Mothering While Black

BOUNDARIES AND BURDENS OF MIDDLE-CLASS PARENTHOOD

Dawn Marie Dow

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

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To my spouse and my daughters, who bring joy to my life every day

And to my mother and late maternal grandmother

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Acknowledgments

I did not write this book alone. An undeniable truth is that, although writing may, at times, be a solitary process, completing a project of this scope cannot be accomplished without the invisible labor of others. I sincerely appreciate the community of scholars, friends, and family who provided emotional, intellectual, and practical support throughout my research and writing. Without their assistance and belief in me, their respect for me as a scholar, and their appreciation of me as a person with non-academic demands in the larger world, this book would have been a much more difficult, if not impossible, task to complete.

I owe a special note of gratitude to every person who participated in this research. I thank them for taking time away from their families and jobs to open up to me about parts of their lives. They carved out time after bedtime, during outings to the park with their children, and during their lunchtime to share their beliefs and experiences about work, family, and parenting. Whenever I have given presentations about this research at conferences, African American women, men, mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters have approached me to tell me how these findings resonate with their personal experiences. Daughters have told me how their mothers worked to cultivate their self-esteem and self-reliance. Sons have said,

"My mother tells me to do the things you describe, but I still get hassled." Some people have approached me to explain where they think they fit into the categories that emerged in this research. African American mothers have told me how they appreciated hearing a version of motherhood that more closely matched their own experiences. I feel privileged to be the person with whom my study participants shared their perspectives and, thus, enabled the individuals I described above to see versions of themselves in sociological research. I hope other scholars continue to examine the complexity of the experiences and perspectives of African American mothers and other mothers of color from a range of socioeconomic positions and determine how they may or may not fit into existing analytical boxes. As novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie asserts, there is danger in a single story.

Like many first-time academic book writers, I used my dissertation as the initial draft of this manuscript. At the University of California, Berkeley, Raka Ray was my dissertation chair, and from the beginning, she believed in this project. Raka encouraged me to show how my research not only diversified what we know about work, family, and parenting by giving voice to the experiences of African American middle-class mothers, but also how it challenged fundamental assumptions within family and work scholarship and demanded that we deconstruct and unmake the categories of mother and worker. Throughout this process, Raka showed me that she cared about my intellectual and professional development and my nonacademic life (knowing these parts of life can hardly be separated from each other). She also encouraged me to develop my voice as both an academic scholar and a public sociologist who shares her research with audiences outside of traditional academic circles.

Barrie Thorne and Evelyn Nakano Glenn also provided invaluable feedback that strengthened the analysis in this book. Barrie pushed me to explore the complexity of the lives of the mothers I studied. She also encouraged me to honor their shared and divergent experiences and to be precise in the concepts I was using to describe them. I thank Evelyn Nakano Glenn for her contributions to the intellectual foundations of this research. Her research on mothering greatly informs this work. Evelyn pushed me to consider how changing social constraints and opportunities shape the life trajectories and expectations of mothers.

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She has been a loyal friend, and I have benefitted enormously from her scholarly brilliance over the years. Our regular writing dates and writing retreats and our discussions about academia and life more generally have sustained me over the years. I will always be grateful for the gift of her friendship and her encouragement to celebrate the milestones and engage in radical self-care.

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Portions of this book have also appeared in *Gender & Society*, *Sociological Perspectives*, and the *Sociology of Race & Ethnicity* and thus have benefitted from feedback from the anonymous reviewers and editors of each of those journals. Lila Stromer was an expert editor and helped me achieve my goal of producing a text that will hopefully be accessible to a broad range of audiences while maintaining the theoretical and empirical nuances of my

research. Melissa Brown, my research assistant at the University of Maryland, College Park, helped me format some citations and figures, and to create the map in the appendix of this book.

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Completing this book while raising twin toddlers, then school-aged children, and now tweens, at times, was challenging, but I would do it again in an instant. My daughters, Lillian and Lucy, have added additional layers of laughter, joy, and understanding to my life. I am privileged to be able to

watch Lucy and Lillian as they learn about, observe, analyze, and participate in the world. From feeling a tiny hand on my shoulder signaling that my current writing session was concluding to having precocious tweens reading over my shoulder, asking questions, and occasionally catching typos, their presence has always been a source of inspiration.

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Introduction

NOT PART OF THAT WHITE MOTHERHOOD SOCIETY

I interviewed Christine in her office between client meetings.[1] At the time of the interview, Christine owned her own business as an alternative medical practitioner and was engaged to marry a white man with whom she had been in a long-term relationship and with whom she had a son. Christine described how she started to feel more African American after she became a mother. She described having many white friends and knew many white families with whom she felt close and whose company she enjoyed, but after she became a mother, she found herself seeking out other African American middle-class mothers. Despite these close connections to a range of white people, during our interview, Christine easily rattled off a list of playgrounds that she no longer visited because of the cool reception she believed she received from the white mothers she met in these locations. She explained,

> The main thing about being a black mom that is probably important to say is not feeling included in white motherhood society. . . . It feels like when I go to the playground, there is the "them" and there is the "us." For the most part, black moms don't care about what other moms are doing, but I have friends who have left playgroups because the white women look at us funny or like you don't exist.

Christine never felt completely at ease or accepted when she visited parks in predominately white neighborhoods or participated in extracurricular activities comprised primarily of white mothers and children. At times, she even felt excluded and judged. Overall, Christine believed that white middle-class mothers distanced themselves from her and her son.

A key part of Christine's experience as a mother was feeling that motherhood was not an experience that transcended racial divisions; in fact, it reified those divisions and excluded her from the dominant white middle-class mothering experience. Christine's account illustrates the limits of existing research on middle-class families that focuses on how socioeconomic status impacts mothers' parenting practices without giving much consideration to how racial identity and gender further complicate those practices.[2] Based on Christine's experiences interacting with white middle-class mothers and her involvement in an African American middle-class mothers' group, Christine believed African American and white middle-class mothers had different parenting concerns, took different approaches to raise their children, and experienced motherhood differently.

Christine's account suggests how the intersections of race, class, and gender influence how mothers parent their children and how they navigate work and family. Christine's distinct parenting concerns resurfaced when she described how these three factors informed her approach to raising her son.

> I don't want his understandings of black folks to be from the media. You know, I want him to know black people as we are. [I also don't want him] growing up with that "black man" chip on the shoulder. Feeling we are weak. Whites have done something to us. We can't do something because of white people. I want him to understand racism in reality so when stuff comes up, we can deal with it, but I don't want him to go around looking for problems.

Despite being middle class and having plans to enroll her son in private school for his education, Christine felt limited in her ability to protect him from the realities of the intersection of racism and sexism—often referred to as gendered racism.[3] Her concerns focused on how her son would be perceived and received by society.

Christine's concerns are supported by research that demonstrates that African American children confront different treatment in school and

with law enforcement, which continues into adulthood, in workplace settings, often varying based on gender.[4] Sociologist Ann Ferguson, in *Bad Boys*, uses participant observation and interviews with African American boys, teachers, administrators, and relatives to provide insight into the dynamics of the school-to-prison pipeline.[5] Ferguson uncovers how racial identity, masculinity, and conforming (or not) to mainstream white middle-class institutional norms are implicated in how boys are labeled "troublemakers" and destined for jail or are labeled "school boys" and put on an academic path.[6] Indeed, scholars have consistently found that within schools, African American boys are more harshly disciplined and more often and more quickly labeled as aggressive and violent.[7] African American girls also confront negative assumptions about their behavior, including being viewed as aggressive, sassy, or unladylike.[8] This body of research has primarily focused on how educational institutions impact children and families from lower-income African American communities. Nevertheless, having additional resources did not remove these issues from Christine's parenting concerns, or from those of the other middle- and upper-middle-class African American mothers in my research. Christine worked to find ways to temper the impact of this societal reception on her son's self-concept and his ability to survive and thrive in life as an African American boy and future man.

When I asked Christine if she felt she had access to other African American middle-class mothers and families, she said, "Maybe not, I guess with my family and friends . . . but it seems like I have to search it out, and it doesn't seem like it is there. Like, I had to put it in my head that I wanted some black mommy-friends and I had to go find them." Christine's account underscores the invisible labor that she engaged in to gain access to other middle- and upper-middle-class African American mothers, families, and communities. Unlike white middle-class families that have a range of neighborhoods and schools that include other white middle-class families, African American middle-class families often have trouble finding middle-class communities that include a significant representation of people of color. This was true for Christine and the other mothers I interviewed for this research.

The extra and often invisible labor to create networks that include other middle-class African American families may be particularly salient

for mothers who live in large urban areas such as the San Francisco Bay Area, the location of my research. Richmond, Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco have all experienced a significant out-migration of African Americans to suburban areas, particularly among middle-class African Americans.[9] Indeed, the Bay Area, as an urban center, is not unique in facing this pattern; in recent years, many cities have established task forces to study the issue of the dwindling numbers of African Americans produced by out-migration.[10] This phenomenon is becoming common across the United States, as African Americans increasingly move from cities to suburban locales where there may be few other African Americans.[11]

The phenomenon of out-migration has left behind less robust African American neighborhoods in terms of population and a more residentially dispersed middle class. It has also produced heightened racial isolation for those African Americans who have moved to predominately white suburbs. Some scholars have referred to this phenomenon as a reverse migration, or the New Great Migration, relating it to the Great Migration of African Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century from Southern states to cities on the East and West Coast, and in the Midwest.[12]

To explain why having access to other middle-class African American families was important to her, Christine said,

> I want my son to be around black people. We have wonderful neighbors and friends who are white. . . . [But] I really didn't have any other black mother-friends who had kids the same age. I really want my son to be around black folks. . . . I have gone out of my way to find them, to make sure we see them frequently so he has black playmates.

Christine believed that providing her son with exposure to African American middle-class mothers and their children and families would help to support and develop his self-esteem and racial identity and increase his comfort level. It would also normalize his life experiences as "not unusual" because he is African American and middle class. On the one hand, Christine sought out African American middle-class mothers because she felt pulled toward these mothers based on cultural similarities, shared life experiences, and a desire to protect her son from racial bias. On the other hand, Christine also sought out these groups of mothers

because she felt pushed away and excluded in her interactions with white middle-class mothers.

Christine's vignette underscores that, for far too long, sociological understandings of the American family, motherhood, parenting, and the work–family conflicts and challenges that emerge from these understandings have been based on a reading of the experiences of white middle-class mothers and their families. The place of African American mothers and their families in this picture was viewed as a deviation from the norm based on class and poverty. Indeed, much of the research and popular depictions of African American mothers' experiences focus on working-class and low-income mothers.[13] In addition, with a few notable exceptions, this body of research often approaches African American families from a deficit perspective. It focuses on evaluating parenting behaviors or the negative impact of having lower-income parents on a child's prospects rather than on what these parents want for their children. This research also focuses on class differences rather than on how race and gender complicate parenting approaches at different socioeconomic levels.

Christine's comments illustrate how and why relying on white middle-class mothers' experiences to stand in for all middle-class mothers' experiences results in both unhelpful and misleading understandings of the challenges that different racial groups of middle-class mothers confront. Her identity as both African American and middle class were deeply implicated in Christine's experiences and perspectives related to family, work, and parenting. These experiences, however, are often not the focus of existing research on middle-class families. *Mothering While Black* intervenes into these discussions by focusing on the parenting and work–family experiences and strategies of African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers and by demonstrating how these experiences and strategies are complicated by intersections of racial identity, class, and gender.

With this backdrop in mind, several questions animate my research. First, what parenting strategies do African American middle-class mothers use to raise middle-class sons and daughters in a racially unequal world? Second, how do these mothers make decisions and create strategies regarding work, family, and childcare? Third, with both of these questions in mind, what cultural, social, legal, and economic forces shape these strategies?

Through in-depth interviews with sixty middle- and upper-middle-class African American mothers, I examine these questions. I was consistent in the questions and topics I covered with each mother, but I also had some flexibility that permitted each mother to explore topics of her choosing. I conducted these interviews without assumptions about the societal expectations that would influence participants' accounts. Participants were recruited through the use of modified snowball sampling techniques. Study announcements were sent via email to African American and predominately white professional women's and mothers' organizations. The study was also announced at a range of other civic, business, religious, and social organizations. After their participation in the study, respondents were asked to refer others as potential participants. All of the interviews were conducted in person at a location of each participant's choosing. It is important to note that these interviews were conducted between 2009 and 2011. Barack Obama had become the first African American to be elected as the president of United States, and this may have influenced some mothers' perspectives and outlooks regarding race and gender.

Through analyzing these mothers' accounts, I revise existing theories and map out alternative theories related to motherhood, family, and parenting. In doing so, I identify additional factors that influence African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers' decisions related to work, family, parenting, and childcare. I also explore the societal expectations against which these mothers justify their decisions and how they make those justifications.

Existing research often focuses on how differences in economic resources explain mothers' decision-making.[14] However, my interviewees' accounts demonstrate how racial identity, class, and gender work in tandem to produce a different set of default expectations against which mothers must negotiate in their daily decisions. Using the analytical lens of intersectionality, *Mothering While Black* examines how the interplay of these intersections with other institutions across society has important theoretical and empirical implications for African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers' beliefs, practices, experiences, and decision-making.[15]

As a middle-class African American woman and a mother, I share demographic characteristics with the participants of my study. I did not offer that I was a mother, but when asked, I answered honestly and then

redirected the interview back to the respondent. Sharing these characteristics with my participants seemed to help build rapport and to create an environment in which people seemed willing to share the details of their lives. In general, respondents readily shared concerns about racial identity and racism and, at times, were more reticent about discussing class divisions or distinctions among African Americans. Despite the benefits of this "insider status," I worked to ensure that I refrained from making assumptions about shared understandings. For a more detailed discussion of the methods, please see the appendix.

DOMINANT IDEOLOGIES OF MOTHERHOOD AND PARENTING

Christine's account mentions the "white motherhood society" from which she felt excluded. In doing so, she was referencing two dominant ideologies, or frameworks, of motherhood and parenting and their related practices and expectations. Both ideologies are widespread in society and are the focus of discussions and critiques in family and work–life scholarship. The first ideology privileges economic resources and status in determining parenting beliefs and practices.[16] The second ideology privileges the private sphere: the realm of homemaking and caregiving in the lives of "good" mothers.[17] Indeed, scholars suggest that when mothers do not conform to the prescribed practices of these ideologies, they often feel compelled to explain their noncompliance.[18] These two ideologies are described in more detail in the next two sections.

MIDDLE-CLASS PARENTING: CLASS TRUMPS RACE

Middle-class Americans are often envisioned as having access to a range of privileges and amenities, such as neighborhoods with low crime rates, increased personal safety, high-quality recreational resources, access to better schools, and greater occupational and residential opportunities. The first ideology of motherhood and parenting assumes that material resources and, specifically, class status determine parents' approaches to raising their

children and play the most significant roles in determining an individual's life experiences and trajectory.[19] Annette Lareau suggests that middle-class parents from different racial backgrounds share common concerns about their children's life trajectories, a common outlook about what is best for their children, and a common approach to parenting their children and organizing family life.[20] Children from these families lead highly scheduled lives that are filled with structured extracurricular activities, such as Little League, soccer, dance classes, and music lessons. These activities are aimed at enriching children's education and helping them acquire specific cultural, economic, and social capital that will enable them to reproduce their parents' middle-class status and successfully navigate middle-class lives as adults.[21] These parents view educational settings as places that should make every effort to meet their children's needs, and they encourage their children to adopt the same service-oriented view of these settings.[22] However, this focus on class-reproduction strategies through material resources downplays other parts of parents' identities that may influence parental decision-making or their efforts to influence a child's racial or gender identity and expression. It also downplays the challenges that parents from different racial backgrounds may face as they attempt to reap the benefits of their middle-class status.

HOW RACE AND GENDER MATTER FOR MIDDLE-CLASS PARENTING

Academic and popular depictions of middle-class mothers have largely focused on the experiences of white mothers and their aims for their children as adults.[23] The works of Patricia Hill Collins; Suzanne Carothers; Katrina McDonald; and, more recently, Riché Barnes represent notable exceptions.[24] Carothers examines how mothers who perceived themselves to be middle class taught their daughters the meaning of mothering and work.[25] Collins's scholarship draws on a variety of sources to examine the diverse standpoints of all black women and mothers on a range of issues.[26] McDonald examines the historical bond of African American women across class groupings and how increasing class divisions are weakening those ties.[27] Last, Barnes's research examines African American middle-

class women in Atlanta who have reduced their commitments to their careers to prioritize their commitments to their marriages.[28]

Despite these exceptions, scarce attention has been paid to the lives of middle- and upper-middle-class African American mothers.[29] Yet these mothers often experience different social contexts and have different resources than both white middle-class mothers and poor and working-class African American mothers. In the contemporary era, African American middle-class mothers navigate a social and cultural context that has shifted to include increasing class divisions within African American communities, new neighborhood and educational constraints and opportunities, and post-racial perspectives on identity that have not fully been considered in previous research.[30]

Scholars have questioned the idea that class is more important than racial identity by pointing out persistent challenges middle-class African Americans encounter across a range of social contexts, despite their additional resources.[31] African Americans' access to middle-class privileges is mediated through their racial and gender identities, which often prevent them from reaping the full benefits of their educational and economic resources.

When African Americans possess markers of middle-class status, such as a college education, a good job, and a decent income, those markers are often not accompanied by the same material benefits or security as they are for their white American counterparts.[32] Middle-class African Americans continue to confront both explicit and implicit discrimination and, as a group, their economic, occupational, social, residential, and educational opportunities are substantially different from those of middle-class whites.[33] African Americans with similar credit histories and financial profiles as whites, for example, face additional hurdles when seeking mortgages.[34] Indeed, the lives of middle-class whites have often been underwritten by the economic wins of previous generations, which include, for example, parental assistance with educational costs, contributions to down payments for first-time home purchases, or inheritances.[35]

By contrast, scholars suggest that middle-class African Americans are more likely to be asked to give financial assistance to, rather than receive it from, their parents.[36] They also are more likely to live in neighborhoods with fewer resources than those in which poor whites live.[37] And when

they do move into predominately white middle-class neighborhoods, research demonstrates that they face challenges such as feeling less welcome, experiencing additional surveillance when using neighborhood resources, and managing stress related to encounters with racism.[38] Thus, even when they physically occupy the same spaces as middle-class whites, middle-class African Americans' experiences of those contexts are very different due to their distinct societal reception.[39]

Where intergenerational economic mobility and class retention are concerned, the futures of African American middle-class children are far from certain. Patrick Sharkey points out that nearly 50 percent of these children experience downward mobility, as compared with 16 percent of their white middle-class counterparts.[40] As a consequence, the reproduction of middle-class status cannot be taken for granted within African American families, and this uncertainty may impact parenting practices and priorities.[41]

A number of scholars who study middle-class parents have identified differences between what African American and white parents emphasize to their children,[42] how they approach discipline,[43] and what they identify as their current and future parenting concerns.[44] The practices of African American middle-class families may differ from those of lower-income African Americans, but their practices may also differ from white middle-class parents whose children do not have to learn how to navigate racial stigma.[45] Researchers have also found diversity in how African Americans approach the racial socialization of their children and the extent to which gender influences how they socialize their children.[46] In the contemporary era, African American middle-class families continue to experience racism, with their children beginning to have such encounters at an early age.[47]

Despite evidence of clear differences in how society responds to middle-class African Americans as opposed to middle-class whites, research on families often focuses on how individual characteristics such as income, educational attainment, culture, and family structure impact life outcomes. Although these are important, this scholarship fails to consider how certain kinds of social status constrain or empower the deployment of resources and how mothers and families respond to those constraints. Part of the explanation for the absence of this analysis is that when the experiences of middle-class families are considered, that consideration is

often limited to white middle-class families, which have not been impacted by histories of residential segregation and related processes, such as racial discrimination in lending, redlining, racial steering, and school defunding.[48] Part of the experience of being white middle-class parents is not having to regularly or explicitly think about racial identity or how racial identity informs parental concerns or decision-making. Conversely, as Margaret O'Donoghue points out, African American middle-class parents do not generally share the luxury of *not* thinking about racial identity, racism, and gendered racism and how it informs their and their children's experiences, decisions, and opportunities.[49]

Part of unpacking and understanding African American middle-class mothers' approaches to raising their children requires examining how these families are received differently, or at least how they perceive themselves to be received, in the broader mainstream and largely white society. Diversity in families and their structures is, in part, produced by how intersections of racial stratification and cultural factors constrain and empower their resources.[50]

In addition to addressing concerns related to racism, African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers' parenting practices provide insights into the diverse micro-level processes related to racial formation theory.[51] Michael Dawson suggests that African Americans view their fates as linked because of shared cultural, economic, and political perspectives and shared experiences of discrimination.[52] Mary Waters comes to a similar conclusion regarding this linked-fate orientation, but she attributes it to American society giving African Americans no alternative other than to identify as a racial group.[53] Recently, however, this linked-fate orientation has been questioned. A report produced by the Pew Charitable Trust Foundation revealed that 40 percent of African Americans perceive an expanding gap in the values of middle-class and low-income African Americans, such that African Americans can no longer be viewed as one undifferentiated racial group.[54] African Americans at the economic extremes—highest income and lowest income—most strongly held this belief of an expanding gap in values. Research conducted by Karyn Lacy also underscores how some middle-class African Americans choose to highlight their racial and/or class identities depending on their social context.[55] This scholarship suggests there is both increasing diversity in how

middle-class African Americans choose to identify and enduring shared concerns that traverse class background. Even so, it fails to examine how gender further complicates these identity processes. In addition, this research has not fully explored the motivations that middle-class African American mothers have in fostering specific versions of African American middle-class identity in their children.

CHALLENGING THE GOOD MOTHER–GOOD WORKER PARADIGM

Despite recent Bureau of Labor Statistics data demonstrating that 67.9 percent of married mothers and 76 percent of unmarried mothers participate in the labor force, the second ideology related to motherhood and parenting assumes that, in the American context, there is widespread acceptance of the idea that being a good mother requires women to focus primarily on their children and families.[56] This perspective is derived from two related ideologies—separate spheres and the cult of domesticity—that emerged during the Industrial Revolution. The separate spheres ideology emphasizes that women should dedicate themselves to the private sphere of home and family, and that men should dedicate themselves to the public sphere of work and wage earning.[57] The cult of domesticity, as a complementary ideology, emphasizes four key virtues of "true womanhood": piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.[58] These ideologies assume the superiority of the nuclear and self-sufficient family in accomplishing the needs of the family.

Although these ideologies emerged more than a century ago, they continue to shape dominant views of the family in both mainstream and academic discourse. Two contemporary academic iterations of separate spheres and the cult of domesticity dominate family and work scholarship. The first is the intensive mothering ideology, which envisions mothers as ideally committing enormous financial and emotional resources to their children and being intimately involved in all aspects of their development.[59] The second iteration is the competing devotions framework, which views mothers who allot more time to work as having a stronger "work devotion," and those who allot more time to family as having a stronger

"family devotion."[60] Both of these ideologies also privilege the nuclear family form. Although these ideologies of motherhood have been critiqued by a range of scholars—including the scholars who identified them—they still retain their hegemonic influence on many American mothers' decisions regarding work and family.[61] Indeed, when mothers combine work and family, whether by necessity or choice, they are said to experience internal conflict and feel compelled to justify their decisions in relation to these ideologies.[62] Much of the scholarship that focuses on middle-class mothers suggests that all mothers make decisions in light of the same default cultural expectations, supports, and constraints and must seek out alternative cultural reference points and resources when they veer from the more traditional paths. However, as discussed in the next sections, scholars who examine the intersections of race, class, and gender have challenged the universality of these ideologies regarding work, family, parenting, and motherhood.[63] Indeed, there is good reason to believe that these perspectives neither apply to nor are embraced by all mothers.

BRINGING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER COMPLICATIONS INTO MOTHERHOOD

Intersectional scholars have underscored that the ideologies and related practices of separate spheres and the cult of domesticity, and their contemporary iterations, were based on research that primarily focused on the perspectives of white middle-class mothers and their families, or included too few participants from other racial groups to adequately analyze possible distinctions based on racial and class identity.[64] However, not all groups of mothers were encouraged by society to adopt these ideologies and practices.[65] Indeed, as Bonnie Thornton Dill underscores, cultural pluralism and shifting economic terrains demand diverse family forms, which some may view as subordinate to other family structures.[66] This body of scholarship that focuses on the family and motherhood has often downplayed or ignored the diversity in mothers' experiences in relation to these ideologies.[67] When nonwhite mothers and families are included, scholars often prioritize analyzing distinctions based on class status over racial identity, even when such distinctions are evident in the data.[68] When race is

examined, it is often viewed through a lens of cultural difference instead of as a component of the societal structure that shapes social interactions.[69] Implicitly, this suggests that the experiences of white mothers and their related worldviews can be generalized to all women.

Long-standing differences in the cultural beliefs, practices, and material conditions between African American and white women date to the era of slavery and challenge the universal dominance of these ideologies among today's African American women and mothers.[70] Although African American middle-class mothers have been exposed to these dominant ideologies, they have historically been structurally, culturally, and economically excluded from embracing their practices and/or internalizing their beliefs. To the extent that African American and white families encounter similar pressures, they may respond in the same way—but historically they have often faced different realities.[71] As a group, African American mothers have had a different relationship to paid labor, both legally and based on their economic circumstances, which has had important implications for African American middle-class mothers and their children.[72] This different relationship has also played a part in producing a sense of value in mothers' contributions in the public sphere and a different perspective on work within the home.[73]

In the contemporary era, African American middle-class mothers' parenting practices and opportunities continue to be shaped by economic, cultural, and structural resources that are different from those of white middle-class mothers at both the macro and micro levels.[74] Their practices and opportunities are shaped not only by characteristics that are internal to their families but also by external constraints they confront when deploying their resources in the broader society.[75] Taking an intersectional approach, scholars have underscored that although the majority of white middle-class mothers have internalized the ideologies identified above, mothers of other racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds have generally not been encouraged to embrace and internalize them.[76] Indeed, partially in response to negative societal evaluations of their worth and value, and a negative societal reception in the form of discrimination, African American women and mothers have proactively created and reproduced beliefs and practices related to motherhood, parenting, and childcare that differ from their white counterparts.[77] As a consequence, African American mothers

are often influenced by and feel beholden to distinct ideologies that reflect their own daily experiences and the needs of their communities.[78] Indeed, even when these mothers decide to conform to traditional approaches to mothering, the logic behind those decisions may be framed by different motivations.[79]

THE ROAD MAP OF *MOTHERING WHILE BLACK*

This section explains the layout of this book. Part I, "Cultivating Consciousness," includes four substantive chapters and examines how African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers approach parenting. Existing scholarship often asserts that class status trumps the importance of racial identity in decisions related to parenting.[80] However, the accounts of these mothers illustrate how intersections of racial identity, gender, and class influenced their parenting practices, their motivations, and the specific version of racial identity they sought to foster in their children. These mothers used typical middle-class parenting strategies, but they also modified them and used additional strategies to address concerns related to the different societal reception they believed that they and their children would confront based on racial identity, class, and gender. Rather than only occasionally coming into play in specific situations, these three factors had a persistent and continuous impact on these mothers' everyday experiences, decision-making, and parenting practices. They used specific strategies to maintain their sons' safety and prevent them from being criminalized as "thugs." They had other practices for protecting their daughters' self-esteem and fostering their independence, self-worth, and self-sufficiency. Their parenting strategies were often motivated by a desire to foster specific versions of African American middle-class identity in their children that were influenced by different orientations to racial identity and middle-class status. Their accounts add to existing scholarship by examining the increasing diversity in African American middle-class racial identity and by revealing that some study participants believed their children had a broader range of identities from which to choose than "just black."

Chapter 1, "Creating Racial Safety and Comfort: Class-, Race-, and Gender-Based Parenting Concerns," outlines how study participants

integrated aims for their children's achievement with creating racially comfortable spaces for their children in their daily parenting decision-making. These decisions included, for example, their children's schools and extracurricular activities. This chapter also describes how racial identity and gender together impacted the worries that these mothers had for their children and outlines different strategies mothers deployed to ensure their children could successfully inhabit and reproduce a middle-class status.

Chapter 2, "Border Crossers: Understanding Struggle," introduces a group of mothers who aimed to ensure that their children were fluent in all parts of the African American community and in cultures of privilege. Border crossers defined authentic African American racial identity as understanding socioeconomic struggle and possessing "street smarts." They wanted their children to be at ease in their interactions with African Americans from a range of social and economic positions. These mothers tended to be among the first generation of people in their families to reach middle-class status. Typically, they had been raised by working-class or poor parents (or grandparents) who did not have college degrees. This orientation to identity was strategically important to these mothers and their children, as they continued to need the skills to navigate social contexts marked by different levels of racial and economic privilege.

Chapter 3, "Border Policers: Finding Our Kind of People," discusses mothers who wanted their children to feel at ease in a variety of middle-class and elite social settings but did not have the same inclination to ensure that their children felt comfortable in poor African American communities. Border policers defined African American racial identity as largely disentangled from firsthand knowledge of economic struggle. They made efforts for their children to have access to middle-class African American peers and families and social, cultural, and political organizations. For these mothers, being authentically African American meant understanding the cultural, political, and historical contributions of the African American community, but they were less concerned with providing their children with direct contact with economic struggle, in part because it was less relevant to their daily lives. Border policers were often raised in middle-class households in which at least one parent had a college degree. Often their families had been middle class for several genera-

tions and connected to middle-class or elite social, economic, and political institutions within the African American community and the broader mainstream white middle-class community.

Chapter 4, "Border Transcenders: Challenging Traditional Notions of Racial Authenticity," describes mothers who wanted their children to be free to embark on lives that were not principally defined by racial identity. These mothers did not want to push a particular way of identifying on their children. Border transcenders worked to ensure their children's access to diverse groups of middle-class peers in which no racial, ethnic, and/or religious group dominated. Border transcenders came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds but shared a common experience of now belonging to racially diverse communities because of romantic relationships, their extended families, or peer groups. Many of these mothers also had gained exposure to different ways of thinking about racial identity through regular travel to predominately black countries in the Caribbean or through travel to African or European countries during formative periods of their lives.

Part II, "Beyond Separate Spheres and the Cult of Domesticity," shifts the focus to how African American middle-class mothers approach combining work, family, and childcare. It also examines the social, cultural, legal, and economic forces that influence these mothers' beliefs, experiences, and practices. Its three chapters examine the differing cultural expectations these mothers confront in the African American community and the white mainstream society. These chapters show how African American middle-class and upper-middle-class mothers encounter different societal receptions and cultural expectations that influence their decision-making on combining work and family.

Chapter 5, "The Market-Family Matrix: The Social Construction of Integrated and Conflicted Frameworks of Work–Life Balance," describes the social and historical construction of dominant ideologies of "good" motherhood and how African American women have been culturally, economically, legally, and socially excluded from their scope. I present a new framework, the market-family matrix, to analyze work and family. This matrix describes different possible characteristics of the family and the marketplace and, thus, different possible relationships between the two. I argue that the specific characteristics and configurations of the family and

the marketplace can produce a market_family matrix in which mothers who work outside the home experience conflict or integration.

Chapter 6, "Racial Histories of Family and Work: Paid Employment Is a Mother's Duty," examines the default cultural expectations that African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers describe navigating when making decisions about combining work and motherhood. It also explores the meanings these mothers attach to their decisions. Their accounts underscore that these cultural expectations related to work and family derive from both the broader, predominately white society and the African American community. Such expectations create different pushes and pulls that encourage African American mothers to combine work and family and to stigmatize those who do not. When participants made the decision to reduce their commitment to work to spend more time with their children or to be exclusively stay-at-home mothers, they encountered assumptions about their class status—that they were poor—in their interactions with the broader mainstream white society. They also described encountering attitudes from the African American community that they should be engaged in paid employment to contribute to the economic resources of their family and to retain their self-reliance. These participants' decisions to reduce their commitment to work were radical acts that challenged the expectations of their families and communities.

Chapter 7, "Alternative Configurations of Child-Rearing: Supporting Mothers' Public-Sphere Activities through Extended-Family Parenting," describes a different orientation to, and configuration of, the family. Raising children continues to be a mother-centered activity, but kin and community members also serve as important support systems. Ideally, extended family and community members were regular and continuous participants in the lives of my respondents' children. In addition, kin and community members were viewed as the preferred source of childcare in the absence of mothers. Although one might assume using kin and community members for childcare is primarily related to a mother's economic resources, my data suggest that it was also influenced by cultural motivations and expectations within families and cultural and social constraints in the broader society. Kin and community caregivers were also key sources of advice to mothers on raising their children. Indeed, rather than

primarily optimizing their caregiving abilities through studying the advice of experts in the latest parenting books, these mothers often sought out the experience-based knowledge and wisdom from other mothers in their families and communities.

The final chapter, "Conclusion and Implications: Navigating Race, Class, and Gender in Motherhood, Parenting, and Work," synthesizes parts 1 and 2 of the book, as presenting a series of departures from dominant discourses of middle-class mothers to discuss the intersections of racial identity, class, and gender and how they connect to societal institutions. Through several contemporary news stories, I revisit topics discussed in the chapters and explore their theoretical and practical significance. In doing so, I uncover the assumptions and normative expectations regarding parenting and family functioning that undergird these discussions. Although it would be easy to think of African American middle-class mothers as an exception to the norm, I argue that these findings make a more significant impact on how scholars should approach research on the family. Rather than explaining an exception to the norm, the norm itself becomes particularized as something that has been produced by a specific set of circumstances and societal reception, not something shared by all mothers and families. The appendix provides a more detailed description of how I conducted the study, an explanation of my research methodology, and the overall characteristics of the sample.

Ultimately, through analyzing the accounts of these African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers, this research offers a crucial corrective to the understandings of the formation of cultural ideals of parenting and motherhood by challenging the idea that all middle-class families can be viewed as largely interchangeable based on their resources. It expands on and revises existing theories related to middle-class parenting, racial identity formation, and family and work conflict/integration by demonstrating that the frameworks typically deployed in research on (mostly white) middle-class mothers and their families do not adequately capture the beliefs and experiences of African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers. Instead, these mothers' approaches to work, family, and parenting are influenced by distinct cultural expectations, derived from both inside and outside of their immediate families and

communities, which are supported by specific social, economic, and structural circumstances. These mothers' accounts provide additional evidence of the racially uneven acceptance of these ideologies of motherhood and parenting by exploring the different cultural, economic, and structural pushes and pulls that African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers experience when making work, family, and parenting decisions. Indeed, African American families that are characterized by different intersections of racial identity, gender, and class encounter a different societal reception that requires distinct strategies to achieve similar aims as compared with white middle-class families.

PART I Cultivating Consciousness

Part I of this book examines how African American middle-class mothers approach parenting their children and how their approaches are complicated by concerns related to intersections of race, class, and gender. Further, these four chapters explore how these mothers' approaches to parenting are informed not only by factors that are internal to their families but also by the racial landscapes that exist within their immediate communities and the broader society.

1 Creating Racial Safety and Comfort

CLASS-, RACE-, AND GENDER-BASED PARENTING CONCERNS

I interviewed Maya in the living room of her home, which was located in an upper-middle-class enclave in a city noted for its high crime rate. Now an academic, Maya was raised in a two-income household by working-class parents. Her own family is blended, comprising a child from her spouse's previous relationship, children from her own previous relationships, and one child she and her current spouse had together. Describing how her approach to parenting compared to her parents' approach, she said,

> [We do a lot] more middle-class parenting in a lot of ways. We do the shuttling, you know, soccer and [this and that], and who has to be where when, and we both do some of it, in a way that my parents didn't. . . . [Growing up working class, my parents told us] go play, go outside and play, whereas our kids are much more sheltered and shuttled, but they do have chores. . . . It is not coddling, but in many moments, it is child centered in a way that . . . for my parents, it wasn't a child centered life. . . . [Our parenting] is much more nurturing and looking at their talents and thinking about what to put them in [activity-wise].

Like Maya, the vast majority of the African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers in my research enrolled their children in a range of extracurricular and academic enrichment programs, including Little League,

soccer, swim class, ballet, karate, and music lessons that lower-income mothers often do not have the same economic resources to do.

Conforming to the images of other middle-class families portrayed in mainstream media and academic sources, the mothers in my research and their families led busy and highly scheduled lives.[1] Their family lives were often child centered and their routines were often tied to weekly calendars. Indeed, during my interview with Maya, she retrieved a weekly calendar posted in her kitchen to use as a visual aid while she described her children's weekly activities and the parental division of labor in the drop-off and pick-up schedules.

FINDING THE BALANCE

On the surface, Maya's account sounds similar to many popular depictions of middle-class parenting. Compared to her own upbringing, she described her children's lives as "sheltered and shuttled." Nevertheless, Maya's description of how she made decisions about the schools her children attended and their extracurricular activities revealed additional layers of concerns. Her decisions were motivated by her desire for her children to acquire additional skills to address challenges related to intersections of race, class, and gender. These concerns recurred not just in her account but also in the accounts of the other mothers in my research. The concerns and the skills these mothers underscored are generally not the focus of discussions of middle-class mothers, who are often presumed to be white and, thus, have the luxury of not needing to prepare their children for the distinct and explicitly racialized and gendered societal reception they will encounter throughout their lives. Although African American middle-class mothers have more resources than their lower-income counterparts, they also continuously navigate parenting challenges that are of a different character and consequence than white middle-class mothers.

