how I interpreted and made sense of the data. During this process, I reflected on ways in which my participants' experiences were similar to and different from that of my own. The acknowledgment of this played a helpful role in supporting me in being more objective about the data. Moreover, because research acts are not given, but are constructed, viewing the research as constructed rather than discovered fosters the researcher's reflexivities about their actions and decisions (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) also discusses how our role as the researcher during reflexivity also means that our values shape the facts that we can identify. Within my own experience of growing up in a Black middle-class home, I found myself intrigued whenever I would come across similarities that hinted at the possibility of there being a specific socialization process that occurs for the Black middle class. In many ways it felt affirming to know that others had also grown up in a household that placed heavy emphasis on the importance of prioritizing education, involvement in extracurricular

activities, experienced messages around gender, race, and class that were influenced by their parents, extended family members, the community, religion, and neighborhood influences.

Additionally, as I completed interviews, I frequently revised questions according to what came up within the interviews. This allowed for me to create space in which I allowed the data to guide me in creating questions that were aligned with grounded theory. This was a process that allowed me to slow down in the moments of interviews and consider important probing questions to gain more insight that may not have been initially considered. Being reflexive allowed me to pay close attention to pauses, tone, pace, and moments when participants became emotionally reactive to certain questions. Examples of this were when Reign spoke about the things that she wished were different in her upbringing and shared that she wished her mother was more present during her adolescent years. Her tone shared moments of sadness and frustration regarding this, which provided an even deeper understanding of how the absence of her mother impacted her during those years. Another example of this was with Diane, who needed to take a break from the interview after sharing about her relationship with her mother and becoming tearful regarding the ambiguous loss she experiences with what she wishes her relationship with her mother could be. These were moments among, many others, that shaped so much of how data was interpreted and analyzed.

Memo Writing

Memo-writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process (Charmaz, 2006). For each participant, I often felt as though a piece of my own story and upbringing was being told. This process created space for me to sit with and process the data that had been collected and also gave me an

opportunity to immerse myself within the data. Memo writing allowed for me to continuously be involved within my research study process. I reflected on and replayed each participant's interviews and during this process, I would begin to expand on and add more questions to the next interviews that I would conduct. With each participant, I found myself revising some of my questions in order to gain the best insight into their middle-class upbringing and to better understand the socialization process.

Initial and Focused Coding

The data analysis process contained initial coding where read through each line of the interview transcriptions thoroughly and noted specific language and meaning attached to that language. Especially any language that was used and meaning that was conceptualized by the participant. Throughout the course of this study, this process was repeated until data saturation had been reached. Data saturation or theoretical sufficiency according to Charmaz (2006) refers to when all conceptual categories have been identified, explored and exhausted. Charmaz (2006) defines initial coding as studying fragments of data – words, lines, segments, and incidents – closely for their analytic import. Charmaz goes on to say that during this process, we may adopt our participants' telling terms as codes. Initial coding continues the interaction that you shared with your participants while collecting data but brings you into an interactive analytic space. Throughout each transcription I noted in the form of track comments important qualitative data that emerged line by line. The codes created worked categorize, summarize and account for each piece of data (Charmaz, 2006). During this initial coding phase, I questioned where narratives came from around topics such as race, gender, class etc. I even wondered as to how parent's own upbringings shaped the messages that they later passed on to my participants and if they ever

even questions their own parents values and believes and experienced a similar experience to the participant. After engaging in initial coding, I then moved on to focused coding, uses the most frequent or significant initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2006). This allowed for me to make more analytical sense of the data and to begin to form categories and themes from participant responses. This also allowed me to compare and contrast participant responses to other participants. This process also allowed for me to discover messages that were both implied as well as explicit.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Through the prolonged engagement with the data, this allowed for me as the researcher to become more familiar with the data and its findings. Furthermore, throughout the interviews, I was able to cross-compare the transcriptions from each of the interviews, the interpretation of these transcriptions as well as my observations within the field. This allowed for me to ensure that no new themes or categories could be formed from the data. Thorough analyses of the data in addition to collaborating with Dr. Gangamma to note and conceptualize the findings together, being able to process my interpretations of the data with her, assisted me in better being able to ensure if whether or not I had data that is sufficient in being able to support my claims regarding the study. The goal in analyzing the data was to be as thorough as possible, until data saturation has been reached. This allowed for any salient or significant findings that I came across, as I cross compared interviews, created categories and subcategories, noted powerful themes and patterns, to support my research topic.

I also frequently completed in the moment member-checking with participants during the interview and reflected their experiences back to them to ensure that I was not misinterpreting

their responses or placing any of my own biases on their responses. I would also share about patterns or themes that may have come up on previous participant interviews to see if their experiences might be similar or different from their own. Data were also analyzed to allow for emergent codes and categories from the participants' narratives. These steps helped to increase trustworthiness of interpretations. In the following chapter, each of the categories are presented with verbatim quotes from participants. These quotes provide evidence for my interpretations of the data. Additionally, trustworthiness and credibility were further established through my reflexive journaling. After each interview I would critically reflect upon what thoughts and feelings came up for me as well as any reactions that I may have had. This supported me in being able to identify my own personal biases or assumptions such as whether or not this had to do with Black middle-class experience or if this was just that of my own. This also helped me to be more aware of ways in which my experiences could influence the data analysis. Additionally, this was negotiated through bi-weekly meetings where I would debrief about these thoughts, feelings and biases with Dr. Gangamma to gather additional perspective to see where we may differ or be similar in perspective. This process was then used to create categories, subcategories and themes for the collected data.

Chapter 4: Results

My research questions for this study, using a grounded theory methodology, was to describe the socialization process for Black middle-class families and its influence on the parent-child relationship. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with ten participants and analyzed using guidelines from Charmaz's Constructivist grounded theory (2014). In this chapter, I begin with an overview of demographic information of participants and then discuss the main categories that emerged from the interviews. It is also important to note that regarding the participants, at least five participants have gone to therapy or were currently in therapy at the time this study was conducted and were actively working on challenges within their family dynamics. This is important to note as this shapes the ways in which participants reflected back upon their upbringing and how they reported about their past and current relationship with their parents. Finally, I propose a model of the socialization process to capture the main categories and their influence on parent-child relationships.

Description of Participant demographic data

	Age	Gender	Household Makeup	Household Income	Neighborhood Demographic
Reign (Austin, TX)	30	female/cisgender	Lived with mom during earlier year and live with dad from high school on	50k-80k	Suburban neighborhood Diverse neighborhood with mom Predominantly White neighborhood with dad
Diane (Seattle, WA)	36*	female/cisgender	Lived in two parent household with younger	>50k-80k	Parent moved to predominantly white

			brother (Ryan)		neighborhood, after living in predominantly Black neighborhood for safety and good schools.
Mary (Phoenix, AZ)	26	female/cisgender	Lived in two-parent household with younger brother.	50k-80k	Diverse in various other racial groups. Mary previously lived with aunt in a more urban area where environment was not safe.
Lina (Los Angeles, CA)	33	female/cisgender	Lived with mother. Only child	>50k-80k	Suburban, gated community Predominantly black neighborhood.
Ashley (Tacoma/Seattle, WA)	34	female/cisgender	Lived in two-parent household with older brother.	>50k-80k	Predominantly White, suburban neighborhood.
Chanel (Virginia)	26	female/cisgender	Lived in two parent household. Older brother was in and out of household	>50-80k	Black middle-class suburban neighborhood. many military families lived near.
Kelsey (Dallas, TX/Shreveport, LA)	36*	female/cisgender	Lived with mother and aunt initially, then moved and lived with mother, aunt and grandmother. Only Child.	50k-80k	Suburban; predominantly White neighborhood
Craig (Tacoma/Seattle, WA)	28	male/cisgender	Lived in two-parent	>50-80k	Suburban, predominantly

			household. Only child		White neighborhood.
Ryan (Tacoma/Seattle, WA)	26	male/cisgender	Lived in two-parent household with older sibling (Diane)	>50-80k	Suburban, predominantly White neighborhood.
Brittany (Nashville, TN)	29	female/cisgender	Lived in two-parent household with younger brother and sister.	50k-80k	Suburban, diverse neighborhood and community due to being apart of a military family.

**Denotes that at the time between recruitment and the scheduled interview the participant had a birthday but initially were still within the young adult age range of 18-35.*

Categories of socialization in Black middle-class families

The overall goal of my study was to examine what messages do young Black adults receive about who they should be and how they should behave in society, family, and relationships. I asked my participants about messages received during childhood as well their current developmental stage and explored how they understood these messages (see Appendix xxx, Interview Schedule). Below are the main categories of conversations that participants reflected on.

Class: Proximity to wealth and Whiteness

Within this study, class played a significant role in how the majority of the participants were raised. Several participants reported that they were aware they were middle-class because they lived in predominantly white neighborhoods, attended predominantly white schools, lived on a cul-de-sac, had multiple forms of transportation, went on frequent family vacations together and

spoke about how being within in this class created a proximity to wealth. Kelsey, a 36-year-old cisgender, female stated:

> "So, for middle and high school, I went to private school. And so, for example, in high school, one of my good friends, her dad was the mayor of the city. Another one of my friends, you know, and I say friends loosely, like we were close acquaintances at school, you know. Someone I would invite to a birthday party, you know, that kind of thing. Not somebody I'd have a lifelong friendship with, but somebody I would invite to a birthday party. She came from generational wealth. Her family owned the Mercedes dealerships in the area. They were practicing attorneys. They, you know, were instrumental in our community for like luxury items, luxury services. A lot of my classmates lived in gated and very high earning neighborhoods and came from families with generational wealth."

Participants reported having access to grocery stores, malls, medical facilities, libraries etc. The majority of the participant's parents were also homeowners. Many also reported that although their basic needs were met, they knew that they were not wealthy and had to still be sure to live within their means. Reign, a 30-year-old, cisgender, heterosexual female who grew up mostly with her single father reported the importance of although resources were available, it was still important to maintain financial responsibility, which may also be due to her father's experience of class growing up poor. She stated:

> "I mean, I think like we didn't live like above our means. Like we don't, we didn't have like flashy cars or like I didn't have like designer clothes, but I had decent nice clothes. Like, you know, my dad had a decent, you know, nice car, but it wasn't like a luxury brand, things like that. Like, um, if I wanted to go shopping, I was still on a budget. Like I got some money, but I couldn't just get whatever I wanted. Like I could get what I wanted within reason."

This message is in contrast to Ashley, a 34-year-old, cisgender, heterosexual female who shared that money wasn't really an object. She stated:

> " And then as far as classism, money wasn't really a thing. I mean, in terms of how I interpret it, I still did cheer, I did basketball, I did dance, I did tap dance, I did sports, I did after school clubs, I had the coolest clothes, I didn't seem out of place. I was like, in terms of money, like how I saw it then, I was no different. I had all the basketball sports bags, I had a Letterman's jacket. There was nothing I didn't have.

