Navigating, Negotiating, and Advocating: Black Mothers, their Young Daughters, and White Schools

Chasity Bailey-Fakhoury, PhD

Grand Valley State University

* Please address correspondence to Dr. Chasity Bailey-Fakhoury, College of Education, Grand Valley State University, 401 W. Fulton St., Grand Rapids, MI 49504. E-mail: baileych@gvsu.edu.

Abstract

This study convened focus groups to identify the strategies suburban Detroit, middle-class, African American mothers use to promote a positive racial identity in their elementary-age daughters attending a predominantly White school. Findings demonstrate that mothers engage three strategies that reflect a dimension of the motherwork concept: presence, imaging, and code-switching. These strategies are aimed at influencing the development of a positive racial-gender identity and are embedded within a gendered racial socialization process.

Keywords: African American mothers, Detroit, elementary-age daughters, racial socialization, gender, motherwork, racial-gender identity

Since 2000, African Americanⁱ families have continued to leave the city of Detroit for its surrounding suburban communities (United States Census Bureau, 2000; United States Census Bureau, 2005; United States Census Bureau, 2010). Many African American parents have moved their families to upper-middle class, predominantly White communities such as Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Farmington Hills, the Grosse Pointes, Novi, and West Bloomfield in hopes of giving their children better educational opportunities. For some parents such a move is a double-edged sword. Children receive opportunities they would not have if they remained in the inner city, yet these same children are placed into a school environment where they may be the only African American or one of only a few.

In environments where African Americans are in the numerical minority they are faced with high visibility, resulting in the pressure to perform and feelings of constantly being surveilled by members of the dominant group (Jackson & Stewart, 2003; Jackson, Thoits, & Taylor, 1995; Mc Donald & Wingfield, 2009). They also experience social isolation/alienation stemming from the exaggeration of difference between themselves and dominant group members

(Jackson, et al., 1995; Jackson & Stewart, 2003). In addition, they are trapped and limited in their role as the *spokesperson* for all Black people or as the *expert* on all things associated with being Black in America (Mc Donald & Wingfield, 2009). In predominantly White schools, Black students who have come from racially homogenous school settings will now tread in territory “consciously or half-consciously [thought of as] *white places*” (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996, p. 51). These physical spaces (classrooms, cafeterias, playgrounds, etc.) become racialized, establishing who belongs and where, and who controls the space. This exercise in racial demarcation is played out through everyday microaggressions (e.g., avoidance, exclusion, being told one speaks well, exposure to stereotypic images in curriculum materials) or subtle actions of discrimination (Deitch et al., 2003; Masko, 2005; McCabe, 2009; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). The toll of racial tokenism (Jackson et al., 1995) and of having to function in racialized spaces can lead to increased levels of depression, anxiety, frustration, anger, underperformance, and a myriad of other deleterious academic, emotional, psychological, and physiological effects (Chavous, Harris, Rivas, Helaire, & Green, 2004; Deitch et al., 2003; Feagin et al., 1996; Jackson & Stewart, 2003; Smith et al., 2007).

The challenge many of these African American families then face is how to promote a healthy, positive racial identity in their children—as residents of communities with histories of racial animus—while navigating an institution that perpetuates the racial order (Tatum, 2004). A person’s identification with a racial group has personal, interpersonal, and sociological implications. Many investigations into Black racial identity development apply Cross’s 1971 Nigrescence Model. Nigrescence—a French word meaning the “process of becoming black”—postulated that there are five stages that a person goes through to develop a Black identity. In 2001 Cross refined his Nigrescence theory and called it NT-E or Nigrescence Theory-Expanded (Simmons, Worrell and Berry, 2008). The NT-E defines Black racial identity as a multidimensional set of attitudes which fall under three worldviews: Pre-encounter (an identity shaped by the dominant group where one is ignorant of one’s real racial identity), Immersion-Emersion (discards the old identity and actively acquires the new, truer identity), and Internalization (one is secure in one’s racial identity and feels connected to their ancestry and the larger Black community). The attitudes reflecting the Internalization worldview are considered to be positive and psychologically healthy. Understanding how parents promote a positive racial identity is important because such an identity is associated with “positive psychological outcomes, such as an increased tolerance of frustration, a stronger sense of purpose, enhanced school performance, and greater security in self” (Sanders Thompson, 2001, p. 156).

Framing this already complex challenge is metro Detroit’s history of contentious race relations. How do parents promote a positive racial identity in their children attending predominantly White schools in a region with a legacy of such a stark urban/suburban divide (i.e., Black/White) stemming from America’s racist social structure and taking root through Henry Ford’s need for a larger automotive workforce, the use of restrictive covenants and redlining to calcify

residential segregation, rebellion/riot/uprising, and forced bussing? As recently as 2005, the Grosse Pointe school board was pressured by district parents to re-register all students in an effort to expose nonresidents (Walsh-Sarnecki & Mask, 2005). Many local observers believed this was an attempt by the school district to stem the tide of an increasing African American population—a group assumed to be interlopers, non-tax paying persons availing themselves of the high-performing Grosse Pointe Public Schools.

Background

In the face of events such as what occurred in Grosse Pointe, and given the regional history and ongoing demographic shifts, this study was concerned with identifying the strategies used by middle class, suburban Detroit, African American mothers to promote a positive racial identity in their elementary-age daughters attending a predominantly White school.

According to Bentley, Adams, and Stevenson (2009), parents influence the racial identity development of their children through the process of racial socialization. This practice of transmitting messages regarding the meaning and significance of race and racial stratification, managing intergroup and intragroup relations, and personal and group identity (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Lesane-Brown, 2006) is common for African American parents, but even more so for mothers because they are the ones to spearhead the socialization process (Harris & Graham, 2007; Thomas & King, 2007). Concentrating on African American women and their daughters requires exploring how being Black and female uniquely affects racial socialization and racial identity development. Therefore, central to this study is an acknowledgement of the simultaneity of experiencing the world through these two marginalized identities. Paying explicit attention to how race and gender intersect offers insight into the distinct ways mothers may be socializing their daughters because they attend a predominantly White school.