Existing research on middle-class families typically does not account for mothers who deliberately and, at times, necessarily, weave themselves and their children in and out of communities marked by different configurations of race, class, and gender, and how that weaving requires different types of social and cultural capital. This research often ignores the class

diversity within African American middle-class families' social and community networks, which demands this weaving and the skill sets that accompany it. This scholarship also tends to focus on the experiences of race and/or racial stigma as it intersects with lower economic status.[2]

The accounts of the African American middle-class mothers in my research suggest how racial stigma continues to influence their experiences, regardless of having more resources at their disposal. Despite having similarities to white middle-class families, the accounts of these African American mothers show how considerations of race, class, and gender have continuously influenced their parenting. Their accounts connect experiences within the family with structures outside of the family and describe how their families experience those structures.[3] Maya explained,

> I think about balance in their lives as a whole. Because there's always this compromise about schools, right? There are not schools that exist in the Bay Area . . . where you can send your African American kids and know they will have African American teachers and . . . be treated with that kind of community love and be well educated. You just can't do both. You have to choose. . . . When I think about the outside activities, I want to balance out what I see as an imbalance in their school experience. So, my other child is in a preschool, but there's only one other black child in his class, but the teachers are black and that's why I still have him there. My other child is at a school where it is maybe 20 percent black, but it is culturally very white. . . . There's maybe one black teacher. . . . And, so, when I think about activities, I want them to be around other black people.

For Maya and the other mothers in this study, ensuring a balance in the racial and economic composition in their children's peer groups in educational and social contexts was a recurrent consideration in their parenting. A mother might believe that her child's school did not have the ideal level of diversity, so in response she would work to balance that through extracurricular activities. Unlike lower-income mothers, these mothers had additional resources that enabled them to have more control over their children's neighborhood context and peer groups.[4]

The definition of the "ideal balance" was not the same for all mothers, but racial, gender, and class identity played key parts in determining that ideal. This balance related to creating racially comfortable environments for their children, and, as I will detail in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, it also

informed these mothers' approaches to the development of their children's racial identity. Mothers varied in whether they were raised in families that were solidly middle class for more than one generation, became middle-class through upward mobility and had substantial economic diversity in their families, and the racial diversity in their families and social networks. These factors also informed their definition of the ideal balance.

A parent's decision to take a child to singing practice at a church choir comprised of children from a range of racial and economic backgrounds is influenced by different concerns and motivations than a parent's decision to take a child to a high-priced violin lesson in a predominately elite, white neighborhood. Similarly, enrolling a child in an athletic league in his or her middle-class neighborhood rather than one across town in a more economically and racially diverse or low-income community served different purposes. Opting to live in a more racially and economically diverse neighborhood rather than in a less diverse one (either white or nonwhite) is also connected with different concerns and motivations. Mothers' specific concerns related to race, class, and gender, and to fostering specific kinds of identities in their children influence how they use their economic and social resources, time, and involvement in organizations within African American and mainstream communities. Although the African American middle-class mothers I interviewed used strategies that scholars describe white middle-class mothers as using in raising their children,[5] they also used additional strategies and modified others to address challenges related to race, class, and gender that they believed their children would face.

Maya described having an ad hoc community of African American parents with whom she talked about school and childcare choices and whom she described as sharing her experiences and outlook:

> [We are in a network with several families that] are all navigating these spaces at the same time and we are able to be a resource to each other. [The network is comprised of] people that I went to college with who are all professionals in the Bay Area [and with whom] I can have those conversations. . . . "What are you thinking about for your child for middle school?" And we can talk about the choices.

These mothers collected and shared a valuable body of knowledge to help each other find and make choices about the best settings for their chil-

dren. When I asked Maya if she ever talked about her choices with white mothers, she said,

> Oh no, because you can't have those conversations; . . . there is a way that it is a different space that I navigate. . . . I do have white colleagues that I talk to about childcare and whatnot, but it is very different; their position is very different in the space. And their sets of concerns are not the same ones. . . . There is not that worry about race.

Maya believed the white middle-class mothers in her network did not share her concerns about race, so she did not raise these topics with them. She gave a concrete example of this dynamic of talking about parenting concerns but excluding anything related to race when she explained a conversation she had with a white colleague while visiting a prospective preschool for her daughter. During her visit, she had observed that the student body was all white, save for one Asian American student. On the tour, she ran into her colleague, who was very enthusiastic about the school. Maya stopped short of revealing her concerns about diversity, instead simply agreeing that it did look like a great school. Explaining her decision not to broach the topic, Maya said, "For her kid, it *is* great! That is the thing about it, because race is so salient in this country and because our kids are going to have to wrestle with these things, we need much more from a school space." Maya's words are telling when she says that "race is so salient," yet she simultaneously acknowledges that, in her view, this is not the case for white parents.

For Maya and the other mothers in my study, it was clear that they had distinct worries related to race, gender, and class that they did not believe overlapped with those of white parents in their professional or social circles. Maya was not looking only for a school that was known for high academic achievement but also wanted a space that would be racially supportive of her children. Ultimately, a high rating in terms of academic excellence could not overcome Maya's concerns over her daughter being the only African American child in the classroom. She enrolled her daughter in a more diverse preschool that had a lower rating for academic achievement; this was similar to compromises many mothers in my study made. She feared her daughter would feel isolated instead of experiencing school as a racially comfortable, if not empowering, environment in her

early foundational years. Maya's four children were currently in four different schools that she selected based on each child's perceived individual talents and on each school's level of academic achievement and diversity. Her account suggests how race and gender complicate class status and the ability of mothers and families to successfully deploy their middle-class resources when parenting their children. Although African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers have higher incomes, those resources cannot change the demographic characteristics of the current landscape of public and private schools, extracurricular activities, and other parenting settings and their respective racial climates.

In the remainder of this chapter, I unpack the "more" that Maya and the mothers in this research believed their children needed. I examine the strategies these mothers used to meet those needs as they navigated spaces that often primarily catered to white middle-class children and their families, and in which these mothers, at times, experienced various degrees of stigma and exclusion. Mothers' concerns over their children's racial comfort were not activated only occasionally—instead, they were a constant part of the backdrop that informed their parental decision-making. Some of these mothers' concerns and experiences related to race and racial stigma likely overlap with those of lower-income African American mothers, but as members of the middle-class, they had more resources to address these issues. The final part of this chapter examines how these concerns and strategies were further complicated by fears of the gendered racism that their children would confront in the future and, at times, were already navigating.

CREATING RACIAL COMFORT

For the mothers in this study, addressing race and racism and ensuring racial comfort started when their children were very young, and it was woven into their searches for places to live, childcare, schools, parks, extracurricular activities, and everyday parenting. Mothers worked to create environments for their children that sheltered them from early experiences of racism and that they hoped would protect and strengthen their racial self-esteem.

Mera, married and the stay-at-home mother of two, said she believed African American and white mothers used different decision-making criteria to raise their children. She developed this belief through her experiences attending two different mothers' groups; one was comprised primarily of white middle-class mothers, and the other was entirely of African American middle-class mothers:

> I attended [a white mothers' group] and I would just sit there and feel like their world was completely different. There were a lot of things that they wouldn't talk about. It was a class issue or a race issue. . . . I wouldn't want to get super-personal with that group, whereas with the [mothers in my] black moms' group, we could talk about anything. From sex to, you know, anything, you know, like what is going on now, and the differences in our bodies, money, and education. We talked a lot about education and preschools and stuff. . . . [The white mothers' group] would have different priorities when it came to education. Talking about places that I would never send my kids or neighborhoods I would never live in . . . like Montclair or places like Piedmont. And, I would think, I am not going to send my children through a school in Piedmont that is all white or something.

For Mera, the racial comfort of her children was an important factor that influenced her decisions related to their educational, social, and residential environments. This was a factor she neither believed was explicitly considered by white mothers nor one she felt she could raise in the predominately white mothers' group that she regularly attended when her children were younger. Piedmont and Montclair are both affluent and predominately white neighborhoods. Piedmont, a tiny city with its own school district, is geographically surrounded by Oakland, but its public schools have records of high academic performance and better resources than neighboring school districts. Montclair is an affluent neighborhood located in the Oakland Hills, and its schools are partially subsidized by the substantial donations from parents in the form of contributions of time and money to the parent-teacher association. Despite these favorable characteristics, Mera was not willing to enroll her children in these schools. Like Maya, Mera did not think the white mothers with whom she interacted would understand her concerns. She sought advice from other African American middle-class mothers who were navigating the same spaces and were thus facing the same issues.

Similarly, Jordana, a married mother of two, whose husband was white, described why she was not willing to live in certain neighborhoods because of concerns over how it would impact the racial makeup of her children's peer groups. She said,

> Where [my husband grew up] sounds like it was really idyllic . . . but there are not enough black people for my taste. . . . [W]hen we first got together and we were talking about where we wanted to live, he kind of was talking about that, and I was like, "Look, dude, I can't do this, I can't. I don't want my children to be the only black kids at school."

Although Jordana said she did not necessarily select her children's school because of its level of diversity, she referred to diversity in the student body and among the teachers as "a plus." She added, "I would never put [my children] into a situation where they were the 'only'—where it was all or heavily one race." Overall, mothers were less than enthusiastic about the prospect of their children attending a school or living in a neighborhood in which they would be racially isolated. The fact that their children would be one of only a few African American students in a predominately white school often outweighed a school's record for high academic achievement. Jordana's account also suggests how the legacy of residential segregation influences the choices of African American middle-class parents. Despite having the option to move to an area with better schools and more resources, Jordana perceived it as coming with the cost of her children, and herself, being racially isolated.

Part of these mothers' hesitation and resistance to incurring this cost was based on their own personal experiences with racial isolation as children. Many had been the only African American (or one of the few) in school settings and neighborhoods; replicating that experience raised concerns that their children would develop unhealthy racial identities and low self-esteem. A lack of African Americans in teaching and administrative positions was also a red flag. As noted previously, when enrolling their children in schools, mothers often balanced a school's academic rankings with its racial demographics. These decisions to prioritize racially and economically diverse schools and neighborhoods over those that are predominately white and have more resources challenge assumptions about the push-and-pull factors that influence middle-

class African American families' decision-making regarding schools and neighborhoods.

Karlyn, a single working mother of a son and daughter, described the time-consuming process through which she picked her son's current school, which both of her children now attend. She said,

> Most of the schools in San Francisco that have great test scores are 50 percent white, 50 percent Asian—probably more Asian now—and 1 percent black, 1 percent Latino. So, I did a lot of research before I chose this school. Their school is maybe 30 percent white, 30 percent Asian, 10 percent black, 9 percent Latino. So, you know, instead of like never seeing another black kid in their school, they will probably have at least another one in their classroom. . . . But, you know, they don't see any black teachers there.

To find the school that would work best for her son, Karlyn did a careful study of public schools, weighing academic ratings; the size of the racial achievement gap between white and African American students; and the racial diversity of the student body, teachers, and school administrators. Ultimately, she did not get everything on her wish list but felt that the school her son attended was the best choice among the existing options. As Karlyn's account reveals, parents' endeavors often required them to engage in hours of invisible labor and then make compromises in each category.

Relative to lower-income African American mothers, these mothers likely had more school options from which to choose for their children and could make choices that weighed racial diversity against school performance. Despite often having the option to send their children to private schools or move to neighborhoods with high-achieving public schools, these mothers' accounts reveal the constraints they faced when looking for racially diverse and welcoming educational and residential spaces for themselves and their children.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Racial comfort was also a factor when selecting extracurricular activities. For example, after Maya discovered that her son's soccer league was all white and Asian American, with no other African American boys, she

stopped taking him to practice. She noted that she was concerned about both her son's and her own level of ease in interacting with, for the most part, only white children and parents. The mothers in this research described having access to a range of elite extracurricular activities that were often predominately white and included little other diversity. Although mothers responded in different ways to the racial composition of their children's activities, they all noted that it influenced their parenting decisions.

Some mothers responded proactively to what they thought could be racially isolating environments for their children. For example, to ensure their children were not the only African American boys and girls in activities, some mothers coordinated with other African American mothers in their networks to enroll their children in the same class or activity group. Mary, married and the mother of a son and daughter, emphasized how the members of her mothers' group very intentionally protected their daughters from feeling racially insecure:

> We want them to feel good about being black. That is one of the key things we all talk about. You know, we work very hard to make sure . . . that they are in activities together so when they go to ballet they are not the only brown girl in the ballet class.

Similarly, to ensure her daughter was not the only African American girl in an elite dance school, Sharon, married with a son and daughter, also coordinated with three African American mothers to enroll their daughters at the same time.

Joining or creating a mothers' group was another way mothers tried to ensure their children participated in activities with other African American children and families. For example, one reason Karlyn created a mothers' group was to empower herself and other mothers to participate in activities that they might otherwise be reticent to do on their own. She explained,

> A lot of mothers were in the same situation as me, and a lot of us don't work near our homes, so we are commuting a lot. . . . Sometimes you are a little more hesitant to step out and do [an activity] on your own, but if you are doing it as a group, it makes it fun and inviting, and the kids get to socialize and they look forward to it.

This largely invisible work of creating peer groups of other African American middle-class mothers and their children is not a new phenomenon. One long-standing example is Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated, founded in 1938 by Marion Stubbs Thomas; the organization aims to expose African American children to socially and culturally enriching activities through their mothers' membership. Since Jack and Jill's creation, other affiliated and non-affiliated African American mothers' groups have emerged at both local and national levels to help African American mothers create connections for themselves and their children. These organizations offer opportunities for African American children to participate in activities in racially empowering environments.

Another organization that plays an important role in connecting children to other African Americans is the church. In addition to instilling faith and providing religious instruction, attending an African American church serves as an important positive touchstone for interacting with other African Americans and it is an institution many mothers used for this purpose. Churches were also a source of extracurricular activities for their children in a racially empowering setting.

In addition to creating or joining African American mothers' groups, some mothers also enrolled their children in extracurricular activities in specific neighborhoods characterized by varying degrees of economic privilege and racial diversity to balance their lack of exposure to African Americans in other contexts. As I will examine in more detail in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, mothers had differing views of these organizations and activities, and some used them as jumping-off points to create their own peer groups based on the kinds of identities they wanted to foster in their children.

Finally, for some mothers, the fact that their children would be the only African Americans participating in an activity did not deter them. These mothers did not want their children to miss out on learning an important skill because they would be the only African American participating in that activity. For example, Reagan, a divorced mother with one daughter, said,

> [T]here is one other black—African American—family that takes swimming at the same time. And, in fact, one day when I was there I ran into this African American lady and she said, "It is very good to see you." And I said, "It is good to see you, too!" I didn't know her and she didn't know me either,

> but I knew exactly what she was talking about. There were no other black kids swimming in the pool. They're all non-black, but I don't want hair—that is, your typical African American woman's deal, which is why we don't swim—I don't want that to be something that keeps [my daughter] from excelling. . . . Do I want her to be the female equivalent to Michael Phelps? No. I want her to be able to save herself if there was a situation.

Notably, although Reagan did not let the fact that her daughter was one of only two African American children in swimming lessons prevent her from participating, she was still very aware of this isolation. She also did not let the damaging impact of chlorinated pools on African American textured hair prevent her daughter from learning how to swim. Reagan became visibly excited when telling of the above encounter with another African American mother at a swimming lesson. Generally, she focused on the fact that while there were normally no other African American children in swimming, she believed learning to swim was a necessary life skill that was worth the temporary isolation. Reagan believed that her daughter was exposed to other African American children and families, although often not middle class, through her regular church attendance.

SCREENING FOR RACIAL INTELLIGENCE

As noted above, to escape early attacks on their children's spirit, mothers carefully screened childcare providers, educational settings, and extracurricular activities for racism. This included investigating educational settings as it related to the racial diversity in a school's student body, faculty, and administration. This invisible labor went beyond examining a specific school's level of academic achievement. Mothers dug deeper to learn specifics on the academic achievement of African American students, to determine the existence and size of any gap between the academic achievement of African American students and that of white students, and to investigate how the school was addressing any such gap. This work involved finding schools with teachers and administrators who were willing and able to talk about issues related to race and racism. It also involved talking to other African American parents about their children's experiences at these schools.

Chandra, a married mother with two children, described being happy with her son's private school, but she was considering changing her daughter's education at a public school because she believed the teachers and administrators lacked racial intelligence. Chandra and her husband had sold their previous house and relocated to their current neighborhood specifically so that their daughter could attend the local public school, which scored among the highest in the school district in terms of academic achievement. Nonetheless, Chandra was dissatisfied with the lack of community in the new school and in her new neighborhood, so she was considering transferring her daughter to another school:

> Academically it is great, but I hate the fact that there is just no diversity there. I don't feel like they are conscious about it either, so I don't know if she will stay. . . . My main focus now is that I really just want her to get really strong reading and writing skills down and then we will have to take it from there, but I am not happy with it.

Chandra's comments underscore the compromise she was making between a diverse student body and strong academic ratings.

Contrasting her daughter's experience with her son's experience at an elite private school, Chandra said,

> [My son has] gone to [a private religious school] since kindergarten. . . . [That school's administration and students' parents] know that their community is privileged, but they have made a statement and mission to be inclusive and to be sensitive to that. I was able to start a parent diversity group there. I was on the board of directors. I was really active. And a lot of the work there was really hard. . . . You have to ruffle some feathers. . . . I wasn't interested in my daughter being there. . . . But I am finding it a struggle because I am not as involved as I would like to be at my daughter's school because (a) I just started a new job, and (b) I feel like I don't really want to be that involved in that community.

Chandra's account describes how her son's school became racially intelligent through her efforts. She spent substantial time "ruffling some feathers" and making it a safe space for him, but the work she had engaged in at her son's school would have to be repeated at her daughter's school. She lacked the time, energy, and desire to start from scratch in an environment that she felt would be less receptive to her efforts. Chandra's current

decision privileged academics over her daughter's racial comfort and her being in an environment with teachers and administrators she believed were racially sensitive or intelligent. In the interim, she focused on the reading and writing skills that her five-year-old daughter was acquiring and tried to balance that with teaching her racial intelligence at home and building her racial self-esteem.

Karlyn, mentioned above, underscored the importance of her son attending a school in which the teachers and administrators did not ignore racism. She described an interaction she had with her son's principal regarding discriminatory treatment she felt her son experienced from his teacher:

> [A teacher] pulled my son out of class over a stupid Four Square game and was yelling at him based upon these girls saying he cheated when he didn't cheat, he just hit the ball hard and they couldn't hit it back. So, I had to let her know, "Don't ever pull my son out of class for a Four Square game again. It is a game." . . . I had to talk to the principal, and I was really upset because he was pulled out of class and she was yelling at him and he was crying. And I told the principal, you know, she may not think she is racist, but what would make her yell at a little black boy over a stupid Four Square game? . . . [H]e said, "Oh my God, I am just so glad that you have the amount of restraint that you did because I would have been really upset." And I said . . . "As the mother of a black son, I am always concerned about how he is treated by people." . . . but, you know, I don't care. "I'm going to tell you how I feel, and it is something that you as a principal need to take into consideration if you are going to have a school that claims to be inclusive and caring of all types of families and all people."

Karlyn did not frame this issue in a more generic manner, such as focusing on how teachers in general ought to discipline children. Some mothers in this research would have addressed this issue more indirectly because of the educational contexts in which their children were situated and their assessment of teachers' and administrators' ability to talk openly about issues of race and racism.[6] However, Karlyn sought out a school in which she could have such direct conversations with administrators and teachers. She attributed her son's treatment to the conscious or unconscious racism of the teacher and demanded the principal address the problem. Like other mothers in my study, Karlyn was actively engaged in issues related to diversity in her son's school and the school administra-

tion's ability to create racially safe environments. Her comments reflect the specific concerns mothers had regarding their sons' treatment by teachers and educational administrators. The topic of gendered racism is discussed in more detail in the next section.

MOTHERS' RESPONSES TO GENDERED RACISM

African American mothers and their families confront social contexts and receptions that differ from those that white mothers and their families encounter, based not just on race and class but also on the gender of their children. Research examining intersections of race and gender provide ample evidence that African American boys and girls experience racially disparate treatment that varies according to their gender, also known as gendered racism.[7] They experience gendered racism from societal institutions including schools[8] and law enforcement.[9] And, as adults, it continues in employment.[10] African American boys and girls also experience different levels of social integration in suburban school systems.[11] The boys are viewed as "cool" and "athletic" by fellow classmates, so they are provided more opportunities to participate in high-value institutional activities than are the girls.[12] Despite having relatively positive experiences with peers, however, African American boys' encounters with teachers and administrators are more negative.[13] As noted in the introduction, African American boys face harsher discipline in school, and teachers and administrators label them aggressive and violent more often and more quickly than they do white boys or white and African American girls.[14] African American girls must navigate a different set of negative stereotypes, as teachers and administrators more often view them as sassy or sexualized as compared with their white female counterparts.[15]

In addition to this distinct treatment within the school system, African American children, overall, are more likely to have interactions with the justice system than are their white counterparts.[16] Additionally, African American boys' encounters with law enforcement are more likely to have negative outcomes and become violent.[17] African American men face heightened scrutiny from police officers and citizens in public and quasi-public spaces. A cursory review of the contemporary news provides many

examples of fatal shootings of unarmed African American boys, teenagers, and men by white police officers and private citizens.[18]

This collection of experiences in schools, law enforcement, and public arenas reflects the impact of gendered racism and controlling images on African Americans' lives, and how these forces work to constrain African American boys and girls to narrow categories that often work to their detriment. Patricia Hill Collins theorizes how controlling images function as racialized and gendered stereotypes that justify the oppression of certain groups and force those populations to police their own behavior.[19] Controlling images also naturalize existing power relations. With respect to African American men and boys, controlling images often depict them as hypermasculine, either elevating them as superhuman or demonizing them as villains.[20] Masculinity scholars suggest that African American men and boys enact the thug, a version of subordinate masculinity, because they are not permitted to attain hegemonic masculinity.[21] When they do enact alternative versions of manhood, they often confront challenges to their masculinity and racial authenticity.[22] Scholars have also examined how African American women are impacted by negotiating controlling images of themselves as angry black women; welfare queens; or hypersexualized and/or emasculating figures in the workplace, in educational institutions, and in other settings.[23]

Although mothers expressed worries that cut across gender, this section explores the specific concerns they described in raising African American boys versus girls and the strategies they used to address those concerns. Mothers primarily spoke of ensuring their sons' physical safety in interactions with police officers, educators, and members of the general public, and preventing their sons from being criminalized by these same groups as "thugs." They were negotiating a racial empathy gap in which their children's, but specifically their sons' actions, would be interpreted more negatively than those of their white peers.

For their daughters, the mothers in this study were primarily focused on ensuring that they developed strong self-esteem, along with independence and self-worth. Despite being middle- and upper-middle class, and thus having more resources than their lower-income counterparts, these mothers felt limited in their abilities to protect their sons and daughters from the challenges associated with being African American boys (and future men) and girls (and future women).

NAVIGATING THE CONTROLLING IMAGE OF THE THUG

I interviewed Karin, a married mother, while she nursed her only child, a daughter, in her apartment. Karin let out a deep sigh before describing how she felt when she learned her baby's gender:

> I was thrilled [the baby] wasn't a boy. I think it is hard to be a black girl and a black woman in America, but I think it is dangerous and sometimes deadly to be a black boy and black man. Oscar Grant and beyond, there are lots of dangerous interactions with police in urban areas for black men . . . so I was very nervous because we thought she was a boy. . . . I was relieved when she wasn't. It is terrible, but it is true.

Karin's relief at learning her child was not a boy underscores how intersections of racial identity, class, and gender influence the concerns that African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers had for their daughters versus their sons.

It is important to note that the interviews for this research took place in the aftermath of Oscar Grant's fatal shooting in Oakland, California. Grant, an unarmed African American man, was shot in the back by Johanness Mehserle, a white Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) police officer. Grant was lying face down on a BART train platform and was being subdued by several other officers when Mehserle shot him. On July 8, 2010, Mehserle was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter—not the higher charges of second-degree murder or voluntary manslaughter.[24] The incident was dramatically depicted in the full-length movie *Fruitvale Station*.[25]

For many of the mothers I interviewed, Grant's death served as another reminder of the distinct experiences that their sons, brothers, nephews, and husbands would have as African American boys, teenagers, and men when interacting with law enforcement and other members of the general public. It also underscored that they would have to teach their sons how to interact with law enforcement and, importantly, how to navigate those interactions so that they would be left unscathed. These mothers questioned whether their sons would be received by law enforcement as good kids from middle-class families or as threats to public safety.

Mary, introduced earlier, described a conversation that regularly occurred in her mothers' group that revealed her worries over adequately

preparing her son for the gendered racism she believed he would encounter:

> With our sons, we talk about how can we prepare them or teach them about how to deal with a society, especially in a community like Oakland, where black men are held to a different standard than others, and not necessarily a better one. . . . When you are a black man and you get stopped by the policeman, you can't do the same things a white person would do. . . . We talk about our sons who are a little younger and starting kindergarten. What do we have to do to make sure teachers don't have preconceived ideas that stop our sons from learning because they believe little brown boys are rambunctious or little brown boys are hitting more than Caucasian boys?

Charlotte, a married mother of four sons, who lived in an elite and predominately white neighborhood, held back tears as she described her fears about how others would respond to her children:

> I look at [then] President Obama. I see how he is treated and it scares me. I want people to look at my sons and see them for the beautiful, intelligent, gifted, wonderful creatures that they are and nothing else. I do not want them to look at my sons and say, "There goes that black guy," or hold onto their purse.

As these mothers' accounts demonstrate, concerns regarding African American boys' treatment—particularly their criminalization—emerge early in their sons' lives, and not just in school settings but also on the playground and during other childhood activities.

Nia, a married working mother of two sons, described interactions with other families at local children's activities. She called it "baby racism." She recalled,

> From the time our first son was a baby and we would go [to different children's activities], our son would go and hug a kid and a parent would grab their child and be like, "Oh, he's going to attack him!" And, it was just, like, "Really? Are you serious?" He was actually going to hug him. You see, like little "baby racism." . . . I have even written to local parents' listservs to ask, "Am I imagining this?" . . . Almost all the black mothers wrote in, "You're not imagining this; this is real. You're going to have to spend the rest of your life fighting for your child."

Nia, like the other mothers in this study, believed that when African American boys participated in activities comprised of primarily white middle-class families, their behavior faced greater scrutiny, and innocuous behaviors were quickly criminalized.

Participants believed the process of criminalizing their sons' behavior began at an early age, and it was pervasive, not confined only to educational settings. Although mothers had no way of knowing how others were actually thinking about their sons, numerous studies support their beliefs that society at large interprets the behavior of African American boys differently, as opposed to white boys, in a range of settings.[26] In other words, race and gender trump class. These mothers believed their sons' racial identity, despite their middle-class status, marked them as "thugs" who were poor, uneducated, violent, and criminal. They recognized they would have to actively and continuously challenge that marking, assert their middle-class status in mainstream white society, and engage in a continuous cycle of respectability politics.[27]

Although most mothers in my study believed their sons would face challenges related to the image of the thug, a few did not. These mothers attributed their lack of concern to their sons' racially ambiguous appearance. Kera, a married mother, said of her two sons, "They could be damn near anything depending on how they put their hair. . . . I don't think they'll have the full repercussions of being a black man like my brothers or my husband." Kera's comments echo research that suggests that skin color differences impact African Americans' experiences in employment, school, and relationships.[28] Her sons were protected because they did not fit the stereotypical image of what an African American looks like. But this protective racial ambiguity represents the exception that reaffirms the rule.

Mothers also believed boys faced more pressure to prove their "blackness" than girls did, in part, because they believed their sons had a more limited range of identities they could express while still being viewed as authentically African American by their peers. Indeed, when African American boys do not conform to the subordinate versions of masculinity assigned to them by the broader society, they often face challenges to their racial authenticity and their masculinity.[29] Nora, a married mother with a son and a daughter, said,

> There is a lot of pressure for black boys to assume a more "thuggish" identity. There aren't enough different identity spaces for black boys in schools . . . and so I want my kids to have choices. And if that's the choice, I might cringe . . . but I would want it to be among a menu of choices. . . . I don't think there is the same pressure for girls in terms of performing their womanhood.

Similarly, Nia believed her sons would be vulnerable to challenges to their racial authenticity and masculinity because they were smart and voracious readers, characteristics that she believed were not often associated with African American boys. She explained,

> I think for black boys, if you ask too many questions in a curious way, then people are like, "You must be a faggot, or shut up, or like what's wrong with you." And that's not okay [that] there is this very narrow black [option]. . . . Particularly in Oakland, I feel like [compared to other places where I lived with larger African American middle-class populations] there was a lot more room for black boys; like you could be like the nerd or you could be the student-athlete or the jock or the artist. . . . [I] don't feel like that here in the Bay Area.

Nia also expressed support of gay rights and progressive attitudes toward gay and lesbian people. However, through her use of the "fag" discourse here, Nia was pointing to how academic achievement is often used to emasculate African American boys as well as challenge their racial authenticity.[30]

Mothers also worried about the toll these messages might have on their sons' self-perception as they transitioned into manhood. Sharon, mentioned earlier, captured a sentiment shared by many mothers:

> Each time a black boy has a racially charged interaction with a police officer, a teacher, or a shop owner, those experiences will gradually start to eat at his self-worth and damage his spirit. He might become so damaged that he starts to believe and enact the person he is expected to be rather than who he truly is as a person.

Mothers wanted their sons to be aware of racism and prejudice, but they did not want them to internalize how some members of mainstream society might view them. Sarah, a mother of one son with another child on the way, said, "How do we give them the history without the pain? Educat[e] our kids without giving them the baggage?" These mothers walked a

tightrope between providing their children with the skills to navigate negative images of African Americans while not validating those images. Their children would need to recognize both explicit and implicit forms of racism while not allowing it to justify not working hard or succeeding in life.

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM AND FOSTERING SELF-RELIANCE

Mothers in my study were also concerned about the gendered racism their daughters might confront, but they believed their daughters were less likely to face situations in which their responses could mean the difference between life and death. The apprehension mothers had for their daughters seemed more "manageable" to them. For example, after describing her concerns for her sons' safety, I asked Karlyn if she had as many worries for her daughter. She replied,

> Not as many, I think that . . . Not as many. I don't know; it just feels as though it is a little easier for her to do what she needs to do and be who she needs to be because she is perceived as less of a threat than he will be.

Karlyn, like the other mothers, believed her daughter's challenges would be less onerous than her son's because her daughter would be perceived as less of a physical threat requiring containment. Mothers' concerns for their daughters focused on ensuring they were well educated, had strong self-esteem in terms of their beauty, bodies, and sense of self-worth, and could take care of themselves. For the mothers in my study, raising daughters involved a different quality and intensity of concerns than raising sons.[31]

The racialized and gendered context for daughters was somewhat different from that of sons during the period I conducted interviews (from 2009 to 2011). At the onset of this research, Michelle Obama had become the first African American First Lady, and the much debated and awaited *The Princess and the Frog*[32] had been released, which was Disney's first animated film with an African American princess. Over the course of the interviews for this research, *Sesame Street*'s music video "I Love My Hair" went viral, showing positive images of African American hair that

encouraged black girls to "love their hair" in all of its natural forms.[33] Malia Obama, one of former President Obama's daughters, sported cornrows and twists, which appeared to decrease the stigma of those hairstyles and encouraged mothers in my research to be more willing to allow their daughters to wear them. Although mothers believed their daughters were barraged with messages that they were unworthy and unattractive because they did not have the "right" skin color, facial features, or hair texture, many also noted the increased availability of positive depictions of African American women. Indeed, they often contrasted the absence of these positive images in their own youth to the relative abundance and availability of them for their daughters.

Mary shifted her focus when she described the concerns she and her mothers' group members discussed about raising daughters:

> Whether it is, "I'm the only black girl in the school," or "Someone is wondering why my hair is curly, or is telling me I look like a monkey because it doesn't straighten like theirs." How can we prepare them? How can we instill in them a sense of beauty and sense of pride in who they are?

Mary's comments illustrate the desire for daughters to see their own value as African American women and to have strong self-esteem. This was something Mary said she did not believe was reflected in the messages her daughter received from the broader white society or from her daughter's non-black peers. Mary believed the friendships her children were forming with other African American kids would help them navigate prospective assaults on their self-esteem. Toward the end of our interview, Mary said that it was indeed a white classmate who had told her daughter that she had hair like a monkey. This experience reinforced Mary's belief that her daughter needed African American peers, and she found solace in the fact that her daughter had a group of girlfriends that she interacted with regularly and whose hair looked like hers.

Although hair and beauty regimens might be thought of as superficial and inconsequential, African American women have confronted a surprising amount of scrutiny over their beauty and hair. This has ranged from the findings of pseudoscientific research appearing in *Psychology Today* on why African American women are less attractive than other women[34] to governmental policies in the military restricting natural hairstyles such

as braids and dreadlocks and school codes of conduct that prohibit certain natural hairstyles for girls and women. This scrutiny has also come from people like syndicated radio talk show host Don Imus, who referred to African American female basketball champions as "nappy-headed hoes" and expounded upon the bodies and hair textures of other athletes.[35]

Mary and other mothers engaged their daughters in a version of what Patricia Hill Collins calls black feminist thought, which involves a process of "self-definition and valuation" that is sensitive to the "interlocking nature of oppression" and emphasizes the "importance of redefining culture" by clarifying the contributions of African American men and women.[36] This process of uncovering one's value was meant to protect daughters from challenges to their self-worth that they would likely encounter throughout their lives. Mothers also viewed this process as connected to building strong self-esteem in their daughters, developing a sense of self-sufficiency and helping them to refrain from early sexual encounters.

STRATEGIES TO MANAGE GENDERED RACISM

To address challenges related to gendered racism, mothers drew from an arsenal of strategies that often differed for their sons and their daughters. They discussed using two strategies—*experience management* and *environment management*—to ensure that their sons' regular social interactions included or avoided certain kinds of exposures. Mothers used a different strategy—*peer group management*—to address concerns related to their daughters' self-esteem. This strategy focused on creating supportive peer groups for their daughters that would affirm their beauty, value, and identity.

Experience management focuses on seeking out opportunities for sons to engage in activities to gain fluency in different situations—both empowering and challenging—that mothers viewed as integral to African American boyhood and manhood. Environment management focused on monitoring their sons' regular social environment, such as their school or neighborhood, with the aim of excluding sources of discrimination.

Participants used experience management to try to help their sons acquire what they viewed as an essential life skill: the ability to seamlessly

shift among communities that differed by race, class, and gender. They shuttled sons to activities such as baseball, basketball, or music lessons in a variety of neighborhoods comprised of African Americans from different economic backgrounds; and they exposed their sons to African American men, including fathers, uncles, cousins, coaches, or friends, who expressed what they believed were healthy versions of masculinity. Mothers provided this exposure because they believed their sons would have to understand how they were being interpreted in various settings and how to deploy different racialized versions of their masculinity to successfully negotiate those settings.

Maya, introduced at the start of this chapter, described how she and her husband used experience management to expose their son to alternative and, in her view, more positive ideals of masculinity:

> With our son, we definitely have a heightened level of concern, especially around public schools, about what it means to be a black male in this society. . . . [I]t is worrisome to think about sending him into the world where he is such a potential target. . . . I know how to make a kid that does well in school and can navigate academic environments. My husband knows how to help young people—black young people—understand their position, how the world sees them, and how they might see themselves in a different and much more positive way.

Maya and her husband did this by teaching their son how others might perceive him while rejecting prevailing images of African American masculinity and crafting alternatives, a version of what W. E. B. Du Bois referred to as double consciousness.[37]

Mothers who used environment management organized their sons' social interactions to exclude exposures to racism. Rachel, a married mother of a son and daughter, said,

> My son thinks he is street-smart, but he is used to being in an environment in which he is known. No one thinks of my son as a black boy, they think of him as my son, but when he goes out into the real world, people will make assumptions about him.

Rachel lived in a predominately white neighborhood with few other African American families. She believed her neighbors did not view her

family as "the African American family" but simply as a family, and this protected her son from challenges associated with being an African American male in the broader society, where he might be assumed to be part of the urban underclass and treated poorly.

When mothers discussed addressing concerns related to their daughters' self-esteem, they often focused on the peer group management strategy. For Sharon, one of her reasons for joining a mothers' group was to give her daughter a peer group. She explained that "part of [joining] was wanting her to have a strong sense of self and being prideful of who she was, but at the same time really being comfortable, being in really any environment. But feeling grounded or centered with people that were like her." Sharon and other members of her mothers' group also made efforts to enroll their daughters in activities together to ensure they were not the only black girls participating. Sharon believed that by providing her daughter with this race-, class-, and gender-specific peer group early in her life, she would have the emotional support to avoid insecurities over her self-worth and beauty. Indeed, she had been prompted to seek out such a group when her daughter was the only African American student in her preschool and began expressing a desire to have hair like the other girls. These mothers hoped that having a supportive group of peers from the same racial background would shield their daughters from the self-doubt and social isolation they often experienced during their own childhoods.

Mothers also described using two additional strategies—*emotion management* and *image management*—to help their sons manage the expression of their feelings and their physical demeanor. Although mothers primarily discussed using these strategies in relation to their sons, image management was, at times, discussed in relation to their daughters to ensure they were treated well. However, different stakes were implicated in the successful deployment of these strategies for their daughters versus their sons. For example, Karlyn engaged in something she called "prepping for life" with her son. She said,

> I talk to [my son] constantly. We do scenarios and we talk about stuff. I'll pose a situation, like, say, if you are ever kidnapped, what do you do? If the police ever pull you over, how do you need to react? So, we do scenarios for all of that; it's just prepping for life.

It would not be unreasonable for a parent to instruct their child to view police officers as sources of help. What is striking about Karlyn's examples is that she viewed child predators and police officers as equally dangerous to her son. She hoped that preparing her son for these scenarios would give him some agency in his response when he was confronted with these situations. Mothers enrolled their sons in activities such as yoga and karate, hoping they would learn to restrain their emotions and that this ability would translate to their interactions with teachers, police officers, peers, and the public.