> If we want to talk about money like that, we took family vacations, boat cruises, on spring break we went places."..."Money, from my view at that age, there was no difference between me and what other people had. Now, in high school, I got a two-door Honda Civic, and my friends were having Range Rovers, Mercedes, BMWs, but by that time, it didn't really seem to be like, whoa, wow, I'm poor, or I'm less than that. It was like, oh, that's what their parents got, then my parents got me a Honda. Like, that's cool. There was no difference really in that for me."

Other participants began to pick up on class as well based up material objects that they and their peer's parents could afford. Ryan a 26-year-old, cisgendered, heterosexual male stated:

I didn't know I was part of the middle class until like, I want to say like third, fourth grade. Seeing vehicles that your parents roll up in on drop-off day or after-school care all that stuff is like they have nice cars but ours are nicer why is that? Or and then like so like driving from North End Northeast Tacoma to 56th and McKinley is a very big culture shock as a kid and seeing just like two story houses and nice stores and nice parks and then driving out of that side to come almost east end and it's what's that car shop on 38th and McKinley like Los Cantos the big yellow building with a bunch of either dirty cars or a bunch of like old school hot rods that are being worked on and you keep going down they're Sharaton and it's just like a bunch of for lack of better term crackhead white boys that go to school there and my school's down the other end but and it's right next to a skate park and skate park has a bunch of drugs going on and all that stuff and noticing that at a young age it's like we're in different areas now I don't know what the words are the terms but it's like it's different and we are living a little bit better life than this area compared to ours so I definitely notice that kind of young but it just didn't make sense until later on."

Gender: **"It's easy to baby the girls"**

Half of the participants reported that they received messages related to gender however, many of the participants who reported receiving explicit messages related to gender were those who had siblings living with them in the home. For participants who grew up as an only child or there was a significant age gap between themselves and their older sibling, they reported receiving little to no explicit conversations that were gender-related. Participants who did receive certain messages, many reported feeling frustrated by the double standard that they received growing up. Furthermore, many of these conversations came from their fathers. Participants shared how reflecting back upon these moments helped them to also make the connection of how

their parent's own upbringing experiences shaped how they were parented based upon gender and even racially socialized. Brittany, a 29-year-old, cisgendered, bisexual female shared that both of her parents did not grow up with their biological parents and that given her brother being the youngest, her father did not know how to be a dad to a boy. She stated, " You baby girls, you give them whatever you want, or whatever they want, and that's it. But it's like, it almost, it's different to raise a man. Like, there's just different things. And maybe this is like me feeding into like, gender stereotypes or whatever, I don't know. But I feel like my parents were really hard on my brother in a lot of ways. Some ways that maybe weren't fair all the time, ways that I think were maybe damaging to their relationships".

Participants also reported experiences of unfairness and feeling as though their concerns were not considered. For example, Diane, a 36-year-old, cisgendered, heterosexual female reported that she experienced a difficult time with the school that she attended. She experienced an array of microaggressions and active racism. She reported feeling frustrated with her parents for not listening to her and for considering sending her younger brother to the same school. She stated, "They didn't want him to have the same treatment that I had. And so they took him out, but it was okay for me."

Stories were also shared of wanting to stand up to their parents due to feeling as though their parents were harsh and too hard on their brothers and in some cases too lenient on them. One participant shared that because he was the youngest and only boy within his family, he felt he constantly lived within his father's shadow. Although as he grew older, he slowly moved towards developing his own sense of self, as a child he recalled that he spent much of his childhood and adolescence wanting his father to notice him.

Many participants in this study were female, and told stories of often feeling sheltered, having to be protected and growing up in more strict environments. For many participants, the experience of growing up female in a Black home meant frequently being critiqued by their parents regarding the type of clothing that they wore, being taught the importance of looking respectable, fear of teenage pregnancy and feeling as though they lacked knowledge around maintaining their own sense of safety or awareness about the world around them. Chanel, a 26-year-old, cisgendered, heterosexual female shared her frustrations of feeling as though there was a double standard held between her and her brother, especially in regards to dating and appearances. She stated:

" So, I think they assumed like, oh, she needs to be sheltered, hell protected, and which was such a slap in the face, like, we're supposed to be better than that, and I'm not stupid. And are there factors that I can't control as a young Black girl? Yes, but also that just wasn't the basis of the conversation. So that is one example of seeing how it was significantly different with my brother, because he brought girls home all the time, whether it was prom or whatever else, just whatever girl he was messing with at the time. And this is him being young, not that I was expected to do that but even that narrative around like how to be a good black girl as related to dating, in these instances."

She even furthered this statement through sharing expectations that she received regarding how she was to present herself as a young Black girl to further provide an understanding regarding the differences in gender expectations within her household. She stated, "The idea of like how you dress as far as a respectability part like I don't think my brother was...it was fine for him to wear his do- rags out of the house when he got his fresh braids, you know. My mom would be like, what are you doing if I ever tried to wear like a scarf or bonnet out of the house? So his could be like culture and whatever else. He could wear his do-rag and uh you know at the time baggy jeans were in and that's fine. And I don't know what the equivalent would have been like for me as a young black woman. I wasn't, I don't think I was, they weren't super prudish, but

it was still this hyper fixation like, especially being like a thicker girl, even younger, like, and I mean, yes, safety and, but some of that I'm like, I can't help the way I'm built. So I have to what, wear a robe? And again, they weren't that conservative, but there were some things that were just micromanaged in that like my brother was not subjected to and that definitely is gendered."

Education: "College was mandatory without being mandatory"

The results of my study indicated that each of my participants grew up in a home where education was highly prioritized and in many cases mandatory. Ryan, a 26-year-old, cisgender, heterosexual male stated, "... College was like mandatory without being mandatory. Because apparently, if you don't go to college, you don't get to do what you want, or you can't strive for what you want, whatever your dreams may be. So, I went to a private university freshman year." Lina, a 33-year-old, cisgender, heterosexual female stated, "...My parents really pushed us, us being my siblings and I, to do well in school, like, to make good grades. Like, listen, it was not going to happen with less than a B, okay, because I was not trying to hear it from my parents."

Some participants saw education as a means to an end where others received a message that education was a privilege that provided one access to opportunities and resources. For example, Kelsey, a 36-year-old cisgendered, heterosexual female stated:

"So I think that I had the privilege to attend private school. I was blessed with the ability to excel academically without having to work hard. You know, I didn't have really good study habits. I just kind of crammed for things, you know, it just came naturally to me. And I think it is definitely the reason for, I believe, my success in life, you know, that I'm comfortable in life because I had access to education, knowledge, and that education, you know, put me in rooms that made me first comfortable and confident in who I was and what I was saying, and comfortable and confident around the people that I was with. I can walk in a room full of all white people and feel comfortable. I can walk in a room full of all black people and be comfortable because I've had access to the knowledge to interact with, you know, both parties."

There were mixed results regarding the highest level of education that participant parent's received. In some cases their parents had received at least a bachelor's degree and in other cases their parents were not able to attend college either through lack of resources, knowledge or due to needing to drop out either because of financial reasons or in the case of pregnancy. This was indicated by Brittany who stated: "We moved away from my extended family when I was only like two or three months old. Because my mom got pregnant with me at the whopping age of 15, had me at 16, and my dad had just graduated from high school. So as soon as my mom finished high school, she just gave birth to me like right before or after." This was further confirmed by Diane who shared that her mother graduated high school however, after completing her first two years of college became pregnant with her younger brother and dropped out of college.

For many participants, many of their parents placed education at such a high degree that they saw it important to place their children into schools that were known for academic excellence and that were predominantly White schools or private schools. For many participants, this experience of being Black and attending a predominantly white school was an experience that is present at the intersection of race and class. Participants shared their experiences of being one of one or one of few within their classroom. Some recalled painful experiences of overt racism and microaggressions but not being able to label this as a then child. Expectations for grades was also a huge component. Some participants reported that so long as they tried their best, their parents were okay with this. Others were expected to bring home "nothing lower than a B."

To be educated was also a quality that for some participants was expected for them to find in a future partner. Mary reported in her interview that members of her extended had a strong

preference for anyone that she dated that they must be educated. In her interview she stated, "And they were always like, you need to at least have someone that has the same kind of educational background, if not more than you, and in a relationship. And I had never even, that concept hadn't even crossed my mind. And I had already graduated college"..." like you need to like get with somebody that's like at least at your level or higher." For some participants, even though they attended various colleges to work towards getting a college degree, some parents had additional expectations regarding the type of major that was chosen. For example, Mary reported that her parents both prioritized wanting to choose a major that "has a better career outlook." She stated:

"They wanted me to be able to get like a good and well-paying job after college. And so with journalism, I don't think they saw like, okay, what about influencing and like all the different ways people can and are using journalism majors now. Aside from I was in high school newspaper, and I love, I love to write. They're like, well nobody reads the newspaper anymore. Newspaper companies are still, like, I have not seen one go bankrupt. But that's, that was their , print media's dying, so that's not gonna be a real job. You need to find something with a better career outlook."

Mary also shared in her interview that her mother's level of importance placed on education in many ways placed a strain on their relationship to where at times it felt like education was prioritized over developing their relationship in other areas. She stated:

"I wish that, I for sure wish education was less. Like, I didn't even tell her about how serious C**** and I, my boyfriend and I, were until I graduated college. Because she's like, you need to focus on school, you don't need to think about boys, like basically wouldn't even acknowledge that they existed. And so, if it were less on that and more of like, hey mom, this is what's actually going on with me and my friends, it would have definitely helped me have a little bit less fear and I guess anxiousness when it comes to certain relationships, because I feel like with my parents, it's very quick for them to cut me off and I'm worried that that's what's gonna happen with my other relationships."

This quote indicates that the role of education in some ways has also hindered some aspects of the relationship between Mary's relationship with her mother.

Extra-curricular Activities: Being Well-rounded and Keeping Busy

Involvement in extra-curricular activities was another theme that was present across all participants. All participants were often involved in multiple extracurricular activities. Results indicated there to be an overarching narrative of having to be involved in activities outside of school for reasons such as to stay busy so as not to risk being involved in inappropriate behaviors, to maintain safety, parents seeing the potential for opportunity and advancement for their children like becoming a professional in the activity, wanting their children to be considered well-rounded or get a scholarship to a good college or university. Others were often involved in additional scholarly programs such baccalaureate classes, student council or NHS (National Honor Society).