Finally, studies (Anderson, 1999/2011; Lacy, 2007) have examined the complexities of developing, negotiating, and maintaining a variegated Black middle-class identity, however, these studies have not evaluated the gender dynamic. Studies of racial socialization and its attendant practices have tended to focus on urban, lower-income African American parents and their adolescent and/or adult children (Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008). These findings are then extrapolated to *all* African Americans, reinforcing the idea of an African American monolith. However, what may work for inner-city African American parents with children attending predominantly Black schools may not address the realities faced by suburban parents with children attending predominantly White schools. Additionally, we know that a child's awareness of race and racial identity is present as early as three years of age (Clark & Clark, 1939; Comer & Poussaint, 1992; Tatum, 1997); yet, we rarely see such studies of African American parents and their prepubescent children. Such a reality warrants further investigation into the nature and processes of the racial socialization practices of suburban, middle-class mothers of elementary-age children and how these practices are used to influence the child's development of a racial identity.

Method

This study aims to broaden our understanding of African American within-group differences by utilizing an intersectional perspective (Dill & Zambrana, 2009) that explores how race, gender, and class intersect to affect parental socialization practices in predominantly White suburban contexts. The social-cognitive learning theory was also applied to investigate how mothers promote the desired racial-gender identity they seek to develop in their girls. The study is part of a larger mixed-methods project. The larger project administered surveys during Phase 1 (to measure racial socialization practices, racial identity development, and gender identity development of mothers) and convened focus groups during Phase 2. Convenience and snowball sampling techniques resulted in 106 survey respondents. At the end of the survey mothers were asked if they would volunteer to participate in a roundtable discussion focused on the topics covered in the survey. Of those consenting, mothers whose availability overlapped were scheduled for participation. The data for the present study come from the six focus groups (and one telephone interview)ⁱⁱ that were convened during Phase 2. Ultimately, 21 mothers participated.

Sample Characteristics

Mothers who (a) self-identified as Black/African American; (b) lived in a predominantly White, middle-class suburb in Macomb, Oakland, or Wayne County that experienced an increase in its African American population from 2000-2005; and (c) had at least one daughter aged 5-11 who attended a local public or private elementary school were eligible to participate in this project. The mothers' ages ranged from 27-54 ($M = 39.17$ years, $SD = 6.22$). All but two of the participants were married; the majority had earned at least a B.A. degree and were employed in professional occupations. Median household income was reported as \$75,000-\$100,000. All three (Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb) counties were represented, with the majority residing in Oakland County.

Recruitment

Mothers participating in the focus groups were recruited from the larger pool completing the survey. Recruitment for the survey respondents was conducted using multiple modes and sites such as: utilizing personal and professional contacts, Parent-Teacher Associations/Organizations (PTA/PTOs), advertising in church bulletins and visiting Detroit churches (Brown & Brown, 2003), and soliciting the memberships of various civic and professional organizations.

Procedure

Mothers participated in focus groups that were convened from June to August 2011 in a conference room on the campus of a large, local university (see Table 1). Focus group discussions lasted from 60 to 150 minutes, and refreshments were provided for the participants. Of the six focus groups, groups 1 and 2 had three participants, group 3 had two participants, and the remaining

groups had four participants in each. None of the participants in a group were previously acquainted.

I facilitated the sessions using a semi-structured interview guide and took notes as the conversations transpired to augment the audio recordings. Mindful of Madriz's idea that a focus group is a form of "collective testimony" (2000, p. 842), the goal was to have the participants feel as unfettered as possible in sharing their experiences, thoughts, and beliefs. Therefore, I took on the role of moderator and not conductor, consciously minimizing my position while letting the dialogue unfold naturally. However, interjections asking for clarification or to realign the discussion to a specific topic were made when needed. Esterberg has noted that by "enabling women to speak with others who have had similar experiences, focus groups help empower women" (2002, p. 109); this type of outcome is considered to be extremely important, especially when applying an intersectional perspective.

Each participant was also asked to choose her own pseudonym. These are the pseudonyms attached to quotes and references to the mothers throughout this article (Table 1). As required by the IRB, a resource sheet was made available to participants who may have needed additional assistance with topics or issues that arose during the focus group. The resource sheet provided contact information for local chapters of the NAACP and Urban League as well as book titles that mothers might select to discuss sensitive issues with their daughters. The table with these sheets also included selected books from the resource sheet. One such book, which many mothers were already acquainted with and had an affinity for, was *Lola at the Library*. The recurring pseudonym of Lola demonstrates this fact. At the end of each focus group mothers were asked if they wanted to receive updates regarding the study and whether they would be willing to answer further questions. Each mother participating in the focus group was compensated with a \$10 gas card in addition to having university parking fees covered.

Analytic Framework

The data were analyzed using a sociopsychological orientation (White, 2009), guided by the intersectional perspective and social-cognitive learning theory. The sociopsychological framework makes use of macro- and micro-level analyses—in this case, to investigate the strategies African American mothers use to promote a positive racial-gender identity in their elementary-age daughters attending a predominantly White school.

An intersectional perspective provides a vehicle through which we can observe how social systems, structures, and institutions make racial socialization and racial identity viable and necessary features of our social world. Furthermore, the intersectional perspective values the production of knowledge that emanates from the actors, those whose knowledge claims were once ignored but are now centered and validated. While the voices of Black women have historically been silenced in social science research, this study centers their voices and illuminates their experiences. The intersectional perspective also illuminates the structural arrangements that protect and promote the American racial-gender hierarchy, as well as narratives that seek to undermine it, because the perspective is "a systematic approach to understanding human life and behavior that is rooted in

the experiences and struggles of marginalized people” (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 4). This perspective is primarily utilized because it reveals the dynamic interplay between varying social locations, in this case, by treating race as being gendered and gender as being raced. Therefore, racial socialization can be examined within the context of gender and gender socialization can be examined within the context of race.

The social-cognitive learning theory asserts that most of an individual’s learning—and therefore their socialization—results from “observation, modeling, vicarious reinforcement, and imitation” (Lesane-Brown, 2006, p. 402). The focus groups were used as a means for elucidating the intra- and interpersonal components of the gendered racial socialization work mothers do that influences their daughters’ race-gender identity development, a process rooted in meta-cognitive social experiences primarily engaged at the micro-level (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Data Analysis

The data analysis made use of Glaser’s (1978) constant comparative method. The sessions were audiotaped and transcribed; NVivo 9 software aided the analysis. Codes were initially identified based upon concepts that appeared immediately across several focus groups (e.g., hair). Many of these were then connected to the major constructs under study: racial socialization messages, racial identity, and gender identity. While coding, a race-gender identity theme eventually emerged, as did aspects of the work mothers engage in inside and outside the school setting. Themes were connected using diagramming, not simply identified (e.g., the centrality of the racial-gender identity construct to racial socialization messaging). Typologies were derived based on the diagrams that were created mapping various strategies and their use. Internal validity was ensured by triangulation of data. Notes taken by me while attending several parent network association meetings to recruit potential members were evaluated for thematic connections, as was my research journal. Member checking was also used (Creswell, 2003).