Rebecca, a widow with one son, who also raised her nephew in his teenage years, described using image management when counseling her nephew about his clothing:

> I tried to explain that to him because he didn't understand. He said, "I am just wearing my hoodie." "But baby, I understand what you are doing, and there is nothing wrong with that, but if you walk through the [poor, primarily African American, and high-crime] neighborhood near my school, we see something different." You know, just having to protect him and trying to shelter him from unnecessary stress and trauma. . . . Is it fair? No. Is it reality? Yes.

Rebecca's comments illustrate a parenting paradox experienced by the mothers in this research. Even as she challenged the double standards that she believed were used to evaluate her nephew's behavior and appearance, as a practical matter, she felt compelled to educate him and her son on these different standards and encourage them to adhere to them for their own safety. Participants could not prevent negative interactions from happening, but they wanted to increase their sons' chances of surviving them.

Mothers also recounted concerns over managing their daughters' physical appearance. Kristen, married and the mother of one daughter, described the racial stigma her daughter might encounter based on her hairstyle:

> I was trying to decide if I wanted to do cornrows, which I don't have a problem with, but I think sometimes there is a stereotype that comes along, or can come along, with it. It was important to me to make sure that if I did it that it didn't look [sigh] ghetto. I even discussed it with a few friends and it

> actually looks really cute. . . . I didn't want people to assume that she was a certain type of child based on her hairstyle . . . bad . . . with parents that are kind of a little wild.

Kristen and other mothers believed that even a seemingly insignificant decision of styling their daughters' hair in a way that was both convenient and common in the African American community could have consequences in the broader white mainstream. These mothers felt that cornrows could provoke negative assessments of their daughters' character by teachers and peers.

Finally, mothers described scrutinizing the media entertainment and toys they exposed their children to, particularly their daughters. Perhaps this should not be surprising, given that most modern childcare experts advise parents to refrain from exposing their children to television until they are two years old and to then limit the amount thereafter. Steven P. Shelov and colleagues described research showing how exposure to television negatively impacts brain development and leads to childhood obesity.[38] Absent from the litany of potential negative effects, however, was a worry voiced by many of my participants: How does exposure to televised images of African Americans impact their children's racial self-esteem? Thus, they monitored and limited screen time for their children using a racial filter. Mothers also used *media* and *toy management* to expose their daughters to empowering images of African American women role models and to exclude negative images.

Karin talked about her plans to restrict her daughter's screen time as a way of preserving her self-esteem as an African American girl. She did not want her daughter to grow up shaped by media images that portray African American women as having the "wrong" hair and skin color and being undesirable to men. She recounted that because her own parents limited her screen time, she never saw Lisa Turtle, the sole black character on the popular 1980s television show *Saved by the Bell*, go dateless season after season. Karin also believed the blow to her own self-esteem was less severe when a white girl in her summer camp told her that she looked like Nell Carter, the overweight actress who played the black housekeeper on the popular 1980s sitcom *Gimme a Break*. Karin realized that this girl was trying to demean her, but because she was not familiar with the show or

the actress, the insult did not resonate with her. She often wondered what damage that insult might have inflicted on her self-esteem had she known about the show. Based on her own experiences, Karin believed that limiting screen time would help to insulate her daughter from such potential stings to her confidence, self-esteem, and thought processes.

Chandra described how she approached media exposure for her daughter:

> I really tried to encourage and push *Dora* [*the Explorer*] as much as possible. . . . She is traveling around. She is cool. She speaks Spanish. She is a kid of color. But the whole Disney thing. I mean (a) from seeing the cartoons, there are a lot of racist innuendos in them. They were made during a very racist time during our history. And (b) they are so white. I think about working with kids and learning how they suffer from low self–esteem around those issues of identity and race and what they look like, and I just think it is really harmful. And this notion that a prince is going to come and save you and whisk you away and your life is going to be perfect is just against everything I've learned in my life. . . . We talk about it and I tell her why I don't like them. . . . [W]e talk about why she doesn't see images like herself, or darker—because she is pretty light—on the news or on TV. And people might think that it is too much to talk about with a five-year-old, but if she is getting these messages already, I feel like it is my responsibility as a parent to begin to deconstruct them.

Chandra believed her daughter, at five years old, was already being inundated with messages that she was less valuable as an African American girl. She had started these conversations about the lack of people of color in the media even before her daughter was five. She could not prevent the exposure, but she could challenge the implicit messages and counter those messages.

Mary described the strategies she and other members in her mothers' group used to build strong self-esteem in their daughters:

> [We work hard to ensure] they see beauty in books and they see themselves represented in books and movies. To make them understand that beauty is not about race or color. You know, I think it has improved a lot in the last twenty years since I was a kid. . . . I make an effort to go out and if I see a book with a brown girl, I buy it. . . . I think that is one of the struggles of black women. The definition of beauty in society has nothing to do with what is black.

The mothers in this research thus deliberately and proactively exposed their daughters to positive examples of African American girls and women in media and toys to build a strong sense of value and worth in their daughters and to counter the negative images they believed they were being exposed to regularly in their lives.

Heather, a divorced mother of two sons and a daughter, captured the end product of building her daughter's self-esteem when she described her proudest moment as a mother. Heather and her daughter were visiting a predominantly white private school when her daughter was given the opportunity to play with current female students, who were all white and playing with baby dolls. None of the children were playing with the lone black doll. Her daughter entered the room, saw the black baby doll, ran to it, and scooped it up, exclaiming, "Oh my goodness! Look at this beautiful black baby and her beautiful black skin." Within moments, the seemingly uninteresting black baby doll became the center of attention, and all of the white girls wanted to play with that doll. In the ensuing weeks, Heather said the school had to order additional black baby dolls to quell disputes among the students who, she opined, now saw the value and beauty in the black doll because of her daughter's actions. Heather commented that her daughter could have responded by similarly rejecting the black doll, but she did not. Instead, her daughter picked up the doll and extolled its virtues. Heather believed that her daughter not only saw the value in the doll but also asserted its value publicly because of the effort she had put into building her daughter's self-esteem by exposing her to empowering media images and toys featuring African American girls and females of color more generally. Overall, the mothers in my study sought to shield their daughters from experiences of self-loathing or self-doubt so that they would not question whether they were smart and attractive, and they would know they were worthy of the same happiness as others.

CONCLUSION

It is important to reiterate that these participants were middle- and upper-middle-class mothers and that most were married. Thus, in many respects, they conformed to the sort of households that, at least on paper,

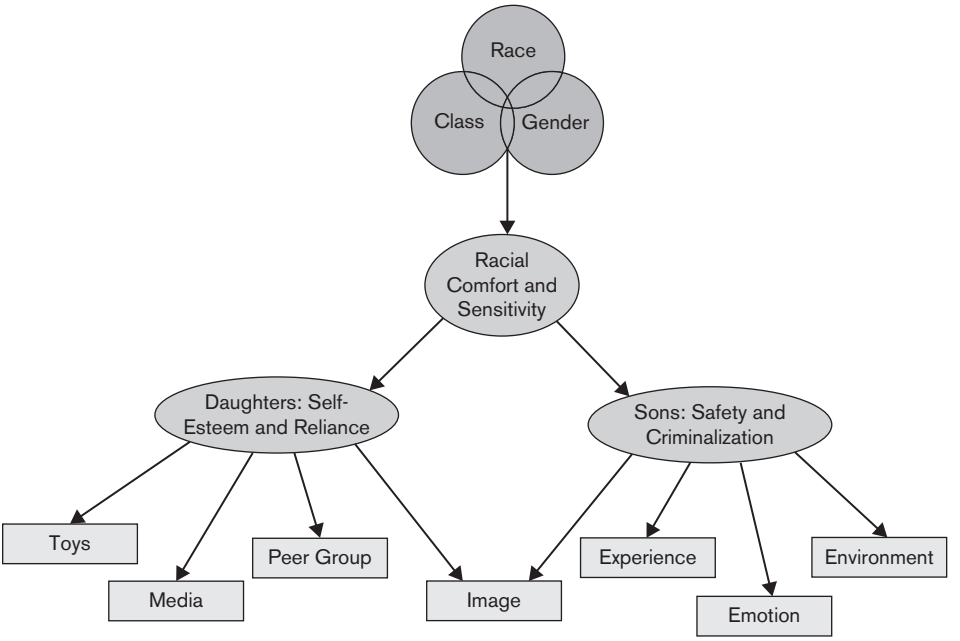


Figure 1. General and gender-specific parenting concerns.

would exemplify middle-class resources and privileges, families that typically view educators and law enforcement as resources.[39] But these participants viewed these groups as threats and sources of gendered racism.

Many would assume that these mothers and their children would have access to good schools, dedicated teachers, and safe neighborhoods. Nonetheless, these participants saw educators and law enforcement as potential threats to their children's development and safety. Sending their children out into the world to get educated; navigate their neighborhoods; and interact with peers, teachers, police officers, and community members was a source of stress. The societal institutions that are often viewed as resources for middle- and upper-middle-class white families were instead viewed with some level of circumspection and fear by the mothers in this research.

The labor these mothers engaged in for their sons and daughters to feel confident, safe, and valued is largely rendered invisible to the broader white society (see figure 1).

These mothers' accounts demonstrate the way controlling images operate in society and how their sons' and daughters' range of acceptable emotions, self-expression, and appearance was constrained by the fear of affirming negative stereotypes. Indeed, mothers encouraged their children to engage in strategic sacrifices in self-expression to successfully and safely navigate their social worlds.

Through engaging in versions of black feminist thought, mothers encouraged their children to understand how to develop an independent sense of their own self-worth.[40] For both sons and daughters, these processes required that they develop a double consciousness. They saw themselves not only through the eyes of the broader society but also through their own empowering self-image. The findings for sons are particularly interesting, given that research suggests that masculinity and male bodies confer privileges and protections that serve as symbolic assets in social interactions. These mothers' accounts tell a different story: depending on its racialization, the male body can be a "symbolic liability." The strength that is usually associated with masculinity put these mothers' sons at risk and necessitated that they adjust how they express their manhood to manage their vulnerability in different contexts.

Ironically, by feeling compelled to engage in strategies that encouraged their sons and daughters to conform to stricter standards and engage in acts of deference, participants contributed to reproducing a social structure that subordinated their children. These mothers were caught in a lose-lose predicament. The seemingly continuous stream of videos of unarmed African American boys and men being shot by police officers and members of the general public might compel the US government to take a closer look at law enforcement's and the broader society's treatment of African American boys, girls, and men, but these mothers need solutions that protect their children now.

These parental concerns over safety, vulnerability, and self-esteem transcend class. The societal forces that produce them are largely outside of the control of individual families. In response, the mothers in this research tried to fortify their daughters against assaults on their self-esteem, tried to protect their sons from attacks on their bodies, and tried to ensure their children received some version of the "more" they believed their children needed to survive and thrive in a society that was not always supportive of their development.

In the next three chapters, I describe three different groups of mothers that I term "border crossers," "border policers," and "border transcenders." Each group of mothers sought to foster different orientations to African American middle-class identity in their children. I also describe the shared characteristics of mothers who embraced each orientation to identity, the strategies they used to foster that identity, and the meanings they attached to that identity.

2 Border Crossers

UNDERSTANDING STRUGGLE

Nia, married and the mother of two sons, described the relationships she wanted all her children to have with other African Americans:

> I want my children to be well rounded. I want them to be cool. I want them to be able to interact with a lot of different people and in a lot of different situations. In particular, I want them to be able to interact with black people, all kinds of black people. And not be scared or intimidated or feel like they're not black enough, or in situations with whites not feel comfortable or sure how to act.

Nia wanted her sons to be able to interact with many types of people: both poor and economically well-off African Americans as well as people of other races. She believed that in order to accomplish this, her children needed to feel secure in their African American identity and be surrounded by people who would not subtly communicate that being African American was inferior. Nia described how this goal influenced the caregivers she selected for her sons:

> We had an issue with another childcare provider, where she would be walking and she would be scared of the people in the neighborhood. . . . I don't care if they are a kid; speak. You need to smile and say hello, because you see

> them every day. I don't care if they are smoking crack, you could smile and say hello as you pass them smoking crack. . . . I don't want my child to be part of that, and for them to have that concept; like, be scared of those people, you don't want to touch them, they're dirty. . . . That's not okay. So, we were through with that nanny.

Although Nia was financially able to hire a full-time nanny, she lived in a neighborhood with people who were significantly less advantaged, including those with visible drug addictions. She did not want her children to look down on other African American community members who had less or to be fearful of them.

Nia's experiences with racially biased caregivers led her to be more circumspect when interviewing prospective nannies. She asked direct questions about race and racism, and she underscored the importance of her children's caregiver being comfortable talking about these issues. She explained,

> In our family, my husband and I, we eat racism for breakfast. We talk about racism and race, and we think about it a lot. That is the lens from which we see a lot of things. And it's hard, like, sometimes you just want to take off your race lens for a second and just be a human being. But we can't do that, you know. So, we can't have someone here that doesn't have that certain lens or is not willing to look at that lens, and maybe even change their lens, you know.

As discussed in chapter 1, the African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers in my research screened their children's teachers, administrators, and others for racial intelligence and sensitivity. With her caregiver, Nia also demanded a specific level of comfort related to negotiating less privileged neighborhoods and community members. The meaning of "racially intelligent and sensitive caregivers" varied, however, for the three different groups of mothers.

This chapter focuses on a group of mothers that I term "border crossers," who worked to foster a border-crossing identity in their children. Border crossers were one of three groups of African American middle-class mothers that I identified in this research (the other groups are discussed in chapters 3 and 4, respectively). For border crossers, caregivers needed to be able to confidently navigate and/or live in poor African American

communities with higher crime rates and to respectfully interact with residents from those communities. This was important because caregivers were setting an example that their children were likely to follow.

LIFTING AS WE CLIMB: RETAINING CONNECTIONS TO LESS PRIVILEGED AFRICAN AMERICANS

"Lifting as we climb," an expression that is often attributed to Mary Church Terrell, describes an aspiration that successful African Americans will reach back to those who are less successful and lend a helping hand as they pursue individual achievement and success. In the traditional template of upward mobility, the concept of lifting as we climb is generally neither a central component of success nor an expectation of those who achieve it. The classic depiction of upward mobility is the Horatio Alger story, in which an individual pulls themselves, and perhaps their family, out of dire economic and social situations by hard work and self-sacrifice.[1] Often the narrative of upward mobility involves moving up and out and leaving one's community behind to merge into a higher social class or stratum. Those left behind have failed to have the "right stuff" in the form of cultural practices, values, desires, or motivation to succeed.[2] Upward mobility is often envisioned as the shedding of lower status or negative cultural and social capital that will no longer be useful in one's new life of higher status, which will require dominant cultural and social capital.[3] Parents might conjure up for their children experiences of struggle as concrete examples of the value of hard work, but less often do they bring their children to the poverty-stricken, and potentially crime-ridden, environment of their origins to teach skills of survival—and even less do they choose to live in such environments.

Perhaps one reason the dominant narrative of upward mobility is imagined as a process whereby people move up and out is that it has primarily depicted the experience of class change among white or white ethnic men, uncomplicated by the constraints and opportunities related to a subordinate racial identity and gender.[4] Indeed, existing research suggests that upwardly mobile white mothers at times see their continued connection to extended family as an impediment as they shed their previous class

background and blend into their new middle-class lives.[5] Other research indicates that this "up-and-outward" orientation does not accurately describe upward mobility among racial or ethnic minority groups.[6] For example, African American women who have attained middle-class status through upward mobility are more likely to have stronger relationships with their mothers than upwardly mobile white women with their mothers.[7] Related to this upward mobility, middle-class African Americans tend to have kin networks characterized by social-class diversity: they are more likely to have parents and siblings whose incomes fall below the poverty line.[8] Although success has always been constructed in individual terms, for racial and ethnic minority groups, those who succeed often retain an intimate connection with their families and a sense of duty and obligation to their communities of origin, in part based on a sense of group struggle.[9]

Revisiting Nia's account, she described emigrating from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean to the United States with her family when she was a child. Her father worked in construction and her mother first worked as a secretary and later periodically ran a childcare business out of their home. Nia described her family as "a typical immigrant family": her parents were firm but loving, and they went through periods of financial distress. Her father was a strict disciplinarian with traditional patriarchal views, but Nia's mother was more progressive, insisting that she wanted more for her daughters, and she even taught Nia's brother how to cook and clean. Nia was the first generation to attain middle-class status in her family, and she was committed to helping people from less privileged backgrounds. For example, prior to having her biological sons, Nia and her husband became foster parents to three African American teenagers. She explained that, as a teacher, she often came into contact with students who needed help, and she and her husband decided to take on the role of foster parent.

Michael Dawson has described this sense of duty and obligation within the African American community as a product of having a linked fate.[10] Irrespective of economic backgrounds, African Americans feel connected to one another by the collective experiences of racial oppression. This connection is felt not just within their families but also within the African American community more broadly. Mary Waters suggests that this linked-fate orientation to identity is produced because there has never been a viable alterna-

tive identity that African Americans have been permitted to occupy within American society.[11] Both of these perspectives underscore how the societal reception that African Americans confront shapes their orientation to racial identity and the broader African American community. Whether produced by collective oppression or exclusion, despite having additional resources, wealthier African Americans often share a bond with poorer African Americans that is shaped by the interactions they experience in the broader society that often constrain their ability to fully deploy their resources.

Some scholars have pointed out how racial and ethnic minorities are forced to cross identity borders; they have to engage in elite and predominately white workplaces and then cross back into their communities of origin.[12] Others have underscored the continued connections and linked fate shared between upwardly mobile racial and ethnic minorities, particularly women, and their lower-income counterparts.[13] The border crossers I interviewed tried to accomplish both of these aims as they raised their children, something that not all groups of mothers sought to do. This demanded that they retain authentic connections to their extended families and to working-class and poor communities of African Americans.

Notwithstanding their educational, professional, and financial accomplishments, border crossers sought to navigate both their community of origin (or similar kinds of communities) and the more privileged, often predominately white, communities where they and their children lived, worked, or went to school. Thus, the accounts of these upwardly mobile African American mothers do not conform to the dominant (i.e., white) narrative but are shaped by the alternative orientation captured in Mary Church Terrell's expression.

The ability to navigate different kinds of habitus is a skill that border-crossing mothers believed would assist their children in their current social interactions and in their future adult lives in the workplace. In the remainder of the chapter, I unpack how these mothers' accounts of their parenting practices reflect this border-crossing identity. I describe how embracing this version of middle-class African American identity influenced their conception of their children's place in the world and motivated them to foster this racial identity in their children. Throughout this discussion, I underscore how the societal reception that these mothers and their children encountered influenced their decisions related to identity.

EMBRACING A BORDER-CROSSING IDENTITY

Trina, a married mother of one child, wanted her daughter to remain connected to African Americans who were less fortunate and experiencing more challenging life circumstances. Trina's parents were never married. They met when they were teenagers and had an on-again-off-again relationship that ended soon after her youngest sibling was born. Trina grew up in a family in which she was often the parental figure for her siblings. She lived primarily with her mother, since her father was in and out of prison, and both parents suffered from drug addiction. Trina described her childhood as unpredictable, and she often worried that her family would be evicted from their apartment or that her father would have another stint in prison. School and her grandmother's house provided a refuge, and she attributed her ability to succeed and thrive as an adult—and to attain middle-class status—to her grandmother's example:

> My greatest source of stability was my grandmother. I would go over [to her house] on the weekends and look to her as an example of how to raise a family and carry out a lot of the duties which I now associate with being a good mom and a good wife.

After getting married but before having children, Trina discovered her younger sister was less successfully negotiating their mother's issues with drug addiction and that she was skipping school and receiving poor grades. In response, Trina made an arrangement with her mother to informally foster her sister for the rest of her time in high school. She wanted to ensure that her sister got on a path toward upward mobility.

One might assume that after pulling herself out of the challenging environment in which she was raised and attaining middle-class status, Trina would want to distance herself from those circumstances. This was far from the case. Along with wanting to help her sister have a better future, Trina wanted her daughter to have a connection to less privileged African Americans, both those within her family and in her community of origin:

> Even though my family has had a lot of rough experiences, I feel like it is going to enrich [my daughter's life]. . . . I am confident that she will be able to relate to people's struggles and not ever get to a place where she just feels like she is disconnected from her people. I think that is how it is with the

> community that we work with. Sometimes the kids, they are tough. . . . [T]hey use drugs, they've committed crimes, they've been in and out of jail, and have had some really tough things happen, and made some bad decisions. But, you know, I don't want her to ever be in a place where she looks at anybody and feels like she is better than them, you know?

Trina, through her activities in her church and as a teacher, sought opportunities to help less privileged African Americans from childhood backgrounds similar to her own. She also wanted her daughter to be exposed to these experiences so she could gain some understanding of their life experiences and her own privilege.

Border crossers wanted their children to be successful in school and in life, but they did not want them to think they were better than others who lacked the family or community support to achieve those aims. Indeed, Trina described how becoming middle class posed a challenge in her relationships with less fortunate African Americans in her community and in her church:

> Because of our income [other African Americans] may automatically dissociate from us or put us on some sort of pedestal, but I think it is just about existing with people where they are. So, I want [my daughter], with whatever she does, let's say she plays basketball, to play on a team with different folks.

For Trina, it was important that both she and her daughter had meaningful and ongoing relationships with less fortunate African Americans.

Several things stand out in Nia's and Trina's accounts of their experiences and the kind of identities they worked to foster in their children. In their current daily lives, being middle class did not shelter Nia, Trina, or their children from exposure to drug users in their current neighborhoods or within their extended families. Their experiences as members of the middle class included regular interactions with individuals who were poor, managing drug use and addiction, and involved in illegal activities. Neither mother wanted to completely shield their children from these social and community issues, perhaps by driving to a park in a safer environment or never walking around their own neighborhoods. Both mothers felt that they and their children should have respectful relationships with individuals from different and more challenging life circumstances than their own, to, as Trina put it, be able to "exist with

people where they are." As a consequence, each mother ensured that her children's caregivers were also comfortable in those settings and compassionate in how they explained those interactions to her children. Their experiences included exposing their children to people who needed help, either from within their own families or from the broader community, and even accepting daily responsibilities for fostering family members or other children.

Border crossers wanted their children to feel at ease with, and, importantly, to be received as authentically African American by African Americans from less privileged economic circumstances. For example, Jennifer, a single mother of one son, said,

> I don't want him [to be] awkward in certain situations because, you know, being a child of color, if he is never around people of color, then he is going to be awkward when he gets older. And I have met people like that, whose parents had the money to send them to [private] schools, so they were never around people [of color], so they can't relate. And it is a little awkward. So, I want him to have a balance where he sees all kinds of different people and understands different people.

These mothers believed that through regular exposure to African Americans who were less privileged—typically while they were present—their children would develop a level of empathy and ease in interacting with others who shared their racial identity but lacked their economic privilege. Thus, rather than encouraging their children to distance themselves from less privileged communities, these mothers worked to help their children become attuned to and be able to embody certain aspects of less privileged African Americans' attitudes, cultural practices, and ways of seeing the world—a version of what Bourdieu referred to as habitus.[14]

There were limits, however, to how much exposure some border crossers wanted their children to have to different ways of life. Although Jennifer wanted her son to be aware of his privilege, she added,

> I would never raise him in the ghetto because that atmosphere is destructive and I don't want [the people in those communities] putting him on a bad track. But, at the same time, I want him to have compassion and understanding for people and why they are the way they are and have some insight into why they are the way they are.

Jennifer worked hard so her son would not have to live in that environment, but she and her son's father wanted him to understand and empathize with people who were less privileged and not see himself as better than them. Jennifer, a dentist, primarily served lower-income people of color, so, because her son regularly visited her at work, she felt that with little effort he was receiving exposure to economic diversity among African Americans. Her son also gained exposure to this kind of diversity from Jennifer's extended family. Like other border crossers, not all of Jennifer's family members had attained middle class status. It is important to note that unlike lower-income mothers, Jennifer and other border crossers in this research could often make the choice to live in what they perceived to be higher-quality neighborhoods while retaining regular contact with lower-income communities.

Trina's, Jennifer's and Nia's descriptions of the connections they wanted their children to have with less privileged African Americans serve as exemplars of how other border crossers in my study approached fostering African American middle-class identity in their children. These mothers' descriptions of the range of people they and their family regularly encountered speak to the different social contexts in which some members of the African American middle class live and the different versions of habitus they must be able to embody. For many middle-class African Americans, the social and economic issues that Trina and Nia describe are regular parts of their social landscape, often based on constrained choices on where to live. Thus, these mothers tried to ensure their children were proficient in communities characterized by different kinds of habitus.

Indeed, research has highlighted that African American middle-class families often live in neighborhoods with fewer resources and amenities than low-income white Americans[15] and are more likely to live adjacent to poorer and higher-crime neighborhoods.[16] Thus, even if their immediate neighborhood is relatively safe, their children may have to regularly navigate through less safe neighborhoods. Living in a solidly middle- or upper-middle-class neighborhood often means living with predominately white neighbors, seldom seeing other African American children and families.[17] Social issues that may characterize African American middle-class and mixed-income communities are issues that many white middle-class families wish to and can more readily avoid.[18] African American middle-class families' residential choices are not solely a function of their economic

resources and their preferences.[19] Existing research suggests that African Americans confront constraints in their housing choices. For example, African American house-hunters with similar credit and wealth profiles to those of white house-hunters are confronted with racial steering in their searches and heightened scrutiny of their loan applications.[20]

FOSTERING A BORDER-CROSSING IDENTITY

One might assume that middle-class mothers from any racial background would encourage their children to avoid walking around an area with a high crime rate. However, border crossers believed their children needed to be comfortable in such areas and that failing to provide them with this acumen would disadvantage them in their daily interactions with African Americans from different economic backgrounds and whites.

Border crossers also worried that if their children lacked the appropriate racial socialization, their peers might challenge their "blackness," which would in turn harm their self-esteem. As discussed here and in the following two chapters, how mothers defined what it means to be authentically African American and middle class varied. For border crossers, having an authentically African American and middle-class identity meant feeling comfortable around less affluent and less well-educated African Americans who had not benefited from the same residential, educational, and/or economic opportunities. It also meant understanding socioeconomic struggles, knowing how to navigate privileged and less privileged spaces, and possessing "street smarts."

Maya, a mother of four, was raised in a family with two working-class parents, and she purposefully fostered an appreciation of her background in her children. Neither of her parents had a college degree during her childhood, but when Maya was an adult, her mother decided to attend college. Maya described her belief that her children should be conversant in arenas of both privilege (often equated with whites) and poverty (often equated with African Americans). She explained,

> If you are a black person in the world and you don't know your history and you don't know your community and [you] can't go into West Oakland [a

> poor and high-crime neighborhood] and walk from Block A to Block B without being all nervous and scared, you are handicapped. . . . There is a sense of power in knowing that you can go anyplace in the world and you are not scared of the 'hood. That it is not this kind of mysterious and dark place and you can handle yourself in lot of different kinds of situations. . . . [My] kids have all spent some time in [this area's] public schools, which are both integrated and segregated all at the same time. There is very much a vibe of the white kids from the Hills [an affluent area] and the black kids from the Flatlands [a low-income area]. . . . I want my kids to be able to hang with both, and again I see this as being related to self-esteem, self-confidence, and just humanity.

Maya's account reveals a description of life that is not often associated with middle-class white children. Her children continually weaved in and out of communities that were characterized by different configurations of race, class, and gender. Her children's high school was integrated in terms of the enrollment of students from different racial groups; yet, in the daily interactions of students, these racial groups were largely segregated from one another.

Maya saw her children's ability to shift, or code-switch, as enabling them to navigate and be welcome within both African American and white social groups. As with so many other public high schools, academic achievement often meant being in classes with few, if any, African American students. Maya did not let her children's academic achievement, which necessitated they be surrounded by non-black students, come at the expense of them not having a connection to the African American community. Maya described how her daughter's educational experiences had produced what she called "cultural fluidity":

> I look at my older daughter's childhood, and I'm actually very happy that she was in this all-black environment from the second grade to fifth grade. Then she went to big public schools . . . then she went to a tiny little private school [and now] high school here. So, she has had all of these ranges of experience that I think make her this person who can really be comfortable in any space. And, at the same time, she's done this community work . . . so she knows how to be around black people, she knows how to be around white people, she knows how to be a scholar, she knows how to be a community person. And I value that kind of cultural fluidity.

Importantly, these skills not only allowed Maya's children to move easily from one geographic location to another but also enabled them to fit in and thrive within their current school environment. This skill set was viewed as essential as her children moved through their lives, based on the assumption that their professional and personal social circles would continue to be socioeconomically and racially diverse, albeit at times in segregated ways.

Maya and other mothers in this study provided their children with routine exposure to a broad spectrum of social and economic arenas so they would become culturally fluent in them. Through these exposures, the mothers aimed to give their children experience-based knowledge that would define what was normal and natural in their social world. Border crossers did this, in part, because they were concerned that their children would have to choose between academic achievement and being grounded as African Americans within the African American community. They also sought to avoid their children having to respond to challenges to their racial identity. Mary Waters describes how Caribbean immigrants emphasize their ethnicity to retain a sense of distinctness from African Americans.[21] Similarly, these children were taught how to underscore aspects of their racial identity to achieve a sense of belonging within specific black communities.

Individuals and families are not generally envisioned as having more than one habitus. A habitus is usually thought of as being acquired organically, at a level below consciousness, such as through day-to-day observation and mimicry.[22] When people do have more than one habitus, they are often envisioned as shedding one that is no longer useful to them for another, even if it is not quite a custom fit. These mothers represent a departure from these perspectives. They consciously shifted between different versions of habitus in their own lives and cultivated that ability in their children. They made it a priority for their children to cultivate diverse versions of habitus and to have an ability to shift seamlessly and unconsciously between them. They also saw how the skills from one habitus might serve their children as they operated in a social class characterized by a different habitus.

Many mothers lamented that, from their perspective, their children had a limited number of identities viewed as legitimately African American. This was a particular concern for mothers of boys, who, as dis-

cussed in more detail in chapter 1, often had to navigate the controlling image of the "thug" and processes of criminalization in their daily lives. Nia consciously tried to construct a black identity for her sons that included academic achievement as a nonnegotiable expectation. Nia, like other mothers, believed her sons would face challenges in maintaining their African American identity and would confront pressure to adopt or assimilate to a culturally white identity:

> [For high-achieving African American boys] either you're socialized as white, like, "He's white, and goes to a white school, and doesn't really know how to interact with black people that much"; or you're a thug. Like, that's pretty much it by the time they get to middle school. Like, pick a path because you can't be [both high-achieving and recognized as authentically black. The kids that] manage that in some way are in the newspaper, like it's not normal . . . [and] that's not okay.

These mothers wanted their children to get good grades and do well in school, but they knew, often from their own experience, that their children's achievement might be accompanied by challenges to their racial identity from fellow African Americans as well as whites.[23] In addition, their children might encounter pressure to abandon their cultural ties and commitments to their families and communities, ties and commitments that border crossers sought to retain and foster in their children.

Another way border crossers encouraged their children to understand economic and social struggles and to incorporate that understanding into their identity was by rejecting versions of African American identity that they believed were tied to privilege or elitism. Karlyn, a single mother of a son and daughter, was raised by a single mother. She knew who her father was, but she did not have a relationship with him. Karlyn grew up in a poor neighborhood and lived in public housing. She said the neighborhood was characterized by an enormous amount of physical and gun violence. As a result, she spent a lot of time with her grandparents, who lived in a different and safer neighborhood, only returning to her own home with her mother in the evening. Although she professed no fondness for the neighborhood in which she grew up, as an adult she retained a commitment to its community members and other African Americans who might come from similarly underprivileged backgrounds. As a single

mother, she described her search for other African American mothers who shared her orientation to race and class:

> I went to another African American moms' group, but I thought, "Man, they are not black mommas like me." . . . It just seemed like they were catering toward moms that were stay-at-home moms or with biracial kids, and I thought, you know, that is not me. I am a black mother and I just wanted to be part of a group where I felt comfortable. I mean, there were people who were trying to get into foo-foo stuff like Links and Jack and Jill [long-standing middle-class African American organizations], and I was like, no, thank you. . . . And I think I did not want to associate with people who defined themselves—and this is just my perception so I could have been wrong—by how much they made or what kind of car that they drove.

Karlyn raised several issues that divided mothers in their approaches to fostering different class and racial identities in their children. Despite sharing their racial identity, Karlyn saw the mothers in the group she visited as being marked by privileges that she did not share. They were stay-at-home mothers or were raising biracial children, which were circumstances that differed from her experience and that she associated with privilege. Karlyn's statement that she believed the mothers in that group were not "black mommas" like her refers to African American working mothers raising black children whose lives demanded they traverse the boundaries of class and racial identity on a daily basis.

Karlyn also explicitly referred to African American bourgeois organizations: The Links, Inc., and Jack and Jill of America, Inc. Jack and Jill is a membership organization primarily comprised of African American middle-class mothers.[24] The Links is a civic organization primarily comprised of middle-class, professional African American women. Both of these organizations have invitation-only admissions policies, and members often must meet income and educational requirements and pay fees for participation.[25] These clubs are aimed at members of the African American elite who are middle class, upper-middle class, and upper class. Some families have been members of these organizations for generations, so one might liken them to a version of "old money" within the African American community.[26] It would not be unreasonable to think that a mother would view getting an invitation to join one of these organizations as confirmation that her family had "arrived." However, this was not the

case among mothers who worked to foster a border-crossing identity in their children. They had no interest in joining these established groups, even when these opportunities were made available to them. Despite the historical legacy of these organizations as fixtures within the African American middle and upper-middle class, for some, these organizations were associated with elitism that excluded many everyday African Americans. Although Karlyn knew people and had friends who were members, she was decidedly not interested.

Instead, Karlyn wanted to have access to an economically diverse group of African American mothers for herself and her children. She was drawn to, and felt most at ease associating with, mothers who were less advantaged. She also felt compelled to help these mothers. Despite her criticism of the elitism within Jack and Jill and other such organizations, her solution to finding mothers with whom she shared values was to use a similar mechanism: creating an organization. Ultimately, Karlyn created a mothers' group that had no fees and, in her own words, was comprised of members that "covered the gamut." She did this because she wanted to have diversity in her and her children's lives. To offset the cost to mothers who might not be able to afford some of the outside activities, she applied for grants. She said,

> I was looking for everyday people [to join the organization] because my family represents everyday people, from people who have high-level positions and are professionals to people who are crackheads. . . . So that the crackhead momma, if her kid started hanging out with some of [the other] kids, maybe they would aspire to . . . do something different.

Karlyn used her own social circle of people from different parts and periods of her life to ensure that her children developed and retained connections with friends who might not have reached middle-class status or who might, in fact, be poor. Considering the impact this group might have on her children's relationships, she said, "I grew up in the 'hood so, you know, it is not like I am a stickler about a particular class or that my kids have to marry someone who has *x*, *y*, or *z*." Embodying Mary Church Terrell's sentiment of lifting as we climb, she organized this mothers' group not only for herself but also to help mothers who would benefit from her and other mothers' guidance.

Similarly, Farah, a married mother of two daughters, also distanced herself from elite African American circles, despite having earned an advanced degree and having been raised for a part of her life in an upper-middle-class African American family. During her childhood, Farah straddled different economic, cultural, and religious contexts, bouncing back and forth between poor and working-class arenas and arenas of privilege. After her parents divorced, Farah lived with her mother for several years until her mother was no longer able to care for her because of health issues. During the period that she lived with her mother in a predominately black and low-income neighborhood, she was surrounded by relatives who played instrumental roles in helping her mother care for her. Soon after moving in with her father, he remarried and the family moved to a different city and lived in an affluent neighborhood where she attended predominately white public schools. At these schools, Farah always felt a combination of isolation and unworthiness. Despite her father's and stepmother's high incomes and educational levels, she described how she primarily raised herself with little structured family time or afternoon activities, save for those offered by the school. As a consequence, Farah continued to identify more strongly with her family and friends from her mother's neighborhood, whom she continued to visit throughout her youth. Although she took Advanced Placement and accelerated courses in high school, as the only African American student in these classes, she did not feel comfortable socializing with her classmates, instead finding lower-income African American friends through her athletic activities.

Farah's father's and stepmother's education and income put them among the African American elite, but she never participated in elite African American circles. Her father rejected middle-class and upper-middle-class organizations like Jack and Jill because of his humble beginnings, but he also distanced himself from the poor community he was raised in as a child. Farah became pregnant with her first child during college, which delayed the completion of her degree by two years. When she told her family about the pregnancy, they rejected her and treated her like a black sheep, but the family of her then boyfriend (and now husband) embraced her and provided valuable emotional and instrumental support. They helped her apply for WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) and provided free childcare as she

transitioned to motherhood while also working to finish her college degree. Her boyfriend's family provided this assistance despite managing their own challenges, including poverty, illegal activities, and drug use, problems similar to those in the community she lived in with her mother.

As an adult, like her father, Farah did not participate in elite African American organizations. Indeed, some border crossers expressed their belief that these groups subtly judged their families for not conforming to more traditional family forms in which mothers were college educated, middle class, and married to a man with a college or graduate-level degree. Farah's comfort in low-income African American social circles and her discomfort with elite circles does not conform to the traditional story of upward mobility. She acquired the cultural and social capital to be able to navigate elite white and African American spaces, but she never quite felt at home or accepted in those spaces.

As an adult, Farah was beginning to feel more at ease in elite spaces, particularly elite African American spaces. She wanted her children to have this ease as well, but she also wanted them to be able to navigate communities like the ones in which her mother and her husband's family lived. When Farah considered the kinds of exposures she wanted her own children to have, she aimed to ensure that they were not shielded from African Americans who were experiencing more challenging life circumstances. She said,

> Whenever we visit my husband's family, there is a lot of cussing, a lot of smoking. There is also drug use, but that usually happens offsite from wherever we usually are. Our approach is to really try to highlight the fact that families are imperfect. You love them regardless, but you don't do the unhealthy things that they do. So, we try to do it that way because my dad would always keep me away from my family, and I don't want to do that to my kids.