Participants participated in an array of activities such as playing musical instruments, lacrosse, field hockey, tap, dance, ballet, chess, soccer, baseball, basketball, cheerleading and volleyball to name a few. Some participant parents' like Craig, a 28-year-old cisgender, heterosexual male saw this as an opportunity to for them to develop important life skills. He stated, "Well first I know at least with swimming my dad definitely was like, you gotta learn how to swim, type of thing. Cause like he would scuba dive and then when we go travel, say to Hawaii, like he would go scuba diving or snorkeling or we'd be swimming in the water. So like, he definitely wanted me to have that life skill of learning how to swim just as like a survival type thing." For some participants heavy involvement in the church such as being apart of youth groups was a form of extracurricular activities within their household.

There were mixed results regarding parental involvement in extracurricular activities. For some participants they reported feeling as though their parents were very supportive of whatever they took interest in, even if they did not complete the activity in its entirety. They reported not

feeling pressured to have to follow through with a sport or activity but felt as though their parents allowed for them explore what they were passionate about. Some participants reported that growing up their parents had expectations that they complete certain activities and reported not feeling as though they had much flexibility in being able to fully explore other things that they were passionate about. Brittany reported that her parents stressed the importance of needing to see an activity through and had a particular preference for her and her siblings to only be involved in sports. She stated:

> "No, we only did sports, but we were required to do, I put that in quotes for the audio. So we were required to do sports every single semester. Like we had to pick a sport. Like we were not allowed to just, like, not do something. And even if you hated that sport, you had to see it through. I will never forget the semester I picked friggin' soccer...terrible mistake. Never made it again. Played soccer for one season and never went back to it. But my parents were really adamant about us doing a sport every year."

This was further confirmed by Mary who reported having developed a love for volleyball but did not feel that she received the support she needed or that her parents took an interest. She stated:

> "And, you know, so it was, um, and I didn't really feel supported when I was playing volleyball specifically, unless I was doing an activity that they wanted me to do, it was like, 'Whatever we'll pick you up afterwards.' And so, and you know, and it was really too bad because volleyball was like the thing that I was the most excited for. I loved dancing, but I hated it at the same time because my mom was a dancer and she was always there. She was one of my dance teachers. And so, and everybody knew she was my mom, I mean, we looked just like, and it was always 'do it like this, do it like that,' and I was like, but I'm trying to develop my own style and my own movement. And it was just always, 'do it like this, do it like that,' and you know, I just I wanted something of my own ."

Some participants reported that they felt one of the reasons their parents stressed the importance of involvement in extracurricular activities was due to believing that a lack of involvement indicated laziness and settling for mediocrity. Chanel stated, "I think that is like part

of it like being busy like doing something. You're not at home being lazy like watching tv or you know like you're getting up doing something even the idea of 'why are you laying in bed.' So again I don't know if I was ever told that explicitly but I do think that's a part of it is like not wanting to have the kid who's like laying around doing nothing. Yeah. So I feel like a cousin to that is like mediocrity and this idea of like you don't settle for being mediocre, like form above that. And above that."

Participants reported an increase in parental involvement if parents also took interest in the activity. These participant's parents helped coach during and outside of practices. Some participants reported that their parents would video record their sporting events and would process together areas of improvement and celebrate what was done well. For some participants their parents ranged from being minimally involved with their activities such as through picking them up and dropping them off to being very involved which would included bringing snacks for their teammates, picking up and dropping off other members of the team who were involved in that sport or activity. Only two participants spoke about the involvement of extended family members within their activities.

Lina reported that her mother would send out invites to all members of the immediate family no matter how big or small the event was. She stated, " I feel like that's also how, kind of how the structure of the school was. They wanted a lot of parent interaction and involvement. But she was definitely there for all of that, whether it be like helping me like doing hair, prepping and stuff like that. When it came to my musical endeavors, it was like a family thing. Like if I had a recital, she was like, everyone has to come. Even if she's only up there for five minutes, y'all have

to make it seem like it was great. So like it was a like family thing that if I had a recital, they all would show up or at least enough of them so it wasn't just her."

Religion: At the forefront of socialization for Black families

The church has played a significant role within the Black community for decades and prior literature has also shown religion within this community to be a source of strength, a coping skill as well as a protective factor for this community. This theme was in line with prior literature which supports religion being at the forefront of many participant's upbringing. Involvement in the church ranged from attending church each Sunday, going to weekly bible study, to being a member of youth groups. For some participants religion played an important role for helping them to develop their sense of morality and supported in helping them to develop a foundation. For others, attending church each Sunday and being involved in church events was considered sacred and an intergenerational tradition. Some participants reported it being a factor that determined the types of school they attended growing up. Several participants reported attending Christian/Baptist schools and this being a mandatory part of their education, while others reported their parents having a more relaxed approach to religion such as attending church only on special occasions or receiving messages from their parents about an emphasis being placed on forming their own personal relationship with God without it being necessary to attend church weekly.

In contrast, a few participants reported harboring some resentment to this day for their parents due to experiencing a more rigid upbringing with religion. For these participants, there lied a fear of even being disowned if they did not follow important religious rituals such as being baptized or baptizing their children. It was also reported that some participants felt pressured to maintain some parts of their religious upbringings to keep peace within their family. Ryan even

reported that religion was so intertwined into his upbringing that he shared he remained Christian for his grandmother and after her passing reported that he has since been on a spiritual journey to find the faith that best suits him. He reported that he wished his parents would have provided more advice and lessons without the use of religion to help him to feel more supported by them. He stated:

> "Um, religion and the relationship with my parents, there are times where I wish they wouldn't bring religion into lectures and stuff, just because during those times, during I just feel like there's a different answer than going to God because one note of religion that's always been in my head is you can pray to him, but you're not gonna get the answers you want when you want them. You're gonna get them when you need them, but you don't know when you need them, so why can't you give me something else? We've been talking about that for how many years like it doesn't it matters, but it doesn't matter right now. I need something for the now to get me through the next day, the next week, the next month. And it was never anything like that."

Racial Socialization: "You already got two strikes against you. Don't give them a third"

During the study, participants discussed their experiences of racial socialization, which involved receiving either explicit or implicit messages about being Black and the Black experience. Explicit messages were direct and clear, while implicit messages were more subtle and implied. This process aimed to explore how participants developed their racial identity and how it shaped their experiences. Participants differed in where narratives about race came from. For some, these messages came from their parents, for others it came from extended families and members of their community. Additionally, some became more aware of race in their peer settings whether this be in friend groups or in school settings where most participants often found themselves being one of few Black students. Some shared stories about feeling isolated and it being one of their first encounters with challenges in being Black. Brittany shared her story around. She stated:

> "...like when I was in school, like going to these white schools and like, I think the first time that I was like face to face with like racial challenges was my senior year of high school where I had a teacher who literally did not want me to pass his math class, me or the other, there were a total of four non-white students and all four of us were failing. And literally, like, I had an F, okay? And I'm somebody that got all As, so my parents were really upset about it, but it turns out that essentially he just didn't like me because I was a black student and was trying to fail me. I was grounded the whole semester. I don't think I will ever forget. I was grounded the entire semester. And I remember when we finally found out that that was the issue, my parents really went to bat and advocated for me at the school and everything."

She went on to share about other experiences with regard to race and being one of few black kids even on sports teams. Other factors that played an important role about receiving messages about race were things such as one 's environment. For example, Lina reported that conversations about race were not as explicit for her growing up due to living in Los Angeles and living in a very culturally diverse community and having attended diverse schools. Because her experiences of her middle-class upbringing These interviews also indicated that conversations about race was also a developmental process, meaning that at different developmental stages, participants developed more of an understanding and awareness regarding their race as indicated by Ashley who reported that as an adult she take so much pride in her race and where she comes from and wished that she received more messages about being Black and taking pride in their race from her parents. She stated, "So those are the two things, the religious piece and just more exposure and support of the black, being a black woman, maybe going to concerts or, you know, I had black Barbie dolls, like I said, but it wasn't an overemphasis of being black."

Other participants reported that the messages that they received about race came from their own parent's disclosure of their experiences of racism and discrimination. Through hearing their parent's experience, this in some ways helped shape their understanding of race and how they viewed the world as well as themselves within the world. This was particularly true for

Reign who shared that her father who was born in 1939 had experienced and witnessed a great deal of discrimination and racism throughout his life and this having influenced what he shared with her to help her to better understand how the world views Black people. She stated:

> "My dad was born in 1939. So he had me when he was 54. So my dad lived through all of this stuff. Like everything, segregation, Jim Crow, integration, all of it. All the things. So, literally, like, the reason he moved to Houston, before I was born, is because he grew up in Indiana, in, like, a very small town, and they were so racist that he had to get out of there. Like, he couldn't handle, like, the way people were just so racist for no reason. So he went to the military, then he moved to Houston. I've, he went to some other places too, before I was born, but then he finally moved here. And he's even told me that like, he's been passed up on jobs because of his race. Like literally they told him, hey, you know, cause he was, he was in the Navy and he was going to be a pilot in the Navy. And they passed him up for a white man that had the same score."..." So he saw a lot of like stuff, like people saying stuff happened and you know, it wasn't always substantiated but sometimes it was, you know, so it was just very cau- He was very cautious and very, very racially, like, aware because of what he had to live through and his job. And then he's like telling me, like, you know, just because it's 2000, whatever that doesn't mean or just because you live in Houston and everyone's diverse and that doesn't mean anything. You should still be aware of how people think, how they grew up, and how they don't even know, some White people don't even know what they're saying and what they're doing and how it's like racist. It was very much pounded into my head, don't trust them because they could like, you just never know. Because it's so ingrained in society. It's kind of like, you don't even catch it sometimes."

This narrative was further confirmed by Brittany who shared that after her parents realized a teacher attempted to fail her because of race, this incident was followed by a powerful conversation that she recalled having with her father who stated, " 'They don't care because they see you for who you are. And I just need you to understand that like,' my dad would say often, 'like you already got two strikes against you. Like, don't give them a third.' He would say that all the time. And he's like, 'and I know that these aren't strikes that you chose for yourself, but like, this is the hand that you were dealt. So like, you got to play with the cards that you were dealt.'

And so I feel like these conversations came up a lot and- that I feel like stuck with me my whole life, things that I'm still hyper-aware of to this day."

Furthermore, participants' parents and close friends of the family not only shared their experiences but also provided participants with supplemental books and educational tools and activities outside of school to continue to cultivate an environment of learning about one's history (e.g Craig stated, "We would go to like a friend's house and do like what's it called like poetry or speak memorized speeches from prominent black authors and stuff and recite them for the families and stuff. My dad is an Alpha, which is one of the first black fraternities in America. And so I have a whole book collection of prominent African-American heroes, I guess, of our time, from like Jesse Owens to Washington Carver and other people of those likes and stuff. So, I read those and stuff."). Additionally, participants who had family members who were active in or experienced the civil rights movement shared an intergenerational sense of pride for their race. Participants shared stories of recalling being a part of conversations related to race with their parents and grandparents and would often compare racial dynamics together."