Results

Promoting a positive racial-gender identity in young African American girls attending a predominantly White school is a challenge faced by African American mothers that requires them to do thoughtful, intense, and emotional racial socialization work. Results from this study demonstrated that racial-gender identity development triggers the enactment of three particular strategies: presence, imaging, and code-switching. These strategies represent one dimension of Patricia Hill Collins’ *motherwork* phenomena. Motherwork is the “reproductive labor” that women of color engage in to ensure the survival of family, community, and self (Collins, 1994). For the mothers in this study, African American motherwork is concerned with helping their Black girls develop into courageous, whole and intact Black women with strong self-concepts and sense of purpose while living in a racist and sexist society. This requires striking a delicate balance between acquiring a strong sense of self and self-definition (emotional

survival) while challenging oppression (physical survival). The three motherwork strategies of presence, imaging, and code-switching are used to thwart possible psychological and/or physical injury.

Presence consists of the keen awareness of one's aesthetic appearance and the role it plays as mothers advocate for their daughters; maintaining visibility in the school and at school functions; and being strategic in interactions with school personnel to gain leverage that will benefit daughters. *Imaging* consists of mothers working hard to teach and show their daughters how to embrace their phenotypic features through the use of role models, home décor, and consumables. *Code-switching* helps daughters navigate various cultural milieus with dexterity.

Presence

Presence has three aspects. It is conceptualized as a mother's aesthetic presentation, as a mother being visible in the school, and as a mother's strategic interactions with school personnel. Mothers deploy this strategy as a means for eschewing mainstream characterizations of Black womanhood and motherhood while providing their daughters with an accessible, positive Black female archetype to observe and imitate.

Aesthetic Presence

Mothers in this study were keenly aware of their aesthetic appearance and how it could hinder or bolster their use of the presence strategy as they advocate for their daughters. Repeatedly, mothers across every focus group spoke to the importance of appearing kempt and appropriate while being visible and interacting in various school settings. Over three-fourths of the mothers spoke to feeling as though they bore a burden—that of representing all African American/Black women when encountering the predominantly White school or community setting. These mothers felt the need to carry themselves in the best light as they might be *the* African American/Black person by which White neighbors, parents, or teachers would judge all other others. In this way, mothers were very sensitive to how they appeared when dropping their children off at school; when working at a book sale; or when attending parent-teacher conferences, sporting events, or school plays. The preoccupation with being viewed as the spokesperson/representative for all African American/Black people carried over into the everyday activities African American mothers engaged in while moving through the predominantly White spaces of their community.

Aesthetic presence also encompasses pronunciation, tone of voice, and the awareness of gestures used. Lola C. stated:

My appearance, yes, my articulation of certain words, my demeanor, how I'm sitting in my chair, everything . . . my voice. In my experience, Black women's voices have a little bit more bass and are a little bit more heavier than Caucasian women and I keep that in mind.

As Lola C. interacts with her daughter's White female teachers, she is acutely aware of the mainstream belief that Black women are boisterous, quick-to-confrontation Sapphires (West, 1995), while White women are stereotyped as

opposites in every way. Lola C. continued to explain why she modifies certain behaviors:

They [White women] speak more softer and gentler and whatever. And it's perceived that they're . . . I can talk to you and still convey my point but not have you think I'm a bitter Black woman who's a militant. . . . But I want [my daughter] to have that balance of bring it and show it, but I want [her] to feel comfortable in who [she is] and still, you know, be accepted.

These mothers felt that it is important to represent themselves and their daughters well when in the public sphere. They work hard to shatter the stereotypes and caricatures of Black women that prevail in American society. Not only is this deconstruction important for these women, it also seems they believe that it is vitally important for their daughters' self-concept and self-image. To transcend and ultimately destroy Black female stereotypes, daughters need instructions on how to "bring it and show it" while being comfortable in one's own skin. Teaching daughters this delicate balance is one way mothers promote a positive racial-gender identity.

Visible Presence

For mothers in this study, being visibly present in the elementary schools of their daughters was paramount. Visible presence differs from the final aspect of presence—presence through strategic interactions—in level of intention. Presence through strategic interactions intensifies the level of intentionality by making one's attendance the catalyst for producing tactical exchanges that further a particular goal. Whereas being seen/visible is purposeful and deliberate, yet the intention is to simply have one's attendance be noted as Toni demonstrated when she commented:

I am visible in a sense that . . . field trips I'm there. Staff appreciation, I'm there. Stuff that is happening after the little fair or fundraiser, PTO in the evenings, I'm there.

Just like Toni, all of the mothers in this study shared that it was important for their daughters' sense of self and for their own well-being to be visible at school plays, fundraisers, parent-teacher conferences, parent group activities, and to just occasionally "show your face" on an ordinary school day. Doing so demonstrates that you are an involved parent committed to her child's education—that you are an active and engaged mother. Rita explained it quite succinctly:

I can't just turn over my daughter and let it be, trusting that she'll be all right. . . . I'm not like some of these other moms. I have to be in her teacher's classroom, in the school, letting them know that I'm not some passive momma, letting my daughter know I'm doing what's best for her.

Presence through Strategic Interactions

Two-thirds of the mothers indicated they are calculated in their interactions with school personnel. When encountering personnel, especially their daughters' teachers, the mothers view these encounters as opportunities to gain leverage to be used to benefit their daughters in some fashion, either at present or sometime in the future. They stated that interactions with teachers can be used to

elicit information that not all parents are privy to, to assess what supplies or additional things the classroom teacher needs/desires, or to forge an open line of communication between the mother and the teacher. Taylor said:

I definitely gain favor with all my teachers. I go in to win you with kindness. Intentionally to be like . . . is there anything you need in the classroom? [My daughter] gains favor in her class based on what I do, my participation.