Farah felt it was important that she and her husband maintain connections with his family, however, like lower-income mothers with similarly complicated family circumstances, she kept her children close to her during their visits.[27] Instead of closing off all contact, she tried to control her children's exposure to those family members so they would not internalize a negative view of African Americans and view their community as bad or

unworthy, something Farah had struggled with during her own youth. In response, she was beginning to actively seek out more positive examples of blackness for her daughters.

Like the other middle-class mothers in my study, border crossers enrolled their children in extracurricular athletic and educational activities to encourage their individual development. These activities were aimed to teach their children new skills and to cultivate their middle-class status. However, as mentioned in chapter 1, mothers chose activities located in both middle-class neighborhoods and in less privileged neighborhoods based on different aims for their children's racial and class-identity development.

Border crossers, in particular, often used geography as a way to expose their children to African Americans from different socioeconomic positions.[28] Despite the accomplishments of the civil rights movement, housing segregation persists and racial identity and class continue to be tied to geographic spaces. As new members of the African American middle class, these mothers and their children often lived in communities in which they had to navigate elements not usually imagined in white middle-class neighborhoods, such as the lack of safe green spaces to play in and the presence of homeless people or drug addicts. Existing research supports that African American middle-class families experience a neighborhood gap.[29] Although the border-crossing mothers in my research were middle class, they did not want their children's identity informed solely by bourgeois values and experiences. They raised their children to see their fate as linked to less fortunate African Americans, and they encouraged their children to understand the structural inequities that can produce destructive behaviors and negative outcomes for individuals and communities of African Americans.

Mothers reported that over the course of an average week they often traveled in and out of different economically and racially marked communities to ensure that their children had meaningful contact with its members. Children who were raised by mothers who embraced a border-crossing identity typically did not attend either neighborhood schools or elite private schools. These mothers often looked outside of their immediate neighborhoods for higher-performing public schools that had some level of diversity. Border crossers often enrolled their children in extracurricular sports and educational enrichment activities that covered a wide

geographic area. These connections were sometimes based on traveling back to the neighborhoods these mothers grew up in to visit family or to purchase beauty supplies or services that were not readily available in their current communities. The physical distance these mothers traveled mapped onto the social distance they wanted their children to be able to travel. These formative moments ensured that their children had the "right" kind of exposure to African American communities.

On the one hand, border crossers wanted to help their children develop certain middle-class skills. On the other hand, they also chose activities with an eye toward fostering a specific version of African American identity—a border-crossing identity—that tied them to their family and community and gave them skills to safely negotiate spaces that were not marked by privilege.

THE CULTURAL AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE BORDER-CROSSING IDENTITY

It would not be unreasonable to assume that an upwardly mobile African American middle-class mother would seek out a community of primarily middle-class African American families, or middle-class families overall, to shore up their newly attained class status. However, this was not the case for the border crossers in my study. Their ability and desire to traverse a range of socioeconomic settings was related to their family backgrounds. These mothers often had been raised by poor or working-class parents, by those managing drug addiction and mental illness, or by grandparents and/or other relatives through informal adoption. These women traversed a host of challenges as they earned college degrees, became employed in middle-class occupations with middle-class salaries, and became new members of the African American middle class and upper-middle class. Border crossers were often among the first generation, if not the first themselves, in their families to earn college degrees and attain middle-class status through upward mobility.

The border crossers I interviewed often had socioeconomically diverse families. They typically had siblings, other relatives, and friends who had followed different life paths, including working-class careers, receiving

government assistance, engaging in illicit criminal activities, or being incarcerated. But border crossers continued to have meaningful relationships and regular contact with these individuals throughout their lives, and these mothers described taking their children to visit parents and relatives who lived in poor and/or high-crime neighborhoods. In addition, unlike white families, who often receive financial support from their parents, these mothers often provided financial or other forms of instrumental support to their parents, family, and community members. Recall from earlier in the chapter that Nia fostered three children, and Trina fostered her sister; this was a common practice among border crossers.

The functional reasons for helping their children have an understanding of the lives of poor African Americans, and not physically or psychologically separating themselves from them, cannot be overstated. Visits to family and regular community exposure both facilitated and required their children to learn how to socialize with a range of African Americans from different economic and social positions. Border crossers did not have to imagine scenarios in which their children might need these skills; they were already regularly experiencing those scenarios produced by their family's heterogeneity.

Part of what it meant for their children to be secure in their identity was being comfortable in a range of social settings. They needed to be able to read the unspoken norms marked by different configurations of racial identity and class and then seamlessly adjust their behavior to fit in. Their children's lives demanded a level of fluency in more than one habitus. Mothers wanted their children to have an identity that felt both authentic and flexible. These mothers believed that the skill set of cultural flexibility—sometimes referred to as shifting or code switching—would enable their children to gain access to diverse social settings, to be at ease in those settings, and to make others comfortable with their presence in those settings. In some ways, they were trying to achieve what Pierre Bourdieu characterized as almost impossible: an authentic and natural connection to class positions that are not derived directly from their families of origin.[30] They were able to do so because these mothers sought to retain, instead of shed, their connections to communities characterized by different kinds of habitus. They were trying to achieve this out of necessity, because border crossers believed that their children would need to

hold on to what was considered lower-status, subordinate, or nondominant cultural capital, so as to retain ties to the African American community: a community they might be distanced from due to their trajectories in educational institutions and in their professional lives. This was a version of the cultural capital the border crossers I interviewed often consciously had retained for themselves. Indeed, these mothers' actions suggest how African American children use subordinate or non-dominant cultural capital to maintain their own cultural identity and links to the broader African American community.[31]

3 Border Policers

FINDING OUR KIND OF PEOPLE

Mary, a married mother of a son and daughter, had both of her children later in life. Mary's parents each had some college education; neither had completed a four-year degree, yet each held jobs that typically required one. Her mother returned to work soon after her last child entered school, earning what Mary described as supplemental income that enabled the family to have more family vacations. Mary and her three siblings earned college or advanced degrees, and today they all work in solidly middle- or upper-middle-class occupations. Mary described growing up in an environment in which there were few examples of people taking the wrong path in terms of educational or other life choices:

> We were really blessed because we didn't have a lot of bad examples around us. And, actually, that is what probably made it even harder because . . . if you see Susan go down the wrong track at fourteen and she's pregnant, and you see how rough her life is, it is very easy to say I don't want to do that. . . . So, you know [my mom] would pull examples from the community news.

Similarly, Mary wanted her children to have many examples of people who were making what she viewed as the right kinds of choices in life.

Thus, she had specific ideas about the kinds of children and parents she wanted her children to have in their personal networks and community:

> I want my daughter to be in circles with people where they are all [achieving academically]. . . . I am constantly seeking out like-minded individuals, people of color with children the same age. That is a personal goal that by the time they are five or ten, they each have five friends—people of color with parents who have similar mind-sets as me. . . . It takes a village. We want to create our own village.

Mary worked hard to create a community of parents and children who shared her family's values, and she saw this as a strategy to protect her children from attacks on their racial self-esteem and racial authenticity. She described how this community could protect them:

> [When] they are striking out and need independence . . . they've got peers that are similar-minded. . . . When they are being persecuted and they feel like they are being treated unjustly or they feel someone is laughing at them or raising doubts about their beauty or authenticity . . . they can look around and see others and have strength and confidence.

The important thing for Mary was that her children's peers were African Americans from like-minded families with similar middle-class values.

When I asked Mary what she meant by "liked-minded" and "middle-class values," she described the characteristics of the women in her mothers' group:

> We all share the same beliefs around the importance of education. We are all similarly educated. We share the same beliefs in wanting our children to be independent thinkers and to use logic and assess situations. We don't want to feed them who they are; we want them to become their own person. . . . We want them to feel good about being black.

Mary was challenging how, as she saw it, society conventionally defined African American racial authenticity. She believed that her children's friends were critical to their overall success and to the strength of their racial self-esteem, racial pride, and sense of racial authenticity.

In this chapter, I introduce a group of mothers that I term "border policers." Mary and the other mothers in this group want their children to

be able to adeptly handle a variety of social settings, but they do not share border crossers' (introduced in the previous chapter) desire to ensure that their children are comfortable navigating poor and/or high-crime neighborhoods despite often not living in those environments. Border policers, instead, view African American middle-class identity as largely disentangled from firsthand knowledge of struggle, economic or otherwise. These mothers did not believe their children needed to have these experiences or develop an ease moving around lower-income communities to be authentically African American. Overall, border policers, in contrast to border crossers, believed that their children should avoid poor and high-crime environments and the people within them, and they focused on surrounding their children with like-minded families who had middle-class values.

Border policers believed that by sharing experiences with African American peers who were living similar middle-class lives and doing similar middle-class activities they would insulate their children from challenges to their blackness, beauty, and intelligence. These activities included traveling internationally, speaking in Standard English, wearing certain kinds of clothing, and partaking in certain extracurricular groups. Mary hoped the peer groups she was fostering for her children would normalize these activities as something black people do. Through this foundation of friendship with similar middle-class African American children, Mary hoped her son and daughter would not experience the self-doubt associated with not feeling "black enough," which was something border policers often had to grapple with in their own lives.

Border policers like Mary wanted their children to have an understanding of why some African Americans were not as financially well-off, but they typically explained challenges faced by less fortunate African Americans in the language of the culture of poverty, focusing on those individuals who, in their estimation, had the wrong values and made bad decisions. Border policers encouraged their children to see that people had different experiences and backgrounds that influenced their life circumstances, but they also emphasized that, ultimately, an individual could make better decisions to create a better life. Thus, while these mothers encouraged a limited feeling of connection to African Americans that

were less well-off, they often simultaneously used their children's exposure to members of this group as examples of the outcomes of poor choices.

CONSTRUCTING THE BORDER-POLICING IDENTITY: DEFYING STATISTICS AND CREATING AN ALTERNATIVE AUTHENTIC BLACK IDENTITY

Reagan, a divorced mother of one daughter, underscored that she wanted her daughter to have a more expansive view of what it means to be African American, and not let it limit her in what she did or liked doing in life. She said,

> Race means one thing because you need to be comfortable with who you are and be able to accept your identity, but at the same time, I'm born and raised in San Francisco, so I'm very accepting of all. I mean, you have a feast of Mexican food and [then] you have black-eyed peas, corn bread, yams, and some rice. I'm going to go for the Mexican food because I can't stand yams and I can't stand black-eyed peas. And, well, you think, "How can that be?" It's what I like, and I don't feel like there is anything wrong with it.

Reagan wanted her daughter to have exposure to other cultural and ethnic traditions and feel free to embrace them. This attitude of thinking outside of the "racial box" extended to how she approached raising her daughter and selecting her extracurricular activities. Although border policers preferred that their children were not the only African Americans in a specific educational setting or extracurricular activity, a lack of diversity did not always dissuade them from allowing their children to participate. Border policers enrolled their children in activities that involved primarily, or even exclusively, white children so as to provide them with access to middle-class or elite enrichment experiences. These mothers also believed their children would benefit from this early exposure to such settings because it would likely make it easier to navigate predominately white spaces as they advanced through their educational and professional lives.

Like border crossers, border policers engaged in a version of racial and class identity work to ensure their children remained grounded in a specific version of African American middle-class identity and connected to specific

African American communities. Border-policing mothers tried to cultivate an authentic African American identity by exposing their children to a version of African American identity steeped in middle-class experiences. These mothers focused on the cultural characteristics of African American racial identity and seemingly tried to reframe race as a form of ethnicity. Indeed, rather than using the terms "race" or "racial identity" to talk about being African American, these mothers instead often used "ethnic background" or "cultural background." In a sense, these mothers were trying to reinject characteristics of ethnicity into this version of African American racial identity.[1] By doing so, they were attempting to reframe their children's racial identity within a broader category of ethnicity that is less connected to the American system of racial hierarchy or racial stigma, such as, for example, families that identify as Italian American or Irish American.[2]

Scholars have suggested that African Americans historically and generally view their fate as linked to each other.[3] However, an emerging body of research suggests this may be less true in the contemporary era. Research conducted by the Pew Charitable Trust Foundation revealed that close to 40 percent of African Americans believe that, based on a perceived gap in values between middle-class and poor African Americans, African Americans can no longer be thought of as a single race.[4] Some scholars suggest that these distinctions are not just *across* African American socioeconomic status groups—middle class as compared to poor—but also *within* socioeconomic status groups.[5]

Researchers Elijah Anderson and Nikki Jones have each examined distinctions made between African Americans living in poor and working-class communities.[6] Karyn Lacy's research in the Washington, D.C., area suggests that, while middle-class African Americans care about protecting their own and their children's racial self-esteem, their experiences and outlooks are increasingly diverse, demonstrating that depending on social context, some middle-class African Americans choose to emphasize their class status; some, their racial identity; and others combine the two.[7] Her research suggests that members of the African American middle class have a greater ability to choose the parts of their identities that are most salient to them, at least within the African American community, and this often maps onto their residential choices. This identity-making also extends to their purchasing and wealth-building practices.[8]

FOSTERING A BORDER-POLICING IDENTITY AND CREATING AFRICAN AMERICAN MIDDLE-CLASS PEER GROUPS AND NETWORKS

As noted throughout this chapter, border policers hoped to mitigate the difficulties their children would face, such as feelings of racial self-doubt and the need to prove their blackness, challenges traditionally associated with being both African American and middle class. Border policers tried to provide psychological support through friendships with like-minded African American peers engaged in similar activities. This was the type of support border policers sometimes felt they lacked during their own childhoods.

Charlene described the challenges to her racial identity that she experienced as a teen:

> In junior high, I used to get hated on by some of my black peers because I was successful, whereas they were failing classes. . . . So, I actually had people, you know, trying to start fights with me for whatever the reason. But I was always a successful [student].

Despite these experiences, Charlene continued to excel academically and ultimately attended an elite private university on a full scholarship, after which she went on to earn an advanced degree. Charlene's father died when she was a child, so her mother, who never remarried, raised her and her brother as a single parent. After her father's death, members of the African American church that her mother attended functioned as her informal extended family. This church provided Charlene with a peer group of other African Americans, many who were middle class. As a child, Charlene participated in organizations, including Jack and Jill, through her mother's membership. Her mother was also a member of The Links. Although border crossers generally rejected belonging to groups like Jack and Jill, and The Links, border policers often embraced them. Both of these organizations ensured that despite living in a predominately white neighborhood and attending predominately white schools, Charlene had regular social interactions and made friends with other middle-class African American peers. Charlene believed the support from these peers both insulated her from challenges to her racial identity and prepared her to navigate elite white educational and professional spaces.

Charlene, now married and the mother of one daughter, continued to have strong ties to middle-class African American communities through her regular participation in activities with organizations comprised of primarily African American members, including her college sorority and church, and civic, social, and professional groups. She believed these communities would similarly insulate her daughter from the kinds of challenges to her racial self-esteem that Charlene faced as a child but that were neutralized by the African American peer group her mother developed for her. She also believed these communities would help prepare her daughter to enter into predominately white educational and workplace settings that might underestimate her ability because of her race and gender:

> I think it is important for [my daughter] to be around other kids like her. I think that those organizations have various programs that will allow her to display certain skill sets. . . . [When I was a child, I would be involved in] a pageant, but it's also a fundraiser so [I learned] how to acquire, use, and account for money. . . . I learned etiquette through those programs. . . . I hate it when I go to work and we go out to eat at lunch and people are asking what glass do I use, what knife do I use . . . so those kinds of opportunities are important [for my daughter.]

Charlene believed organizations like Jack and Jill, which had helped her, would also teach her daughter important social skills and provide resources to learn to navigate a range of elite social settings. As an attorney, Charlene worked in a primarily white, and often male, corporate space; she represented elite white corporate clients; and she expected her daughter would have similar occupational and social experiences. She imagined her daughter regularly navigating elite social events at restaurants with elaborate place settings, places in which using the wrong fork might disadvantage her by communicating that she did not belong in that arena of power.

Sharon, a married mother who had two children later in life, described her initial failed attempts to find a community of African American mothers who, as she said, "defied statistics." For Sharon, this meant finding African American mothers who were married, educated, professionally accomplished, homeowners, and had children later in life. Sharon's com-

ments underscored her desire to distance herself from African Americans who were not middle class and that she believed did not share her values and lifestyle. Describing a failed attempt to find a group of mothers who shared her values, she said,

> Before I found [my] black moms' group, it was hard finding black mothers with similar values, particularly in my age group. . . . I went to the crazy class—I call it the crazy class. There was a black young mother of twins in that class. . . . Her two little girls were older than mine, and I knew she was kind of lost. I didn't realize how lost until one day I asked her if she wanted to go get a [coffee] and . . . it was just like all bad and she didn't know who the father was, she didn't care who the father was, and everybody was trying to find out who the father was, but she wasn't telling who she thought he was. . . . I asked her, "What are [your children] eating now that they are two?" and she said, "Well, she likes Ho Hos and she likes Ding Dongs." . . . I just couldn't find anyone who shared my values. . . . I was looking for people who would come over [to my home] and have a dinner party, and bring the kids . . . but I couldn't find that type of connection, and I thought I probably never will because anybody I find with a child my daughter's age will be significantly younger than me.

Sharon believed that none of the parents in the "crazy class" shared her parenting values. Sharon's parents were both college graduates. As a child, she moved from a mixed-income African American community on the East Coast to a predominately white and middle-class community on the West Coast, where she was the only or among the few African Americans in her educational and extracurricular activities. She currently lived in a neighborhood with similar demographics: primarily white families with few other African American families.

Sharon had deliberately sought out a black church to counterbalance the lack of exposure to African Americans in her children's school settings, but that effort was not completely successful. Sharon was specifically looking for African American mothers who could engage in what she considered to be a middle-class lifestyle. This included placing her children in a range of extracurricular activities and enrolling them in both private and charter schools at different points in their lives. She sought a group of mothers who would share her concerns that their children were provided with the best educational and extracurricular opportunities. Sharon

believed that a lot of mothers did not put the same kind of thought into their decision-making regarding their children as she did, and they did not engage in the same level of research on child-rearing. She did finally discover an African American mothers' group whose members shared similar middle-class backgrounds and outlooks on parenting. She felt extremely lucky, saying, "You don't join a group like this if you are not the kind of mother who cares about things like nutrition and educational development. . . . It is really a gift to have a group like this." The mothers Sharon met through this group also helped to ensure that her daughter would not be the only African American girl in all of her extracurricular activities, as they sometimes simultaneously enrolled their daughters in the same activity.

Border policers who lived in lower-income African American communities sought out groups like Sharon's to create relationships with middle-class African American mothers and their children, with whom they shared similar values, if not income levels. Sarah was a married mother of one child, with another on the way. She lived across the street from a housing project, having made the decision to move to this area because of its affordability. In the year before our interview, however, a man had been shot and killed in that housing project, and this memory loomed large in Sarah's thinking about the neighborhood. She did not believe the parents in her neighborhood shared her values, so she joined a middle-class African American mothers' group to provide her children with playmates whose parents did share them. Sarah graduated from an elite college and had received a master's degree, although she earned only a modest income as a part-time educational counselor. She used African American organizations such as mothers' groups and her college sorority to create and remain connected to middle-class African American families.

Overall, the mothers who embraced a border-policing identity specifically sought exposure to other middle-class African American families and children. They accomplished this by joining middle-class African American social groups, mothers' groups, and children's playgroups, as well as through their ongoing relationships with sororities, religious organizations, groups like Jack and Jill and The Links, and other professional African American organizations. Border policers wanted their children to be worldly and exposed to a wide variety of middle- and upper-middle-class experiences

that were, perhaps, not traditionally associated with African Americans, such as traveling, studying abroad, and participating in elite educational or extracurricular activities. This often meant being a minority in mostly white middle- and upper-middle-class settings, yet they did not let this prevent their children from participating in such activities. At the same time, because they understood how it felt to be racially isolated, they also sought out African American peers for their children who were also engaged in these kinds of activities.

For many border-policing mothers, long-standing middle- and upper-middle-class African American organizations such as Jack and Jill, The Links, and sororities within the National Pan-Hellenic Council (also known as the Divine Nine), facilitated connections with other middle-class African American peers. Now, as parents, they relied on these organizations to continue to play important roles in facilitating connections with other middle-class African American families and establishing peer groups for their own children. The church was also an important organization for these mothers. Even if their children's entire week had been spent attending predominately white schools and extracurricular activities, their church communities ensured regular connections with other African American children and families, although at times with mixed results with respect to those who were middle class.

CHOOSING NEIGHBORHOODS: CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINED CHOICES

When Alana and her husband married, they lived in an upper-middle-class white neighborhood in which Alana felt uncomfortable and believed her neighbors questioned her presence. She and her husband decided to buy a house in a more economically and racially diverse neighborhood so that their two children would see other African Americans and where their presence would feel normal. Although Alana was happy they lived in a diverse neighborhood because of the exposure it gave her children to other African Americans, she was beginning to question that decision because of the quality of the middle and high schools in the area. She elaborated,

> The school district is not that great. . . . In a few years, middle school will be another issue. Now they go to a school with a lot of parental involvement. You hear nothing but bad things about the middle schools; and in my job [as a probation officer], the kids that come across my desk go to these schools, and they have committed offenses. . . . I applied for my daughter to go to a charter school in Oakland, so hopefully I will get a private education for free, but the hard part will be that I have to drive her to school and that is a good little ways. . . . Of course, my mom is willing to help me out with that.

Sociologists Thomas Shapiro and Melvin Oliver point out that African American middle-class families generally live in neighborhoods with fewer resources than white middle-class families.[9] Although residential segregation and discriminatory practices in lending and real estate markets are important factors that produce this pattern, Alana's account suggests that some African American families are making choices between racial comfort and neighborhood quality. While she was now questioning that decision, Alana chose to live in a neighborhood that was more diverse but with lower-quality schools rather than live in a neighborhood with higher-quality schools but where she and her family would feel uncomfortable in their daily life. Alana's hope that her daughter would get into the public charter school in her area, which she viewed as equivalent to private schools in terms of academic standards, highlights border policers' priority of a quality education. Families often needed to travel long distances and enlist the help of other family members, as Alana did with her mother to fulfill this goal. Indeed, some border policers with more limited resources chose to send their children to private school over homeownership—they simply could not afford both.

Border policers were wary of economically disadvantaged African American neighborhoods because they often had poor, underfunded, and underperforming schools. When border-policing mothers in my survey lived in these neighborhoods, their children often attended public schools or private schools in other neighborhoods, and they interacted mostly with parents and children from those school communities. When these mothers considered the schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and public schools more broadly, they worried that their children would be "lumped in" with poor African American residents and treated poorly because of assumptions that they were engaged in illicit activities.

The socioeconomic status and racial composition of neighborhoods were also used as proxies for a mismatch in values and increased vulnerability for their children's lives. For those border policers whose residential choices were limited by economic constraints, they often felt that their parenting values and practices conflicted with those of the parents in their neighborhood. Jameela, a single mother raising a son, chose the neighborhood she lived in because of its affordability. Although there were affluent neighborhoods nearby, the city she lived in is known for its high poverty and crime rates. Like lower-income mothers living in similar neighborhoods,[10] border policers kept a close watch on their children at home and when they were out and about in these neighborhoods.

Jameela lamented that she did not see many parents that she felt shared her values: "I keep a tight leash on my son because of where we live. I don't want him to get involved with the wrong element. . . . The parents around us, they just don't have the same values as I do, as my family does." Jameela provided a concrete example of this difference in her parenting approach through an experience she had with another parent over resolving the ownership of a toy water gun. Her son had been playing outside with a boy from the neighborhood while she was getting ready inside. When she was ready to leave, she realized his toy water gun was missing. She reached out to the parent of the boy with whom her son had been playing to verify if the water gun that boy was now playing with, which looked identical to the one her son had, was his. Describing the incident, she said,

> [I told my son's playmate], "why don't we go walk to your house so I can ask your mom if this is your water gun. . . . [I explained to him] I just want to make sure that if it is your toy that you get your toy back. But if it's my son's toy he gets his toy back. [As we were walking to his mother's house] another neighbor came up who happened to know the boy and his mother, and she asked him, "Why are you crying," and he was like, she [referring to Jameela] has my water gun. . . . So, she called the mom on the cell phone. . . . And [the boy's mother] comes to the balcony on the second floor and she says, "Bitch, give my son back his motherfucking water gun." . . . I walked away because my son was standing right there, and I didn't like what was going on. I went inside [and found my son's] water gun underneath a pillow. So, I went outside, and I said, "Come here" to the boy as he was walking up the stairs, and he said, "no". . . . He took on the attitude of his mom.

Ultimately, Jameela was wrong about the water gun belonging to her son, but she felt that his playmate's mother's reaction was inappropriate. What Jameela thought should be a cordial interaction between parents resolving confusion over the ownership of a toy ended up becoming a one-sided shouting match that exposed her son to what she believed was poor parenting and profane language. She was concerned that the parents in her neighborhood did not share her values, and that living in this neighborhood would expose her son to the wrong elements. She believed the neighborhood parents were more reactive than proactive and less thoughtful in their approaches to raising their children.

The mothers I interviewed sometimes viewed the young children within these communities as relatively innocent and unproblematic, but they considered their parents to be weak in parenting skills and a source of poor values. For example, Sarah, mentioned above, did not let her son play with other children in her neighborhood. With this decision, she distinguished the children in her neighborhood from the social context in which they were raised, which she identified as the true source of her reluctance: "It's not so much the kids. It is the parents. You know there is stuff going on. People aren't necessarily watching their kids. Nothing wrong with the kids, but you don't necessarily want your child around a teenager who is messing around and getting high."

Other behaviors that mothers associated with lacking the same "middle-class values" included speaking harshly to children, calling children names like "stupid," using profanity in the presence of children, or physically disciplining their children in public. Border policers drew boundaries between themselves and other mothers they believed lacked their middle-class values and behaviors. As noted earlier, border policers who lived in lower-income communities often believed the parents in these communities did not share their values. In response to this gap in values, border policers often shuttled their children from one social group to another that they believed contained the right kind of racial and class diversity. Middle-class African American organizations like Jack and Jill and The Links and mothers' groups were particularly important for these mothers because they provided their children with the kind of middle-class peer groups that were not readily available within their neighborhoods. In addition, underscoring wealth differences between African

Americans and whites, some of these mothers made the choice to send their children to private schools rather than live in higher-income and better-resourced neighborhoods, as they could not afford to do both.

NOT MY KIND OF PEOPLE

The mothers in my sample often raised and discussed issues related to racial identity and racism with relative ease. By contrast, talking about class was generally not as easy a task. Many hesitated when they spoke about class distinctions among African Americans, and acknowledged that they were making broad assumptions about neighborhoods and their residents. Border policers, in particular, emphasized that there were always exceptions to the rule. Nonetheless, there were rules. Border-policing mothers were wary not only of the quality of schools and resources available in poor African American neighborhoods—and concerned about higher crime rates and decreased personal safety—but also of the residents of those neighborhoods. The prospect of their children interacting with children from these communities raised a variety of issues. Border policers were concerned that their children, specifically their sons, would be exposed to teenagers who might be involved in illicit activities and, as a result, they would get involved in those activities. As described in chapter 1, mothers often mentioned being tense about their sons' safety and treatment by local residents and by law enforcement in these communities.

Charlotte, a married mother of four sons, raised several issues regarding her sons' interactions with lower-income African Americans:

> One of my concerns is that I do not want them to be in situations where it is guilt by association, and there are issues caused by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. That is less likely to happen in [the predominantly white and upper-middle-class area] where we live. Say my boys are teenagers and they wanted to hang out in Oakland, I think I would worry. . . . I would wonder, why do they need to socialize with people who might cause them harm or, by being there, it might cause them harm. I want to make sure they are in certain places with people who would make smart decisions. I just don't want to see them hurt because of silly distinctions people make. . . . Here, they can safely walk down the street.

Charlotte believed that her sons would be safer and less likely to be negatively stereotyped in their predominately white upper-middle-class neighborhood. She referenced the city of Oakland, where a lot of negative attention has been drawn, to serve as a proxy for a host of potentially negative experiences from which she hoped to protect her children.

Ann, a married mother of two sons—one who was now an adult—acknowledged that she made assumptions about children from other neighborhoods:

> I think, ideally, I would want my children to relate to African American kids who are poor on a case-by-case [basis]. . . . If the child is well-behaved, polite, and understands what school is about; and is not into music videos and using language that I think is inappropriate; and they get along, I would totally support that relationship. In fact, I would take that child and do everything I could for the child. I think the way that our society is structured . . . middle-class kids don't have a lot of contact with kids in poverty unless you seek it out somehow by going to some sort of recreational program in a certain community. I wouldn't do that.

Although border policers might help the "right" kind of poor African American child, they would not have their children participate in recreational activities in less privileged neighborhoods for them to purposefully gain exposure to such children. Ann referred to her neighborhood as the source of her younger son's peer group and the reason for the class homogeneity among his peers. This is an important distinction to make between border policers and border crossers. Border crossers made conscious efforts to offer their children *cross-class* African American interactions, while border policers consciously prioritized exposure to other *middle-class* African American children.

Scholars have identified how members of poor, working-class, and mixed-socioeconomic communities make distinctions among those who adhere to different moral codes or codes of conduct such as "decent" versus "street" or "good" versus "ghetto."[11] The women in this study revealed how middle-class African American mothers distinguished themselves from mothers in *other* economic groups and *within* the same economic group. Although border policers and border crossers were middle- and upper-middle class, they cultivated their children's racial and class identi-

ties in different ways. In particular, while border policers frequently used middle-class organizations to create a community for themselves and their children, border crossers generally were less comfortable connecting with those groups because they associated them with elitism.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? USING NAMES AS MARKERS OF CLASS STATUS

When I asked Reagan, mentioned earlier in this chapter, what kind of relationship she wanted her daughter to have with the broader, not necessarily middle-class, African American community, she responded,

> Are you asking me if I want my daughter to hang out with the Laquitas and the Lanishas of the world [from a poor black neighborhood]? . . . She doesn't have to. I'm not full of myself. I'm not bourgie. I want her to hang around good people. People who have the same morals and values as she does. . . . I don't want her hanging out with the ghetto children of the world.

For Reagan, the idea that her daughter might associate with the "Laquitas and the Lanishas of the world"—her shorthand for poor African Americans—created concerns about her daughter having inappropriate exposures that would potentially hinder her success in life. Reagan made no apologies about not wanting her daughter to associate with African Americans from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. She and her daughter lived in a neighborhood in Oakland that was mostly white and Asian, and she had created a community for herself and her child that was comprised mainly of middle-class African American families. Her daughter attended a predominately white private school in San Francisco on a partial scholarship, and she often spent nights at Reagan's mother's house in San Francisco to lessen the hardship of the commute. Reagan and her daughter also attended a church with a substantially middle-class African American congregation, although, like most African American churches, there were some lower-income members.

Border policers were often very conscientious about what the name they chose for their children would communicate to others about their racial and economic background. As Reagan showed, some mothers associated

"African American–sounding names" with being poor and from certain neighborhoods. In another example, Reagan described a member of her church: "There is a girl at church and her name is . . . Ashataya. To me that [name] screams, 'I am a little black girl.'" Indeed, Reagan purposefully chose a name for her daughter that she believed was racially nondescript:

> Does my child's name scream, "I'm a little back girl?" No. I chose her name with the intention of my daughter not being judged before you meet her. . . . I had concerns with her being a little black girl and I didn't want her to be judged. You don't know what she is. . . . I never want her to miss out on an opportunity because of her race.

Reagan's comments unveil the class-based assumptions that African American–sounding names carry in white and some African American communities. Many border policers believed having an African American–sounding name would have consequences for their children in the workplace. Specifically, these mothers were concerned that white decision-makers might summarily exclude their children from opportunities because of their race before meeting them. Like Reagan, these mothers wanted their children to have the opportunity to get their foot in the door rather than never receive an invitation. Thus, most border policers, aware of these challenges, felt that what they considered to be African American–sounding names were off limits for their own children.

Research and anecdotal evidence supports Reagan's concerns. It was only in the 1960s—with the emergence of the Black Power movement and Afrocentricity—that the naming practices of African Americans and whites began to diverge dramatically.[12] During that period, some African Americans began to reject the names associated with slave masters, often adopting Islamic first and last names. Another trend was giving children names that were unique.[13] Several economists have examined the significance of name choice for African American children. Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, for example, conducted an audit study that found that résumés sent out with African American–sounding names were 50 percent less likely than those with white-sounding names to receive calls about job interviews.[14] Roland Fryer, Devah Pager, and Jörg Spenkuch conducted research showing evidence to support these mothers' assumptions that racially distinctive names are more common in neighborhoods

with lower incomes and higher rates of racial segregation, according to census data.[15] All else being equal, individuals with African American–sounding names often do confront discrimination in the workplace.

Most border policers, while sharing Reagan's concerns about names, would not express them as strongly. A few said they resisted using African American–sounding names as a way of creating boundaries between different kinds of African Americans. Indeed, a comment about racially distinctive naming led Sarah to briefly reconsider her membership in her mothers' group. She described overhearing a fellow member say, "We don't want to accept the Laquishas, do we?" Sarah said she was shocked by the comment and how this mother used names as a mechanism for inferring the class status and, hence, value of potential new members. However, she never confronted this person directly about the comment, and admitted to hearing similar comments from other members. Sarah did discuss her discomfort about these comments with some members privately, but she ultimately felt that being a part of the group was too beneficial, so she decided not to push the issue. Research indicates that Sarah's decision to express her unease about this intra-racial classism privately rather than publicly to the group mirrors how some white members of predominately white social groups express similar challenges to bias.[16]

Overall, border policers sought to distance themselves from lower-income African American mothers and children. Comments like "like-minded," "middle-class values," "Laquitas, Lanishas, and Laquishas," "not being like them," and "the ghetto children of the world" reveal the unspoken and, at times, controversial distinctions made by some African American mothers. These comments also show divisions in what is considered respectable and racially authentic within the African American community, and highlight how some middle-class African Americans implement their versions of the politics of respectability to determine who is worthy and who is not.

A SNAPSHOT OF BORDER POLICERS: MAINTAINING AND REPRODUCING CLASS PRIVILEGE

Border policers wanted their children to have links to middle-class African Americans, and they focused on the cultural, historical, and political

aspects of African American identity, not on exposure to lower-income African American communities. This orientation rejects equating African American identity with understanding economic and social struggles and does not see all African Americans' fates as linked. Why might these mothers have such a different orientation to African American middle-class identity than the border crossers described in chapter 2?

A potential explanation can be found in the account of Jessica, whose childhood family background sharply differed from other border policers but who ultimately embraced this orientation to racial identity. Jessica, a divorced mother of one daughter, was raised in a working-class African American neighborhood that she described as being riddled with crime and drugs. She described returning home from her private school to a neighborhood that was rough, but where she was "able to fight it out," if necessary. She is raising her daughter in a very different environment:

> I get this feedback from my family a lot that I am raising her white. . . . Her [daughter's] father is from an upper-middle-class black family in the South, and for generations it has been that way for him, so he is, like, "She has her family. What do you mean, she will always know who she is?"

Describing her ex-husband's family, she said, "His parents are still married; his father is a minister. His mom is a schoolteacher, and I am not saying they are perfect at all. They do have their dysfunction, too, but that is not their idea of blackness. And they have had generations of that kind of success." Through conversations with her child's father and learning about his experiences growing up, Jessica redefined what it meant to be authentically African American, and she no longer closely tied that definition to having to understand struggle.

Contrasting what her daughter is exposed to in her upbringing against what Jessica's family believed she should be exposed to regularly, Jessica said,

> [My daughter lives in a] very calm household with no drama; there is no family drama. Not all the stuff that I grew up with. It is very crazy, you know—neighborhood and family dysfunction. You know, my daughter doesn't have it, and in my family's view she somehow isn't resilient because she is not having that experience. And I just disagree with that, and finally, like I said, I just straight told my mom, "That shit is not normal. She doesn't

> have to have that.". . . [My daughter] can build strength and character and resiliency by focusing on things that are good in her life and having positive experiences. So, that is a big shift from the way that I grew up in my family and my family's values.

Jessica's description of adopting a different definition of what it means to be connected to the African American community points to the diversity across class and within middle-class experiences of African Americans.

Jessica's ability to provide her daughter with certain middle-class experiences, an elite education, and to raise her in a less diverse but more middle-class neighborhood produced tensions between Jessica and her family members who were not middle class. These middle-class experiences complemented her child's father's connection to an elite African American family. Through her paternal family, her daughter was exposed to elite social networks. However, these different socialization practices left Jessica's family concerned that her daughter would lose a connection to her extended maternal family and her African American roots. Jessica's account underscores the diverse meanings attached to having a connection to these roots. Jessica's ex-husband believed being African American meant having college-educated parents, being a member of elite African American organizations, being involved in community service through African American civic and social organizations and being part of an African American extended family network that occasionally vacationed together at a ski lodge for the weekend, a traditionally elite white domain. Through her ex-husband's family, Jessica's daughter was exposed to these elite experiences as a "normal" part of her life, thereby delinking African American identity from disadvantage and economic struggle.

Jessica's depiction of the family in which she was raised contrasted with the accounts of other border policers, who were often raised in middle-class households in which at least one parent, and often both, had earned a college degree or greater. Indeed, it was not uncommon for border policers to be raised in middle-class families that had been middle-class for several generations. Some border policers grew up in working-class households; but even in these cases, their parents had typically earned college degrees but had remained working class because of racial prejudice. They had confronted obstacles in the form of de facto or at times de jure discrimination that shortened their career ladders and prevented their advancement. These

obstacles limited the ability of the parents of these border policers to convert their educational attainment into middle-class status. Indeed, many educated African Americans in the contemporary era face similar societal constraints. Nevertheless, a parent's working-class occupational status did not necessarily preclude families from moving into and being accepted within the African American middle-class social and civic circles. The boundary of middle-class identity has historically been less rigid within the African American community than within the white community.