Respectability was another component that was present in many participant interviews. Respectability politics in this case, refers to an effort of middle-class Black families or an attempt to counter negative stereotypes of Black people as poor, lazy, and uneducated by emphasizing middle-class values of hard work, education, dressing tidily, using proper English, and respecting authority figures (Turner, 2020). Middle-class values stand in contrast to those stereotypically associated with lower income Blacks, such as dressing untidily, using improper English, engaging in violent or criminal acts, and being uneducated.

At some point within each participants' life race was learned and talked about and what was particularly spoken about was the Black experience. Parents, extended family and members of community all played a significant role in participants' lives in teaching them about where they come from. They learned to celebrate their Blackness in all its beauty and in all its ugliness because all parts of being Black, good or bad, aided each participant with the strength they needed to maneuver in spaces as an adult that were not made for them. Because of what was instilled in them at some point in their lives, they continue to make their own space in all spaces.

Neighborhood Influences: "You're physically not far from stereotypical black neighborhoods and environments"

As previously mentioned, all participants lived in a suburban area growing up. This includes those who may have initially lived in more urban areas when they were younger however, as their families expanded and parents moved upward in social mobility, they then moved into more suburban areas. All participants shared that their neighborhoods provided a sense of safety to them due to low crime rates and provided them with opportunities to attend good schools within the neighborhood. Some participants shared that their parents specifically moved to certain areas because of the school systems that they had access to. Ashley shared in her interview that her parents had a particular preference that she attend one school in particular due to other schools have a negative reputation which caused a divide in her and her parents agreeing on what school she would attend for high school.

She stated, "And the reputation always was there's drug kids that go there. So like if I would have stayed at my grandma's house, my grandma's house fed into that district and there would be no way. No way. And that's actually the district that my friend down the street fed into,

that I talked about who lived in the apartments. And so that was another point of reputation that my parents were like, no, you're going to North Shore, you're not going to Lake Washington. So that was another kind of divide as well."

Many participants lived in predominantly white neighborhoods or affluently diverse neighborhoods. They had access to medical care, grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls, etc. For participants who lived in more diverse middle-class neighborhoods, they shared stories about the sense of community that their families formed with other Black families within the neighborhood. One participant in particular, Chanel, reported that she felt that her family's financial status served as a modifier of one's Blackness as well as a reminder that you physically and mentally are not far from stereotypical black neighborhoods and environments. She stated, " I think that's important even metaphorically to remember that as a black person, our financial status is always a modifier of your blackness, but not really, you know what I mean? You're still a black person and you're not far socially from what would not be considered middle-class and what that means for where you live. How you grow up what you think the opportunities are given like you're very much not far from that, you know, remove a couple thousand dollars and, you know."

They were made aware at early ages of neighborhoods that were deemed by their parents as unsafe and considered "the hood." Several participants such as Ryan, Diane and Ashley reported that their parents set limits and restrictions on participants being able to go to certain parts of towns or visit friends who lived in those areas. Ashley stated:

> "I had a friend who lived in that community. And my mom actually, at one point, said that I could not hang out with her because she was biracial. Well, not just because she was biracial, I don't think that was it. I think it was because her mom had different rules.

> The kids were kind of unkept. They didn't really have food in their house. Her mom smoked. And so if I did go play with her, it would have to be outside. Like I couldn't go in her house. And so I'm not sure what that was about for my parents. Even back then, I know I was really mad when they said I couldn't hang out with her anymore, but that was one of their decisions. But I remember going through their neighborhood a lot and there would be, you know, people hanging out, kind of loitering by their cars, you know, swearing. Yeah, like a broken car, not abandoned, but broken cars, windows and things like that, just to get through the neighborhood to get to the McDonald's."

Parent-Child Dynamics: "They did their best"

Prior to describing their middle-class upbringing, participants were initially asked to describe their overall experience in three words. Due to their being some overlap in the words used to describe their experience, some words were removed. The overall words that all ten participants used to describe their process were as follows: Supportive, loving, tough, strict, lonely, overprotective, close, dependable, difficult, nurturing, stable, intellectual, goal-oriented, needs met, warm, consistent, adventurous, challenged, confusing, tragic and strange. Participants reported an array of thoughts and feelings related to their past and current relationship with their parents as a result of their upbringing. Although having their basic needs met, many shared heartfelt stories of feeling as though, looking back with adult eyes, their parents did the best they could however, in those moments wanted a little more from them.

However, many wished that their parents would have taken more time to prioritize themselves and be less busy. Brittany, a 29-year-old cisgender bi-sexual female said, "I mean, I felt, I mean, I think I never knew leisure until this past December. I feel like this was the first summer or not summer, the first time I could just sit and do absolutely nothing." She shared that growing up her family was often busy. Whether this be due to her parents working or her and her siblings having a game or a practice to attend for an extracurricular activity that they were involved in.

This was further confirmed by another participant, Lina, a 33-year-old female from Los Angeles who stated:

> "-I feel like she would spread herself too thin sometimes and so I sometimes wish that she would really like...because she was so invested in me, but also in like our family dynamic, like she was always the first one, like the first one on scene, or the last one to leave a situation, and I feel like that was, I always told her that was a gift and a curse, because I felt that she spread herself too thin, and then I think when you spread yourself too thin, you don't think about your own personal self-care. And self-care, I personally don't think she even tapped into that until maybe five years ago. Six years ago. So if you've gone your whole life without really thinking about yourself, but always think about everyone else, that becomes very like, that's a lot to handle. And I think it impacts you physically, mentally, in all aspects. And I think especially when you're not used to taking care of yourself, and you want to, you don't really know where to begin because it probably feels very daunting."

Furthermore, the concept of parents having done their best did not resonate with every participant. Several participants reported having a difficult time navigating their relationship with their parents then and even still to this day. Ryan, reported that he often felt as though his father had a difficult time being emotionally available to him, making it difficult for the two of them to connect with one another. He reported feeling as though his dad would physically present at sporting event but distant emotionally as well as distracted. He shared a heartfelt story of feelings being hurt when he learned that upon his father's retirement that he was volunteering for a local youth group, leaving him wanting his father to take more of an interest in him as his son in the same way he did to other children that were not his own.

Some participants like Diane, a 36-year-old cis-gendered, heterosexual, female shared stories around feeling so frustrated by the integration of religion into all aspects of her upbringing, that she felt distant from her parents and wished that they could have had more "honest and genuine conversations" during their challenging times without religion being at the forefront. Her brother, Ryan,-shared these same thoughts as well. Navigating a challenging relationship due to their socialization process and upbringing was further confirmed by another

participant, Mary, a 26-year-old cisgender, heterosexual female from Phoenix, AZ. She reported that because academics and education was placed as such a high priority that it caused some distance in her relationship with her mother. She reported in addition to this, she still worries about being cutting off if expectations are not met which continues to impact her into adulthood with regard to how she perceives her performance at work. Participants who had siblings living within the home also shared feelings of frustrations with their parents regarding being treated differently from their opposite gender siblings. It is unclear if this was due to gender, age or both factors. Additionally, some participants noticed their parents carrying their own traumas and fears into how they parented them. This was confirmed by Brittany, Diane and Ryan who shared that many of the rules and values that were instilled into them growing up came from their own parents' experiences of growing up poor or growing up in environments where there was high crime and violence, thus causing them to place an emphasis on staying busy and being involved in extracurricular activities so as to maintain safety and decrease likelihood of engaging in unsafe and risky behaviors.

Above all there is a clear theme that despite how their upbringing has shaped their relationship with their parents, whether this be positively or negatively, all participants shared a common theme around wishing that their parents had taken better care of themselves and modeled what it looks like to prioritize themselves. Whether it be in the form of self-care and saying no to things, expressing their emotions and modeling a healthy emotional connection with their children or witnessing their parents "spreading themselves too thin," constantly being busy and for those who were raised by single parents wanting to see them date to model what healthy, loving relationships look like to prepare them for how to navigate their own romantic

relationships in the future; many expressed wanting better for their parents so that they could be able to better handle various aspects of their own lives in adulthood.

The Role of Extended Family: Fostering a sense of community

The role of extended family members has always been a very important part of the Black community. For many of the participants this continued to be the case. Members of their extended family often cared for them as though they were their own children. Participants in two-parent households often reported that due to proximity, they were closer with one parent's side of the family than the other. For many the involvement of extended family members ranged from being helpful to working parents, especially single parents to at times were overly involved in their day to day. Kelsey shared that growing up she lived with her mother and aunt initially when living in Texas and later moved to Louisiana in middle school where she lived with her mother, aunt and grandmother. Her grandmother often supported her mother through picking her up from school and her aunt even helped teach life skills such as learning to cook. She was very close with her aunt and considered her a confidant where she would go to her first for support, which later caused some friction within their family dynamic. She stated:

"If I have something going on, she's usually the person I go to first. which caused some friction, cause my mom would be like, I'm your mom, you come to me first. But I don't know, she just has a more, I don't know, approachable spirit. And she handles crisis and turmoil better. When I first started having issues in my marriage, I went to her first. I told her first, rather. And so, yeah, I would say they were very involved in my day-to-day life. Like I said, my aunt teaching me to cook, my grandmother took me to school. My other aunt, if I wanted to do something or needed money for something and that kind of thing, I would go to her, because she didn't have any... My other aunt didn't have any children."

Kelsey also noted that in present day her mother currently lives with her and supports her with her own children, just as her grandmother did for her. Extended family not only consisted of biological family but was also created through community. For participants such as Brittany and Lina, they both shared similar stories of other members within their community having

provided support to them. Brittany shared that growing up as a military family, she often moved around from state to state and because of this was often far away from members from members outside of her immediate family. This meant that her parents had to create their own sense of community wherever they went. She stated:

> "So like I especially think about like when we lived in Fairbanks, Alaska, we lived in a cul-de-sac and like all of the parents that lived in that cul-de-sac were like black parents of like kids that were five and younger. And so like if one parent had like a kid that was sick but like they couldn't take off work, one of the other parents who had a little bit of extra leave would take off and watch all the kids or whatever the situation was. And that kind of followed us throughout everywhere we moved. Like I remember living in Tennessee, like in Clarksville, Tennessee, everyone on our street, all of the kids, all the parents were military parents. And so we all looked out for each other there. And I think that my parents fostered that kind of community within our neighborhood, no matter where we lived. And that kind of followed me even to my adult years. Like now we have family friends that live in Ohio, that live in XX (city). Like I know I could anywhere I live, where I went to, where we went to college in New Orleans, we had family friends there. So there was always somebody that could be there to like look out for us. So that was kind of what they did."