In these instances the mothers seek to do what they deem necessary to give their daughters an advantage in a setting where they may be disadvantaged because of their race and/or gender. Strategic interactions with the teachers and other school personnel may erode barriers that were erected as a result of faulty perceptions and preconceived notions—interactions that provide another vehicle for dismantling stereotypes of Black mothers and their daughters. Kim. S. demonstrated this when she commented:

But I do . . . try to come in and speak to the teacher, and [I] did tell her that I'm your ally and I'm on your side. I'm here with you however I can help you, and what do you need, and what can we do to work together, and speak to each other and help the children to gain their goal 'cause I know how hard it is. . . . I tried to become a kind of a parent-peer with the teacher in the classroom and kind of be assistive.

The relationship and network that Kim S. has sought to form with the teacher is one of equality, where each understands the part she plays in the academic success of Kim S.'s daughter. Kim S. understands that establishing this "parent-peer" relationship will have tangible benefits for her daughter.

These two aspects of presence—visible presence and presence through strategic interactions—allow mothers to flex social capital that will ultimately help their daughters. Portes (1998) states that "through social capital, actors can gain direct access to economic resources; . . . they can increase their cultural capital through contacts with experts or individuals of refinement; . . . or, alternatively, then can affiliate with institutions that confer valued credentials" (p. 4). Caughy and O'Campo suggest that "[p]ositive parent involvement in child-rearing is the social capital within the family that supports healthy child development" (2006, p. 143). As mothers seek to rear their daughters with a positive racial-gender identity in a predominantly White school setting, they must tap into their social capital reservoir to provide access, eventually leading to optimal outcomes for their daughters. While flexing social capital, mothers must simultaneously become adept at amassing and transmitting cultural capital or the "high-status linguistic and cultural competencies (e.g., values, preferences, tastes) that students inherit from their parents and other 'cultural brokers' such as siblings, peers, and 'institutional agents'" (Strayhorn, 2010, p. 309). The suburban, middle-class mothers in this study possess the financial means to be visibly present in their daughters' schools on any given day and assert their social capital, which permits them to eventually transmit cultural capital to the benefit of their daughters.

Imaging

Another strategy mothers said they employ to promote a positive racial-gender identity and to advocate for their daughters is that of imaging. Imaging means that mothers consciously seek out positive depictions/reflections of Black female identity as a counter-narrative. Young Black girls “are bombarded early with negative messages about their worth, intelligence, and beauty” (Lipford Sanders & Bradley, 2005, p. 301), making mothers sensitive to the images they put before their daughters.

Imaging through Hair

One area that led to very impassioned conversations was that of hair and how mothers of these young girls deal with this issue. The subject of hair has a long, turbulent history in the African American community, especially for African American women (Collins, 2000). One’s hair texture, length, hairstyle, and adornments can signify a great deal about the person (Johnson, 2013). Numerous African American women have *hair stories* to tell. As young African American girls attempt to find their place in their family, clique, school, or community—in a society that places overt value on long, flowing, straight blonde locks—hair and its imbued meaning can be a harbinger of things to come. These mothers were supremely cognizant of the American standard of beauty, realizing that their daughter’s phenotypic features are deemed antithetical. With unanimity, mothers believe that it is essential to provide various alternatives to the American standard of beauty. They pride themselves in the ways they style and adorn their daughters’ hair, styles that many non-Black girls are unable to achieve. Mothers work hard to teach and show their daughters how to embrace their natural self and to take pride in what is uniquely their own. Renee demonstrated this tactic:

So she [my daughter] was just like, “Well I just don’t understand why my hair does this and M’s [her White classmate] hair doesn’t do this.” And I said, “Well there’s different grades and textures. And we have that book right there, the *I Love My Hair*” [pointing to book on resource table]. “And we have some other books that speak to that as well.” And I was like, everybody’s hair is not the same. . . . But I think sometimes it bothers her just because she wants to be like the other girls. And I’m like, well this is just something that’s gonna--that makes you unique. As I tell you all the time, God makes everybody different. Mommy can’t wear her hair down without some form of chemical or something and you’re not ready for chemicals. So we just gonna do what little girls do. I said, look, you’re only eight. Little girls wear ponytails.

Over three-fourths of the mothers were forced to address the subject of imaging through hair when their daughters came home asking to wear their hair in styles worn by their White counterparts. Daughters were told that their hair was “unique,” “special,” “different,” and could not be worn “down” or “long.” Tiffany shared a story about how mothers help their daughters to recognize and appreciate their hair’s versatility:

They had spirit week and it was 70s day. And so we went online to look at how Black folks looked in the 70s. And she was like, can I do an afro? . . . And I talked to her. I said, “Now let me be clear. Don’t be surprised when you go to school and they [non-Black classmates] gonna want to touch it. . . There’s a certain beauty to that that they don’t even have that option no matter how much grease and gel they want to put in.” And she was so proud and her teacher and everybody else. She came back. She said, “Mommy you were right. They [daughter’s classmates] were all like, ‘Wow! They told me you should do that every day.’ It was cool, Mom.”

The mothers said they reinforce messages about hair by pointing to (through family members, friends, passersby, television shows, or magazines) images of girls and hairstyles that were appropriate and attainable for their daughters. Mac provided an example of this:

I remember the Pantene commercial, you know, having shiny hair and [my oldest daughter] asked me one day, “Mommy, how come we don’t have shiny hair?” I said, “What do you mean?” And finally she shows me this commercial one day. I thought, oh, okay. And then Kenya Moore [Miss Michigan 1993, Miss USA 1993] became a spokesperson for Pantene and I was so happy. I’m like, “Babe, look, we’ve got shiny hair!” And so she’s like, okay.

Imaging through Role Models

Another aspect of imaging that mothers said they use is that of role models. This aspect of imaging has two prongs: role models from history and popular culture and; role models to interact with personally, who the daughters can pattern themselves after. Mothers felt that it was very important to provide their daughters with role models that reinforce a positive self-image. Vicky stated that something as seemingly innocuous as watching a tennis match can promote a positive racial-gender identity by reinforcing reflections of her daughter.

“I think sometimes a picture’s worth a thousand words. If you see Venus and Serena playing tennis, there’s no question in your mind that brown skin can play tennis.”

They were also keenly aware of the lack of role models in their daughters’ classrooms, schools, and after-school activities/organizations. For a majority of the mothers in this study, their daughters could go through the entire school day and not interact with one individual who “looked like them.” This reality was very disconcerting for many of the women in this study. Lola S. shared how difficult this can be:

And usually we find out in August who the teachers were. My daughter was almost in tears. She’s like, “Mom, you mean I’m never gonna have an African American teacher?” . . . So, I mean, she does notice that. She mentions it, but I think once she gets into the school year and gets going, she doesn’t let it affect her work or anything like that. But I think she is aware that, hey, I haven’t had an African American [teacher].