Even with the obstacles that they faced, the parents of border policers often broke various racial barriers in their professional and/or personal lives. They were frequently active in their churches or other community organizations, and the church figured prominently in the childhoods of border policers. They regularly attended church with their parents, who were also often active on the auxiliary guilds. Because of their parents' achievement, border policers were also expected to be high achievers. For example, Ann, mentioned earlier in this chapter, explained that her mother was a founding member of a local black professional organization, and both her parents were members and activists within the Congress of Racial Equality. Ann's mother had clear expectations for her daughter and had worked with Ann to plan out her career. Her mother also encouraged her to assert herself. Ann explained that her mother and her aunts had often been either the first African American to accomplish their professional benchmarks or the only African American to be employed in their professions in their local areas. Ann said that this history of being among the first African Americans to achieve certain goals, combined with a strict Catholic upbringing, resulted in her mother having high expectations.

As children, border policers often had friendships with white children and would play with white children in their neighborhoods. At the same time, however, their parents worked to ensure they had access to African American peers and playmates. Their mothers were often members or leaders of local chapters of organizations like Jack and Jill, The Links, or 100 Black Women (a nonprofit volunteer organization, now known as the National Coalition of 100 Black Women). They were also active church members and served on guilds. All of these activities provided their chil-

dren opportunities to meet and play with other African American middle-class children. Their parents worked in predominately white environments, but often they chose (and at times were constrained) to remain deeply connected to African American middle-class communities.

The parents of border policers, whether middle class or working class, emphasized the need for their children to acquire an education and to pursue professional careers so they would remain or become middle class. Border policers' families were not typically characterized by class diversity, as most siblings and extended family members attended college and often earned advanced degrees. This was something that was mentioned with pride during interviews. The older mothers in this group, along with other members of their family, had often, like their parents, broken or crossed color barriers, including neighborhoods, educational settings, and workplaces.

Sharon's family of origin was the only African American family in their neighborhood for several years, and she and her brother had integrated their elementary school. Sharon described her experiences:

> We were the only African Americans on the block for many years. . . . I know there was a little concern because my brother and I integrated this elementary school that we went to and little things would pop up from time to time where my parents would have to deal with them. I remember my brother was upset that everyone was coming up to him to touch his head and his hair, and little things like that.

Sharon also described how her family's move to another predominately white neighborhood was greeted with a mixed response:

> [My parents] went into contract on this house, and we would come check it out to see how close it was to being ready, and then one day we came and there was a profanity that had been spray-painted on the garage. Somebody painted "nigger" on the garage, and then the contractors painted over it. And then about a week later, someone painted a [welcoming message] and then they fixed that and then we never really had much of a problem there. . . . There were little things, like the neighbor next door said we didn't know what to think when you guys were moving in, but after they would always say you guys are nice. You know, they had never had exposure with anyone outside of their own sort of culture, I guess.

Sharon and other border policers often mentioned they had previous experience with navigating predominately white neighborhoods and had developed coping mechanisms as children to address challenges related to feeling isolated. Rather than view the bias she confronted as a child as the product of another's racism, Sharon and other mothers in this study reframed those experiences as deriving from an individual's lack of exposure to diversity more broadly. This strategy seemed to depersonalize the challenging experiences these mothers had confronted, and it also suggested that, with time, they could gain acceptance from these individuals.

Ann's parents moved to one of the few integrated blocks in a white suburb that had few other African American families. Ann said the builder stipulated that all nationalities and religions would be able to live in homes on this block, and as a result, her street included a half dozen African American families and families from diverse religious traditions. Despite the diversity of their immediate neighbors, after they moved to the area, Ann's mother tried to join a church in their new community but was advised by the pastor to find a different place to worship because their family was black. Thus, despite gaining entrance to this community, her family navigated various levels of exclusion and social isolation.

Border policers described their own parents' worries about their racial identity development after moving to predominately white neighborhoods in which they were often racially isolated. Sharon recounted,

> I remember my father explaining to me that he was a little bit worried about taking me out of [the previous neighborhood we lived in], which was a predominately black middle-class neighborhood, to where we [moved] and that was because he just thought that I might just get lost . . . and not be able to really relate to my culture.

Sharon attended predominantly white schools throughout her education, but because of these concerns around her racial identity, her parents took a special interest in trying to support possible relationships with African American children. She described how her parents asked more questions about the parents of these children, how they encouraged her to seek out these children's friendship, and how they made specific efforts to

arrange play dates with these children. These efforts mirrored those Sharon was now making with her children. As border policers grew up and went off to college, their social group often shifted to include other middle-class African Americans students through extracurricular activities, for example, gospel choir; African American student unions or social groups, such as sororities; and race-based professional organizations. Their social and educational groups at times became exclusively African American if they chose to attend a historically black college or university, often a school their parents had also attended. Despite navigating primarily white professional, educational, and social networks, these elite African American organizations provided border policers with opportunities to also have access to networks that were primarily comprised of middle-class African American professionals and their families.

Ann also described how living in a predominately white community impacted her racial self-esteem during her youth:

> I had one friend in particular who was Swedish American and Quaker, and [her] family was wonderful, and other friends that I feel like I had quality relationships with. And then I had other relationships that ended up being questionable, and something would happen and I would not know exactly what happened . . . but I suspected a racial kind of thing; so, yeah, I definitely feel like I spent a lot of energy trying to fit in.

Ann felt her mother sent her mixed messages about racial identity. On the one hand, her mother seemed to want her to have strong ties to an upper-middle-class black experience, but, on the other hand, she also made efforts for Ann to retain ties to African Americans living in poor neighborhoods.

Both Ann's and Sharon's personal narratives about relocating to predominately white suburbs depict the constrained options that framed their parents' choices, and how those choices have not significantly changed in the contemporary era. Their parents had to decide between buying or retaining homes in predominately black and sometimes middle-class neighborhoods with inferior schools, or relocating to areas with better schools that were in mostly white neighborhoods with residents who would, at best, greet them with curiosity or, at worst, with outright hostility.

CONCLUSION: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE BORDER-POLICING IDENTITY

Border policers' early childhood experiences with racial isolation often were repeated in their adult lives because of the lack of racial diversity in their workplaces. They typically worked in predominately white, and often male-dominated, business settings. However, on a personal level, they were often firmly involved with African American social and/or civic organizations that provided these mothers and their children with something they might otherwise lack: access to African American middle-class communities.

Border policers told me that they wanted their children to have connections to other middle-class African Americans through their extended families, sorority sisters, religious affiliations, civic organizations, and/or professional organizations. They also expected that, as in their own educational and professional lives, their children would routinely have to navigate elite white circles. Getting haircuts or styling products might require a special trip to lower-income African American neighborhoods because these services and items were often not available in white middle-class neighborhoods. However, these visits were typically supervised by their parent(s) and were an exception to the rule of normally being surrounded by middle-class African Americans and whites. Border policers had strategic reasons to help their children develop ties to these communities, given that their own childhoods had been middle class, often for generations. Thus, it was not as functionally important for their children to have or maintain personal connections to less privileged African Americans or acquire expertise in components of the lower-class/nondominant cultural and social capital needed to navigate those communities.

4 Border Transcenders

CHALLENGING TRADITIONAL NOTIONS OF RACIAL AUTHENTICITY

Jordana, an African American mother of a son and daughter and married to a white man who emigrated from Europe, was optimistic about the future of race relations in the United States. Although she was not biracial herself, Jordana worried that her children might encounter challenges related to being biracial, yet she also left open the possibility that racial identity might not be as important in her children's lives as it had been for her growing up. She said,

> [My children] are biracial and there will be challenges around that. Who am I? Where do I fit? All that kind of stuff. But, luckily, in this area, there are so many biracial kids and multiracial people. . . . For me, twenty years ago, thirty years ago, it would have been an issue, but for them, it may not be. . . . I mean, they [had] a biracial president [referring to former president Barack Obama].

Jordana recalled that during her youth, being biracial was unusual and viewed as a challenge to establishing a secure identity. In her children's lives, however, being biracial was no longer exceptional. They knew other biracial children in their school and community, including entire families that were multiracial or multicultural. For mothers of mixed-race children

like Jordana, this was a welcome development. The Obama presidency signaled the possibility that their children might not have to confront and overcome the same struggles or constraints over their racial identity that they had experienced or witnessed during their own childhoods. Jordana believed this was, in part, because of changing attitudes and the increase in numbers of multiracial families.

It was only in 1967 that antimiscegenation laws prohibiting marriages between people of different races were deemed unconstitutional in the landmark US Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia*.[1] Despite this change in the law, these unions, and the identities of children produced from these relationships, were often viewed as vexed.[2] This perspective has only changed in the recent past as older generations' views have begun to soften and younger generations no longer recognize a social stigma.[3]

As Jordana's account suggested, the numbers of biracial and multiracial births have increased, making children with a mixed racial heritage less unusual. According to data from the Pew Research Center, the number of US mixed-race births increased from 1 percent in 1970 to 10 percent in 2013.[4] Moreover, 12 percent of newlyweds were interracial couples in 2013.[5] In recent history, the social stigma attached to interracial relationships and marriages has decreased.[6] In addition, as a result of activism in the 1990s, led by the mono-racial parents of mixed-race children, the US Census, starting in 2000, gave individuals the opportunity to check more than one racial category when identifying themselves, rather than allowing only a single answer.[7] Reflecting on this new orientation to "check all that apply," Jordana said, "I want [my children] to be proud of their African American heritage as much as their Swedish American heritage. I want them to feel proud about all aspects of themselves and to know that they can be who they want to be."

Jordana, and other mothers like her, whom I term "border transcenders," want their children to be able to embrace all parts of their racial background and not to let racial categories place constraints on their identities. In this chapter, I describe border transcenders' approach to racial identity, how they encourage their children to embrace this orientation to their racial identity, and why challenging traditional ideas about racial identity is important to their entire family.

RESISTING THE CONSTRAINTS OF RACIAL CATEGORIES

When Senator Barack Obama became the forty-fourth president of the United States, many suggested that this historic election of the first African American to the nation's highest office signaled that America had overcome its history of racism and discrimination, and that as a nation we had entered a new postracial era. To understand how border-transcending mothers conceived of this identity, it is useful to consider the various definitions of "postracial." One definition focuses on how racial identity influences individuals' life experiences and trajectories and in general how they are treated by society.[8] In a postracial society, racial identity would no longer significantly influence where individuals reside, whom they marry or befriend, where they go to school, how well they do in school, where they work, and how much they are paid. In a postracial society, racial identity would not impact the quality of interactions individuals have with health care professionals, law enforcement, school officials, and others. Simply put, a postracial society is one in which racial identity would no longer be a significant factor that influences and predicts social interactions and life outcomes.[9] This is different from the idea of colorblindness, which seeks to redirect attention away from race with the supposed aim of producing fairer outcomes. Those who view the world through a postracial perspective believe race is irrelevant to an individual's daily experiences and life outcomes.[10] In such a society, any racial disparities that existed would be attributable to other factors, such as differences in education, economic resources, or personal preference. In such a society, racist ideas and behavior would be viewed as coming from individual bias occurring on a field of equal racial power, not from asymmetrical power relations reinforced and produced by systemic sources of racism.[11]

In a 2012 *Rolling Stone* interview, President Obama, while acknowledging improvements in racial attitudes, rejected the idea that his election ushered in a postracial society.[12] He reiterated this statement in his farewell address in January 2017,[13] as Donald Trump, who had run one of the most divisive political campaigns in recent history, became the forty-fifth president. An abundance of social science research also challenges the premise of a postracial society, demonstrating the continuing impact of

race on various life outcomes and on the quality of an individual's experiences in a range of social and institutional contexts.[14]

Like Obama, the border-transcending mothers in my study also rejected this postracial perspective of society, believing that racial categories and identities continue to influence how individuals are treated within society and their life outcomes. At the same time, however, these mothers also hoped that the promise of a society in which racial categories play a smaller role in defining the contours of an individual's identity would become a reality for their children. Also like Obama, these mothers often focused on the fact that racial attitudes had improved, and they hoped that they would continue to improve during their children's lifetimes. Through these mothers' accounts of their approaches to parenting, a second definition of *postracial* emerged that focuses less on an individual's life trajectory and reception by the broader society and more on the impact of racial categories on an individual's identity and immediate interpersonal relationships. This definition focuses on disrupting the influence of racial categories in how individuals identify themselves, what they expect out of life, the people and groups with whom they choose to affiliate, their political commitments, and their regular social activities. The border transcenders endeavored to raise their children to embrace their racial or cultural backgrounds and encouraged them to not be circumscribed or constrained by them.

It is worth noting that these interviews took place well before the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, during which the executive branch of the United States government included cabinet and other key members with ties to white supremacist and neo-Nazi organizations. As a consequence, the mothers in this research may have been more optimistic about a future where race mattered less.

For these mothers, racial categories and racial identity potentially functioned as cages that could limit their children's expression, interpersonal relationships, and/or activities. These mothers worried about how other people's definitions of racial categories and identity might compel their children to have to prove their racial authenticity. Rachel was one such mother. She was married to a white man of Irish heritage, and together they had a daughter. While identifying as African American, Rachel also identified as Caribbean. In the United States, African Americans or blacks

are often viewed as a homogenous group, but those who identify as such often come from diverse cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds. Rachel previously had a son with a man from a country in Africa, so each of Rachel's children straddled different cultural, ethnic, and racial boundaries. Her daughter was biracial (that is, African American and white), and although Rachel's son was mono-racial in that both his parents identified as black, his cultural mix was African American, Caribbean (Rachel's family background), and his father's national identity. Describing her approach to community and racial identity for her children, Rachel said,

> I think it is important for you to know about your background and where you are from, but in terms of being a sort of gung-ho-we-must-imbibe-black-culture, or whatever, I have never been that kind of person. . . . You know, if your friend is African American, that is great; if not, that is great too. I don't consciously seek people out because of their race.

Rachel did not want racial categories to dictate the relationships her children formed with others. She went on to describe her approach to racial identity for her daughter, stating: "I want her to be very proud of who she is. She is African American, on one side, and, you know, Caribbean-Hispanic, and, you know, white on the other side. But I want her to be proud of [it all]."

Rachel was adamant that her children would not have to choose between racial or cultural identities or be limited by them. She wanted her children to understand that being white and black or African American, African, and Caribbean were important parts of their racial and cultural backgrounds. However, like other border transcenders, she did not want their racial identity as black, white, or biracial and/or their ethnic identity as African American, African, Caribbean, or Irish to dictate their range of expression. That is, she did not want ideas of what it means to be "authentically black" to limit the kinds of activities or communities her children joined. She also did not want having white ancestry make her daughter feel like she had to prove her blackness.

Echoing Jordana's comments from above, Rachel did not want racial identity to prevent her children from embracing certain aspects of their background. She described how racial and cultural identities impacted her mono-racial and multicultural son:

> I think he identifies as African American. I still think he's young. I don't know where he will be in the world, but he may end up being around a specific African American community or he may not. . . . [My son] has a lot questions about where he fits in culturally/racially because his father's family is absolutely not African American and not American culturally at all, either. . . . I think right now he identifies with the African American community and culture because that is immediately within his grasp and it's simple.

Rachel saw her son's sense of racial identity as evolving over time and believed that his multicultural and multinational background might lead to shifts in how he identified in the future as he gained new experiences and affiliations with other communities—African American, Caribbean, African, or otherwise.

Rachel's concerns about the challenges her children might encounter in embracing their various racial and cultural identities are supported by America's historical record regarding racial categorization, specifically as it pertains to multiracial or mixed-race individuals with white and black racial heritages.[15] Historically, African American racial identity has been determined by the "one-drop rule," which dictates that if an individual has one drop of black blood in their ancestry, he or she is categorized as black.[16] Once codified by law in various parts of the United States, the one-drop rule continues to serve as a strong cultural prescription to African American–white biracial children that they should identify as black or African American.[17] Indeed, as noted earlier, until recently most US government documents, including the census, required individuals to choose only one answer in identifying themselves.[18] But this concept of black or African American trumping all other identities may be slowly changing. As of 2013, 39 percent of mixed-race African American/black–white multiracial people identified as multiracial or mixed race.[19] Although the mothers discussed in this chapter challenged the primacy of traditional notions of racial identity for their children, it would be a mistake to say that they ignored race or did not think about racial identity. In fact, they thought about racial identity frequently and talked about it with their children regularly.

It was not just mothers raising biracial or mixed-race children who embraced the border-transcending approach to racial identity (and not all

mothers raising biracial children did). Some of these mothers were in relationships with spouses or partners who shared their racial background or status as a racial minority but were from different ethnic backgrounds.

Cheryl, a married mother of one son, identified as African American, as did her husband, but her mother was from the Caribbean. Although Cheryl did not straddle racial categories of black and white, like Rachel's son, she and her son straddled cultural identities within the racial category of black. Cheryl did not want to privilege racial identity for her son in his upbringing. She lived in a predominately white middle-class neighborhood, but she described her professional and social circles as very diverse. Explaining her views about race, she said,

> It is important to know who you are in terms of your cultural identity, not just in terms of race but also in terms of being a Californian, or being a person who lives in Oakland, or being a person who is an educated professional, or being a skier or a Star Trek geek, or whatever it is.

Cheryl viewed racial identity as one of many legitimate categories that her son could choose to emphasize as important to him in his life. Relaying her thoughts on potentially joining Jack and Jill or The Links (discussed in earlier chapters), she said, "If they are not doing something that is interesting, we aren't going to join a group just because they are black." Jack and Jill, in particular, provides children with ready-made peer groups from other middle-, upper-middle-, and upper-class African American families. Cheryl's mother had been a member of both of these organizations. Nonetheless, for Cheryl, securing access to such a community of African American mothers and children was not a sufficient reason to become a member. Only if they were substantively engaged in something that she believed was important would it be worth the time and money to join these organizations. Middle-class African American organizations did not feature prominently in the parenting strategies of border transcenders, and this absence seemed to be less about elitism than about rejecting ideas of African American racial authenticity.

Essence, a married mother, wanted to expose her only child to foreign language and international travel to foster an appreciation of diversity. She discussed her plan saying,

> I want to put [my daughter] into school, a French-American school. My husband and I have talked about doing programs where she would be allowed to travel in school . . . where she can learn a language at school and then, like in fifth grade, they go on a field trip to France for a couple of weeks. Travel is a really important thing for both of us.

Later, Essence added why travel and language were important to her and her husband:

> We have a big thing around language. My husband speaks fluent Spanish, and I speak fluent French. And I really want to have those two languages stick with her because I want her to feel like she can go anywhere in the world. And relate to anybody. . . . I don't want her to feel trapped by the Bay Area and to think that this is just it. I want her to feel like she can know the world and know who lives in it and not be limited by her experiences here. I really want her to be a child of the world.

Other border transcenders also wanted their children to look beyond the immediate challenges within their communities and national borders to become global citizens. Indeed, they often encouraged their children to recognize social problems involving issues of race and racism on a more global level, and they left open the possibility that such concerns cut across traditional racial and cultural divides.

Jordana shared her belief that issues related to race might be of even less importance to her children than other social issues:

> I think my children are going to have a lot of challenges. Who knows what the environment is going to be like. . . . [What] I really try to instill in them is a respect for and reverence for Mother Earth. . . . There is going to be a reality that climate change is here, you know, and there are things that are happening that are affecting their lives directly as a result. And they are going to have to be the ones to have to fix it.

Border transcenders believed that issues related to racial identity and racism might become less salient for their children and that these concerns should not be automatically privileged over other issues, such as protecting the environment or decreasing world hunger. Indeed, issues of racial identity and racism were often viewed as diminishing in importance or becoming supplanted in importance for their children.

Jordana, Cheryl, Rachel, Essence, and other border-transcending mothers hoped their children would have the freedom in the future to determine the parts of their identities that are most important to them. They tried to help their children define what "African American" or "black" racial identity meant to them individually, rather than letting others define it for them.

In the next section, I examine how these mothers fostered a border-transcending identity in their children, a version of African American middle-class identity that embraces their racial and cultural heritages while not being defined by them or making them more important than other types of identity.

CREATING PROTECTIVE ENCLAVES FOR RACIAL FREEDOM AND DIVERSITY

As with the border crossers and border policers described in previous chapters, border transcenders wanted their children to move through their neighborhoods, schools, and social environments with ease. Unlike those other mothers, however, border transcenders typically did not join or seek out specific African American communities or social organizations, middle class or otherwise, simply to provide their children with racially specific peers and experiences.

Border transcenders often challenged the idea of racial authenticity, instead believing there was no one right way of being black or African American. Racial diversity in their children's peer networks was more important than helping their children fit into a specific kind of African American identity or community. Instead, these mothers looked for and sometimes worked to create environments in which no single racial group dominated and their children were accepted as racially authentic at face value. Essence expressed this sentiment in her account of how race impacted her parenting decisions:

> [Because my daughter] has lighter skin, I want her to be around other kids who she can identify with. . . . [T]he only thing that I really want for her is to not be odd. So, wherever she goes, the school is going to have a good mix of children. But in terms of race, I wouldn't say that I am trying to keep her

> away from anybody or more around other people. . . . And our friends are every color, every race.

Essence's description underscores the different ways mothers can approach potential challenges to their children's racial identity. Like other mothers who embraced different orientations to African American middle-class identity, Essence wanted to ensure that her child felt comfortable in her school and social environments. However, she took a different approach from mothers who focused on helping their children have a specific set of experiences within a specific kind of African American community that they believed their child should join or emulate. Border transcenders wanted their children to have access to communities in which any version of themselves would be received as legitimately and authentically African American and not viewed as unusual.

Through her professional and educational networks, Cheryl developed a diverse circle of friends not dominated by one racial, ethnic, or religious group, or sexual orientation. Cheryl explained that she created a similar environment for her son in which he would not have to prove his blackness and would be shielded from racism:

> You do want to kind of create a protective environment for them to grow up first, and then they can deal with the world. So, I think I am more likely to try to shield him from any of that. That is how I grew up, pretty shielded from racism and sexism. . . . My husband, on the other hand, was confronted with that kind of stuff regularly. . . . And I don't necessarily think it did him any good. . . . But I think if [my son] knows himself, wants to learn, wants to do his best, that's great. And it doesn't need to be any different because he's African American.

This approach was an extension of the environment management strategy described in chapter 1, through which mothers aimed to find or create environments that were largely free of racism. While many mothers used this strategy when their children were young to help them build strong racial self-esteem and protect them from racism, border-transcending mothers used this strategy for a longer period of their children's lives.

Reflecting on her own protected childhood, Cheryl questioned the idea that her son needed to have special preparation in the form of exposure to racism and sexism in order to successfully navigate these harsh realities.

Cheryl reflected on the importance of diversity in their community, stating, "We have friends who moved to a predominately white area. I would not want that for my child—to be the only black kid. I don't want them to be with all black kids either." Among border transcenders, creating or maintaining diversity in their own and their children's communities was important because they wanted their children to negotiate the complexities of their own racial identity development in supportive environments.

Skin tone also impacted some border transcenders' approaches to racial identity. Chandra was a married mother with a daughter and son by two different fathers, both of whom were white. She explained that she was quite selective about the schools she sent her children to because they had light skin:

> The fact that [my children] are both biracial—I know that within the black community there are still issues of color, and that goes both ways. . . . [O]n one side, they get more privileges because they are lighter and mixed, but it also makes them "less black." . . . For my son [at his school], there are a lot of mixed families. So that felt really good. My daughter is even lighter than [my son] was when he was younger. I mean she and I are really tight, so she knows that she's part me too, but I think I am going to make more of an effort with her, to get her into camps . . . for kids of mixed ancestry . . . so she will have some help grappling with that. Her dad is Jewish. . . . We both decided that we are probably going to start going to church and temple soon. And it is not necessarily out of religious need per se but more culturally, so she can feel more grounded.

Chandra's desire to support her children in exploring their mixed racial and religious heritages informed how she parented them and the level of diversity she sought in their social, religious, and educational environments. Her statement "she knows she's part me too" highlighted the importance of her daughter knowing she is African American, but it is also clear that she was making efforts to ensure her daughter was exposed to all aspects of her background.

Chandra's concerns over her children's varying skin tones and the impact skin tone might have on their racial identities are supported by research.[20] Border transcenders raising mixed-race children made efforts to ensure their children's exposure to diverse settings that included other mixed-race children. This additional socialization work on the part of

these mothers may explain why research shows multiracial Americans are more likely to have multiracial friends than other US racial groups.[21]

Border transcenders frequently explained how they sought out diverse communities in which to raise their children. Cara, divorced and the mother of a son and daughter, described how her neighborhood provided her children with access to diverse friends and families, which translated to making their own multiracial backgrounds both commonplace and uncontroversial. She said, "[My neighborhood] is very racially diverse. Black, white, Hispanic, Japanese, Chinese, and that is just this block." She also described how that diversity carried over into her children's peer group, stating, "It is funny; most of my daughter's friends are half-black and half-white."

Similarly, Jordana was sensitive to how the level of diversity in her children's peer group could impact their racial identity and level of ease:

> I would never put [my children] in a situation where it was predominately one race or another. . . . I'd never—I wouldn't want to live someplace, where again, where I grew up, where you are kind of the minority and not really fitting in. I would never do that to my kids.

It is important to note that border transcenders did not value diversity only for their children; they also valued it for themselves. As discussed later in this chapter, many of these mothers had negotiated similar challenges to their racial authenticity that they sought to avoid for their own children.

The diversity they wanted for their children included racial, ethnic, and religious affiliations, as well as family configurations and sexual orientations. For example, in choosing a church or synagogue, Chandra emphasized that it had to be progressive:

> I want the music. I want there to be a gospel choir. But, at the same time, it has to be tolerant and it has to be accepting. . . . You know, people of different orientations. I can't do something that is not tolerant. You know, open, and that has been my challenge. . . . The congregation is mostly white but it is integrated and there are gay folks that are involved.

Historically, the church has been an important social, economic, cultural, and political institution for African Americans. However, Chandra experienced challenges finding a church that was the right fit for her

family. For her, not accepting members of the LGBTQ community would be a deal breaker, and this limited her choices for an important institution of cultural and social support for many African Americans.

Border transcenders were not the only mothers who refused to join religious institutions that did not embrace the LGBTQ community, but, as a group, these mothers were often very progressive. Along with a number of other metrics, they often connected being open to the LGBTQ community with an appreciation and respect for a range of other kinds of diversity. Jordana's account reveals this sentiment:

> [I] love the diversity of [the Bay Area] the open-mindedness; I am a liberal. . . . The people out here kind of let you do your thing. That is part of the value system here. Live and let live. Why do you care who someone is sleeping with? Why do you care if someone is going to church? . . . That is a real bellwether for a place, you know. Like, what is the LGBT community like there? If you know they are left alone, you know that you are going to be left alone. . . . Also, I appreciate that there are lots of educated, open-minded talented African American people here. Those are the people I want my children to see, and I didn't feel like I saw that too much growing up.

Border transcenders created multicultural, liberal, and progressive communities to encourage their children to embrace all aspects of their identities and to be confident being themselves rather than having to prove they fit into a preexisting racial schema. The LGBTQ community was a litmus test to see how other groups were treated within a community; these mothers underscored that any community in which they were involved had to be tolerant of diversity, including sexual orientation. Some border-transcending mothers said that living in the San Francisco Bay Area, a region they perceived as characterized by a greater acceptance of individuals from diverse backgrounds, made it possible for their children to embrace any version of their African American identity.

A PROLIFERATION OF DISCOURSES ON RACE, RACIAL IDENTITY, AND RACISM

Given that border transcenders often wished to downplay the significance of racial categories in dictating their children's identities, one might assume

these mothers avoided discussing race-related topics. Perhaps surprisingly, racism, as well as other "isms," was not a taboo topic for these mothers. Instead, it was often a routine part of conversations within their family and their typically racially diverse community of friends. While race, gender, and religion often came up in interviews, these topics were primarily connected to appreciating and recognizing the diversity in their communities, not to addressing issues of discrimination or prejudice. When discussions of racism and discrimination emerged, they often focused on abstract experiences involving people outside of their immediate community. In addition, discussions of racial bias focused on the global context as often as the local. This global orientation to racial categories and racism challenged the fixedness of these categories and highlighted their social construction. These mothers, rather than ignoring these topics, engaged in a constant critique of the traditional meanings and constraints attached to racial identity.

Cara's account reveals how diversity in her family's community and what they witnessed on family road trips provided a backdrop to talk to her children about race relations:

> I started talking to [my children] about race when they were four or five years old. Usually with the start of school; I don't think it has been a real problem. . . . There are so many mixed-race kids in this area; and even when we go home to Michigan, there are a lot of mixed-race kids in our immediate family and in my hometown. . . . But we did a cross-country drive last year. We drove from California to Michigan, and then we came back through the Midwest. It was so funny because I noticed that people [in some states] would, like, outright stare at us. I was, like, have these people never seen a black person before? . . . We watched [the TV miniseries] *Roots* because I wanted them to really see this background in America and racial relationships. . . . So, we have had a lot of dialogue. . . . We went to Aruba last year for spring break, and one of the things that they do that I find hilarious when we travel nationally and internationally, they count the number of black people they see at the airport. . . . So, they are definitely aware of race, and we talk about it.

In general, Cara's children lived in a relatively racism-free environment that included other racial groups, other mixed-race children, and an appreciation of diversity. In general, her children's racial identity was a

nonissue, given the racially diverse environment in which she was raising them. Indeed, lessons about racism and discrimination were often taught through historical examples in museums, documentaries, and experiences visiting places that were largely removed from their daily lives.

Similarly, Cheryl said that discussions of racism and other "isms" continually happened in her social circles, and were happening cross-racially, something that she believed was unusual:

> I think a lot of black people don't talk about race with white people. We do all the time. . . . Then again, we have a fairly liberal progressive group of friends who are not just white or black; they are multiple races and multiracial within themselves, and so I think that race comes up as a part of normal conversations, just like gender comes up as a part of normal conversations, politics, or religion or being gay or whatever, just because who we hang out with is very super-diverse. So, because of that, it is just something that we will talk about. . . . I don't know what it would be like to be in an environment . . . I have never known what it was like to be in an environment where everybody was the exactly the same.

These mothers invested a lot of energy into discussions on race, in part to support their children as they navigated the development of their own racial identities. Regularly talking about racial identity in their communities normalized these conversations and challenged ideas of racial categories. At the same time, they wanted these discussions to take place in environments in which their children would not have to regularly negotiate the realities of racial categorization and racial bias.

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM CHALLENGES TO THEIR "RACIAL AUTHENTICITY"

Border-transcending mothers had concerns that their children would experience racial identity as a constraint, as had often occurred in their own lives as children. These mothers had experienced some level of racial alienation or isolation during their youth, so as adults they prioritized diverse communities over communities that were predominately one racial group or another. Jordana described her own circumstances:

> When I was in high school, I was always in the accelerated classes, and there was just, like maybe, one or two other black people in those classes. . . . You don't question things like, it can't be that, like all the black kids are just dumb, you know? This is the South, and there's a lot more to the reality of why you see more white kids in these accelerated classes than you see blacks. . . . I also experienced from a lot of black kids a lot of anger directed at me. Sort of questioning my blackness. You know, you think you're smart. You think you're white. At the time, living in the South, I think there was definitely a lot of self-hatred going on, and that still goes on in black communities where stupid equals black. . . . So, you find yourself sort of in this kind of limbo, you know, not really fitting in with the whites because you're not white and this is the South . . . but you also are not really fitting in with the blacks because, you know, you don't even know them because you have never been in their classes.

Jordana's sense of alienation persisted throughout her education.

Jordana attributed living abroad in Europe during college as the seminal experience that introduced her to the possibility that people could see her as an individual with a range of characteristics, rather than what she viewed as reducing her and judging her based on stereotypes associated with her racial identity. She said,

> I'm not saying it was utopia; there was plenty of racism in France and in Europe. But it's just not so ingrained. In America, it is so part of the fabric of this country from like day one. It's just deep, and there's just so much pain surrounding it. So, it was good to get out of America and to live somewhere where it wasn't the primary issue. And it actually helped me a lot. To take myself out of that and to have more of a clear idea of, OK, what am I interested in?

Traveling and living outside of the US race-relations framework was a transformative experience for Jordana. She developed new ways of thinking about being black that challenged the idea that she had to conform to a certain way of being to be viewed as racially authentic or "black enough." Building on this point, she said,

> [T]here was a revelation that I had about being black. I went to France, and there was a big black community in Paris. And they were almost all directly from Africa. The idea for them that you could somehow be defined as less black, because that is a big deal, you know, people saying, "Oh, you're not

> black." Over there, I'm from Africa, it is like, what the hell are you talking about? . . . [Our African American] ancestors had to kind of create this kind of identity, and part of it was their own, but a lot of it came from the white community about what black people were and how you were supposed to be. And I realized over there, "Oh, I can define myself and I don't need, it doesn't have to just be because some black person says, 'Oh you're not black enough.'"

Jordana's experiences abroad redefined the importance of racial identity in shaping her actions and beliefs, and not just for herself but also for how she raises her children. She initially associated being African American with constraints, but her time in France suggested it did not have to be that way. Instead, she believed her children were authentically black by virtue of existing.

Chandra underscored a similar shift in her views on racial identity that she attributed to her travels to Africa and Europe. These experiences also shaped Chandra's approach to parenting her children and the values she sought to instill in them:

> I am not religious, but I feel like I do teach my children that you constantly have to acknowledge what you have and never allow that to color how you view people who have less than you or are less fortunate than you. So, I really, really try, and not just locally but globally, too. So, I talk. I travel with my kids as much as I can. . . . I want them to have a really good understanding of the world, the good, the bad and the ugly. . . . I talk to them about social justice issues all the time. . . . [T]he other day . . . a friend brought a friend [from a local high school over to my house] who was in the social justice academy. . . . And I was really impressed and happy that my eighth-grade son could engage in discussion with him.

These mothers' desires for their children to think and look beyond their immediate surroundings and to consider problems in social contexts outside of the United States was influenced by how they had come to think of the world through these experiences.

It was a common experience for border transcenders to spend time during their youth or early adulthood traveling abroad and being exposed to different perspectives on race, racial identity, and social issues, which subsequently impacted their parenting practices. Informed by those experiences, these mothers challenged the idea that there was a single version of authentic blackness that their children had to master and enact.

LIVING UNDER AND BREAKING RACIAL "AUTHENTICITY"

Mothers who worked to foster a border-transcending racial identity in their children came from a range of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. Some of these mothers grew up in solidly middle- or upper-middle-class circumstances, while others grew up moving in and out of poverty. Some were raised solely within African American communities, and others were the children of interracial relationships and/or were raised in multiracial communities. Many of their own parents had immigrated to the United States; some were immigrants themselves. The key factor these mothers shared in common was currently belonging to communities that were racially diverse, albeit largely middle class. Often, these mothers' communities were also diverse in terms of religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

As adults, border transcenders were often, but not always, in interracial marriages or relationships with white men or with men of color who had strong ties to their own nationalities that were outside of the American context. As a result, these mothers were often raising biracial, mixed-race, or multicultural children. As noted above, some border transcenders felt that when they were children or young adults, they did not "fit" into either African American or white communities because of their being multiracial or the children of immigrant parents.

Rachel identified as African American, but her background was more complicated than that single category would suggest. Describing herself, she said,

> I am an American, and I was born and raised in America, but having parents that are immigrants has definitely made me a little different than other people. . . . [F]or me, it has made me more aware of people who are from other backgrounds, who are not necessarily the standard American. If I see another [black person], I don't think they are African American. I wait for them to say, because they might be from Africa or somewhere else.

Rachel's parents emigrated from the Caribbean to the United States, and as a child, she navigated a black immigrant identity, American identity, and African American identity. What she described as her bicultural background at times made her feel out of place in black cultural spaces and sensitized her to similar experiences for other black people.

Similarly, despite identifying as black, Essence felt that her immigrant status made it difficult for her to identify with some aspects of the African American experience. She explained,

> I think that my bicultural upbringing excludes me from both groups. In one way or another [I am excluded] from being a Haitian person because I'm too American, and then in African American groups, I can't identify with some of the African American experience and it goes against me. . . . I'm supposed to identify with these things . . . and I just don't experience them that way, so I find it difficult. I end up being really good friends with people who have parents who were immigrants and who can identify with the same expectations I had growing up.

Cheryl was raised in an upper-middle-class family and in a predominately middle- and upper-middle-class African American community. She described her childhood family as both African American and bicultural. Throughout her life, she regularly visited her father's family in the US South and her mother's family in the Caribbean. At a young age, she traveled out of the country regularly and learned that people live and think differently in other places. Despite attending predominately white Christian schools, she described her childhood friends as somewhat diverse, including nonwhites and non-Christians. Cheryl's mother also supplemented her school friendships by becoming a member of Jack and Jill.

Cheryl believed there had been a shift from her parents' generation to hers in terms of race and relationships and that her generation was more fluid in relationships, making social and professional circles less circumscribed by race. She described this shift:

> The African American middle- and upper-middle class is like a culture unto itself, you know, especially in [my parents'] generation. I think in our generation we're much more fluid in terms of friendships. In terms of people who are not African American. . . . [My parents] are definitely grounded in the black community.

However, Cheryl also explained that she could feel out of place in middle-class African American communities:

> I spent a summer in Atlanta, and I did not fit into the black community there at all. I wasn't, it just wasn't my discourse, you know? . . . That sort

> of automatic knee-jerk [response]—"that sounds racist." . . . Just the assumption—those kinds of knee-jerk assumptions—drive me crazy. . . . [The whites] didn't bomb the levees to flood the Ninth Ward [in New Orleans]. They maybe didn't keep them up very well. But it wasn't intentional, purposeful "I'm going to destroy people."

The experiences of the mothers discussed in this section, show that as young adults border transcenders often felt like they had to learn how to negotiate different cultures and were judged as inadequate based on narrow definitions of what it means to be African American or black. They wanted their children to have more freedom in choosing their identities.