Although Lina did not come from a military family, like Brittany, she had a similar upbringing where neighbors would keep an eye on each other's children while their parents were away at work. Ashley, shared that many of her values around education, religion and developing a sense of pride in her race came from her godparents. She shared that one day during her shift working at nearby daycare at a younger age that she met a married couple with children who she knew nothing about and shared no relation to but connected with on many different levels and wanted them to be part of her life in some way. She reported that before meeting them, outside of her parents, she had never seen much representation of other stable middle-class Black families. As years passed on, they became her godparents and helped to further develop her faith in Christianity and her relationship with God as well as cultivated an environment that allowed her to explore all aspects of her Blackness that she did not feel she received from her parents. Their

involvement in her life, helped her to develop a love for her Blackness and exposure to Black excellence.

Do your best: Be twice as good as everyone else.

The phrase "twice as good" has been a common phrase that many minoritized communities have come to be familiar with as they've maneuvered within society and through the margins. Many of the participants in my study were also all too familiar with phrase. However, most participants shared that they experienced it more on their own as adults rather than as a child or in their adolescence, which further speaks to the developmental process of racial socialization. Participants reported receiving both explicit and implied messages around having to work harder because of gender, class or a combination of all of the above. Many participants shared that although they did not explicitly feel pressured by this specific phrase, they noticed a sense of pressure from their parents in that still carried the undertone of having to work harder. This was especially true for Chanel, who stated:

"And maybe that might be the closest to how I see like implicit messaging through like, you got to work harder might be through their respectability piece. Because I do think that's another form of labor to just always be thinking about how you're perceived and how you need to say things in a certain way, how you need to switch, how you need to show up. So I do think that's working harder than white people simply by having to perform the respectability piece, which I also like, I do my best to explain."

Others received messages such as needing to work harder because of being different from everyone else, but nothing explicitly referencing race.

Several participants discussed the need to work harder through often hearing "put your best foot forward" and "always do your best." Some took this to mean that "doing your best still means you have to do more than everybody else." For some participants, this narrative came from their own parents' experiences of maneuvering in the world as a Black person and often

being reminded of not quite fitting in within society. Mary stated, "...My dad would talk about it, especially, he would say like, in his industry, it was way easier for white guys to get jobs, or that he had to work harder or like more, longer hours because he's the Black guy and that's what they expect of him. But, and if he doesn't, then they'll try to make it harder for him." This shows that both implicit and explicit messages exist amongst participants about having to work harder more so because or race compared to other factors such as gender or class.

Figure 1: ***Black Middle-class Socialization Process***

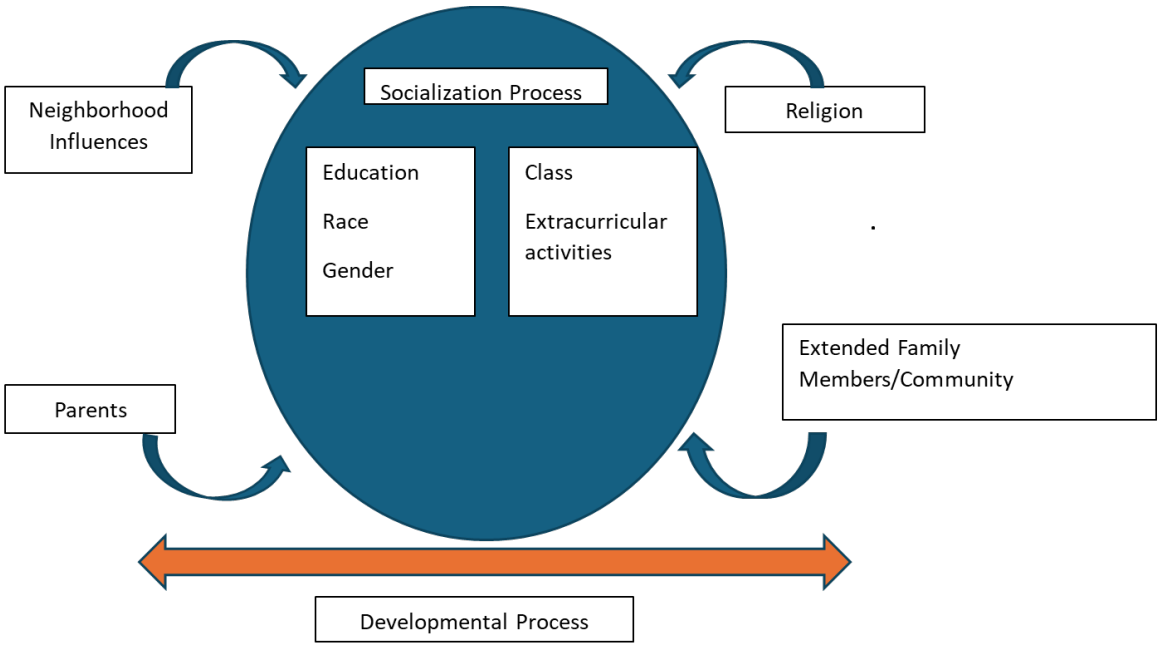


Figure 1 shows a tentative proposal to explain influences that shape socialization in young black adults in this study. Categories of class, education, extracurricular activities emerged as important intersecting influences. Messages about race, religion, education, and gender were received by participants at different developmental stages and also appeared to be gender specific. For instance, participants recalled different experiences with their parents in childhood, adolescence, and young adult years. For some of them, their perspectives of their own relationships with their parents also shifted as they grew older. For instance, resentment about not being able to have freedom in their younger years softened to a place of understanding about why their parents may have had certain expectations. Important messages about race, class, and the need to do your best appeared to also be influenced by their parents' own experiences of particularly of race and class.

According to the themes that were found, the socialization process for Black middle-class families may consist of messages received around education, race, gender, and class. These components of the process may be influenced by parents, which can also be influenced by intergenerational messages received by their parents. It also appears to be influenced by religion, the corner stone of the Black community and the Black community itself. Finally, the influence of neighborhood and class can shape the messages that are received and all of these factors can play an important role in shaping the parent-child relationship.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe the socialization process of middle-class Black families and to gain an understanding regarding how this process shapes the parent-child relationship using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 20014). Current literature provides some understanding of the socialization process however, there is a lack of literature that describes what this looks like for Black middle-class families. Additionally, several theoretical frameworks and theories were applied. These included narrative family therapy, contextual therapy and the intersectionality framework. According to the narrative family therapy theory, Narrative focuses on how stories are constructed and how couples and families organize their lives around those created meaning that they make (White, 1990). The theory focuses on privilege and power and what narratives become privileged over others. The theory also tells us that these narratives can be maintained through the power that dominant discourse holds. For each of the categories that were created there is special narrative embedded in them all. From gender, class, education, the role of the extended family to neighborhood influences, the involvement in extra-curricular activities, religion, and how all of these factors may shape the parent-child relationship over time.

Additionally using an intersectional framework which focuses on how at varying intersections of identities, there lie a different set of experiences and challenges that are faced. This was indicated in ways such as through participants sharing stories about their experiences of not truly feeling as though they could fit in with either their Black or White peers, this was a specific experience to those of the Black middle-class. Most of the female participants in this study expressed not being able to fit in with their Black peers because of their class differences and not being able to fully fit in with their White peers because of race, although class afforded

them access to the same opportunities and programs as their White peers. This is congruent with Butler-Sweet's study (2017) which explores middle-class women being viewed as the “Black Stepsister” and the challenges and mistreatment of young Black girls in school who identify as being middle-class.

The findings of this study are both similar and different to the literature in many different ways. Some of which was to be expected others of which were a surprise which confirms that further research will need to be completed to truly understand this process and contextual factors that play a significant role within it.

Education

Participants provided a great snapshot into a very small percentage of how Black middle-class families experienced and received messages around the importance of education. These findings are also congruent with prior literature that supports this. Many participant -parents’ prioritized education and placed them in schools known for academic excellence, which further confirms Montgomery (2006) findings where findings confirmed that parents were often dissatisfied about local school distracts due to their lack materials and low school rankings. For many participants within this study, their parents moved to certain neighborhoods because their better quality school systems or drove participants to those schools rather than having them commit to schools that were nearby but may not have been as high ranking in academics as other schools. Prior literature discussed there being an important consideration to have a healthy social mix in a school environment (Ball et. al., 2013). However, in this study’s findings we see that participants did not appear to place much emphasis on a healthy social mix but rather on the academic rigor of the school. Parent who were not able to complete or attend college for various reasons also continued to prioritize the importance of education. This was particularly seen with

Mary who's mother did not attend college but highly prioritized education within their household, which she shared later caused friction in their relationship because of its level of importance. The participants shared their experiences of being one of few Black students in predominantly White schools, and the expectations placed on them regarding grades and choice of major. Education was also seen as a quality sought after in a future partner (King et. al., 2009).

Gender

Few participants indicated gender differences in how they were treated within their families. However,-those-who had siblings living with them at home were more likely to receive messages related to gender compared to those who were the only child or who had a larger age gap between them and their opposite gender sibling, in these cases, these participants did not grow up with the sibling in the home. Several participants reported feeling frustrated by the double standards they experienced growing up, especially regarding the different ways their parents treated them and their siblings based on gender. Some participants also shared stories of how they wanted to stand up to their parents because they felt their parents were too hard or too lenient on them or their siblings.

Additionally, Black females grew up feeling sheltered and protected, often being critiqued by their parents about their clothing choices and being taught the importance of maintaining a "respectable appearance". There was a double standard between Black girls and boys, especially regarding dating and appearances. We see this especially in Chanel's story that there were differences in gender expectations within her household, with her brother not being subjected to the same limitations as her. One of the congruencies with this study and prior literature is the idea that black girls come in to womanhood whereas this is not the case for Black boys (Wallace, 2007). Manhood for black boys is not gradual but it automatic from the time they

are born into this world. This literature finding is congruent with Ryan's story that at a young age there was already an expectation that he look after his mother and sisters by taking on the role of the protector. This was a message that was passed on from his father to him.

Furthermore, in regard to racial socialization, male participants and also female participants who had male siblings, reported that they received more messages around race compared to female participants or the male participant's female siblings. These messages included but are not limited to looking respectable so as to appear non-threatening to White counterparts, how to conduct oneself in the presence of authority, particularly law enforcement. Messages also included the importance of maintaining safety, what it means to be a Black man and masculinity. Under the umbrella of "being a man" came the importance of taking care of one's family and not abandoning them especially in regard to having children out of wed-lock.

Extracurricular

Participants were frequently involved in extracurricular activities. The primary reason for this involvement was to stay busy and avoid engaging in unsafe behaviors. Participants engaged in a variety of activities such as playing musical instruments, sports, and additional scholarly programs. There was mixed parental involvement in extracurricular activities, where some parents were supportive while others had certain expectations. Parents were more involved when they took an interest in their children's activities, even helping to coach them. Parental involvement in extracurricular activities was congruent with prior literature which supports that Black families believe involvement will aid in developing their children into better people, helping them to become more well-rounded and to expand their worldview (Laureau, 2002).