Lola S.'s daughter's reaction to not having an African American teacher since attending her predominantly White school exemplifies the potential impact such a reality can have on a child. Many in the general public might underestimate the level of awareness young children of color have when it comes to the absence of teachers who look like them.

Paris highlights what the majority of mothers shared, not only is it vitally important that young girls interact with African American female teachers/administrators but these young girls need to see women and men in non-stereotypical gender roles:

I would like to see more African American teachers in the school district, and men too. I mean, it's not even just from a race [standpoint]. I mean, there are no...the gym teacher is a man, right? I mean, stereotypical, that's it.

Mothers stated that they made efforts to involve their daughters in activities and organizations with predominantly Black memberships in hopes of providing tangible images of positive role models for their daughters. Lacy (2007) wrote that the Black middle-class parents of predominantly White Lakeview "find that developing a strong racial identity in a white environment requires intervention; learning 'who you are' needs to be reinforced through participation in black social organizations" (p. 172). To this end, families in the present study who left the city for the suburb were intervening by intentionally keeping their membership in their church home; enrolling their daughters in dance troupes, Brownie troops, ice skating groups, and various clubs that are located in Detroit or another predominantly Black city; and visiting racially- and culturally-specific institutions. Valerie reflected the importance of such efforts when she stated:

People are still trying to figure out what their identity is out here [in her Oakland County suburb]. And I just have to throw this out there too, that if you don't find an outlet . . . if you don't find connections outside of your [residential] community for your children, the odds are really high that they're gonna struggle with their self-identity as they get older if they only rely on the people in your [residential] community to befriend them.

Mothers said they also work hard to be a role model for their daughters, demonstrating how to balance normative and alternative gender role expectations. It was quite clear that these mothers are aware of prevailing narratives surrounding what is considered appropriate femininity. Females (as exemplified by White, non-Hispanic, class-privileged, gender norms in the U.S.) are to be quiet, reserved, dainty, and deferential. To be female is to exemplify the cult of true womanhood (Welter, 1966); it is normative, even if the majority of White American females realistically do not fit this mold. However, for young African American girls to excel in predominantly White spaces they cannot be a shrinking violet; they must be strong, independent, self-assured, and self-protective. Such alternative gender role expectations lead to accusations of being loud, emasculating, domineering, bitchy, mammies and Sapphires (a reality acknowledged by Lola C. as she explained the importance of modifying one's aesthetic presentation). The Black community is another space in which daughters

need to learn how to balance seemingly contradictory gender role expectations. Taylor referred to her own upbringing and the lessons she learned, which she hopes to recalibrate for her daughters. Taylor remarked:

My mom, she was so independent and I have it [independent streak] so bad that sometimes I have to kinda watch myself even as being a married woman . . . showing my daughter the balance of having an opportunity to work and perfect submission, where you are aligned with God, husband, and then you . . . so I think I make those changes in my daughter where I'm just like, "Ok, you can do all this, but you don't have to."

The independent streak that Taylor mentioned is what is sometimes referred to as the Black woman's burden (Haldeman, 2010; Hayes, 2012) or strong Black woman syndrome (Collins, 2000; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009). To be a caretaker of the family and community, Black women must be strong, assertive, and independent and do it all. Some Black men characterize these as good qualities in their mothers but hold in contempt the average Black female who dares do it all and who supposedly relegates her male partner to being an accessory, not a necessity. In this instance Taylor identified that she developed her strength and independence—qualities usually labeled as masculine—prior to marriage. However, at times she actively seeks to background those qualities while foregrounding submission to and alignment with her husband, expectations which generally reflect the White feminine ideal. She hopes to show her daughter that she can have/do it all as a woman, on her own, but that she does not *have* to. Her daughter can develop these qualities and has the option of foregrounding or backgrounding them at will; she does not have to be beholden to one set of gender expectations or another. Taylor, along with seventeen other mothers, seemed to be fully aware of the multidimensionality of the Black-female identity.

Imaging through Home Décor and Consumables

The last aspect of imaging that emerged in the focus groups was that of reinforcing reflections of their daughters through home décor and other consumables. These mothers have the necessary disposable income to purchase clothing, book bags, school supplies, books, posters, and other items that reflect the phenotypic features of their girls. Mothers in this study believed that countering the prevailing negative and controlling images (Collins, 2000) of Black women and girls is an important undertaking. They make conscious efforts to promote the development of a positive racial-gender identity by bringing into the home decorations and artifacts that celebrate blackness and the Black female identity. Paris shared:

And like you said, I buy books, African American books. And if a television or movie or a show comes on, like *The Wiz*ⁱⁱⁱ was on TV. . . . I wanted her to watch it. I ended up buying the DVD. I wanted her to see *The Wiz*.

Buying the DVD allows Paris to continually reinforce the image of a Black leading lady and all-Black cast depicting a version of a well known

children's story that it is rarely brought to life with Black people as its central characters. One mother shared that she went so far as to alter Halloween costumes of Euro-American characters so that they reflected a more Afrocentric aesthetic when they adorned her daughter. Many mothers reported that whenever they could purchase goods or bring items into the home that reinforced their daughter's image, they did. It appears that mothers believe this to be a key means of encouraging their daughters' positive self-image and racial-gender identity.

For these mothers, showing people with "brown skin" and other phenotypic characteristics that reflect their daughters' image being successful is vital to their development of a positive racial-gender identity in a setting where these characteristics may be constantly disparaged.

Code-Switching

In sociolinguistic parlance, code-switching refers to "the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction" (Nilep, 2006, p.1). For purposes of this study, code-switching is defined as one's ability to move between cultural milieus at will and with fluidity. It involves knowing the appropriate cultural rules, prescripts, vernacular, and behavior unique to each setting and how and when to use them. The mothers in this study demonstrated how they use code-switching to help their daughters navigate the dominant, minority status, and Afrocentric cultural terrains. The literature tells us that parental racial socialization occurs across these three distinct milieus of our sociopolitical structure. Boykin and Toms (1985) named this phenomenon the *triple quandary*. African American mothers must navigate these three terrains when socializing their children. The dominant culture reflects mainstream messages and expectations. The minority status experience is the milieu in which African American mothers must prepare their children to face an oppressive society, one predicated on subjugation and dominance. The Afrocentric/cultural experience is the setting in which African American mothers educate their children about racial pride, traditions, and customs unique to being African American.