CONCLUSION: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF BORDER-TRANSCENDING IDENTITIES

In this chapter, I underscore how border-transcending mothers resisted the constraints of racial categories. They did this largely because of their own experiences and because they worried about the impact they believed stereotypes associated with racial categories would have on their children. These mothers were less inclined to join long-standing middle-class organizations within the African American community. They wanted their children to be proud of, and appreciate, their myriad racial and cultural backgrounds, but they did not believe that being accepted within a specific racial group should demand that their children enact some version of blackness that was decided by others. *Being* black or African American should be enough versus *enacting* a specific version of blackness.

As these mothers' accounts reveal, many border transcenders purposefully embedded themselves and their families within racially diverse social, professional, and community networks, and lived in racially diverse neighborhoods. As described throughout this chapter, these communities were also characterized by racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual orientation diversity. It was strategically important to these mothers that their children were comfortable in diverse environments. Border transcenders' children would be straddling cultures within their own families, thus, it was important for their children to see examples of people within their own communities successfully doing this. Diversity was not about visiting

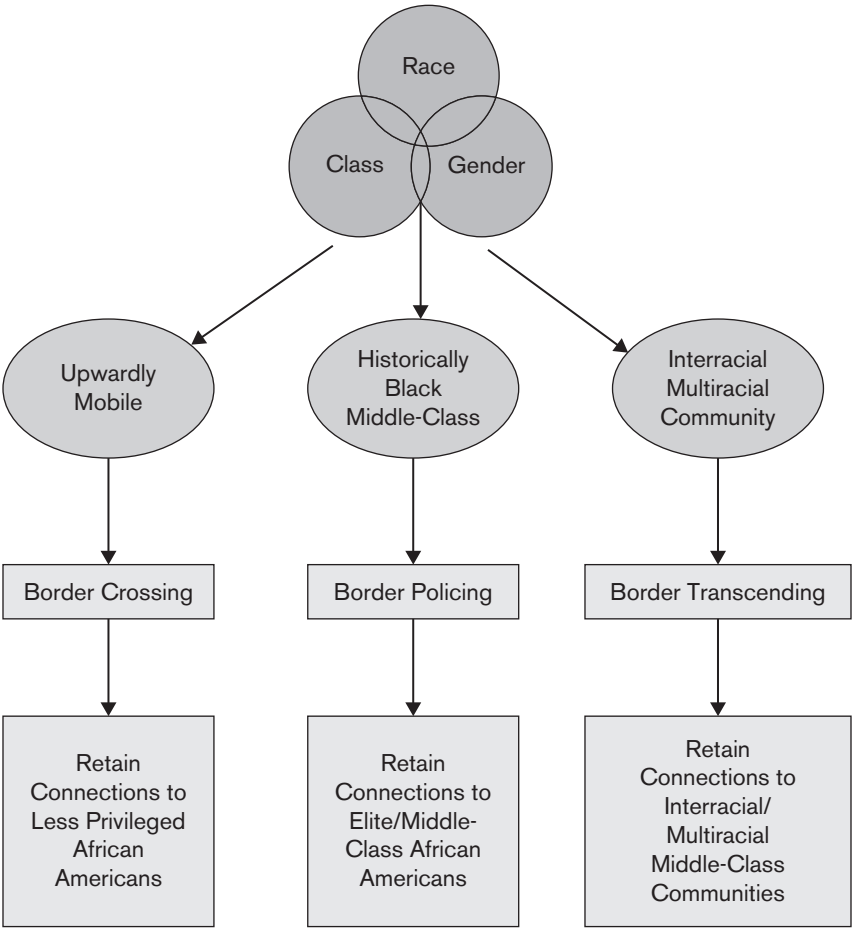


Figure 2. Versions of African American middle-class identity.

a different community; it was about navigating one's own family, neighborhood, and school.

These mothers, like border-crossing and border-policing mothers, were engaged in community building, but their community defied convention in that it was often characterized by unity in the very heterogeneity they sought (see figure 2 describing each group of mothers).

Helping their children to fit into a specific kind of "African American" identity or community was less important for border transcenders than

cultivating pockets of society in which their children's day-to-day experiences were not primarily shaped by the constraints of racial identity. They wanted their children to be free to embark on identities and lives that defied traditional ideas about what it means to be African American or black. To instill this freedom of expression in their children, border transcenders applied consistent effort that involved regularly challenging messages coming both from the broader white society and black communities.

PART II Beyond Separate Spheres and the Cult of Domesticity

Part II continues to examine the experiences of African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers, but it shifts the focus to how they approach combining work and family and how they make decisions about childcare. The second half of the book also examines the meanings these mothers attach to their approaches and decisions, and it continues to examine how intersections of race, class, and gender influence these mothers' beliefs and practices. Part II is comprised of three chapters that examine the cultural, social, legal, and economic forces the mothers in this research confront from within African American communities and white mainstream society. These myriad forces directly influence these mothers' beliefs, experiences, and practices within and across the realms of family, work, and childcare.

I begin by presenting in chapter 5 an alternative framework for analyzing work and family, which I call the "market-family matrix." The matrix captures the characteristics of the family and the market and the relationship between these two arenas of life. I suggest that the specific cultural, social, economic, structural, and ideological characteristics and configurations of the family and the market produce a matrix in which mothers who work outside of the home experience either conflict or integration.

Although research on family and work life often assumes the dominance of one of these characteristics and configurations, I argue that these ideals vary, and how society views and treats certain kinds of families also varies. Indeed, American society can, and does, simultaneously stigmatize some mothers who work outside of the home and other mothers who do not. American society can, and does, create obstacles that prevent some mothers' employment while encouraging and facilitating others. I suggest that these contradictory positions have been essential to ensuring the efficient operation of the family and the market.

In chapter 6, I examine the different cultural expectations of motherhood these mothers confront from their own communities and the mainstream white society when making decisions on combining work and motherhood. To do so, I also examine the controlling images of African American womanhood and motherhood that police how these mothers negotiate making those decisions and the related tensions they confront.

Chapter 7 examines how multiple configurations of the family are shaped by different expectations and constraints that are both internal and external to the family. Indeed, while one might assume that the kind of childcare a mother chooses is dictated mostly by financial resources, the African American mothers' accounts in this research suggest that these decisions are also affected by the racial landscape of available educational and childcare institutions and the quality of those institutions, as well as by cultural motivations and expectations. These choices may also reflect differences between how and from whom white and African American middle-class mothers seek support and advice on raising their children. Indeed, among the mothers in this research, many preferred the experience-based knowledge and wisdom of older mothers in their families and communities to advice from the latest parenting books.

5 The Market-Family Matrix

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF INTEGRATED AND CONFLICTED FRAMEWORKS OF WORK–LIFE BALANCE

> That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?[1]

This iconic quote from Sojourner Truth's remarks at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, underscores how American society has viewed African American and white women through different logics and cultural expectations. Although Truth supported the mission of the women at the conference, she simultaneously pointed out an important contradiction in how women from different racial groups were treated during this period of political mobilization. African American women were often enslaved and viewed as property and labor, both economic and reproductive. Although women were characterized as the weaker sex, this view was not applied to African American women, who in many ways were treated like

men. Enslaved women worked alongside enslaved men and were given only a brief suspension of duties after the birth of a child. Their children increased the wealth of slave owners because legally they were their property. Truth's passage suggests how different versions of womanhood and motherhood were made and unmade through cultural norms, laws, policies and social structures, interactions, and hierarchies.[2] This racialized and gendered double standard is not limited to the nineteenth century. Different versions of it continue to inform the treatment and expectations of women from different racial and economic groups in the United States, with African American women cast as promiscuous, unworthy, and bad mothers, while white women are considered worthy, morally superior, and "good" mothers.[3]

In this chapter, I suggest how this double standard has been reinforced by distinct cultural, economic, legal, and social forces within American society that have produced variations in what I term the "market-family matrix," a framework that captures the characteristics of both the family and the market and the relationship between the two. The market-family matrix that is typically associated with white middle-class families and mothers emerged alongside two dominant ideologies of womanhood and motherhood—separate spheres and the cult of domesticity—and their contemporary iterations. These ideologies informed the dominant market-family matrix and dictated a specific gendered division of labor in the home and the workplace, whereby under "ideal" circumstances wives are principally responsible for duties within the family, yet defer to their husbands, and husbands are principally responsible for duties in the marketplace (and defer to more powerful men). Although African American and white women may respond in similar ways when they confront the same forces,[4] I explain how, more often, the same forces did not, and do not, exist for African American mothers and their families.

Scholarly understandings of the relationship between work and family are derived from specific ideological, cultural, legal, and economic locations that are assumed to be shared and experienced by all American mothers, but that have, in fact, varied in both the same period and over time for different racial and economic groups.[5] Although dominant ideologies of motherhood influence the experiences and behaviors of subordinate groups of women and mothers, these groups, specifically African American women, have produced alternative ideals of womanhood and motherhood

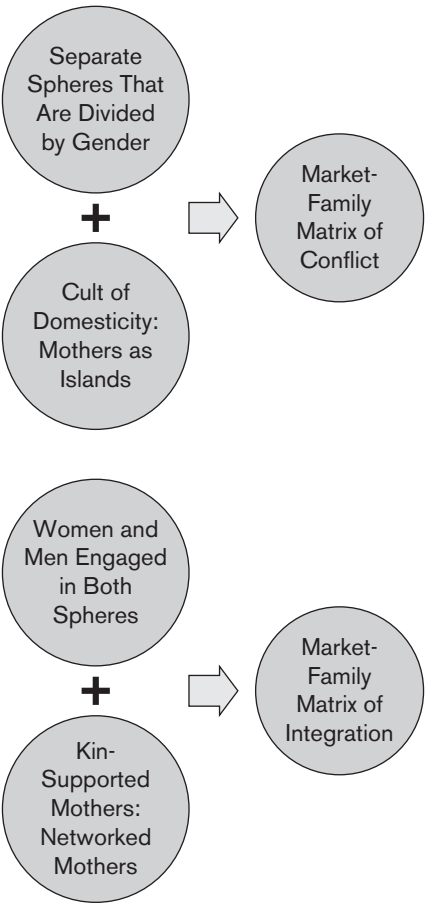


Figure 3. Market-family matrix of conflict and integration.

that are derived from their own lives and based on standards and cultural expectations from within their own communities (see figure 3).[6]

As a result of the distinct societal reception that mothers confront based on intersections of race, class, and gender, they navigate different cultural, economic, legal, and social forces. The configuration of some mothers' market-family matrix produces conflict when they work outside of the home.[7] For other mothers, the configuration produces integration.[8] Indeed, the market-family matrix is not fixed or uniform. It can change from one

period to the next and within the same period. Various configurations of the matrix that are characterized by different gendered divisions of labor and different cultural expectations about the place of work in men's and women's lives have necessarily existed within the same time frame and social context. Further, these configurations have been, and continue to be, reinforced by American racial and gender hierarchies that ensure the successful functioning of white families.[9]

DOMINANT PERSPECTIVES ON WOMANHOOD AND MOTHERHOOD IN WORK–FAMILY RESEARCH

The cult of domesticity and separate spheres are two related ideologies that have been integral in organizing America's gendered division of labor and the relationship between the marketplace and the family.[10] Together, these ideologies relegate women to the domestic sphere, foster a societal belief that a woman's place is in the home, and specify how women's work should be enacted and evaluated.[11] These ideologies largely free men from regular domestic duties and support a stark division between the private world of the family and the public world of work and demand a strict gendered division of labor within both.[12]

These ideologies of womanhood and motherhood did not always exist. They emerged in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century during the Industrial Revolution, when capitalism became a durable part of modern American society.[13] These ideologies were initially forged in the homes of the white middle- and upper-middle-class and, ultimately, were presented to all white women and men as an ideal to which to aspire and the standard against which to evaluate their family and work decisions.[14] These ideologies supported the new economic order of modern industrial capitalism by encouraging a new gendered division of labor in the household and marketplace and a new vision of motherhood. Before the Industrial Revolution, the public and private spheres were not as divided.[15] Indeed, the work of the family within the home—what Dorothy Smith has referred to as women's lived experience—was integrated with market work, and men, women, and children were all active participants.[16] Many white working-class families continued to need women's economic contri-

butions, but their lack of conformity to the ideal was less visible to the public eye because they were often able to engage in paid work inside their homes, such as taking in boarders or engaging in piecework.[17]

The logics of separate spheres and the cult of domesticity were used to create changes in labor laws and policies that reinforced men's status as breadwinners and women's status as homemakers.[18] Progressive Era maternalist reformers used both ideologies as key rationales to regulate women's activities in the public sphere and to create government initiatives that would enable mothers to focus their attention on caring for their children and their homes.[19] The logic behind these ideologies also undergirded the creation of early welfare policies, including widows' and mothers' pensions that provided certain groups of mothers with financial support to reduce or eliminate their workday, permitting them to stay at home and raise their children.[20] Although these pensions were often symbolic, functioning more often as economic subsidies for low-income white mothers rather than entirely eliminating their need to work,[21] they sent a powerful message that, under ideal circumstances, white mothers should stay at home and care for their children.

These ideologies also influenced changes to labor laws that permitted regulations limiting a woman's workday based on the rationale that women should be able to focus on their duties within the domestic sphere.[22] In *Muller v. Oregon*, in a unanimous decision, the US Supreme Court permitted the workday of women to be regulated based on their current and prospective position as mothers.[23] This decision contrasts sharply with the prevailing jurisprudence of this period, known as the Lochner era, which prioritized the liberty of contract over the government's right to regulate workplace conditions and, more broadly, labor.[24] Women, at least those who were white, were identified as a group that warranted legal protections from exploitation.

The separate spheres ideology also had an impact on white men's economic position. In the nineteenth century, male union members used the logic of separate spheres to fight for improved wages. They negotiated for a "family wage" that would enable them to be "good providers" for their families and permit their wives to focus on being homemakers.[25]

In the 1950s, separate spheres and the cult of domesticity continued to influence scholarly understandings of work and family. Sociologists Talcott

Parsons and Robert Bales coined the term *nuclear family*: a family unit headed by a father, who had an instrumental role in the labor force as a financial provider, and a mother, who had an expressive role in the home as a homemaker and caregiver.[26] Parsons and Bales believed that the gendered division of labor in the family was a natural phenomenon that supported the efficient functioning of both the family and the capitalist economic system.

Just as the stark division between the public and private spheres has not always existed, the nuclear family has not always been the dominant and idealized configuration of the family. The shift from extended and multigenerational families to one comprised of two parents and their children began at the end the World War II, during a period of immense economic prosperity in America. The nuclear family became possible only during that era, when white men were able to earn a wage that was sufficient to support their entire family without contributions from other household members.[27] During this period, family size also decreased, in part due to lower infant mortality rates and increased access to birth control. This enabled married women to better manage their fertility and thus their family size. Several new and complementary views of relationships within the family also emerged. Children were now expected to leave home and form independent families when they became adults. Adult children were no longer encouraged to care for their elderly parents, but instead to place them in institutional settings such as nursing homes or assisted-living accommodations.[28] In line with the ideals of American individualism, parents and grandparents were encouraged to accept institutional living, so as to not become a "burden" to their children, grandchildren, and families.[29] If healthy, in this new era, older parents and grandparents were allowed second lives of leisure in retirement, exercising newly reclaimed independence as empty nesters.[30]

Creating the nuclear family required shifting views of the family from a range of perspectives, including who makes up one's immediate family and the duties and obligations that are owed to members within that group. Although many families did not, and still today do not, conform to the nuclear family form, it continues to play a key role in shaping the functioning of major societal institutions.[31]

There are a number of contemporary examples of separate spheres and the cult of domesticity in academic discourse: the "standard North American family,"[32] the "good worker vs. good mother ideal,"[33] "competing devo-

tions,"[34] "hard choices,"[35] "intensive mothering,"[36] and "for the family."[37] Versions of these ideologies can also be found in mainstream discourses.[38] For example, in 2007, Leslie Morgan Steiner's bestselling anthology, *Mommy Wars*, described the physical, emotional, political, economic, social, legal, and cultural battlefield of defining what is a good mother, and chronicled the perspective of two camps of mothers: stay-at-home and career moms.[39] During the 2012 US presidential election campaign, the mommy wars were reenergized when a conflict erupted between Ann Romney, the wife of Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney, and a Democratic strategist, Hillary Rosen. Rosen described Mrs. Romney as having "never worked a day in her life," despite raising five children as a stay-at-home mother.[40]

These ideologies often envision mothers as principally responsible for raising their children within a nuclear family context and see working outside of the home as conflicting with being a good mother.[41] They often pit being a "good" mother against being a "good" worker. As a consequence, mothers who work outside of the home by choice, necessity, or some combination of the two often feel compelled to justify their decisions based on the needs of their families, while simultaneously encountering workplace logics that assume all workers have few domestic duties.[42] These ideologies, and their associated idealized images of mothers, often frame debates on whether women can "have it all"—that is, a fulfilling career and motherhood—or if they must choose between being a devoted mother or worker.[43] Increasingly, scholars have noted that part of answering that question involves understanding the meanings that mothers attach to their decisions and the images and ideologies of motherhood that frame those meanings.[44] In the next section, I demonstrate that not all mothers reconcile their work and family decisions in relation to these images of motherhood, womanhood, and the nuclear family,[45] or to the ideologies of the cult of domesticity, separate spheres, and their contemporary iterations.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S EXCLUSION FROM DOMINANT WORK–FAMILY PERSPECTIVES

As noted earlier, scholars argue that separating the workplace from the home was a necessary precondition for the Industrial Revolution and the

development and expansion of capitalism.[46] The independent, nuclear family, while not possible, encouraged, or desired by all families, was also viewed as a key building block of modern capitalist societies,[47] and continues to be a major focus in sociological research examining family and work life.

African American women's daily experiences stood in stark contrast to these emerging ideologies and ideals of motherhood and the family: during this period, the majority of African American women (and men) in the United States were enslaved. Thus, although the separation between the public and private spheres was increasing for white families across a range of class backgrounds, it did not exist at all for the majority of African Americans, who were tethered to their "jobs" by their legal status as property. This difference is not typically recognized in discussions of the emergence of separate spheres. Racism exempted African American mothers from the "protective" and "patriarchal" discourses of these ideologies.[48] African American women were forcibly brought to this country to be sold into slavery, and they were viewed as property, compelled to provide economic and reproductive labor under threat of violence and death, and routinely experienced rape.[49] Chattel slavery, which often divided families through sales to other slaveholders both near and far, did not recognize familial ties between enslaved people or women's rights as mothers.[50] As slaves, African American women and men worked in the field and in their homes, regardless of parental status.

By necessity, when enslaved women became mothers, they had to craft ways to care for their children while accomplishing their tasks.[51] In comparison to white mothers, African American mothers occupied a very distinct position within the American economic, legal, and social structures that produced different expectations regarding work in their lives. Although motherhood was viewed by societal institutions as a key element of white women's identities, being a laborer was the primary identity for African American women. Indeed, the labor of African American women has been traditionally carried out in the homes of white Americans—as cooks, housekeepers, wet nurses, nannies, and other laborers, whether enslaved or paid—which enabled white families to meet the new standards set by the cult of domesticity and separate spheres.[52]

After slavery ended, African American women's economic contributions continued to be necessary to their families' survival, regardless of

class or parental status. African American men faced both de facto and de jure discrimination in employment and were often prevented from joining unions and accessing their benefits.[53] As a result of this discrimination, African American men's abilities to earn a family wage were severely hindered, and typically necessitated that African American women, even when married, work outside of the home.[54] As agricultural and domestic workers, African American men and women were largely excluded from the legal protections conferred under the New Deal following the Great Depression.[55]

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when first-wave feminists were fighting to enter the public sphere, African American women were already firmly rooted in the labor force.[56] African American women worked, regardless of their status as mothers, and were excluded from state policies created to benefit widowed mothers and women.[57] For the most part, the benefits of widows' and mothers' pensions (described above), which were the predecessors to contemporary welfare programs, were not extended to African American widows and mothers. Although these programs did not explicitly exclude nonwhites, terms like *worthy* and *deserving* were interpreted to prevent African American widows and mothers who otherwise would have qualified from obtaining benefits.[58] Mothers were either granted or denied access to benefits based on their potential to find work outside of the home. Employment as a domestic servant was often considered to be unsuitable for white mothers but appropriate for African American mothers.[59]

When mothers' pensions became a part of Aid to Dependent Children through the Social Security Act of 1935, it was conditioned on states retaining discretion in determining who was eligible to receive benefits; as a consequence, the primary beneficiaries continued to be white women with children.[60] Social historian Linda Gordon has described how the administrators of these programs, particularly those in the southern states, believed that because African American mothers had always worked, they did not need financial assistance and should be able to get along through their own devices.[61] As a result, in the same region in which white mothers were deemed eligible to receive benefits that reduced their need to work for pay, African American mothers were deemed ineligible to receive such benefits.[62] Clearly, one logic was used to craft and apply

laws and policies designed to encourage white women to focus on their duties as homemakers, and another logic was simultaneously used to exclude African American mothers from the benefits of those laws and policies, thus demanding that they work outside of their homes.

The de facto exclusion of African American mothers from these pensions reinforced their identities as workers and their exclusion from dominant ideologies and practices of motherhood. This exclusion sent clear messages to African American mothers that they should work and that their work should be outside of the home rather than in the domestic sphere within *their own* households. I emphasize "their own" households because African American women were often employed as domestics for white upper-middle, middle-, and working-class households.[63] The share of employed African American women who were domestic workers increased from one-third in 1900 to a peak of three-fifths in 1950.[64] In the 1960s, when the ideal of the independent and self-sufficient nuclear family with a male breadwinner and female homemaker became a durable part of American society, one-third of employed African American women continued to be employed as domestic servants, and thus they underwrote the new domestic standards of white middle-class nuclear families.[65] Indeed, African American women's labor outside of their own homes also underwrote the new cultural expectations of motherhood produced by the ideologies of separate spheres and the cult of domesticity.

Scholars of family and work have primarily examined how the ideal-worker norm has been used to exclude women from the workplace.[66] However, this norm was not applied equally to both white and nonwhite mothers.[67] Instead, employers of African American women and mothers often presumed these women's availability for their housekeeping and domestic needs.[68] Indeed, African American women employed as domestics reported that they were assumed to be unencumbered and perpetually available workers.[69] They were thought to have ready access to family members who would care for their own children during their absence.[70] Relative to white working-class mothers, African American mothers' financial contributions to their households were more explicit because their employment generally occurred outside of their own homes, thus demanding that they actively negotiate the demands of working and raising children.[71] As Evelyn Nakano Glenn argues, if not for the tenuous and

unstable position of African American women and other women of color within the American economy, white women would not have had access to a reliable labor supply to help them adhere to the new standards required by the cult of domesticity.[72] Glenn writes,

> A careful reading of the history of Black, Hispanic, and Asian-American women workers reveals a persistent racial division of "women's work." This division of labor subjected women of color to special forms of exploitation, subordinating them to white women and ensuring that their labor benefitted white women and their families.[73]

The racialized and gendered power dynamics required to achieve the standards required by the ideologies of separate spheres and the cult of domesticity are often overlooked in favor of emphasizing the shared sources of women's oppression.[74] Indeed, scholars have underscored how motherhood, the reproductive rights associated with it, and the family, are key sites of gendered racism (i.e., bias and inequality that varies based on intersections of racial identity and gender).[75] These dynamics suggest that different configurations of the market-family matrix have necessarily existed to simultaneously support and reinforce different configurations of the family and the workplace.

Although these two ideologies have influenced the functioning of many societal institutions from their inception, as noted, they were not actively supported and encouraged for all women and mothers. Intersectionality scholars underscore how the social context of the United States has not been characterized by uniformity but by historic and contemporary divisions based on intersections of race, gender, and class, as well as cultural, religious, and political identities. For example, in *Feminist History: From Margin to Center*, bell hooks underscores the subjectivity and particularity of white female experiences.[76] She suggests that white women's suppressed potential across their lifetimes explains *their* perspectives on the need for feminism and *their* particular characterization of oppression (motherhood, men, and power) and liberation (work, sisterhood, sexual, and educational). Increasingly, the universal acceptance of these ideologies by all groups of women and mothers has been questioned, particularly for African American middle- and upper-middle-class women and mothers and other women and mothers of color.[77] Patricia Hill Collins

and Bart Landry individually argue that African American women were never able, or encouraged, to live up to these ideologies, and thus produced their own distinct and positive visions of womanhood and motherhood based on the needs of their own communities.[78]

African American feminist scholars identify how controlling images serve as powerful rationalizations for treating racialized groups of women differently.[79] These images—which are interpretations by elite white males of African American womanhood—police African American mothers' behaviors within the larger white society and, at times, within their own communities. Different, but related, controlling images are also used to police white women's beliefs and practices. Both sets of images are strongly connected to dominant ideologies. Collins identifies four externally produced controlling images applied to African American women: the mammy, the matriarch, the welfare queen, and the jezebel.[80] She also describes how these images are applied to justify African American women's subordinate place and continued oppression in society.[81]

The mammy represents the faithful and obedient domestic servant who serves the needs of white families while accepting her subordinate place. With love and devotion, the mammy cares for the children of these families better than she would care for her own children.[82] The matriarch represents the African American mother who cares for her own children while simultaneously engaging in paid work. Because of this employment, the matriarch is viewed as failing to live up to her duties as a mother.[83] Although, as described above, African American mothers' participation in the labor force has often been compelled by state policies or out of necessity for their families' survival, their employment has been used to explain the challenges their families face. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY, 1977–2001) construed the matriarch as an emasculating figure that produced the fragile economic position of African American families and was the root of all problems within the African American community.[84] The image of the strong black woman is often viewed as an attempt within the African American community both to reject and reinterpret the pathological image of the matriarch.[85] Instead, African American mothers' familial duties are to be seen as symbols of strength and resilience.[86] Rather than view their workforce participation as a failure to live up to the ideal of separate spheres, African American women created their own standards of womanhood that

incorporated paid work as a necessary and valued component.[87] Indeed, African American women typically take for granted that they will work outside of the home, and they value economic self-sufficiency.[88] For strong black women, strength, resilience, and independence are defining and valued features of African American womanhood.

Numerous examples in both mainstream and academic discourse emphasize African American women's strength as an important element of their distinctive experience. In the mid-1950s, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier wrote, "Neither economic necessity nor tradition has instilled in the [African American woman] subordination to masculine authority."[89] The image of the strong black woman has continued to appear in both literary works and popular magazines.[90] It is found in popular television shows, including *Julia* (1968–1971), the *Cosby Show* (1984–1992), *Grey's Anatomy* (2005–present), *Scandal* (2012–2018) and *This Is Us* (2017–present). In music, the image of the strong black woman is celebrated in Alicia Keys's "Superwoman" (from the album *As I Am*); Tupac Shakur's single release, "Keep Your Head Up"; and Kanye West's "Hey Mama" (from the album *Late Registration*). The image of the strong black woman may, in part, originate from a desire to empower African American women, but it can also potentially lead to oppression by normalizing African American women's and mothers' lived experience and placing constraints on their choices.[91] Despite the emerging criticism of the image of the strong black woman, it is often viewed positively by African Americans and internalized as an ideal to which to aspire.[92]

The image of the welfare mother, also known as the "welfare queen," emerged in the post–World War II era, when African American mothers increasingly gained access to welfare programs from which they had previously been excluded.[93] These programs enabled African American mothers to reject the low-wage work their own mothers had been forced to accept, often in the households of white families, and instead to care for their own families. As recipients of financial assistance from the state, these mothers were often stigmatized because they were unmarried and thus lacked a male authority figure in their lives. They were also increasingly demonized by conservative politicians as deceitful and unworthy of benefits.[94] The term *welfare queen* first emerged in the 1970s in media discourse focusing on welfare fraud.[95] Ronald Reagan appropriated

the term and used it during his 1976 Republican presidential campaign saying,

> There's a woman in Chicago. She has eighty names, thirty addresses, twelve Social Security cards and is collecting veteran's benefits on four non-existing deceased husbands. . . . She's got Medicaid, getting food stamps and she is collecting welfare under each of her names. Her tax-free cash income alone is over $150,000.[96]

Through this depiction of a mythical black woman from the South Side of Chicago, who was unjustly receiving aid, Reagan and his political strategists successfully mobilized opposition to welfare policies.[97]

In the 1990s, during the Clinton presidential era, the image of the welfare queen resurfaced and influenced the reforms included in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.[98] A key component of the welfare reform led by President Clinton in the mid-1990s was adding the requirement that mothers who receive benefits should also be required to work. Instead of being cast as the beneficiaries of financial assistance that would enable them to do the important work of raising their children, these mothers were described as lazy, lascivious, and lacking morals.[99] These policies required that poor mothers have jobs to retain access to their children and to receive benefits.[100] This image of the welfare queen continues to have power, both in the political landscape and in the imagination of Americans.[101] The subtext is clear: staying at home to raise children is not an appropriate use of African American mothers' time, and if they receive welfare benefits, they should be obligated to work. Dorothy Roberts describes how the fertility of African American women has continued to be regulated by government laws and policies and cast as a problem that must be managed.[102] Although her scholarship generally focuses on lower-income African American women, the policies she describes have ripple effects that impact more privileged African American mothers as well.[103]

The jezebel, or the (colloquial) sapphire, represents African American women with low moral values and uncontrolled sexual desires. This image was used to rationalize the widespread sexual violence committed against African American women during and after slavery. This image, along with the image of the welfare queen, justified state policies designed to control African American women's fertility.[104] As this chapter's opening quote by

Sojourner Truth suggests, and as Collins's theories describe,[105] racial double standards were used to justify the exclusion of African American mothers from dominant ideologies of womanhood and motherhood, and controlling images played a key role in those processes. The experiences of African American women also serve as an example of being caught in ideological crosshairs. These mothers' work and family decisions were often evaluated as failing to live up to dominant ideologies of motherhood (i.e., separate spheres and the cult of domesticity). At the same time, these mothers were also treated unequally by the broader society based on racist ideologies of difference.

As Collins explains, African American women have continuously confronted, navigated, and resisted controlling images, and simultaneously they have engaged in a continual practice of self-definition to create their own conceptualizations of ideal motherhood and womanhood that reflect their own values and life experiences.[106] Within their own communities, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham describes how African American middle-class mothers engage in a "politics of respectability" that emphasized "cleanliness of person and property, temperance, thrift, polite manners, and sexual purity", which enabled African American women to achieve an identity that was defined outside of the parameters of the prevailing racialized discourses of womanhood.[107] In many ways, the standards of femininity captured in the politics of respectability resemble those espoused by the cult of domesticity, and they have been used to stigmatize and police African American women who do not adhere to them.

In *Black Working Wives*, building on Collins's work, Landry provides evidence that in the early part of the twentieth century, African American middle-class mothers were proponents of an alternative ideology of womanhood that combined family, career, and community.[108] Thus, even when African American women adhered to aspects of the cult of domesticity, it was tempered by the African American community's expectations that they acquire an education and be active participants in the public sphere of work, politics, community activism, and civic engagement.[109] African American female activists such as Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, and Anna Cooper were referred to as "race women" and were charged by their families and communities to assist with the uplift of the African American community.[110] Landry underscores that this alternative ideology has a more favorable view of

women's participation in the labor force, often encouraging it, and, he suggests, that it partially explains African American women's greater and more continued participation in the workforce relative to their white female counterparts.[111] Bonnie Thornton Dill and bell hooks separately suggest that African American mothers have confronted distinct social realities that have impacted their decision-making related to work and the family.[112]

DISTINCT CONFIGURATIONS OF THE FAMILY: EXTENDED VERSUS NUCLEAR FAMILY FORMS

Another distinction to be made between the traditional market-family matrix and African American women's experiences is the preferred configuration of the family and its relationship to the broader community. The nuclear family is often presented as the ideal family form; historically, however, kin and community networks have been important, particularly among African Americans in terms of childcare.[113] Afrocentric theorists argue that African American women's long-standing participation in the labor force extends back to their lives in Africa and continues to influence their cultural orientations to family and childcare in America.[114] Scholars have also underscored the existence and value of kin and community networks, flexible family responsibilities, and the availability of nonmaternal care of children as characteristics within African societies that facilitate and support women's public sphere participation.[115] Indeed, Collins argues that African American women have a long history of recognizing "that vesting one person with full responsibility for mothering a child may not be wise or possible. As a result, othermothers—women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities—traditionally have been central to the institution of Black motherhood."[116]

The use of "othermothers" is a practice that was and remains valued in the African American community for both pecuniary and nonpecuniary reasons.[117] Using othermothers was reinforced by the practices of American chattel slavery, an institution that did not respect the biological, social, legal, and family ties of those who were enslaved.[118] During slavery, African American families relied on kin and community caregivers to help

raise children while mothers labored on plantations.[119] Relying on family members to care for children was in part produced by the racialized and gendered social system of the United States, which required enslaved African American women to work regardless of their parental status. African Americans have historically been, and continue to be, more likely than whites to be part of multigenerational households.[120] African American mothers' access to extended family and community networks for childcare enabled them to continue participating in the public sphere of work after slavery ended.[121] In the contemporary era, African American mothers, both married and single heads of households, have continued to have strong kin attachments.[122]

In fact, policy makers have at times crafted policies based on the assumption that African American mothers and their families have ready access to low-cost or free childcare through their extended family and community networks. Anne Roschelle's research provides evidence that, after controlling for socio-demographic factors, whites and African Americans are not significantly different in their use of kin for support. In fact, women in lower-income communities were the least likely to have support from kin while middle-class women had greater access to such support systems.[123] Karin Brewster and Irene Padavic's research also challenges these assumptions by pointing out the decreasing rates of kin-care being used among lower-income Americans.[124] This decrease is largely attributed to changes in the economy that have opened up more employment opportunities for lower-income African American women, making them less available to provide kin-care.

Although kin-care has decreased among lower-income African Americans, it has actually increased among middle- and upper-middle-class African Americans.[125] As compared to their white counterparts, upwardly mobile African American women are more likely to retain close relationships with their mothers, providing them access to the instrumental support of kin and community networks for childcare.[126] Scholars have pointed to both cultural and structural factors to explain why kin-care has continued to be used by these upwardly mobile mothers.[127] In the contemporary era, African American mothers often wish to safeguard their children from racism during their early years. As discussed in earlier

chapters, this desire to instill racial pride is a counterbalance to the racialized social system that may stigmatize certain children because of their racial identity and gender.[128] In response to this stigmatization, the parents of these children must find racially safe childcare providers in a landscape characterized by institutional and interpersonal racism.[129] Additionally, African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers who prefer kin-care may also be providing their family members with working conditions that are more desirable than those they could obtain independently.[130]

In recent years, white and African American women's participation rates in the labor force began to converge.[131] Historically, however, African American women have been more likely to be employed while raising young children than their white counterparts.[132] Many African American women were raised in households with working mothers or, at least, saw examples of working mothers in their communities in married or female-headed households. In the contemporary era, African American men continue to face discrimination in the workplace.[133] In addition, when African American men marry or become fathers, they do not receive the same increases in their wages as do their white male counterparts.[134] Because of the discrimination that African American men have faced, and continue to face, in the economy, African American women generally assume that if they get married, their spouses will not earn a family income that would enable them to be stay-at-home mothers.[135] Indeed, African American women, particularly those who are middle class, are encouraged to get an education so they can secure better employment and contribute financially to their families.[136] African American married couples often have more egalitarian gender ideologies than white married couples, thus the gendered division of labor in their homes is less stark,[137] perhaps facilitating women's employment. Research conducted by the Pew Research Center has also found that African American mothers are, in fact, more apt than white mothers to prefer working full-time while raising children.[138] This preference is likely associated with a confluence of factors, including economic resources, examples in women's families, and the historical legacy of the relationship of African American women to the public sphere.

THE MARKET-FAMILY MATRIX

The market-family matrix underscores that the current configuration of the family and the marketplace—and the relationship between them—is contingent on specific social and cultural forces and has the potential to change. Current configurations of this matrix cannot be reduced to material resources; instead, they are determined by multiple societal forces and elements that may be interconnected and serve different purposes.

African American mothers, thus, often encounter a different version of the market-family matrix based on their different relationships to work, parenthood, childcare, family form, and societal institutions, and their different perspectives on the gendered division of labor in the household and the marketplace.[139] Although white women have been presented with modern archetypes of womanhood—career-oriented, family-oriented, or conflicted when combining working outside of the home and motherhood—there is ample evidence that African American middle-class women have been presented with, or created, other archetypes of womanhood and motherhood.

Historically, this has manifested itself in white women and mothers feeling compelled to work inside of the home and African American women feeling compelled to work outside of the home. It has also manifested in societal institutions using discretion in the application of laws and policies, which has resulted in groups of women being treated differently. White middle-class mothers may work for a number of reasons, but in the American context, meeting community or societal expectations that they work is generally not one of them. However, African American middle-class mothers navigate a market-family matrix framed by cultural expectations within their families, immediate communities, and the broader society that they will financially contribute to their families by working outside of the home. These mothers confront different default expectations about the place of paid employment in their lives.

One example of these cultural expectations comes in the form of myriad controlling images that police the behavior of women from different racial groups. For example, the expectations that African American mothers navigate have been reinforced by ideological, legal, and economic

forces unlike those encountered by white mothers. Also, African American middle-class mothers often expect community support when raising children. These factors impact African American middle-class mothers' views and experiences related to combining work and motherhood. As a result, many African American mothers do not experience working as a sign of decreased devotion to their families but instead as a duty and expectation of motherhood.[140] In addition, African American mothers may view the home as a respite rather than a source of oppression.[141]

In the next two chapters, I show how distinct default cultural expectations related to work and family impact the configuration of the market-family matrix experienced by the middle- and upper-middle-class African American mothers in this research. In chapter 6, I examine the prevailing societal and community expectation that African American middle-class mothers will work outside of the home. These mothers were presented with positive examples of mothers who contributed financially to their households before and after having children. These expectations, related to the place of work in their lives, produced challenges for mothers who stayed at home. African American mothers are navigating a market-family matrix characterized by the integration of household labor and marketplace labor. This is not to say that combining work and family is an easy task, but it is viewed as normal for mothers and as part and parcel of their parenting duties rather than as a remarkable accomplishment.