Laureau (2002) discusses the "determined for the best" style of parenting that middle-class Black parents take on. This form of parenting helps the child to exercise critical thinking

skills and allows for the parents to foster and assess their child's talents, opinions and skills; which we see with all participants as they recalled their experiences of being involved in activities. Many shared that at a younger age, there was less flexibility around in being able to decide their own activities but as they got older, they were able to articulate their opinions and make cases for why they wanted to be involved in certain activities, including arranging their own transportation around these. Furthermore, involvement in extracurricular activities worked to help participants to "keep busy." Prior literature has noted that involvement in extracurricular activities for the Black middle-class in some ways is also about achieving proximity to Whiteness (Turner, 202).

Religion

The Black church has occupied a distinctive position in the lives of African Americans as the traditional institutional core of African American communities (Taylor et. al., 2014). The finding in this study indicated that religion continues to play an important role in the upbringing of many participants within the Black community, ranging from attending church on Sundays, weekly bible study, to being involved in youth groups. For some participants, religion even helped them to build a sense of morality and provided a foundation, while for others, attending church and being involved in church events was considered sacred and a generational tradition. However, a few participants reported resentment towards their parents for having a rigid upbringing that involved religion. There was even a fear of disownment if they did not continue to uphold their religious values, and some felt pressured to maintain their religious upbringing to keep peace within their family.

Parent-child dynamics

Before discussing the dynamics of the participants and their parents, I would also like to note the differences across participants regarding their family structures, which may have played a role in their parent-child dynamics. While the majority of the participants in this study lived in two-parent households, some participants lived in a household with a single parent or with a single parent and a member(s) of their extended family. It is unclear the exact extent of these participants living with a family structure as such, as the focus was primarily on the parent-child relationship. Participants used words like supportive, loving, strict, adventurous, and confusing to describe their upbringing. They shared mixed thoughts and feelings about their relationships with their parents, with some appreciating their parents' efforts and others feeling distant from them. Several participants reported difficulty in connecting with their parents emotionally, while others wanted their parents to prioritize themselves more. Participants also noted that their parents' rules and values were influenced by their own traumas and fears. Parents of participants were actively involved within their children's day-to-day lives which confirms the type of parenting Laureau (2002) calls a "determined for the best" style of parenting. This form of parenting helps the child to exercise critical thinking skills and allows for the parents to foster and assess their child's talents, opinions and skills.

Additionally, from a Contextual lens loyalty is one of the hallmarks of this theory. Within this study, many participants shared compassion about their parents as they reflected from an adult perspective on their relationship with their parents and reflected upon their childhood and adolescence. Contextual talks about loyalty being a preferential commitment to a relationship, based on indebtedness born of earned merit (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). This may provide some explanation as to why when some participants shared stories about frustrating or

disappointing moments about their parents, it was cushioned with compassion and not wanting to speak of ill of them for all the other ways in which their parents provided for them. This may speak to the indebtedness born of earned merit. According to contextual this is a normal developmental process where adults as they age reflect on balance and fairness in their childhood differently than they did when they were children.

Racial Socialization

Participants discussed their experiences with racial socialization, including receiving explicit or implicit messages about being Black. These messages shaped their racial identity and came from various sources such as parents, extended family, and community members. Participants shared stories of feeling isolated in predominantly white school settings, with some encountering challenges due to their race. For some, living in culturally diverse communities meant less explicit conversations about race. The interviews also highlighted how parental experiences of racism and discrimination influenced participants' understanding of race. For example, one participant's father, born in 1939, shared his experiences to help her comprehend how the world views Black people. This study revealed that conversations about race are a developmental process, with participants gaining more understanding and awareness of their race at different stages of their lives.

Parental experience of racism and discrimination increases the likelihood of parents transmitting racial socialization messages to their children (Smith et. al., 2019), as indicated within many participant interviews. Furthermore, respectability was a concept that was seen in many of the female participants, in addition to all participant’s parents pushing the importance of highly prioritizing education. According to Turner (2020), this is an effort of incorporating

respectability politics in the socialization process. According to the literature, this is seen as an attempt to achieve proximity to Whiteness and move away from stereotypical Blackness.

Another component of racial socialization was also present with participants, particularly participants who received more explicit messages about race which was racial barrier socialization. As mentioned in many of the participant stories who reported receiving explicit messages due to either neighborhood influences or parental experiences, the types of messages that they reported were congruent with racial barrier socialization. This is defined as messages that are intended to promote children's awareness of and ability to cope effectively with racial discrimination (Hughes et. al, 2010; Cooper et. al, 2011). Examples of this included acknowledgment of differences, being told to behave a certain way because they are Black to maintain safety and decrease proximity to stereotypical Blackness as well as the concept of respectability politics. Moreover, congruent with literature, as children grow older, they undergo important cognitive transitions in their understanding of race (Hughes et. al, 2010). This was evident with many of the participants, where some had a stronger sense of racial awareness compared to others, while others may have developed this awareness later in life, so although there is a developmental process of this awareness, based upon the stories of the participants, it may also be that presence or lack thereof of parents providing this awareness to their children also plays an important role in their development around race.

Extended family

Extended family and community members have played an important role in the lives of Black families. Participants reported that members of their extended families have often cared for them as though they were their own children and provided a great support to their parents. Such involvement ranged from being helpful to being overly involved in their day-to-day lives.

Similarly, community members provided support as well to their families, especially those who lived in military families who had neighbors willing to watch out for each other's children. This finding is similar to prior literature in regards the role of extended family as a support in emotional, social, and psychological ways. However, it differed from prior literature that reported that the involvement of extended family is a function of class, with poorer people more heavily involved in their family networks as a result of need (Nguyen, 2017). This study indicates that for this middle-class population, extended family involvement may have had less to do with need and more to do with want and close family ties.

Neighborhood influences

The participants reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods, with little to no crime or gang activity. Those who lived in predominantly white neighborhoods or gated communities felt an extra sense of safety. Ryan's father was a high-ranking city official, which gave him an added sense of safety. The sense of safety was not just due to the neighborhood but also the sense of community that was developed within those neighborhoods.

Geographical location was a factor that was something new that did not appear in the literature that was found within this study. During my analysis I noticed that within this sample size many participants came from differing regions of the United States. As a result of this I noticed that participants who were from parts of the South (i.e. Texas, Louisiana, Virginia, and Tennessee) received more explicit messages about race in comparison to those who were from the Pacific Northwest, East Coast, Southwest and West Coast, where there is typically more diversity. Participants also shared that many lived in very walkable neighborhoods which made it a lot easier for their families to socialize and develop a sense of community with neighbors (Carson et. al., 2023).

Class

The study found that social class played a significant role in how most participants were raised. Participants recognized that they were middle-class because they had access to various resources and lived in predominantly white neighborhoods. Although their basic needs were met, they still lived within their means. Class also played an important role on the types of messages they received especially the emphasis on education. Class also influenced the types of messages that were received about class. Respectability (Turner, 2020) is one concept that was seen at the intersection of class and race and was observed to be seen more in female participants. This finding supports the reiteration of middle-class Black females being considered the "The black stepsister" (Butler-Sweet, 2017). Prior literature also indicated that middle-class families typically have weaker extended family ties (Laureau, 2002), which did not appear to be the case for participants. Six out of the ten participants reported that they had strong extended family ties and spent a significant amount of time with them, whether this be on a weekly basis or a daily basis because their household consisted of extended family members.

Twice as good

"Twice as good" is a common phrase that many marginalized communities are familiar with as they navigate through society. In the Black community it is a proverb that usually reads, "You have to work twice as hard to get even half of what White folks have." This was a phrase that many participants were all too familiar with. However, one of the key findings within this study indicated that although participants were very familiar with this saying, they shared another phrase that appeared to carry this same meaning which was, "Do your best." Typically when most people think of what it means to do your best, it is often thought of as whatever one's best is to do just that and recognizes that one person's best can look different from another person's best.

Within this study "Do your best" in reality for these participants wasn't truly accepted. It meant do your best, but it has to be better than and you have to work harder than everyone else.

Underneath this phrase, many participants knew this had to do with race even if participant's parents did not explicitly state this, participants felt this was often implied and in many case internalized. Some participants were conscious of this and were able to recognize that it showed up in areas of their lives where they felt and continue to feel the need to be "perfect" and fearful of "messing up" otherwise. Others accepted this as just expectations without questioning. Participants received both explicit and implicit messages around having to work harder due to gender, class, or a combination of both. Although participants did not always feel pressured by this specific phrase, they noticed a sense of pressure from their parents that carried the undertone of having to work harder. Overall, both implicit and explicit messages existed among participants about having to work harder more so because of race compared to other factors such as gender or class. These findings are supported by prior literature which suggest that the Black middle-class is proportionately much smaller than the white middle class (Darity et. al., 2019). Because of this, members of the Black community who desire a better life and better opportunity for their families must work twice as hard to ensure the well-being, safety, and opportunity of their children (Darity et. al., 2019). Historically speaking, the Black community for decades have faced racial inequalities. From a Contextual therapy perspective, it is possible that this experience intergenerational from a family level and on a community level regarding needing to be twice as good.

From the researcher perspective, although it has been previously mentioned the ways in which my research findings were the same or different from prior literature, there were several

findings that stood out to me within the data. One of these findings were the high levels of prioritization around education. Expectations were even higher for participants if their parents were not able to finish college. Furthermore, these expectations in some cases caused a lot of stress, anxiety, and ruptures in some of the participants' relationships with their parents, which is important for clinicians to understand so that they can explore these challenges with families.

Another finding that stood out to me were the gender differences and the different ways in which participants were socialized according to their gender. Female identifying participants had fewer explicit conversations about race compared to their male siblings or the male participants. Most conversations about race for female participants were not had until they were off to college or in the workforce. Perhaps this may have had to do with Black males being at a higher risk of being targeted because of race. Lastly, another finding that stood out to me were the differences in messages around racial socialization due to the geographical locations of participants and neighborhood influences. Many participants who lived in areas that were more diverse received fewer explicit messages about race, such as those who lived on the West Coast, Pacific Northwest and Southwest. This plays an important role in painting a narrative of what the socialization process of Black middle-class families looks like because the racial socialization component can look different depending upon gender and geographical location.

Clinical Implications

It is important for clinicians to consider possible challenges that can impact black middle-class families and members of these families. In addition to the historical context and traumas that Black families and individuals have faced for years, through an intersectional framework clinicians can begin to acknowledge and provide support around the challenges that are

indicative of being specific to this class and the impact on clients' emotional and mental well-being due to expectations that are set. This is especially the case around pressure to perform academically. Moreover, the impact of respectability politics can be found using the intersectional framework of focusing on specific challenges of individuals, families and couples who have grown up in a middle-class home at the intersection of race and class.