Sometimes mastering the parameters of these milieus can be vital to one's very existence. Lola L.'s comment provided a profound example:

This is another thing I tell my children. We go to California at least twice a year. We haven't been there since 2009 because of the job changing. But every time I go we rent a vehicle. And when I call my children hear me say I don't want a red vehicle or a blue one because—my oldest girl is just now asking, "Why do you do that, Mommy?" . . . I have to tell her about Crips and Bloods. You need to know you go in the wrong neighborhood with the wrong color, you getting shot up. Don't play. . . . When she goes to California and she becomes an adult, she already knows that if something should happen to Mama we can't get a red car or blue car 'cause we going in the 'hoods because that's where our friends live.

What Lola L.'s comment reflects is the vitally important necessity of being able to traverse worlds fluidly. In the predominantly White, middle-class suburb that she

and her daughters reside in, preoccupation with the color of one's vehicle while driving through their community would most likely never occur. Nonetheless, Lola L. knows the world her daughters inhabit extends well beyond the predominantly White suburb. Preparing her daughters to survive and thrive in a wider world demands direct instruction in how to successfully navigate different spaces. The significance of acquiring the code-switching skills cannot be overstated.

Code-switching is an exercise involving hypotheticals, role play, and practice. Mothers and their male partners model behaviors and provide direct instruction for daughters regarding when and how one should switch codes. Mothers in the current study believed that to be successful, daughters should be able to fluidly traverse White spaces and the Black community Taylor shared:

I teach [my daughter] purposely how to flip the script. . . . So you know how to act in one setting and you know how to act in another setting. . . . She can flip it in her conversations. I watch her dialogue at school. . . . Every now and then she'll be like, "What up doe to her daddy" . . . But at the private club she'll, "Yes, I would like to have a Shirley Temple, please."

Kim S. called it "doing the Carlton."^{iv} She stated that her husband often puts on a cadence and mannerism that mimics the Carlton character. At other times, her husband interacts with their children using the prescripts and vernacular of the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, his birthplace. The ability to code-switch, "flip the script," or "do the Carlton," is a skill that has been transmitted generationally.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the strategies that suburban Detroit, middle-class, African American mothers use to promote a positive racial identity in their elementary-age daughters attending predominantly White schools. Three motherwork strategies emerged: presence, imaging, and code-switching. The fact that these women were partnered, educated, and gainfully employed with disposable income augmented their agency and their ability to navigate, negotiate, and advocate for their daughters. The motherwork that these women engage in is embedded in the socialization process. It is work that is multilayered, emotional, stressful, and race-gender based in the context of White spaces. It is not surprising that racial socialization is a gendered process. Collins writes that "Black daughters are raised...to anticipate carrying heavy responsibilities in their families and communities because these skills are essential for their own survival as well as for the survival of those for whom they will eventually be responsible" (1997, p. 270). In order to successfully carry that mantle they must have instilled in them a sense of racial pride so that they can aid the development and continuation of the community - to *uplift the race*.

While Black mothers are preparing their daughters to be strong, independent, and confident in order to take on gender role-specific responsibilities, they are—at the same time—socializing them into alternative

gender roles (Buckley & Carter, 2005). Consequently, young Black women are imagined/portrayed as being deficient because of possessing “masculine” qualities and of being the crux of what causes “black family dysfunction” according to Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965) and others (see Nathan Glazer, 1975). Mothers work hard to help girls deconstruct these portrayals in White spaces and also help girls actively balance conflicting gender expectations in the Black community.

The findings from this study go beyond explicating the construction and maintenance of Black middle-class identity in suburban contexts. This study increases our understanding of the nature of gendered racial socialization practices occurring in predominantly White suburbs. Motherwork strategies appear to foster gendered racial socialization that is deliberate, purposeful, and consuming. In particular, the activation of the presence strategy is fundamentally different than reported elsewhere. For instance, Lareau (2002) found that higher-income parents, regardless of race, engage in behaviors mimicking the presence-visibility and presence-strategic interactions aspects uncovered in this study.

Lareau (2002) wrote:

[t]he role of race in children's daily lives was less powerful than I had expected . . . in terms of . . . the strategies used for intervening in institutions [e.g., education/schools] *white and black middle-class parents engaged in very similar, often identical, practices with their children*” [emphasis added]. (p. 773)

This study’s findings question Lareau’s race-neutral conclusion. For the mothers in this study, race-gender identity is quite salient and it underpins the motherwork strategies they use. The impetus for intervening in their daughters’ schools, and thus the activation of these strategies, is race-gender based, not class-based.

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation to this study is that mothers who volunteered to participate in this investigation may have done so because they were more interested in racial issues; therefore, this study may be affected by selection bias. Mothers’ responses may also have been influenced by social desirability as they listened to comments shared by other participants. Also, this study was constructed to look at mothers only and therefore is narrow in scope. The assertions made about daughters, predominantly White schools, and predominantly White communities are predicated upon what the mothers reported during the focus groups.

Future research should compare class effects by also exploring the strategies used by lower-income, suburban African American mothers with children attending predominantly White schools. In this study that issue was not explored. However, this study appears to reveal that mothers’ abilities to exercise agency and resistance were aided by resources and skill sets they had acquired as a result of their educational attainment, career/vocational experiences, and social networks. Job security, disposable income, and memberships in various civic and professional organizations are believed to have contributed to mothers’ agency and advocacy. Although the impetus for employing the motherwork strategies

was racial-gender, it is apparent that efficacy was enhanced by various elements of social and/or cultural capital. Ultimately, the class construct has to be examined further.

Conclusion

Promoting a positive racial-gender identity for elementary-age daughters attending a predominantly White school necessitates African American motherwork strategies. It requires these mothers to negotiate White spaces, deconstruct the caricature of the Black woman/Black mother through presentations of themselves and their daughters, and train their daughters how to navigate conflicting gender role expectations within and between two disparate domains: White spaces and the Black community. In White spaces, mothers must model for their daughters the behavior/skills they consider necessary for their daughters to develop a positive racial-gender identity and to excel academically. This is an immensely important tactic used by the mothers. For these mothers, being a Black female means recognizing one's intellect and beauty, and possessing self-love in the face of racism and sexism—in a manner, transforming hegemonic power by eschewing commonly-held perceptions about Black girls (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). It also means acquiring an independent streak in order to engage in collectivist acts that support and nurture one's racial community. Principally, these mothers are “empower[ing] their daughters by passing on the everyday knowledge essential to survival as African-American women” (Collins, 2009, p. 112).