In chapter 7, I explore how expectations related to connections to family and child-rearing influence the market-family matrix. The mothers in this research recounted alternative models of organizing and thinking about their families, which resulted in them deploying different strategies for raising their children. I connect these strategies to specific cultural, economic, and ideological forces that produce a market-family matrix of integration.

6 Racial Histories of Family and Work

PAID EMPLOYMENT IS A MOTHER'S DUTY

The idea that motherhood conflicts with working outside of the home is often debated in the popular media, and these discussions are wide-ranging. Various pundits and self-appointed experts explain why women cannot have it all,[1] why women are opting out of the workplace,[2] and why "leaning in" is a strategy to work more effectively.[3] These mainstream images of motherhood often pit working outside of the home and raising children against each other as oppositional and conflicting activities. In chapter 5, I introduced a concept I term the market-family matrix, which captures the characteristics of the public sphere of the marketplace and the private sphere of the home and the relationship between the two. Work and family scholars present a variety of complex explanations for this relationship, yet they all consistently describe a version of the market-family matrix that is characterized by conflict when women combine paid employment and motherhood. The conflict, in part, is produced by a mismatch in the needs, desires, expectations, and functioning of families (the private sphere) and the workplace (the public sphere); this mismatch can discourage mothers from combining activities within these spheres.[4] However, the cultural expectations that undergird the version of the market-family matrix that African American middle-class women and

mothers often navigate are different from those that white middle-class women and mothers do. Indeed, when scholars conducting research on family and work include African American women in their samples, they have often noted that these mothers have a different orientation to the place of work in their lives.[5]

Kristen is married, the mother of one daughter, and employed as a lawyer. She revealed this different orientation when she recounted her views on the relationship between work and family among professional African American mothers:

> I don't think it is really acceptable for black women who are professional women to stay at home. . . . You just don't see it that much, and I often wonder what the stigma of that is. Like, is it a choice or because of something else? . . . Black women are portrayed as welfare recipients with a bunch of kids, so I think the assumption could be that you are staying at home because you are one of "them" as opposed to you chose to be home to raise your child.

Several times during our interview, Kristen said being a stay-at-home mother appealed to her, but that the stereotype of the poor, single mother on welfare influenced her ideas about staying at home full-time with her daughter.

When Kristen evaluated her decisions on work and family, she referred to the models of motherhood she saw growing up, which included women who combined work and family successfully, with no examples of stay-at-home mothers. These were her images of good mothers. Explaining her reluctance, she went on:

> I think about my mom or other women who are single parents and are working. They manage to work every day. And they come home and deal with their kids. And they do it. And they are seemingly doing it fine. Then I look at myself. And I am tired all of the time. And there are not enough hours in the day. And I am wondering: "Am I taking the easy way out if I stay at home? You know, other women have done it, so why can't you do it?"

As Kristen's account suggests, African American middle-class mothers are aware of the dominant images and ideologies of womanhood and motherhood, but they also are presented with and navigate alternative

images and ideologies from their families and communities and the broader mainstream society. Despite wanting to reduce her commitment to paid employment, Kristen also wanted to avoid the stigmas she associated with being a stay-at-home mother. These stigmas come from both the broader African American community (for failing to meet expectations about combining work and motherhood) and the broader white society (in seeking to avoid gender and racial stereotypes).

Despite often having the resources to stay at home, the middle- and upper-middle-class African American mothers in this research described confronting assumptions that they were unmarried, poor, and/or on welfare if they choose to stay at home. They also described the censure that they believed would come from within their own families if they chose to stay at home. When Kristen looked to her family of origin, the community she was raised in, and her current community, she did not see examples of mothers who stayed at home. As a consequence, she attached meanings to the decision to combine work and family that were influenced by different models of "good" motherhood that viewed that decision more positively.[6]

In this chapter, I describe some of the cultural expectations that undergird the market-family matrix that the African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers in this research described navigating and how those expectations encouraged them to combine public- and private-sphere activities. These mothers' accounts reveal distinct historical legacies about working motherhood. Like Kristen, most of the study participants were raised by mothers who worked outside of the home, and as children they saw many examples of such mothers in their communities—positive examples of mothers who worked before and after having children to contribute financially to their households and retain their economic independence. To be sure, study participants experienced stress when juggling the demands of work and home. They admitted that if finances had not been a concern, they might have stayed at home for slightly longer periods of time after they had their children. But combining public-sphere and private-sphere activities was not viewed as unusual. Even those participants raised by stay-at-home mothers were encouraged to be economically self-reliant as adult women.

By centering this analysis on African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers, I suggest how cultural expectations within the

African American community encourage mothers to work outside of the home and stigmatize those mothers who do not. Indeed, rather than viewing combining paid employment and motherhood as a less-than-ideal practice, the mothers in this study viewed it as an uncontroversial and normal practice.

OPTING-IN: WORKING MOTHERHOOD AS A NORMAL STATE OF AFFAIRS

Existing research on middle-class mothers in the American context suggests that mothers who work outside of the home feel they need to justify that decision, while those who stay at home feel less compelled to do so.[7] However, among the mothers in this research, the vast majority saw working outside of the home simply as what mothers do. Nia, who works as a teacher and administrator, is married and the mother of two sons. Describing why she always felt she would be a working mother, she referred to the examples of mothers in her childhood that had influenced what she expected life would be like when she had children: "I don't think I even knew anybody that stayed home, so I didn't have that as a framework. I didn't see any women that stayed at home with children. You know, especially ones that had an education. And I knew that I would be college educated."

For Nia, the idea that she would not work was unfathomable, particularly after investing her time and energy into earning a college degree. Influenced by the examples in her community, her ideal vision of motherhood included balancing work and raising children. Rather than viewing motherhood as an identity that was, at least initially, separate from working outside of the home, Nia viewed being a mother and career woman as coexisting. Her quote also underscores how upward mobility can influence a mother's view of the place of paid employment in her life. She was the first generation in her family to be middle class, and this had been achieved through enormous investments in her education and sacrifice both from herself and her family. Nia was raised in a working-class neighborhood in which it was common for mothers to be engaged in paid employment. The idea that an African American woman would improve her employability and earning potential by getting an education and then

not work outside of the home conflicted with what seemed a commonsense view of the choices a mother should make for herself and her family's well-being. Nia's account also underscores the power of family and community examples that set the expectations of the normative duties of African American mothers.

Drawing on the ideal of self-sufficiency and self-reliance, Brandy, married with two children and working as a project manager, also saw working outside of the home as an important component of adult womanhood. The need to be self-sufficient was instilled in her throughout her childhood and youth through messages from both her parents. Describing her parents' expectations for her, Brandy said,

> They wanted me to be independent, they wanted me to be smart about the way I lived my life. And I remember my mom telling me something about always relying on yourself so you can do what you want to do in your life. I definitely took that to heart.

Ultimately, when Brandy became a mother, she did not consider staying at home because it would have meant giving up her independence.

Robinne, a married mother with one child and employed as an administrator, also identified a long-standing belief that she would not be a stay-at-home mother. She did not view having a career as in conflict with being a mother, but instead that the two went hand in hand. Based on her life experiences, good mothers did not have to stay at home; they could have demanding and fulfilling careers while simultaneously raising children. She said,

> I never had a desire to be a stay-at-home mom. I like to work, I like the work that I do. I like interacting with adults about adult things. And work is one of the places I get to do that on a regular basis, on a daily basis. I always knew that I would be a working mother.

Drawing on the language of gender egalitarianism, Cheryl, a married mother of one child and a pediatrician, believed mothers and fathers should both contribute to the household financially and with child-rearing. In fact, when she returned to work, her husband was the primary caregiver for their child. During Cheryl's own childhood, her mother and father both worked outside of the home, and she believed that financially

providing for the household was both parents' responsibility. She described her views on work and family by saying,

> Both [parents] have to raise the kids and both people have to bring home the money. There is not a man's job and woman's job. We have bills to pay, so everyone has to work, and there are kids to raise, so everyone has to do that. No man's job or woman's job; it's more [of] a partnership.

Cheryl could not envision herself as a stay-at-home mom because she viewed it as abdicating power in her marriage and as something that would be boring. She also resisted the idea because she had put substantial investments of time and effort into her career.

Wanting to work and be financially independent did not mean that these mothers did not want to be married, but for some, it did change how they viewed potential marriage partners. Participating in the public sphere of the marketplace enabled mothers to embrace less traditional views on the gendered division of labor within families. For example, during Charlene's childhood, she envisioned that she would be a career woman. She wanted to be self-sufficient and be able to choose a partner based solely on whether he was a good man, not on his income-earning ability:

> From the time I was a kid, I thought I would be a mother with a career. I wanted to be able to support myself. Not need anybody to take care of me. And my mind-set was that I would be completely self-sufficient. I would not need someone to support me from a financial perspective.

Charlene, married with one child, believed that she might not find an African American male partner who could match her earning potential as a corporate attorney. Her solution was to take the category of earning potential out of her equation for what makes a good partner and focus on other qualities. She linked working outside of the home with her ability to make decisions based on preference rather than necessity. This included selecting a mate based on qualities that she viewed as more important.

Similarly, Farah, an academic, is the mother of two daughters and married to a man who did not finish college. She is the primary breadwinner for her family, and her husband is the primary caregiver for their children. In describing the division of labor in her family, she said,

> Who cooks and cleans and who does this and who does that, we go back and forth and we try different things. And it's never been the same. And sometimes if he is away, then I have to do this, and if I am away, he has to do that.

However, challenging traditional gender roles produced some tensions in her family, and she commented that this occurred in both her personal community and the broader society as well.

> Society, our family, my friends, everyone devalues it. They don't understand that I couldn't work the way that I work if he wasn't as supportive and as flexible. And they would be much more comfortable with him working all day and us having our kids in childcare and neither one of us seeing them than what he does—stays at home.

In response to these censures from others, Farah and her husband made efforts to value his labor in the home, particularly for their older daughter. Clearly, for Charlene and Farah, what is an "appropriate" mate defied traditional views. They rewrote the traditional gendered division of labor in their families by delinking being a strong economic provider from what it means to be a good husband and father. They see the categories of husband and wife and mother and father as relational; they can be made and unmade toward different ends.[8] These mothers' accounts shed light on how the identities of "mother" and "father" constructed using a traditional gendered division of household labor can lead to a market-family matrix characterized by conflict. But reconceiving these identities using a different gendered division of household labor can produce a different kind of market-family matrix. These mothers navigated communities in which working was expected as a duty of mothers yet the idea of fathers not being engaged in paid employment produced tensions.

PREFERENCES FOR PAID EMPLOYMENT AND GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

I asked the employed mothers in my sample, "If finances were not an issue, would you stay at home with your children?" Based on previous research with middle-class mothers, one might expect responses indicating that careers and/or working outside of the home enhanced their

abilities as mothers.[9] An example of this kind of response came from Nora, who is married, the mother of two children, and an educator. She did not justify her decision to work based on her career accomplishments or preferences for paid employment; instead, she focused on how working outside of the home made her a better mother:

> I like what I do. I think identity is a really interesting and funny thing; like I love being a mother when I'm with my kids, I love being with them, I love playing with them, I love watching them discover, and all those things. But I also love reading and writing and the kind of intellectual discourse of higher education, and I don't think I would be completely happy doing just one or the other. . . . I think to not do it would make me an unhappy mother, and would actually hurt my kids.

Brandy, mentioned earlier in this chapter, had a similar view:

> When I think about it, being in a work environment, we share stories and I learn things and it is great to bring that home. I meet other parents at work with kids with [similar challenges]. These were things I would not have had access to if I was at home.

Brandy framed her interactions at work as benefitting her children by rejuvenating her spirits and providing her with additional knowledge that would help her better parent them. Brandy's and Nora's explanations emphasizing how employment enhanced their caregiving activities conformed to how scholars might expect mothers to justify their decisions to work outside of the home.[10]

More often, however, other study participants' accounts did not conform to the expectations of this scholarship. Although working outside of the home might have an added benefit of making them better mothers, their explanations for wanting to work focused on the investment they had made in their education and a duty to share their talents with their communities.

Bart Landry, in *Black Working Wives*, used a combination of census data and the speeches of African American female activists to suggest how African American women have been encouraged to be civic minded and, thus, to value a commitment to community service.[11] He also underscored that long before the women's rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, African

American female activists were proponents of an alternative ideal of womanhood that emphasized a commitment to family, community, and career.[12]

When I asked Jennifer, single with one child, and employed as a dentist, if she would stay at home if finances permitted her to do so, she responded,

> I would work at least a couple days a week because I worked hard to get this education and to not help other people is not good. I think that with all the work and everything I went through to get educated, I have to help other people besides just my family. At the same time, too, it makes me a better, more interesting person and happier to go out and do something and come home rejuvenated and give that to my son.

Jennifer justified her decisions by emphasizing how her employment enhanced her mothering by giving her the necessary emotional resources to be a good mother, but she also emphasized her educational investment and her commitment to serving her community. Jennifer, like many of the mothers in my sample, was raised in a family in which education was emphasized and sacrifices were made to ensure that she reached her potential. Participants' parents who had not earned college degrees also urged their daughters to get a higher education because that was the pathway to economic security and middle-class status.

Similarly, Hana, a married mother with two sons, described herself as a "laid-off-at-home mom." Hana continued to work several days a week as a part-time consultant to earn a little income and to maintain her skill set while she looked for a permanent job. She was emphatic that she could not remain a stay-at home mother:

> I love working outside of the home. I will not just be a mom. . . . I feel like I am here with a purpose and a mission. I am here to serve and I am here to make an impression. To have some sort of legacy above and beyond my kids. I want to be a wonderful mother and I really hope that I get that from my kids, but when it is all said and done, I have professional aspirations and also personal fulfillment aspirations. And the way things are right now, I feel very stymied. Like I want to volunteer, I want to start something where I can give back to the community.

For Hana, giving back to her community was something she felt compelled to do and speak about and she did not feel a need to explain how

working made her a good mother. She focused on her duty to contribute her skills to the world. Although she hopes her children ultimately view her as a good mother, she did not connect her activities outside of the home to enhancing or challenging her caregiving abilities. Jennifer and Hana, like many mothers, justified their decision to work based on the sacrifices their childhood families had made to ensure they were educated and how those families had instilled in them a duty to give back to their families and communities.

The majority of the working mothers in my sample did not feel the need to justify their decision to work outside of the home or distance themselves from their work. Their paid employment was viewed as a priority that demanded their attention and time and was a key part of their identity. For these mothers, employment was not reduced to providing for their families economically or pursuing individual professional pursuits. Rather, it was connected to giving back to their community, reaping the rewards of investing in their education, and being self-sufficient and economically independent. These mothers' accounts suggest how the orientation that Bart Landry described manifests in the quotidian decisions and practices of contemporary African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers.

Participants often also raised concerns about the consequences associated with the decision to stay at home with their children. For example, Elizabeth, married, the mother of one son, and working as a program manager, described her opinion of mothers who stayed at home, including her own:

> As I got older, I saw how my mom was kind of trapped. And my dad wasn't always nice. He was a little authoritative. I want to have the freedom to go, so I better have an education and a job so if he starts acting up: "I don't need you. I don't need to have your money." I think my mom felt trapped because she had four kids and no money and she needed to stay at home.

Examples respondents gave of stay-at-home mothers, either of their own mothers or those within their communities, often focused on how these mothers potentially lacked power in their marriages and faced constrained choices. Teresa, married and the mother of two children, was employed as a project coordinator. She also did not have a positive view of stay-at-home mothers:

> I think it is important to me to work. I have a friend who does not work, and she is bored and she feels like she is overwhelmed with her kids all the time, and I'm just like, you better do something. It's not that she hates her life, but she resents having to stay home with the kids all the time, and I don't want to feel that way.

Indeed, as discussed in more detail in the next section, among the mothers in this research who stayed at home, many felt varying degrees of pressure from spouses, relatives, and community members to work outside of the home; and some described experiencing stigma in their daily activities.

THE RADICAL ACT OF STAYING AT HOME

Historically, the vast majority of African American mothers have not been able to stay at home. Increasingly, however, some African American middle-class mothers have diverged from the default path of combining working outside of the home with raising children.[13] Among the women in this research, approximately one-quarter identified as stay-at-home mothers. For these African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers, staying at home was a complicated and radical act, not, as existing research might suggest, an internalization of and conformation to dominant cultural expectations of motherhood.[14]

At face value, these mothers' decisions seem like a story that is shaped by class mobility and the additional choices resources enable related to work and family decision-making. In making the decision to stay at home, many of these mothers voiced concerns related to monitoring their children's treatment and making sure their children stayed on the right academic and social paths, which are concerns shared by other middle-class mothers. Thus, a convergence of cultural expectations may partially explain some of these mothers' decisions. Although these women were engaging in behavior that might be construed as conformist within mainstream white society, within the African American community they were viewed as mavericks.

Notably, almost half of those who identified as stay-at-home mothers were nonetheless also employed in part-time or full-time jobs, in part to

address the tension between their own desires to focus on raising their children and to maintain their economic independence. Anita Garey, in her study, similarly encountered mothers who were attempting to reconcile cultural ideals of the "good mother" and the reality that their families needed their public-sphere economic contributions.[15] In my study, generally, mothers who identified as staying at home but actually worked outside of the home (either full-time or part-time) were employed in jobs with some flexibility in their work schedules. Some mothers worked the night shift after their children went to bed or during the portion of the week when they were in daycare or at preschool. When these children were not in the care of their mothers, they remained in the care of another parent or family member. These mothers viewed themselves as "stay at home" because they were available to their children during the daylight and out-of-school hours. They arranged their employment so they could reconcile competing cultural expectations: fulfilling their desire to be available for their children *and* their desire—or, at times, sense of duty—to be financially independent. On the one hand, the mainstream community envisions good mothers as perpetually available for their children, while, on the other hand, the African American community envisions good mothers as self-sufficient caregivers who make economic contributions to their families. Because these stay-at-home mothers actually also worked outside of the home, they were protected from disapproving comments from spouses, family, and community members.

Tamika, married and a mother with one son, identified as a stay-at-home mother but actually worked thirty hours a week as a freelance administrator. This apparent contradiction in her self-identification as a stay-at-home mother and the amount of time she spent engaged in paid labor was connected to cultural expectations that she should be financially self-reliant. She explained,

> I have three clients that I like. It is not a heck of a lot of money, but it is enough where if I see something I want at the mall, I can buy it. If I want to buy my kid a tricycle, I don't have to say, "Honey, I need sixty bucks to get this bicycle." I don't like that, I don't do that, and I don't think my husband would be down with that, to be quite honest. I think he kind of digs that I am not the shrinking violet type.

Tamika's husband worked two full-time jobs to make it possible for her to stay at home (even though in reality she also worked a part-time job) and to send their son to preschool part-time. Although her income did not pay for big household expenses, by having some income she was able to reconcile two competing cultural expectations—being self-sufficient and "not the shrinking violet type"—with her desire to be more available to their son. These cultural expectations were not just ones that she believed existed within her community but also ones that she believed her husband shared.

Mary, a married mother of two, had taken what some might view as extreme measures to be able to stay at home with her children while retaining her financial independence. Before Mary met her husband and became a mother, she worked in technology and created a savings account for when she had children. She was determined to stay at home with her future children, but she also believed it was unlikely that the African American man she hoped to someday marry would make enough income to enable her to do so.

Mary ultimately married a man who was a high school graduate, earned less than half of her six-figure income, and paid child support for a child from a previous marriage. Despite the financial challenges it presented, when Mary became a mother, she carried out her plan. She stayed at home for three years, but because of shrinking savings, she decided to find a temporary part-time evening job to increase her family's income. Mary had hoped that her husband would respond by finding a second job, allowing her to return to being a stay-at-home mother, but six months later, she was still working. In fact, Mary had increased her work hours and her husband was not actively looking for additional income. Mary underscored how expectations related to combining work and family within the African American community and from her husband impacted her life and the lives of other African American mothers attempting to chart a different stay-at-home path. She said,

> One of the challenges that mothers of color face is our history of black women being the pillar in the family. . . . I think the idea that we will provide the finances, do the child-rearing, do the cooking, and just do it all. If the man has married a strong black woman, he can end up not doing much of

> anything because the black woman is not going to let her family fail, not going to let her marriage fail. She will do what it takes to hold it together and . . . accept things from our men of color that maybe shouldn't be accepted. We have seen our parents do it and we have accepted this role, but we need to reassess it because we can't go on like that forever. I think that you can't maintain happiness and balance if you are trying to do everything.

Mary's account reveals how African American women's historical and contemporary breadwinning roles in the family are valued and have come to be viewed as an expected part of their duties as mothers. These expectations were the foundation for Mary's decision both to save for motherhood and to return to work to retain her economic independence. She made—what turned out to be—an accurate assessment of the earning ability of the African American man she would marry, but she also felt that she should not have needed to take either action.

Mary felt constrained by cultural expectations within the African American community. In addition, based on discussions with her husband and what she perceived as his lackluster effort to find another job, she believed he interpreted her decision to return to work as what she should be willing to do. At the time of the interview, Mary was trying to negotiate a different division of household labor with her husband, but she believed that cultural expectations that she should combine work with mothering and take on the lion's share of household duties interfered with those negotiations.

The stay-at-home mothers in this research who did not engage in paid employment reported experiencing resistance and disapproval from spouses, family members, and sometimes friends regarding their decision to not financially contribute to their household. Jessica's decision to stay at home after the birth of her first and only child was not met with support from her now ex-husband. They had agreed she would return to work as an administrator after the birth of their child, but when the time came, she decided to quit her job and stay at home. Like many mothers in this research, before getting divorced, Jessica was in a hypogamous marriage: she earned more than her husband. By choosing to stay at home with their child, she was cutting their household income by more than half. Jessica recounted,

> After I became pregnant, it was expected that I go back to work . . . but I didn't go back to work; I stayed home and took care of my daughter because that was what was in my heart to do. Ultimately, that led to the problems that led to my divorce because that wasn't [in] the marriage agreement, you know.

Jessica's ex-husband expected that she would return to work and resume her six-figure salary job that would enable them to maintain the lifestyle they had achieved. It was not just her husband who resisted the idea of her staying at home; she also received little support from other family members. Jessica explained, "Everybody thought I was absolutely crazy to leave a job like that and they thought it was laziness." Making the decision to stay at home defied both the expectations of Jessica's ex-husband and her community, and she believed her marriage was a casualty of this mismatch of expectations. After a year of staying at home, she decided to enroll in a graduate program with the hope that her family would stop asking when she planned to return to work.

Other stay-at-home mothers described facing similar comments from their families, which contributed to them feeling conflicted and unsupported in their decision. Rochelle, a married stay-at-home mother of three (but who also described herself as working in a clerical position), faced censure from her family and community for her decision to not work outside of the home. Her husband's family even suggested that she was lazy and taking advantage of her husband. She explained,

> My in-laws feel that I should work. They make those sorts of comments . . . like my husband wouldn't have to work so hard if you guys worked together and you got a job. Or they say things like he works so hard because you like to go shopping. . . I have responded that, "It is not about me going shopping but that I think it is important that I be home with my children." . . . It is difficult to balance working and taking care of my children, particularly when my husband is not around. My children enjoy that I am at home with them. . . . If I had to work full-time, I would probably be depressed and resentful.

Rochelle felt that her in-laws did not believe that she was pulling her full weight in the family and discounted the fact that she was responsible for providing the primary childcare for three children.

Sarah, married and the mother of one son and pregnant with her second child, occasionally worked as a part-time teacher. She largely rejected the cultural expectation that African American middle-class mothers should participate in both public and private spheres:

> I know a lot of women who are troopers and they pump. They are career women and they wanted to go back to work. I think absolutely if you want to go back to work after a few weeks, I support you in that. If you are a career woman and that is important to you and you have childcare taken care of, do that. But that is not me. My child is the most important thing to me right now, and if I have the privilege and luxury to stay at home with him, I am going to do that.

Although Sarah held these views, she also attempted to walk a tightrope between her preference to stay at home and not condemning other mothers of color who made different choices. A few mothers, not all of whom stayed at home, believed it was best for children to be a cared for by a parent when they were young. Most mothers who did stay at home also highlighted that it was a personal decision that they were financially able to make. Mothers' views about staying at home were informed by cultural, historical, and economic forces. The majority of the mothers in this study viewed staying at home with their children, even if they themselves did not make that choice, as a privilege that most African American mothers could not afford to make. Their views were also informed by the long history of African American women working as childcare providers and domestics in white homes, rather than caring for their own children.[16]

One strategy used to counter this resistance from families and community was to join a mothers' group. Stay-at-home African American middle-class mothers often sought out racially attuned support for their decision to stay at home. In this setting, with other African American stay-at-home mothers who were often experiencing the same resistance from their families about working, these mothers could attach positive meanings to their decision and offset the cultural expectations that they should work outside of the home. These mothers sought out, created, or yearned for groups that would validate and support their decisions to opt out of careers.

Sharon Hays found two decades ago that stay-at-home mothers sought communities of like-minded mothers who supported their decision to focus on raising their children and forgo paid employment.[17] The mothers in my study were continuing to navigate different expectations about motherhood and employment through such groups. Describing her mothers' group, Sarah expressed this sentiment:

> What we all share in common is trying to maximize the time we spend with our children. Even career women stay at home for eight months, and they try to maximize their time with their children. It definitely is important to me because I . . . know a lot of women who are more career women and who don't have kids, and I don't know a lot of people who think being a stay-at-home mom is a good thing to be. I think a lot of people think, "What are you doing all day?" They don't realize you are busting your ass all day. Taking care of a child is work—that is why they are called childcare workers—because it is work. For me, for my self-esteem, it has been important to be connected to other women who believe that it is an important thing. It is okay. And, in fact, it is important to be with your child.

Sarah made it clear that by not working outside of the home (but, again, note that she is also a part-time educator), she was going against the expectations of her spouse, her mother-in-law, and other family and community members, but that the women in her mothers' group empowered her to interpret staying at home differently. Rather than viewing herself as lazy and not pulling her full weight in her household, Sarah saw staying at home as engaging in the important work of raising her children. It is also important to note that Sarah and the other stay-at-home mothers in my sample sought out race-specific stay-at-home mothers' groups. They told me that although white mothers might share some of their motivations for staying at home, they would not understand the shifting economic and racial sands that they contend with in making that decision.

Using in-depth interviews and ethnographic observations of twenty-three African American married middle- and upper-middle-class mothers in Atlanta Georgia, Riché Barnes sought to understand how and why these mothers decided to place their career on hold to focus on their marriage and family. These mothers similarly navigated censure from family members who were confused by their decisions to "waste" their hard-won educational and occupational achievements.[18] By seeking support from

similar African American middle-class mothers, these mothers were revisiting the strategies of self-definition and valuation that Patricia Hill Collins identified as essential to the survival of African American women and their families.[19]

As discussed in other chapters, many of the mothers who made the choice to stay at home with their children did so for reasons complicated by race and gender. The emphasis on raising one's own children is related to the history of African American mothers working as domestics and nannies in white upper-middle, middle- and working-class families' homes. The historic inability of women of color to care for their own children in the past, combined with concerns over the racism their children might confront under the care of others, were among these mothers' concerns. These mothers considered raising their own children to be an important privilege that many African American mothers have not enjoyed, and continue not to enjoy. These mothers rejected the expectation that they should work outside of the home, and so they actively created an alternative version of African American motherhood that they hoped would gain greater acceptance.

The reactions from spouses, family, friends, and community members demonstrate the cultural expectation that African American mothers should work outside of the home. When mothers stay at home to be the primary caregivers for their children, they feel they have to justify that decision to their family, community, and mainstream society in relationship to, and in tension with, a different market-family matrix that includes paid employment as a duty of mothers. As noted above, the working mothers in my study generally did not feel the need to justify their decision to work, yet the stay-at-home mothers felt the need to justify their decisions, and several self-identified stay-at-home mothers, in actuality, also worked in the marketplace to reduce experiences of censure.

CONCLUSION

These mothers' accounts of how work should be incorporated into their lives after having children contrast with what is typically depicted in the literature on middle-class mothers and families. Furthermore, their views regarding working outside of the home versus staying at home with their

children were based on personal preferences but also reinforced by, or at times in tension with, community expectations and meanings related to work and self-reliance. For the majority of these mothers, stepping into bread-winning roles was a family legacy of sorts in that it was a continuation of what they saw during their youths. Their accounts highlight how family and community histories impact the meanings mothers attach to working in the marketplace and staying at home. Working and giving back to the community were important parts of many of these mothers' identities that they did not view as detracting from being a mother. For some, work was valued as an end in itself that did not need to be justified in relation to family duties. These perspectives put pressure on stay-at-home mothers to justify their decisions in relation to the cultural expectation that they should engage in paid labor as a form of caring for their families and children.

On the one hand, a mother's participation in the public sphere of paid employment is not stigmatized within the African American community and is often expected as a characteristic of "good" motherhood. On the other hand, the mothers in this research, particularly those who stayed at home, often believed they faced assumptions from the broader society that they were poor and on welfare. The stigma they faced resembled what teenage mothers in Elaine Kaplan's research described encountering.[20] However, an important distinction is that they could try to avoid these experiences by emphasizing their occupation or marital status. Connecting these processes back to the market-family matrix, these cultural expectations promote and psychically support mothers' engagement in paid employment. However, as demonstrated in the accounts of mothers who reduced their commitment to paid employment by working only part-time or staying at home full-time, these expectations can produce stumbling blocks for mothers of color who are charting different courses for themselves.

7 Alternative Configurations of Child-Rearing

SUPPORTING MOTHERS' PUBLIC-SPHERE ACTIVITIES THROUGH EXTENDED-FAMILY PARENTING

The following two quotes present strikingly different depictions of motherhood that I suggest are connected to different ways of thinking about and configuring the family and the market, as well as the relationship between the two—what I have called in previous chapters the market-family matrix.

Patricia Hill Collins writes,

> In African-American communities, fluid and changing boundaries often distinguish biological mothers from other women who care for children. Biological mothers, or bloodmothers, are expected to care for their children. But African-American communities have also recognized that vesting one person with full responsibility for mothering a child may not be wise or possible. As a result, othermothers—women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities—traditionally have been central to the institution of Black motherhood.[1]

By contrast, Sharon Hays provides this depiction of motherhood:

> There is an underlying assumption that the child absolutely requires consistent nurture by a single primary caretaker and that the mother is the best person for the job. . . . A mother must recognize and conscientiously respond

> to all of the child's needs and desires, and to every stage of the child's emotional and intellectual development. This means that a mother must acquire detailed knowledge of what the experts consider proper child development, and then spend a good deal of time and money attempting to foster it. . . . In sum, the methods of appropriate child rearing are construed as child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive and financially expensive. . . . It is this fully elaborated, logically cohesive combination of beliefs that I call the ideology of intensive mothering. . . . These ideas are certainly not followed in practice by every mother, but they are, implicitly or explicitly, understood as the proper approach to the raising of a child by the majority of mothers.[2]

The proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" underscores a sentiment that has been expressed in a variety of African nations: raising children is not only the project of a single family but also of the entire community. Research on middle- and upper-middle-class mothers in the American context does not generally focus on how extended family and community networks influence mothers' work and family decision-making.

Collins and Hays each describe motherhood differently. Hays depicts mothers functioning as private islands trying to accomplish all household and child-rearing tasks on their own, with only occasional help from other women. Although women may participate in the public sphere, they continue to be expected to carry out the lion's share of duties within their homes, with men's private-sphere participation experiencing little change. This is something Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung refer to as the "stalled revolution."[3] This version of motherhood demands that women be bound to their homes and relegated to the duties of homemaking and caregiving, either as direct providers or managers of this work.[4] It also exacerbates any conflicts between the public sphere of the marketplace and the private sphere of the home because these spheres are viewed as separate and with distinct logics,[5] and, in each sphere, the duties are expected to be highly gendered. Work and family scholars have underscored how this orientation to motherhood discourages women from combining working outside of the home with raising children.[6]

By contrast, Collins's quote depicts mothers as ideally embedded in networks comprised of female relatives and community members that help them in the task of raising their children. This orientation to motherhood is associated with a different default configuration of the market-family

matrix that I argue encourages and supports African American middle-class mothers' engagement in *both* the private sphere and the public sphere. This version of the market-family matrix is associated with regular interactions with extended family and community members who assist with child-rearing activities. It is also associated with a less gendered division of labor within both the public sphere and the private sphere of the market-family matrix. Indeed, paid employment and engagement in the public sphere is viewed as part of the duties of mothering rather than separate from them.[7]

Through the accounts of middle- and upper-middle-class African American mothers, I suggest that the market-family matrix that informs their choices encourages them to integrate public and private sphere activities. This matrix is supported by cultural expectations from the African American community that child-rearing should be a community-supported activity that need not be exclusively carried out by mothers. This orientation to childcare is an important element of what Anne Roschelle has described as "familism (the values, attitudes, and beliefs that are associated with the extended family)"[8] and it is often not captured in studies of kin-provided child care.[9] It is also supported by cultural expectations from the broader mainstream white society. Study participants' accounts reveal a history of kin-provided childcare that they often continue for their own children. Their decisions to use kin-care are reinforced by their beliefs that these family and community members are competent caregivers who need not master new knowledge contained in contemporary parenting books.

Many study participants viewed work as an integral part of their mothering identities that did not detract from their child-rearing duties. Indeed, some expressed a preference for their paid work outside of the home over their mothering activities. Taken together, these beliefs reduced tensions associated with combining paid employment and caregiving.

GROWING UP WITH KIN-CARE AND COMMUNITY CARE AND CONTINUING THE TRADITION

African American families have a long tradition of multigenerational families.[10] In addition, these families often belong to robust networks comprised of extended family, fictive kin, and community members.[11]

Afrocentric theorists have identified characteristics within African societies that have facilitated the continued participation of women in public-sphere activities, such as the existence of kin and community networks, less rigid gendered divisions of family responsibilities, and practices of nonmaternal care of children.[12] Perhaps a different reception in the colonies would have led African Americans to shift to a nuclear family form, but the institution of American chattel slavery did not respect these involuntary immigrants' family ties and, thus, largely reinforced the extended family form and child-rearing practices found in African societies. Enslaved African Americans relied on kin and community caregivers to help raise children while mothers labored on plantations.[13] After emancipation, economic circumstances often demanded that mothers continue to be engaged in paid employment outside of the home, so kin and community networks continued to be important sources of childcare.[14] In the contemporary era, middle- and upper-middle-class African American families have continued to use extended family and community networks to provide childcare for their children, a practice that supports mothers' labor-force participation.[15] Some scholars suggest that kin networks among lower-income African Americans are less robust than they once were, yet they have remained an important source of support for higher-income-earning African Americans.[16]

Consistent with this history, the mothers in this research were raised in families that used a combination of family, extended kin, and community members to manage the demands of raising children and working outside of the home. For example, Tamika, married and a stay-at-home mother of one, recalled the diversity and coordination in childcare arrangements her mother used to be able to work outside of the home—a mix of kin, community, and sibling care. During parts of Tamika's youth, she lived in a multigenerational household with her grandmother, which helped her parents manage work and family demands. When she and her siblings reached a certain age, they were expected to look after themselves. She explained,

> My grandmother lived with us for a while, my dad's mom . . . and then we moved out of San Francisco and we had a babysitter for a little while. Right around the time the babysitter stopped working out, my sisters were old

> enough to look after me. Then my mom started working the swing shift, so she would be there after we got home from school, but then we needed to be quiet so she could get ready for work.

Similarly, Cara, married and the working mother of two, described her childhood as including regular interactions and caregiving from extended family members:

> I grew up around lots of family, lots of uncles and cousins, so everybody just watched out for everybody else, and you know, you would spend a lot of time at your relatives. I remember my grandparents watching me when I was a kid, like when my mom had to work, or when she and my dad would go out. Those were fond memories of spending the night with my grandparents. You know, spending a lot of time around different family members.

Cara and Tamika did not view growing up in an extended family context as unusual, and they each recalled this version of family organization fondly. Their descriptions of the caregiving they received as children reveal the structural and cultural benefits of extended family networks, including grandparents, aunt, uncles, and cousins. Research suggests that the use of other relatives for help with childcare is more common among African Americans than among whites.[17] The availability of various family members to provide low-cost or no-cost childcare was an economic benefit to participants' families of origin. It also eased potential work and family challenges and gave parents' peace of mind. At the same time, these interactions with extended family were valued for fostering bonds among family members across generations. These relatives were not just called on when assistance was needed or for special occasions or holidays; instead, they were consistently present during participants' childhoods and figured prominently throughout their lives.

Jennifer, a single working mother of one child, described how her mother used a network of reciprocal childcare with community members to address childcare needs. Jennifer said,

> When we were really little, like in the '70s, my mom's friends, everybody, took care of each other's kids. We lived in Richmond [California], and there was a lady there who would take care of a lot of the kids. . . . And then we had a friend of the family who lived with us for a period of time who took care of me. [My mother] would have lots of friends work with each other to

> try to take care of the kids. So, if it wasn't my mom watching the kids, it was her friends or somebody [she knew].

Challenging Hays's depiction of motherhood that opens this chapter, Jennifer did not describe mothering as a solitary activity carried out between mother and child within a nuclear family. Much like the women in Carol Stack's *All Our Kin*,[18] Jennifer described mothering as a community-supported activity with reciprocal or balanced exchanges of childcare help.[19] She learned through life experiences that mothers were connected to each other and were a continuous and routine part of each other's lives. The majority of mothers in my research experienced some version of this village approach to child-rearing during their childhood. These mothers learned from one another, supported one another, and engaged in a version of motherhood that involved shared and cooperative childcare—a version of othermothering matching the depiction in Collins's quote above.