Other new and important findings are the role of extended family. Prior literature has supported the idea that for Black families, extended family has often played a significant role and resource within their family dynamics, including the survival of the family (Nguyen, 2017). Members of the extended family can help to provide support financially, with childcare as well as emotional, social and psychological support (Nguyen, 2017). However, as helpful as this extension of family can be, this study indicates that at times it can be overwhelming to the child as well as the parent depending upon how involved they are in the family's day to day life. Kelsey shared that her grandparents and aunts were so involved within her day-to-day routines that at times many members of their church were not sure who's child she was because of their level of involvement. This also caused friction between her and her relationship with her mother who felt as though they had overstepped at times. This scenario may be a more present than we know within families who are close with extended family members and it can be helpful for clinicians to know and explore this further in session to get a better since of how helpful there involvement is to the family.

Additionally, it is important for clinicians to consider that racial socialization may look slightly different due to class status. Families who live in affluent neighborhoods and regions, especially areas that are more diverse may not feel as impacted by race or not realize the implicit messages that they received. This was evident with Ashley who shared that she did not receive

explicit messages about race growing but that there were some subtle messages such as "not being the same as everyone else." It was not until she met her godparents and became an adult that she developed more of an understanding about her race and received messages about pride in race. So it is also important for clinicians to consider the developmental process of these factors and how neighborhood influences may play a role in racial socialization.

Involvement in extracurricular activities can also be something that is important for clinicians to explore with families. Prior literature and the findings in this study indicate that many middle-class children are often involved in multiple extracurricular activities at a time. Involvement in extracurricular activities provides both educational and developmental benefits. Clinicians may want to follow up with children in these families and assess for areas such as decline in interest and any fears of being transparent with parents around no longer wanting to be involved in certain activities. This can provide a safe space for children to explore their own thoughts and feelings around involvement and help them discuss openly with their parents. In turn parents can begin to become more cognizant around their rationale for wanting their children to be involved in certain activities and explore if there is any sense in feeling as though their child "owes" them something by continuing in these activities and narrative that supports this.

In applying a contextual lens to these findings, clinicians can make more efforts to explore and help Black clients to identify ways in which intergenerational patterns have shaped the messages that they have received over time around race and class and explore how this shapes relationship with their parents. By children getting to hear and witness their parent's perspective and struggles around what their own childhood was like and how this may have played a role in how they parented them and influenced the decisions they made in raising them,

this understanding can shed more light on the experience and shape their relationships differently. This can be a healing opportunity to learn more about intergenerational patterns and an opportunity to explore its impact on families and foster conversations between members around how to shift those patterns if necessary. Additionally, clinicians can work to support Black middle-class parents in exploring where entitlement may be surfacing and work with to process these and break the cycle. This studies also helps us to realize that there are some parts of the socialization process that can cause friction in the parent-child relationship such as the high importance placed on education and religion. Clinicians can work to explore ways in which children in these families may feel under pressure to academically perform. Individuals and families can also learn to navigate organized religion by working to also create safe space and acceptance of honoring one's spirituality and placing more emphasis on the importance of developing your own type of relationship with religion.

This study also provides insight into how adult children are loyal to their parents in many ways, and while they are loyal, they are also able to reflect back upon their childhood and adolescence and feel comfortable critiquing their parent's parenting styles and choices. This emphasizes the role of concerted cultivation which is a parenting style that is very much a part of the middle-class experience. As previously mentioned, concerted cultivation is a form of "determined for the best" style of parenting that middle-class parents often adopt with their children. Due to their basic needs being met and being in a place of financial stability, parents can intentionally work to develop their child's skills and talents as well as challenge them to think critically and develop their own thoughts and opinions about things. This can support adult children as they navigate spaces without their parents and works to help them to become fully functioning adults within society. Furthermore, prior literature argues that anxiety about

facilitating a good future for their children is a particular, rather than general, account of middle-class parenting experiences (Irwin et. al., 2011). Thus, having this understanding, clinicians can spend time with families in session processing ways in which this form of parenting shapes their relationship with one another.

Limitations and Challenges

There were several limitations within this study. Recruitment of participants was done through the posting of flyers to social media platforms (Facebook, TikTok and Instagram). This posed challenges in that, as predicted, some participants fluctuated in social media usage. As a result, several participants initially expressed interest in wanting to be apart of the study but would then go onto social media hiatuses which made it difficult to contact them further to set up interviews. Additionally, the majority of my participants came from Instagram, although the advertisement for the study was also posted on Facebook and Tiktok. This may have also been due to my own level of interactions on those specific platforms and most of my social media activeness being predominantly on Instagram. Perhaps being more active on other platforms might have increased variety in gender and middle-class experiences. A large percentage of my social media are female followers which may have also played a role in having fewer male participants. Another limitation with recruitment may also have to do with the impact of social media algorithms. Algorithms are used on social media to create better user experience through tracking the type of content we frequently engage with on social media platforms. This may indicate that depending upon the content that has been created for each user's experience may result in seeing less and less of other types of content, meaning that users are less likely to see

my posts on social media because it may not fall in range of what their typical content is that they frequently engage with online.

The sample size itself is consistent with constructivist grounded theory guidelines and consisted of 10 participants, However, the demographic makeup of this study consisted of a 8:2 ratio of female to male participants. By having more male participants this may have provided different results especially regarding gender and racial socialization. This study also consisted of only heterosexual, cisgender male and female. More representation from the queer community in the sample would have added to the richness of the study in learning about how their experiences about gender and gender identity might have shaped their relationship with their parents. Furthermore, the regions in which participants grew during their childhood and adolescence all varied. Many participants were from the Southern and Pacific Northwest region and the West Coast, which may influence the types of messages that were received, especially regarding race.

By also identifying as growing up in a Black middle-class household as the researcher, this may have shaped the way I interpreted and analyzed the data being presented due to my own similar or different experiences from my participants. During my data collection and analysis process, I found it difficult at times and reminded myself throughout the process to remain objective. There were many times where I truly identified with a participant's experience and could go even deeper into the subject matter than what was already being done however, because of the interview schedule had to remind myself to stay on track with my interview questions.

Furthermore, with completing a qualitative study, it requires a great deal of time, which because I was on a fixed timeline to complete my dissertation, I was also limited in being able to conduct a second round of interviews for my study. Although this study consisted of in the

moment member checking, it still did not allow for an opportunity to clarify answers that were given by participants as well as after having refined some of my questions as I completed interviews, to go back to ask new questions to participants regarding their middle-class experience. An example of this was one of my interview questions that asked participant to "please describe ways in which their neighborhood provided a sense of safety for them growing up." A participant re-worded the question in a way that better suited them to "Was there ever a time I felt unsafe." This in conjunction with needing timely approval from the IRB board prior to conducting any modifications to the study would have resulted in a delay in completing the study.

Future Research

There are several different directions for the future of this study. This study has the opportunity to provide support to members of the Black middle-class through bringing to light the specific challenges that they may face at the intersection of race and class. Future studies may consider including young adults and their parents/caregivers in interviews to understand multiple perspectives of the socialization process. By including the parental perspective on this process, this can provide a deeper understanding into parts of the process that the participants are not able to answer.

Throughout this study, participants could only answer from their own perspectives and infer why their parents made certain decisions or prioritized one thing over another. It could also provide healing for participants where ruptures may have occurred due to not having insight into their parent's rationale around some things. Through sharing their experiences, it can have the opportunity to provide a better overall understanding of the Black middle-class socialization process. This study could also benefit from narrowing the focus more on a specific region within

the country to determine how certain regions may differ regarding the types of messages that are received.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study sought to explain and describe the socialization process within Black middle-class families and how it shapes the parent-child relationship. The questions that I set out to explore are "What is the socialization process of Black middle-class families?" and "How does this process shape the parent-child relationship?" Constructivist grounded theory was the methodology used for this study. Additionally, two theories, Contextual Therapy and Narrative Family Therapy, along with the intersectionality framework were used to guide interview questions as well as the data interpretation process.

These findings indicated that there are many key elements that help to form this process for Black middle-class families, a population often neglected in research with Black families. Class shaped a great deal of this process. With having basic needs met and access to resources, the messages that participants received were focused more on autonomy, independence, assertiveness, many of which values participants saw modeled by their parents. Class afforded Black middle-class families opportunities to travel, involve their children in extracurricular activities, freedom from financial hardships that many of low incomes families may have to struggle with. Many parents saw the best way to be a parent of the middle class and go even further through being educated. Education is held as a high priority and many parents pushed the importance of education because it provides access to not only better paying jobs but more opportunities, many of which parents did not have access to during their own upbringing. Racial socialization was another important part of this process and depending upon one's environment or neighborhood influences, determined the types of messages they received. This study's findings also shed light on how parent's own experiences of racism and discrimination shape the types of messages they pass on to their children about race. Gender played a significant role and

may even have been a point of contention for many participants with their parents, especially with female participants feeling as though there was a double standard existed for them that did not exist for their brothers.

Religion was another part of this process. It has often played an important role within the Black community and has been used as a source of comfort, strength in times of challenges and resiliency. The findings of this study indicated that religion was an integral part of each participant's lives and was even at time woven into lessons and values that were instilled into them. In addition to the above-mentioned factors that make up this process, extracurricular activities was another important part of this process. Participants indicated that the role of involvement in extracurricular activities serves the purpose of helping them to become more exposed to different types of activities as well as to become more well-rounded. Most participants had the freedom to choose their own activities and parents gave them the option to choose these activities. For some participants there were activities that it was imperative that they participate in because of their parent's love for these activities. As a result of this, some parents appeared to be more involved than others, from coaching, to chaperoning and even traveling with their children's teams. Above all parents supported their child's passion, even when they may not have always agreed on them being involved in the activity.

This study also indicated that there may be some influence of neighborhoods that play a role in the messages that are received. Many participants reported living in safe neighborhoods. They reported little to no violence and low crime rates within those neighborhoods. Participants also lived in predominantly white areas. In few cases some participants lived in affluent diverse neighborhoods. In these cases, conversations around race were less frequent due to having more representation of other racial groups. Living in these areas, especially those of predominantly

White neighborhoods also created a proximity to wealth which further created a salient view of being able to identify as middle-class compared to low-income neighborhoods.