As predominantly White school districts increase their African American populations, this study and its findings regarding motherwork are critically important, especially during a period that many Americans would label “post-racial” or “colorblind.” Such labels are far from truly capturing the lived experiences of many persons of color. Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011) inform us that these labels reflect color-blind racism—racism that is subtle, negating institutional and structural racial inequality while advancing cultural deficiency and market-force explanations for existing racial disparities. These colorblind ideologies are at work in public school systems across this country. According to Cooper, these ideologies “compel educators to avoid understanding white privilege, remain unaware to the prevalence and/or effects of discriminatory practices, and perpetuate inequities that directly harm African American families and others” (2010, p. 343). As mothers seek to expose and challenge colorblind ideologies on behalf of their daughters and their community children, they run the risk of alienating educators who regard favorably mothers who serve “as cooperative volunteers rather than participate as equal power-holders” (Cooper, 2009, p. 380). Because “encounters with racism, classism, and sexism shape Black women's life experiences and inform their education activism” (Kakli, 2011, p. 179), Black mothers seek to disrupt differential power relations by engaging presence, imaging, and code-switching. African American motherwork in a predominantly white school aids daughter's development of a positive racial-gender identity, fosters resilience, and helps protect against real, perceived, and invisible racist and sexist threats.

Acknowledgments

This research is supported by a grant from the African American Success Foundation awarded to Chasity Bailey-Fakhoury. The author wishes to extend the deepest gratitude to the mothers who courageously shared their stories and to gratefully acknowledge the anonymous reviewers for their generous and insightful comments and the assistance of Beyond Words, Inc., in the editing and preparation of the final manuscript.

References

- Anderson, E. (2011). The social situation of the Black executive: Black and white identities in the corporate world. In R. Coates (Ed.), *Covert racism: Theories, institutions, experiences* (pp. 291-319). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill. (Original work published 1999)
- Beauboeuf-Lafontant, T. (2009). *Behind the mask of the strong Black woman: Voice and the embodiment of a costly performance*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Bentley, K., Adams V., & Stevenson, H. (2009). Racial socialization: Roots, processes, and outcomes. In H. Neville, B. Tynes, & S. Utsey (Eds.), *Handbook of African American psychology* (pp. 255-267). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Bonilla-Silva, E., & Dietrich, D. (2011). The sweet enchantment of color-blind racism in Obamerica. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 634, 190-206.
- Boykin, A. W., & Toms, F. D. (1985). Black child socialization. In H. P. McAdoo & J. L. McAdoo (Eds.), *Black children: Social, educational and parental environments* (pp. 159-173). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Brown, R. K., & Brown, R. E. (2003). Faith and works: Church-based social capital resources and African American political activism. *Social Forces*, 82, 617-641.
- Brown, T., Linver, M., Evans, M., & DeGennaro, D. (2009). African-American parents' racial and ethnic socialization and adolescent academic grades: Teasing out the role of gender. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38, 214-227.
- Buckley, T., & Carter, R. T. (2005). Black adolescent girls: Do gender role and racial identity impact their self-esteem? *Sex Roles*, 53, 647-661.
- Bussey, K., & Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation. *Psychological Review*, 106, 676-713.
- Caughy, M., & O'Campo, P. (2006). Neighborhood poverty, social capital, and the cognitive development of African American preschoolers. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 37, 141-154.
- Chavous, T., Harris, A., Rivas, D., Helaire, L., & Green L. (2004). Racial stereotypes and gender in context: African Americans at predominantly black and predominantly white colleges. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 51, 1-16.

- Clark, K., & Clark, M. (1939). The development of consciousness of self and the emergence of racial identification in Negro preschool children. *Journal of Social Psychology, 10*, 591-599.
- Collins, P. H. (1994). Shifting the center: Race, class, and feminist theorizing about motherhood. In E. Nakano Glenn, G. Chang, & L. Rennie Forcey (Eds.), *Mothering: Ideology, experience, and agency* (pp. 45-65). New York: Routledge.
- Collins, P. H. (1997). The meaning of motherhood in black culture and black mother-daughter relationships. In M. Baca Zinn, P. Hondagneu-Sotelo, & M. Messner (Eds.), *Through the prism of difference: Readings on sex and gender* (pp. 264-275). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Comer, J., & Poussaint, A. (1992). *Raising black children: Two leading psychiatrists confront the educational, social and emotional problems facing black children*. New York, NY: Plume.
- Cooper, C. W. (2009). Parent involvement, African American mothers, and the politics of educational care. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 42*(4), 379-394.
- Cooper, C. W. (2010). Racially conscious mothering in the “Colorblind” century: Implications for African American motherwork. In A. O’Reilly (Ed.), *Twenty-first century motherhood: Experience, identity, policy, agency* (pp. 338-351). New York: Columbia University.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Cross, W. E. (1991). *Shades of black: Diversity in African American identity*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Deitch, E. A., Barsky, A., Butz, R. M., Chan, S., Brief, A. P., & Bradley, J. C. (2003). Subtle yet significant: The existence and impact of everyday racial discrimination in the workplace. *Human Relations, 56*, 1299-1324.
- Dill, B., & Zambrana, R. (2009). *Emerging intersections: Race, class, gender in theory, policy, and practice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Dotterer, A., McHale, S., & Crouter, A. (2009). Sociocultural factors and school engagement among African American youth: The roles of racial discrimination, racial socialization, and ethnic identity.” *Applied Developmental Science, 13*, 61-73.
- Esterberg, K. (2002). *Qualitative methods in social research*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Feagin, J., Vera, H., & Imani, N. (1996). *The agony of education: Black students at white colleges and universities*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glazer, N. (1975). *Affirmative discrimination: Ethnic inequality and public policy*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Haldeman, K. (2010). The “burden and blessing” of being a Black woman: Engaging intersectionality through an anthropology of pregnancy and motherhood among African American woman. In M. Berger and K. Guidroz (Eds.), *The intersectional approach: Transforming the academy through race, class, and gender* (pp. 210-228). Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Harris, Y., & Graham, J. (2007). *The African American child: Development and challenges*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing.
- Hayes, D. (2012). The Black woman’s burden. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, 29(2), 18-19.
- Helms, J. (1990). *Black and white racial identity: Theory, research, and practice*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Hill, S. A. (2001). Class, race, and gender dimensions of child rearing in African American families. *Journal of Black Studies*, 31, 494-508.
- Hughes, D., & Chen, L. (1997). When and what parents tell children about race: An examination of race-related socialization among African American families. *Applied Developmental Science*, 1, 200–214.
- Jackson, P.B., & Stewart, Q. T. (2003). A research agenda for the black middle class: Work stress, survival strategies, and mental health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 44, 442-455.
- Jackson, P.B., Thoits, P., & Taylor, H. (1995). Composition of the workplace and psychological well-being: The effects of tokenism on America's black elite. *Social Forces*, 74, 543-558.
- Johnson, E. (2013). *Resistance and empowerment in Black women’s hairstyling*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Kakli, Z. (2011). Doing the work: A portrait of an African American mother as an education activist. *Urban Review*, 43, 175-195.
- Lacy, K. (2007). *Blue-chip Black: Race, class and status in the new Black middle class*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lareau, A. (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. *American Sociological Review*, 67, 747-776.
- Lesane-Brown, C. (2006). A review of race socialization within black families. *Developmental Review*, 26, 400-426.
- Lipford Sanders, J., & Bradley, C. (2005). Multiple-lens paradigm: Evaluating African American girls and their development. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 83, 299-304.
- Madriz, E. (2000). Focus groups in feminist research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 835-850). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Masko, A. (2005). I think about it all the time: A 12-year-old girl's internal crisis with racism and the effects on her mental health. *The Urban Review*, 37, 329-350.
- Mc Cabe, J. (2009). Racial and gender microaggressions on a predominantly-white campus: Experiences of black, Latina/o and white undergraduates. *Race, Gender & Class*, 16, 133-151.