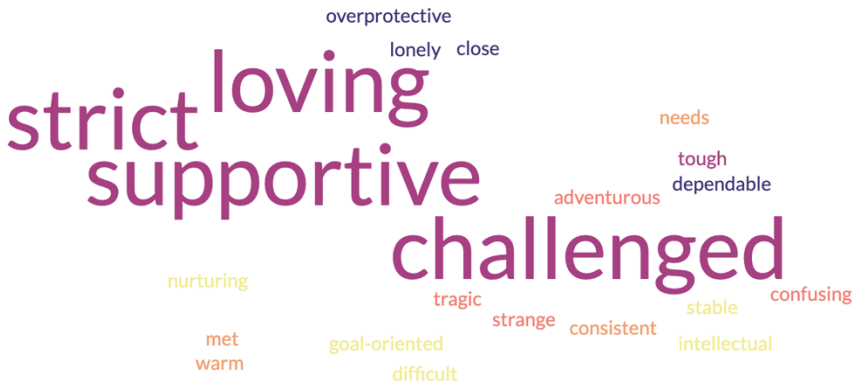
The extended family was not part of the process however extended family did have influence within the process and the messages, values and beliefs that were instilled in participants. All of these parts of the socialization process shaped so much of the relationship that participants had with parents during their upbringing as well the type of relationship that they continue to share with their parents today, indicating that messages received and type of relationship with parents evolved through their individual and family developmental stages. Participants described their relationship with their parents as loving, challenging, strict, goal oriented, adventurous, close, overprotective, busy and dependable just to name a few. Some participants were able to look past difficult moments with their parents and see beyond their faults. They were able to see that they were human just like them and did their best to provide a better life for them, that many parents didn't get to have on their own. In some ways this longing for what they did not have bled into how they parented and the messages that they passed down to them. Including having to work twice as hard to get to where they wanted to be, because that was their own experience. For some participants they are still working to heal the ruptures within their relationships with their parents and family. They shared that they watched and continue to watch their parents fight daily with their own childhood traumas. Thus, reminding us all that we inherit directly and indirectly the load of those who came before us and hopefully Black families can continue to do the work to heal.

With these findings clinicians can begin to provide more support to Black middle-class families by knowing what components helped to make up their socialization process. This can help to explore with families values and beliefs that are helpful as well as ones that can be harmful. Clinicians can then work to assess intergenerational patterns and entitlement and help families to process the role of loyalty to not just family but to the Black community as well. Using a Narrative lens clinicians can work with families to explore the origins of the meaning that is created around certain values and believes and help them to identify ways in which dominant narratives hold privilege over others and keep families stuck.

Future research can continue explore intergenerational patterns of how their socialization process is the same or different from how an individual was parented to how they socialize their own children as a result from this. Additionally focusing on a specific region and comparing how neighborhood and regional influences can play a role in what the socialization process looks like for Black families in the middle-class.

Appendix

Figure 2: Participants were asked to describe their middle-class upbringing in three words. The words that are emphasized indicate overlap in participants' description.



Interview Schedule:

Demographic Questions:

1. Age:
2. Race/Ethnic Background:
3. Gender/Gender Identity:
4. Pronouns: she/her
5. Current SES:
6. Childhood Household makeup (who all lived within your home
7. Describe the type of neighborhood you lived in during your childhood and adolescents? (i.e Urban, Suburban, etc.)
    a. What was the demographic makeup of the neighborhood that you lived in?
    b. What resources were available to you in this neighborhood (i.e library, mall, grocery stores, restaurants, medical care?)
    c. Please describe ways in which your neighborhood has provided a sense of safety for you growing up?

Interview Questions:

8. If you could describe your upbringing and how this has shaped your relationship with your parents in 3 words, what would those words be and why?

9. Describe you experience of the social class you relate to.
    a. Were there certain messages that you received that indicated this?
    b. Where and who did these messages come from?
    c. Did your parent(s)/caregiver receive certain messages from their parents or environment that were passed down to them and then to you? If so, what were those?
10. What types of values or lessons did you receive growing up?
11. What role did education serve within your upbringing?
12. a. What is the highest level of education your parent's received?
13. Describe the types of schools you attended growing up (elementary, middle, high school) and how did this shape your relationship with your parents?
    a. Did your parent(s) have a preference for where they wanted you to attend?
        i. If so, what were the conversations like and how did this shape your relationship with them?
14. Racial socialization is defined as implicit and explicit messages around racial identity. How was race discussed within your upbringing and how did those narratives shape your relationship with your parents?
    a. Were there messages that you received about race, if so what types of messages or narratives were they?
    b. Did you or your parent(s)/caregivers ever feel like you had to work harder because of gender, race, and/or class? If yes, please explain what this was like for you.

    c. How did this shape your relationship with your parents growing up? How does this shape your current relationship with your parents?

15. Please describe your experience, if any, with bullying or forms of mistreatment because of (a) class, (b) gender/gender identity, (c) race or (d) all of the above?
    a. how did this experience shape your relationship with your parents?
16. In what ways was religion apart of your upbringing and how did this play a role within your relationship with your parents?
17. What were some of the extra-curricular activities that you participated in and how did this shape your relationship with your parents?
    a. What was the decision-making process like for participating in these activities?
    b. Were there certain activities that you were or were not allowed to participate in?
    c. How involved were your parents in these activities (such as setting them up for you, attending these events, maybe chaperoning, or coaching them)?
    d. How did the concept of perfectionism show up, if it did, within your upbringing?
    e. Were you apart of any social organizations, scholarship programs or later a fraternity or sorority?
    f. What type of families attended these programs that were apart of these groups?
    g. What social organizations were your parents a part of, if any?
18. In what ways did the overall ways in which you were socialized shape the relationship with your parent(s)/caregiver(s)?
    a. Describe your relationship with your parents during your childhood/adolescents.
    b. What are ways in which your relationship with your parent(s)/caregiver(s) have changed and or stayed the same?
19. Is there anything you wish your parents would have done differently or more of in raising you?
20. What were similarities or differences you noticed in how your sibling(s) were raced related to gender?

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C

Grants Awarded

Hollie, B.D., (PI) Johnson, R., **D, Walker**, D., Albright, K Merrian, M., Stone-Fish, L., Watson.,.

University-community collaborations to reduce barriers to mental health services in the Black Community. Sponsor: Central New York Community Foundation: Black Equity and Inclusion Grant, September 2020. Amount: 53,000 funded.

Fellowships

American Association of Marriage Family Therapy - Minority Fellow (2023-2024)

Conferences

Gangamma, R., Reichert-Schimp ff, T., Shipman, D., Stone Fish, L., & **Walker, D.N**

Psychological distress & resilience in a clinical sample during COVID-19: Brief report.

Submitted & Accepted. IFTA

Manuscripts In Progress

Su, Z., Lucena, C., **Walker, D.N**, Childs, T.S., Gangamma, R Self Report Family Inventory:

Factor Analysis in Couple Clinical Sample. In progress.

Walker, D.*, Le, K.,*, Su, Zhihan., Predictive Factors in relational ethics in Family of Origin. In

Progress.

Lucena, C.,* **Walker, D.N.*** Intersectionality of Supervision. In progress

*Denotes shared authorship

Manuscript Reviewer

"Assessment of Implementation of the Spotlight Initiative to End Family Violence in Six

Caribbean Countries during the COVID-19 Pandemic" —Caribbean Journal of Psychology (CJP) Special Issue on Domestic Violence in the Caribbean. Reviewer for Summer 2021 Publication

Department Committees

PhD Faculty Search Committee (Syracuse University Marriage and Family Therapy Program) — Student representative (Fall 2022-Present)

Department Climate Forum Co-Facilitator (2019-2022)

Syracuse University Marriage and Family Therapy Program - Doctoral Student Representative

(2019- 2020)

BIPOC Student Consultation Online Group Facilitator (Spring 2023)

Advocacy

Facilitator of support groups for Black students of Syracuse University (Summer 2020)

Addressing Mental Health in Women of the Black Community (Fall 2019)

Research

Research Assistant - Mental Health, Economic Well-Being, and Experiences of Farming in
Resettled Refugees in Syracuse, NY (in progress).

Teacher's Assistant

Course: Master level Cultural Diversity (Spring 2021)
Course: Master's level Research Methods (Fall 2019)

Guest Lectures

Contextual Family Therapy — Master's Course, Pacific Lutheran University, Marriage and Family Therapy Program, April 14, 2022.

Power, Violence and Control — Undergraduate Class, Falk College, Syracuse University, November 10, 2021. Instructor: Ambika Krishnakumar.

Ableism, Master's Cultural Diversity, Department of Marriage and Family Therapy, Syracuse University, March 8, 2020. Instructor: Linda Stone-Fish

Sexism, Master's Cultural Diversity, Department of Marriage and Family Therapy, Syracuse University, March 1, 2020. Instructor: Linda Stone-Fish

Structural Family Therapy, Master's course on Theory, Department of Marriage and Family Therapy, Syracuse University, October 16, 2019. Instructor: Dyane Watson.

Independent Course Lectures

Couples Theory and Techniques course — Master's residential course, Summer Session 1 May 24, 2022- June 30, 2022.

Couples Theory and Techniques course — Master's online course, Spring 2023 (January, 17, 2023 – May 8, 2023)

Couples Theory and Techniques course — Master's online course, Summer 2023 (May 8- August 25).

Panel Discussions

Understanding Racial Trauma from an Intersectional Perspective, Department of Marriage and Family Therapy, Chapman University, April 30, 2021.

Media Mentions

The Daily Orange, October, 2021, Mental Health Professionals and Connecting Virtually https://dailyorange.com/2021/09/professionals-struggle-connect-virtually-mental-health-declines-nationally/

Bridge Street, News Channel 9 WSYR-TV, Segment Topic: Through a partnership with the Marriage & Family Therapy Department at Syracuse University's Falk College, Syracuse Community Connections is offering free virtual and in-person mental health services to members of the Syracuse community. https://www.localsyr.com/bridge-street/need-to-talk-program-offers-free-therapy-counseling-to-cny/

Inspiration for the Nation Hour. Aug. 9, 2020. https://soundcloud.com/ inspirationforthenation/inspiration-for-the-nation-hour-2-8-9-2020

Internships

Peace Syracuse, NY– Headstart Program (October 2021- Present)

Syracuse Community Connections Syracuse, NY (August 2019-August 2021) - Through the partnership of Syracuse University and Syracuse Community Connections, I serve as a doctoral student therapist at the center and provide therapeutic services predominantly for individuals, couples and families of the Black community in Syracuse. While there, I have also held group workshops where I have worked with young women within the community and addressed how anxiety and depression looks within the context of Black women.

Doctoral Student Therapist, Couple and Family Therapy Center, Syracuse University — Fall 2019- Present

Navos Mental Health (CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY INTERN THERAPIST), Burien, WA (Jan 2018-May 2019)

Certifications and Memberships

NYS Mandatory Reporter
Future Professorial Program (In Progress)
American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy
CITI Research Certified