- Mc Donald, K., & Wingfield, A. (2009). (In)visibility blues: The paradox of institutional racism. *Sociological Spectrum*, 29, 28-50.
- Moynihan, D. P. (1965). *The Negro family: The case for national action*. Washington, DC: Office of Policy Planning and Research, U.S. Department of Labor.
- Nilep, C. (2006). Code switching in sociocultural linguistics. *Colorado Research in Linguistics*, 19, 1-21.
- Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 1-24.
- Sanders Thompson, V.L. (2001). The complexity of African American racial identification. *Journal of Black Studies*, 32, 155-165.
- Sellers, R., Smith, M., Shelton, N., Rowley, S., & Chavous, T. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2, 18-39.
- Simmons, C., Worrell, F., & Berry, J. (2008). Psychometric properties of scores on three black racial identity scales. *Assessment*, 15, 259-276.
- Smith, W., Allen, W., & Danley, L. (2007). Assume the position . . . you fit the description: Psychosocial experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American male college students. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51, 551-578.
- Strayhorn, T. (2010). When race and gender collide: Social and cultural capital's influence on the academic achievement of African American and Latino males. *The Review of Higher Education*, 33, 307-332.
- Suizzo, M., Robinson, C., & Pahlke, E. (2008). African American mothers' socialization beliefs and goals with young children. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29, 287-316.
- Tatum, B. (1997). *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria: And other conversations about race*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Tatum, B. (2004). Family life and school experience: Factors in the racial identity development of black youth in white communities. *Journal of Social Issues*, 60, 117-135.
- Thomas, A., & King, C. (2007). Gendered racial socialization of African American mothers and daughters. *Family Journal*, 15, 137-142.
- United States Census Bureau. (2000). Retrieved from (<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>).
- United States Census Bureau. (2005). *American Community Survey*. Retrieved from http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en
- United States Census Bureau. (2010). Retrieved from (<http://2010.census.gov/>).
- Walsh-Sarnecki, P., & Mask, T. (2005, May 17). Parents want address checks for schools; Those near Detroit seek crackdown on outsiders. *The Detroit Free Press*, p. A1.
- Welter, B. (1966). The cult of true womanhood: 1820-1860. *American Quarterly*, 18, 151-174.

- West, C. M. (1995). Mammy, sapphire, and jezebel: Historical images of Black women and their implications for psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy*, 32(3), 458-466.
- White, M. (2009). Sociopsychological processes in racial formation: A case study of the autobiographies of Black Panther Party members. In T. Koditschek, S. Cha-Jua, & H. Neville (Eds.), *Race struggles* (pp. 158-177). Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Table 1: Mothers Participating in the Focus Groups^v

Pseudonym	Focus Group	County of Residence
Lola C.	FG #1	Oakland
Taylor	FG #1	Oakland
Kim S.	FG #1	Oakland
Ruth	FG #2	Wayne
Monique	FG #2	Wayne
Rita	FG #2	Macomb
Sherry	FG#3	Macomb
Vicky	FG#3	Oakland
Mac	FG#4	Oakland
Natasha	FG#4	Oakland
Auntie	FG#4	Oakland
Toni	FG#4	Wayne
Kim D.	FG#5	Oakland
Valerie	FG#5	Oakland
Tiffany	FG#5	Oakland
Lola L.	FG#5	Oakland
Renee	FG#6	Oakland
Lola S.	FG#6	Wayne
Christina	FG#6	Wayne
Paris	FG#6	Oakland
Lashawn	Phone Interview	Oakland

ⁱ The terms African American and Black are used interchangeably throughout this work.

ⁱⁱ A phone interview was conducted for a mother who wanted to participate but could not attend any of the scheduled focus groups.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Wiz is the 1978 Berry Gordy produced adaptation of the all-Black 1975 Tony awarding-winning play *The Wiz: The Super Soul Musical "Wonderful Wizard of Oz."* The Gordy adaptation was a feature-length film starring Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Nipsey Russell, and Richard Pryor. It made its television debut in the early 1980s.

^{iv} Carlton Banks was the African American male character raised in Bel Air on the television show *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, starring Will Smith. Banks attended a prestigious, private, White, all-boys prep school in one of the most affluent communities in California.

^v A few mothers chose the name Lola as a result of various trade books and resources that were set up on a table in the conference room. The book "Lola at the Library" by Anna McQuinn and Rosalind Beardshaw was one such book that mothers stated they had read with their daughters as they perused the items on the resource table.