Study participants' accounts revealed how extended family and community networks played a key role in their upbringing and underscored that they saw the value in continuing that tradition as adults in their own families.[20] Overall, African American women are significantly more likely than white women to give childcare help to family, but once sociodemographic variables, the presence of other family members, and proximity to relatives are held constant, those differences disappear.[21] The accounts of the mothers in this research shed light on why African Americans may have family configurations and orientations to family members that are different from those of whites, including living in closer proximity to family members. Participants assumed that their spouses, partners, and extended family would assist them as they raised their children, and this was reflected in how they approached selecting nonparental childcare, either from within their immediate communities or the broader childcare market.[22]

Rebecca, a widowed mom of one son, who also raised her nephew when he was a teenager, relayed her perceptions of African Americans' preferences for kin-provided childcare:

> I think in [African American] culture, we tend to be more like your grandmother will watch you or your cousin, whereas in white culture it is typically

> the nanny. And that is obviously a financial issue, but I don't think it is necessarily always a financial issue. [Former First Lady] Michelle Obama is the perfect example, she [didn't] have a nanny; it [was] her mom. . . . We [African Americans] are going to get someone close to us to take care of our children. . . . I think it is a cultural difference. . . . Not saying that African American women don't have nannies. But, I think, typically, even if you look at those reality shows, with the white women, it's the nannies [and] with the black women, it's grandma.

Rebecca points to both cultural and structural explanations for her belief that African American families are more likely to use kin-provided childcare. She underscores how factors that begin as cultural may become structural, and vice versa. Some scholars support Rebecca's perspective and provide evidence that suggests that cultural and structural factors become entangled and play a part in reproducing each other, particularly in decisions on childcare.[23] Thus, individuals who continuously confront obstacles that limit and constrain their choices may develop a shared set of dispositions to cope with those constraints, including resignation, acceptance, or rejection.[24] If structural constraints remain within specific communities from one generation to the next, these dispositions can be passed on as well, becoming integrated into a community's cultural frame and taken-for-granted assumptions about how the world works and how their families should be configured. These dispositions can continue whether or not they continue to be useful to community members. Structural and cultural entanglements influence all mothers, although they may not be the same for different racialized groups of mothers.

Consistent with Rebecca's perspective, many study participants described enlisting or being offered assistance with childcare from their children's grandmothers for both extended and brief periods of time. Indeed, for Sharon, Teresa, Nora, and Brandy, all married and working mothers of two children each, the solution to managing demanding careers and young children was having their children's grandmothers become primary childcare providers. These mothers described benefitting from this choice by being less stressed over the quality of care their children received and less confined by the typical time constraints of childcare facilities that often have fixed hours and are not open late into the evening. In addition, for the most part, grandmothers' parenting aptitudes were

viewed positively and their knowledge was considered to be a valuable and reliable resource.

When Sharon returned to work, her daughter was eight months old. She had the means to pay for a nanny or for formal daycare, but when she finally had to make a decision on childcare, her preference was to have her own mother care for her daughter in her absence. Sharon did financially benefit from having her mother watch her daughter, but she saw the primary benefit as giving her a sense of security over the quality of care her daughter received. Describing her feelings about returning to work, Sharon said,

> It was fine because I had my mother taking care of her. How could I have thought I would have a nanny, someone I didn't know, who wasn't even a part of my family [take care of my child]? It was just crazy that I would even think that could work, but before having kids that seemed perfectly reasonable. So, my mother stepped in and we took [our daughter] to my mom's house every morning and then I went to work and picked her up and came home. . . . My mother was very diligent [and] I had no question about my child under my mothers' care.

Sharon's mother also provided childcare for her second child. Participants said their mothers expected and welcomed such arrangements. Teresa recounted that her mother could not imagine someone other than a family member looking after her grandchildren. When Teresa returned to work, she said her mother demanded to take care of each of her children, even sacrificing her sleep to care for them: "[My mother] basically told me they are coming to her. She doesn't want anyone else watching them. She works nights, so it works out for her. She watches them during the day."

For Sharon and Teresa, the geographic proximity of their mothers facilitated their childcare arrangements. Indeed, African Americans overall are more likely to live close to their families.[25] Research suggests that this proximity increases a family's likelihood of using kin-provided childcare.[26]

However, it was also not unusual for grandmothers and other female relatives to temporarily move in with mothers to increase their availability. Occasionally, a grandmother relocated—anywhere from a nearby state to across the country—to care for their grandchildren for months or years

at a time. This was the case for both Nora and Brandy. Nora's mother offered to provide childcare when Nora originally returned to work to quell her concerns over having a nonfamily childcare provider. Nora acknowledged there were financial benefits from using her mother for childcare, but she also described this choice as coming with nonpecuniary pluses:

> I stayed home full-time for three or four months, and then my mother came out. . . . I had to go back to work full-time. So, she became the grandma-nanny full-time for six months, which was fabulous. . . . My mom would come at 9 [a.m.], and I would hand my daughter over. . . . And I thought I would come home a lot during the day and nurse and stuff, but I actually didn't. . . . So, I would just pump at work, because I nursed her for a year. And I would come home at 5 or 6 [p.m.] most days. . . . Some nights, it would be later, and my husband would be there. But it was great. It worked out great. Actually, I was anticipating a lot of power struggles, and there were very, very few.

Like most mothers in this research who are employed in professional careers, Nora took the full maternity leave that was offered to her, but when she returned to work "grandma-nanny" helped with that transition. Nora benefitted from the peace of mind of having her mother care for her child and not racing to beat the clock at the end of day to relieve a paid caregiver or retrieve her daughter from childcare.

Brandy's mother ultimately sold her house so she could move in with Brandy and her son-in-law to serve as the primary childcare provider for her two grandchildren. Brandy said that her return to work went smoothly because she could check in with her mother throughout the day about her sons, which made her feel comfortable and gave her the flexibility to work the demanding hours her job often required of her.

Except for Sharon, most mothers explicitly acknowledged that using kin-care as their principal source of childcare did benefit them economically. Mothers suggested that these offers to provide free or low-cost childcare were readily made by grandmothers. Some participants who decided to use alternative forms of childcare, such as a daycare service or nanny, or who became stay-at-home mothers, described encountering resistance from grandmothers who expected to have more time with their grandchildren and play a more instrumental role in their lives. Viewing child-

rearing as a collective effort created different pushes and pulls for mothers related to combining work and family. Although it would be easy to focus on how their choices produced structural or economic benefits related to their families or careers, these mothers' accounts demonstrate additional factors that motivated and influenced their decisions, including decreasing their level of stress when they returned to work.

One might assume that stay-at-home mothers were more likely to reject kin-care, but I did not find that to be the case. A striking finding of this research is that slightly more than half of the mothers who described themselves as stay-at-home mothers actually worked outside of the home full-time or part-time (see chapter 6). Anita Garey encountered mothers like these in her research, which examined an economically and racially diverse sample of mothers employed in the health care industry.[27] She suggests that these mothers were attempting to reconcile cultural ideals of what it means to be a "good mother" with the reality that their families needed their economic contributions.[28]

As I describe in chapter 6, those in my sample who identified as stay-at-home mothers and yet engaged simultaneously in substantial amounts of paid work were also attempting to reconcile different and competing cultural expectations. On the one hand, the broader society envisions good mothers as perpetually available to their children; on the other hand, the African American community envisions good mothers as self-sufficient caregivers who make economic contributions to their families.[29] The mothers in this research navigated both sets of cultural expectations, but their accounts suggest they felt more directly beholden to the expectations from within the African American community. Although self-identifying as stay-at-home mothers, these mothers heavily relied on spouses, kin, and longtime community members to care for their children while they worked and/or while their children slept. This enabled them to meet the expectations related to work from their communities while also fulfilling their desires to be available to their children during the day and/or during their children's non-school waking hours. In my interviews, like the employed mothers, the majority of stay-at-home mothers used trusted extended kin to care for their children in their absence.

Some mothers who did not use kin-care often noted that they would use it, but that they lacked access to such networks. Others viewed certain

family members as unsuitable caregivers because of histories of depression, mental illness, and/or drug and sexual abuse. Some mothers responded to this lack of family by trying to create networks of support within their communities, often through churches or other social or civic organizations in their communities. Elizabeth, married with one child, for example, did not have family nearby to provide regular or even occasional childcare assistance; in response, she endeavored to create such networks. She said,

> We are transplants from the East Coast, so we don't have any family here. For a while, my friend and I would switch off babysitting. I would take her kids and then she would take my son. Then it got to be too much because she had two and now she has three, so it wasn't as balanced, and it seemed that, somehow, I would take her kids more than she would take care of my son, but we did that for a while. And then we had a babysitter, but she didn't bathe him and do something else that I had asked, so I was done with her. Now there is a little girl across the street that has two siblings. She is eleven and the mom and I kind of talk, she's right across the street, so sometimes she watches my son, and the mom is right there or the dad to help out. She is going to watch my son this weekend so we can go on a date.

Elizabeth's description of trying to build a network of support underscores the benefits that extended family and community members provide to mothers of young children. Most of the individuals Elizabeth used for childcare were people that she regularly had interactions with in her social and community networks; and, in the case of the young girl, those who lived nearby. Other mothers who lacked such networks shifted to a nuclear family form in their childcare arrangements.

Among the working mothers in my sample who did not use extended family for childcare, the majority followed the national pattern of using center-based childcare.[30] These mothers often began their search by asking members of their family and religious and social networks for referrals. This is not a surprising practice, but many of the mothers in my sample found childcare not only through social network referrals but also within their existing social networks of family and community. Robinne, a married working mother of one, relayed a typical account of selecting childcare stating, "I'd known her [the woman she hired for childcare] for seventeen years. She was a member of my church. And while I was preg-

nant, she became a licensed daycare provider. Some of the other members from my mothers' group had her look after their children." Thus, rather than choose a stranger as a childcare provider in an arms-length market relationship, Robinne selected someone with whom she had a long-standing relationship.

Similarly, Tracy, married and a working mother of five, had a childcare provider who was a longtime friend with whom she had had multiple social interactions, including church and other activities:

> My two-year-old and four-year-old go to daycare with my four-year-old's godmother. She has looked after my four-year-old since she was about nine months, so I really trust her with the kids, and, you know, we are really good friends. We go to church together and we do things outside of daycare and church.

Indeed, Tracy was so close with her caregiver that she asked her to be her daughter's godmother. She also was able to observe her with other children, which added a layer of security. These descriptions of the relationships between caregivers and parents, and their ongoing participation in each other's social worlds, stand in contrast to what is typically described, at least initially, as an arms-length relationship. Many of the African American mothers in my study, had relationships with their childcare providers that did not stop at the end of the day; instead, they extended to other parts of their lives and continued even after their child was no longer in their care.

These experiences suggest that certain features or resources are contained in African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers' networks. In this sense, they are not unlike the poor African American women Carol Stack described.[31] Just as those women depended on their connection to, and use of, kin and community members to assist them in their day-to-day lives, the participants in my study were connected to networks that helped them find trustworthy childcare.

Existing scholarship suggests that institutions such as churches and childcare centers in poor neighborhoods are key sites for a range of resources.[32] In his research on childcare, Mario Small found that the quality of an individual's support network is contingent on factors such as how trustworthy it is and the types of obligations these networks involve.[33] The

descriptions of how mothers found their childcare providers suggest that the default networks of African American middle-class mothers include trustworthy sources of childcare that facilitate the decision to combine child-rearing with breadwinning. These mothers felt confident in the care their children were receiving because these caregivers were often trusted family members or were community members they knew well.

VALUING THE WISDOM AND EXPERTISE OF OTHER MOTHERS

The competence that these mothers believed existed within their networks not only influenced their childcare choices but also more directly influenced their mothering. In the transition to motherhood, new mothers are often confronted by situations and decision-making on a seemingly daily basis, and often seek guidance through this uncertain terrain.[34] For example, scholars describe the Herculean effort many mothers undertake to master the latest advice in parenting books and their reluctance to have older relatives care for their children based on fears they will use outdated parenting practices.[35] My research suggests that not all mothers privilege the same sources of information in their quest for guidance. Some study participants conformed to the intensive mothering ideology (see the introduction), including consulting books for expert advice on how to raise their children.[36]

Tamika consulted books and academic studies to guide her parenting. Her impetus to seek out this information was influenced by her own mother's approach to parenting: find a book. Rather than reinvent the wheel, her mother advised that when encountering a new situation or challenge, she should reach for a parenting book or study. Tamika described how she sought out parenting advice by following her mother's example:

> [I] got advice from everywhere. I was asking everybody. . . . My mother is probably my most direct course. But my mother's solution to everything since the beginning of time has been, "Get a book. You want to know how to do something, I'm sure someone has written a book on it. Go find a book." So, I just started accumulating books. Or, if something comes up, I will call

> her or I will call my sister-in-law and say: "Are you familiar or have you ever heard of this?" . . . When I wanted to expand my reference, I read everything from natural fertility and pregnancy to the *Girlfriends' Guide to Raising Toddlers*[37] or food café. I mean, I have read everything from complicated studies on age and fertility [to] race and mortality.

It should be noted that while Tamika valued consulting formal experts' advice in books, she also sought out advice from other experienced mothers.

This double-pronged approach is similar to how Nora described the sources she used to get answers to her child-rearing questions:

> [Now it is] definitely other mothers; I think with my daughter I did a lot more reading. I don't do much parenting reading now. [With my daughter] I read a lot of Dr. Sears's books, and I hate him now, I really loathe him, I think he's horrible. It was the wrong book for us to be reading with that particular child. I can see why his attachment parenting stuff is good for other kids, but it wasn't good for us, and it really caused a lot of doubt. . . . But I really think that at this point [when I have questions,] it's other women, other women with kids.

Nora's experiences showed an initial desire to follow the advice of professional parenting experts, which shifted toward privileging experiential knowledge when an approach she adopted from a book did not work for her family. Nora read various parenting books, and settled on Dr. William Sears, an advocate of attachment parenting, as her expert of choice. The parenting practices associated with attachment parenting include natural or low-medical-intervention childbirth, giving birth at home, stay-at-home parenting, co-sleeping, breastfeeding, and wearing babies in slings for most of the day.[38] In many ways, attachment parenting is closely aligned with the intensive mothering ideology that Hays identified in her research, which demands an enormous commitment of time and physical, emotional, and financial resources from mothers.[39] Over time, Nora, who returned to work when her child was four months old, felt this approach did not suit the needs of her child or her family, so she sought out the experiential wisdom of other, mostly working, mothers to guide her parenting decisions.

Nora and Tamika each described a variety of books and studies they consulted to determine how best to raise their children, and thus

conformed to the practices associated with the intensive mothering ideology. This research was something that they described themselves doing but not their husbands.[40] However, an important distinction in how study participants approached this period of new motherhood was whose knowledge they privileged and sought out first.

THE WISDOM OF EXPERIENCE: TRUSTING OTHER MOTHERS CAREGIVING

One might assume that one "cost" mothers would incur in having grandmothers—and other, often older, extended family and community members—involved in raising their children would be the additional stress that comes with power struggles and the nuts and bolts of rearing children.[41] By and large, these mothers' first source of parenting advice was their own mother or other female relatives or community members who were experienced mothers. The advice from these sources was highly valued. For example, Jennifer valued experiential knowledge in the day-to-day activities of child-rearing. In responding to a question on what resources or people she sought out when she had questions about her son's care, Jennifer said,

> Honestly, I usually call my mom or talk to women who've had kids, like older women who have had children and have raised kids already. That is probably the first place I go to. And for health stuff, I try to do my own research a little bit, but it is always better to go to the doctor.

Much like Jennifer, Tracy also described seeking out child-rearing advice from other mothers. She said, "[I go to] my mother or my sister. I went to my mother a lot . . . called the 'advice nurse.' There is no one outside of my family that I really talked to [about child-rearing]."

Jennifer and Tracy had a hierarchy of advice that they valued that was reflective of the hierarchy of the majority of the mothers that I interviewed. Mothers often began with their family and friends, and as a last resort sought out books and doctors for additional support.

Kera, a stay-at-home mother of two, said that the advice she most valued was from mothers she had been able to observe in action and viewed as competent. She described it this way:

> [I most trust] experienced people that I know and who have been mothers, and who I agree with the way they've raised their kids. People who are close to me, like good friends of the family, or other mothers who have kids the same age or a little older. . . . [At my black moms' group] I may talk about potty training, geared to someone who has boys: "What is your strategy? What are you doing?"

Often when mothers expanded their search for advice outside of their family, they continued to privilege experience-based sources of expertise over more formal indicators, such as academic degrees. Robinne described her sources of advice in this way:

> [I get advice from] my girlfriends who have babies, or I should say have children, really. My mother. One friend who has good experience—she worked in a post-partum hospital for about eleven years. So that was a really helpful resource, just her being a nurse and seeing babies in the hospital and that sort of thing. And then a couple of close girlfriends who have kids. And I did get all those books and things when I was pregnant, and I ended up not referring to them as much after [my daughter] got to be about two or three months. So, mostly, it is like friends and family that I ask.

Although Robinne said that she "did get all those books and things," her network—friends and family members who were mothers—were seen as more valuable sources of expertise and advice on raising her child.

For some of the study participants, online communities and parenting listservs played special roles. Nia, a working mother with two sons, noted that her heavy use of the internet was because she had little access to extended family or community networks:

> I call myself the Google parent because I think before . . . you parented in a group, you know, you had mothers and sisters and other women family members to tell you, this is how you discipline, or this is how you breastfeed, or this is how you deal with a sick child; but now we don't have that, so you just Google it. Like, okay, my child is colicky, I'm just going to Google it to find out how to deal with it or look online or even an online parents' listserv or group or chat room or something. So, it's just a very different parenting style, trying to figure it all out, in relative isolation, you know.

Nia's vision of the ideal was far from her own reality. She believed that mothers should be surrounded by both family and community members

who can provide support and firsthand parenting advice. This had been her experience as a child. She became a self-proclaimed "Google parent" only because she lacked that kind of community. Through her online activities, Nia sought to create a network of support and experiential knowledge that she did not have in person in her daily life.

For many study participants, motherhood was not viewed as an identity that required intense study, guidance from experts, special training, and seclusion. The currency on which expertise was evaluated was the experience of raising children. The accounts of these mothers contrast sharply with existing research that depicts middle- and upper-middle-class mothers as being wary of advice from older mothers in their families because they were viewed as potential sources of outdated parenting practices.[42] Overall, these mothers' accounts challenge the primacy of expert knowledge that is described as guiding how other middle- and upper-middle-class mothers raise their children.[43] Ultimately, for the mothers in my study, being a "good" mother was "expert guided," although in a very different sense of the word *expert*. Expertise was derived through experience.

Viewing family and community caregivers as competent, and child-rearing as a cooperative effort, facilitated different orientations to work and family for the mothers in my study. Envisioning caregiving as something other than the exclusive purview of a single mother has implications for how the market-family matrix is and can be configured. If caregiving is an activity that is shared with other family and community members, women are thus better supported in their efforts to combine working outside of the home with raising children. In addition, by expecting mothers to combine working and child-rearing, mothers attach meanings to doing so that are less fraught.

CONCLUSION

African American middle-class and upper-middle-class mothers' orientations toward combining working outside of the home with motherhood is influenced by a different configuration of the market-family matrix that encourages maintaining, protecting, and/or creating extended family and community networks. While scholars have noted these networks are not

as available to lower-income African American mothers, this has not been the case for middle-class and upper-middle-class African American mothers.[44] The accounts of these mothers lend additional support to those findings. Based on a combination of factors related to necessity and preference, the majority of African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers in this research were raised in communities that included networks of caregivers, and they expected and hoped that extended family and community members would be involved in the rearing of their children. These networks played an important role in supporting those mothers who worked outside of the home.

Anne Roschelle finds that women with higher incomes and who live in close proximity to relatives are more likely to use kin for childcare across racial groups. Indeed, although African Americans are more likely to live in close proximity to relatives, when whites live close to relatives they are actually even more likely to utilize such assistance.[45] This body of research suggests that although the nuclear family is often envisioned as a significant building block of modern society, the extended family is also an important source of support. The accounts of the mothers in this research shed light on additional factors that may explain why African American mothers often live in close proximity to their relatives.

The continued use of these kin networks is supported by these mothers' beliefs that extended kin and community members are capable and competent caregivers, and that childcare need not be exclusively provided by mothers who have spent enormous amounts of time absorbing and mastering expertise from parenting books. Instead, these mothers believe raising children should happen with the support and assistance of family and community members and be guided by the wisdom of other mothers' experiences. This orientation to child-rearing and family organization implicates both structural and cultural dimensions, which are often inextricably linked to each other and shaped by a mother's racial identity and class, as well as cultural, social, economic, and legal forces, all of which empower and constrain choices.

The traditional market-family matrix includes assumptions and expectations on how families should be configured in terms of who does what, how it is done, and when to do it. It also assumes that children should be primarily cared for by a mother in a nuclear family.[46] By contrast, the

market-family matrix that framed my study participants' decision-making assumes a different configuration of the family and childcare. For the working mothers, combining work and family did not generate the compromises that scholars suggest have registered in the experiences of elite white women; instead, the market-family matrix they navigated supported and often encouraged their participation in both the public and the private spheres.

Approaches to caring for children and connecting with extended family are often primarily viewed as an adaptation that families make to account for their inability to attain the idealized norm. These mothers' accounts suggest that their approaches to family are not simply modifications but expressions of preferences and adherence to different cultural expectations derived from their lived experience. American society is increasingly moving to an economy where more than one income is necessary for achieving a middle-class lifestyle. In addition, traditional family structures are becoming increasingly less common as a result of both choice and constraint. Although government and business policies can and should shift to consider these changes in family configurations, these policies should be sensitive to the diversity in the normative expectations about how the family should be configured. These mothers' accounts destabilize the presumed dominance of the nuclear family form and intensive mothering as ideals. Their accounts also suggest an alternative configuration of the family that draws its strengths from mothers and families that are embedded in networks of support that might reduce the stress and internal conflict experienced by some mothers.

Conclusion and Implications

NAVIGATING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN MOTHERHOOD, PARENTING, AND WORK

A sentiment expressed by Rebecca, a widow with one son, who also raised a nephew when he was a teenager, toward the end of our interview captures a recurring theme in this book regarding the daily pressures of being an African American middle-class mother:

> Black middle-class women are trying to do the best that they can with what they have and love their families and be good moms and give their kids what they need to be good people, and it is hard. I think people need to know that it is hard. It is not an easy thing because not only are we tackling being a middle-class mom, but we are tackling the issue of race. . . . I know I have often woken up in the morning and said, "Can people just not judge me today? Just today, can I just be me with [no judgment]?" and I know that the answer to that is no. And that is really hard.

To just be "me" was not an option for Rebecca. At times, she wanted to be able to be herself and parent her son without the judgments and stigmas related to race and, as I described in chapter 1, gender. She wanted to be able to go to work and not have to deal with stereotypical assumptions about the kind of woman and mother she was just because of her racial identity and gender. Rebecca enjoyed being African American and sharing that cultural

heritage with her child, but her daily reality conformed to many other mothers who, as Nia, a mother of two, said, "eat racism for breakfast." It was why Kristen, a mother with one child, was concerned that choosing a natural hairstyle for her daughter would reflect poorly on her daughter as well as herself. It was the reason that these mothers and their children needed "much more from a school space," as Maya, a mother of four, said.

The mothers in this research often used their resources to accomplish things that structurally look very similar to those of other middle-class mothers, but to which they attached a different significance and that had a different functional importance. Unlike lower-income mothers, they had the resources to expose their children to a range of enrichment activities. They also used their resources to help their children have the cultural acumen to belong to different kinds of racialized and classed communities, something that may not be an explicit priority for other middle-class parents. This cultural flexibility or fluency in different kinds of habitus was strategically important to these mothers and their children. Mothers believed that it would help their children in their current school setting as well as when they entered the workforce. But they also worked to ensure that their children felt pride in being African American—to give them, as Sarah, a mother of one, stated in chapter 1, "the history without the pain," and to "feel good about being black," as Mary, a mother of two, said—albeit, at times, encouraging different versions of middle-class African American identity.

The mothers in this research felt that their experiences were distinct from white middle-class mothers, who they believed did not share explicit concerns about race, racism, and gendered racism. At times, the mothers in this study felt alienated from white middle-class mothers and were reluctant to join white mothers' groups and activities that they perceived as requiring them to engage in invisible labor to gain acceptance. They felt drawn to and embraced by African American mothers, who they felt better understood the challenges they faced as mothers and their approaches to combining work and family.

The accounts of the mothers in this research challenge bifurcated approaches to analyzing the family that focus on race or class. The class perspective suggests that once individuals attain a specific income or education level, they have similar concerns and make similar choices to others

in their strata as well as have access to the same opportunities.[1] Class status is construed as a leveling force. Thus, if different racial groups have the same resources, racial inequality is believed to disappear or at least be less influential. Conversely, the race perspective suggests that blacks or African Americans share a similar orientation toward parenting irrespective of their resources. This similar orientation is produced by a shared cultural or historical outlook as well as challenges that impact individuals across class groupings. However, this construction of class versus race ignores how social forces related to race, gender, and class are interconnected and reinforce one another. It fails to consider how these forces powerfully shape the life experiences and outcomes of individuals from both imposed and chosen structural and cultural perspectives. The accounts of the mothers in this research demonstrate how class, race, and gender are not separate processes but instead are fundamentally entangled for African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers—and they suggest that this is the case for all mothers. While some scholars contend that race is less important than class,[2] the accounts of these mothers suggest that race continues to be important in their lives and the lives of their children, although how and why it is important may be becoming more varied.

This research identifies several key cultural expectations of mothering and parenting that undergird dominant family and work frameworks. Other scholarship has found that these cultural expectations are that mothers are principally responsible for raising their children within a nuclear family,[3] that working outside of the home conflicts with being a "good" mother,[4] and that class trumps racial identity and gender in determining how middle-class mothers parent their children.[5] However, this book demonstrates that these expectations are informed by intersections of race, class, and gender and specific economic, cultural, social, and political configurations of work, mothering, and the family that are not shared by all groups of mothers.

The accounts of the African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers in this research suggest they are navigating an alternative framework of motherhood and parenting characterized by alternative expectations. Those expectations include: that childcare is mother centered but also supported by extended family and community; that working is a duty of motherhood and does not detract from one's identity as a mother; and

Table 1 African American Middle-Class Mothering

Framework	*Cultural Expectations*
Parenting	Cultivating consciousness: race- and gender-conscious middle-class parenting
Childcare	Kin-supported mothering: mother focused but extended family and community supported
Work and family	Integrated devotions: paid employment is a duty of mothers

that considerations of racial identity, racism, gender, and socioeconomic class should consistently be considered in determining how to best raise children (table 1).

These alternative expectations are produced by the myriad social contexts and receptions that these mothers and their children navigate. These expectations also underscore the cultural, racial, and economic specificity of dominant versions of motherhood. African American middle-class and upper-middle-class mothers have a long-standing position within the labor market. They experience cultural, economic, and political pushes and pulls from both inside and outside of the African American community that encourage them to be economically self-reliant through paid employment. Their different relationship to the labor market has produced and reinforced a long tradition of extended family and community supports for childcare, particularly for middle-class African American families.[6] They also must manage the ongoing impact of racial identity and gendered racism in their own lives and the lives of their children.

This framework emerged from the accounts of the mothers in my research and represents the different cultural pushes and pulls that they confronted from mainstream white society and their own communities when making decisions related to work, family, and parenting. I provide only an outline of this alternative framework of motherhood, however; as with any group of mothers, African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers will have diverse responses to it. One cannot look at this framework and know how all African American middle-class mothers will think or behave. These mothers do not live in a vacuum, and as they

are aware of the ideology of intensive mothering (see chapter 5), sometimes they must simultaneously negotiate with expectations related to its ideals. In fact, some mothers in this research did not completely fit into the patterns that emerged from my data. Those exceptions underscore that although the categories of African American, middle-class, and mother shape each other, they do not always do so in the same way and, at times, people actively resist them. Also, resistance looks different for these mothers. Indeed, stay-at-home mothers often drew upon alternative cultural, economic, social, and institutional resources to find support as they charted this less conventional path. Nonetheless, the accounts of the mothers in my research suggest that most have not internalized the ideology of intensive mothering as the dominant version of motherhood that guides their decisions.

PARENTING WHILE MIDDLE-CLASS AND BLACK

African Americans are increasingly joining the middle class, and these shifting demographics have produced questions about how upward mobility may impact their racial identity. Upward mobility is often equated with shedding aspects of one's social or cultural capital that are no longer useful or needed and that perhaps do not fit in with one's new social status. This understanding of class change or reproduction misreads or ignores how racial identity and gender identity are integrated into that process. Although African American racial identity is often fused with notions of lower socioeconomic status and criminality, as this study shows, and as Karyn Lacy found in her research on the African American middle-class in the Washington, DC, area, African Americans enjoy being black.[7] For African Americans, ascending to or reproducing middle-class status does not mean giving up one's racial identity, culture, or community, although it may introduce diversity into how it comes to be defined and expressed (see chapters 2, 3 and 4). In some cases, it is strategically important that African Americans retain aspects of their racial identity that others might view as undesirable or as subordinate forms of cultural capital.

Becoming middle class or reproducing that status from one generation to the next does not mean accepting the dominant white mainstream

narrative of, or relationship to, African American or black identity, culture, community, and accomplishment. Indeed, attaining and reproducing middle-class African American status often occurs through recognizing, recovering, and celebrating the accomplishments of African Americans who have been overlooked.

Middle-class African Americans often incorporate cultural elements of their racial identity into their everyday lives.[8] They take time to consciously provide the learning their children are not getting at school about African American accomplishments and challenge the negative messages their children encounter about what it means to be African American. Some of the mothers in this research made decisions on where to work, live, and educate their children based on their perspectives of African American racial identity. Many retained a preference for connections to extended kin and community networks that challenge the primacy of the nuclear family form in the middle class. Many upwardly mobile middle-class African Americans retain connections to their poor or working-class communities of origin. Many work to help people from lower-income communities become upwardly mobile because they continue to view their fates as linked.[9] These practices underscore that African Americans as members of the middle class do not want to shed their racial identity; rather, they wish to avoid the burdens or limitations associated with their racial identity and racism.

During this research, and continuing today, a recurrent news story captured the attention of the American public and served to demonstrate how stories of middle-class families are incomplete when primarily examined from a class perspective. With slight factual variations but similar tragic outcomes, these news stories feature a young African American boy, teenager, or man in the prime of his life being shot and killed by a police officer or civilian in extremely questionable circumstances. The life of the boy, teenager, or man is often scrutinized in the media for any misstep. The standards they must meet for their deaths to be viewed as tragic include being, among others, an honor roll student, college-bound or educated, middle class, and without so much as a speeding ticket or a dalliance in shoplifting or even smoking marijuana. Even in the cases when these standards are met, rarely is the person responsible for the death held accountable. The fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin is often used as the

prototype, but Martin's name could be easily replaced with countless others: Oscar Grant, Tamir Rice, Jordan Edwards, Philando Castile—to name only a few.

Martin was an African American teenager visiting his father in his "safe" gated middle-class community in Florida. He was shot and killed by neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman as he walked home from a convenience store carrying an Arizona Iced Tea and a package of Skittles intended for his younger cousin. Despite being told by 911 operators to stop his pursuit, Zimmerman continued and ultimately shot and killed Martin. Initially, the police released Zimmerman from custody without being charged, based on Florida's Stand Your Ground laws that permit individuals to use deadly force if they believe their life to be in danger. It took a national movement, weeks of pressure from the public and media, and a special investigator to finally file charges against Zimmerman. After a trial involving allegations of misconduct on the part of the police chief and department, Zimmerman was found not guilty.

The Trayvon Martin case exemplifies the distinct concerns that African American middle-class mothers have for their sons that are specifically tied to racial identity and gender. Despite being the child of one of the middle-class families from the community, Martin was not viewed by Zimmerman as a nice middle-class kid walking home from the store. Viewed primarily through the lens of racial identity and gender, he was interpreted as a threat and something that needed to be neutralized. Trayvon's father's "safe" middle-class gated community was not safe for him. Bryant Gumble, the talk show host and former lead anchor for the *Today Show*, commented in an interview about violent encounters that African Americans experience with police officers and the public:

> You can't buy your way out of this one. You can't educate your way out of it. It has always happened, we've seen more evidence of it and too often people are more inclined to say if he'd only had a different attitude, if he hadn't been driving . . . almost as if the victim is partially to blame. . . . This is nothing to do with victims. It has everything to do with the culture of demeaning a person of color.[10]

Ultimately these victims were blamed for not showing enough deference to the officer or civilian with whom they engaged. These strikingly

similar stories are increasingly well documented by videos that circulate widely in the media. These events shed light on the challenges that African American children and their parents confront and that do not subside with increased resources.

For the African American mothers in my research, these extreme events certainly shaped their outlook, but their day-to-day concerns regarding racial identity and gender emerged in more subtle ways in the lives of their children at school, in their communities, and in other societal institutions. Although mothers responded to the challenges of race, class, and gender in different ways, those challenges were a regular part of all of their lives and could neither be avoided nor ignored. As such, they necessarily influenced these mothers' decisions on parenting, work, family, and childcare.

Decisions were also informed by ongoing cultural and structural factors that cannot be easily disentangled. For example, mothers wished to protect children from racism by using kin-provided childcare. This inclination might be construed as a cultural orientation, yet this orientation to parenting and caregiving can also be understood as a response to a perceived lack of racial sensitivity in the marketplace of childcare providers and in a society shaped by gendered racism. The desire to instill racial pride might be labeled cultural, but it may also originate from structural factors in a racialized social system that stigmatizes certain children and racial groups.[11] Similarly, childcare institutions are shaped by institutional and interpersonal racism and sexism that is produced by structural factors and the dominant cultural context.[12] Thus, these mothers, no matter the extent to which they had the necessary resources as members of the middle- and upper-middle-class, made choices based on the existing landscape of childcare, which sometimes included caregivers who displayed explicit and/or subtle forms of racism.

REVISITING THE MARKET-FAMILY MATRIX

In part II, I introduce the market-family matrix, a framework that captures the relationship between the public sphere of work and the private sphere of the family, as well as the gendered division of labor within each. I suggest that the configuration of this market-family matrix has

necessarily varied for different groups of mothers, both over time and during the same time frame. Despite this diversity, family and work scholarship has often suggested that all American women, and mothers specifically, navigate and respond to similar cultural and structural constraints, opportunities, and expectations in the public and private spheres.

My research suggests those ideas are profoundly flawed for African American middle-class and upper-middle-class mothers and, as such, perhaps for other groups of mothers as well. Ultimately, the experiences of the mothers in this study serve as an empirical challenge to key assumptions regarding middle-class motherhood overall and underscore that several revisions to dominant frameworks of motherhood are required that incorporate an intersectional perspective.

Many of the mothers in this research made decisions on work and family based on different cultural and structural forces and ideas about the place of work in a mother's life. For example, scholars have used time as a measurement of a mother's commitment to her family or to the workplace. However, using only the time allotted to paid employment outside of the home as a measurement of commitment to work or to family suggests that only one meaning can be attached to these activities. One can, in fact, affirm one's identity as a mother *through* their public-sphere—that is, marketplace—activities. The idea that allotting time to paid employment outside of home does not mean a lack of devotion to family is accepted without controversy when the focus is on men instead of women.[13] This is because traditional models of the family view husbands and fathers as showing their commitment to their families through their breadwinning activities. Raising children is difficult, but the meanings mothers attach to the challenges they confront impact how they experience incorporating into their identities either working outside of the home or choosing not to do so. Indeed, among these study participants, the majority of whom worked, combining work and family was challenging. However, these mothers were often supported emotionally and instrumentally by family and community, which allowed them to meet community expectations that they would work outside of the home, thus fulfilling their duties as mothers. Meanwhile, mothers who chose to reduce their commitment to work often felt scrutinized by family and community members.

Another example of how existing frameworks of motherhood do not address diversity within the market-family matrix is demonstrated by a second set of news stories that recurred over the period of this research. These stories focused on the state of what Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung once labeled the "stalled gender revolution" and how various mothers, typically elite white mothers, respond to it.[14] Although American women now engage regularly in the public sphere of paid work, the ideal worker continues to be envisioned as a man who does not have obligations at home. Little has changed on the home front for women, except that for many their role as caregiver has expanded to include care manager—they coordinate and manage the care their children receive from paid childcare providers.[15] In response to this double bind, or second shift, that this lack of change within the workplace and home has produced, every few years an elite, and often white, working mother enters the spotlight to unveil her version of what managing work and family is really like. In 2003, investigative journalist Lisa Belkin published a now infamous article, "Opt-out Revolution," that used interviews with highly educated mothers to suggest that, contrary to claims, women were not failing to reach the top ranks of corporations because they were being forced out but, rather, they were choosing to focus on a job they believed was more important: motherhood.[16] Belkin's article generated a maelstrom of critical responses from other journalists and academic scholars, some supporting women who choose work over being stay-at-home mothers and others issuing fierce critiques of Belkin's claims.[17] As an aside in this article, specifically focusing on women with MBAs, Belkin said that unlike their white counterparts, highly educated African American women were not opting out of the corporate workplace. In fact, their level of employment was not significantly different than highly educated white men with MBAs. The opting-out that was occurring for highly educated white women was not happening in the same way for highly educated African American women.

More recently, Anne Marie Slaughter, the former director of Policy Planning at the State Department in the Obama administration, contributed to this commentary regarding combining work and family in her pessimistic editorial confession, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All."[18] Slaughter wrote of the enormous challenges she and other women confront balancing work and family demands as mothers employed in

demanding jobs with relatively fixed schedules. Slaughter, like Belkin, writes from the perspective of an elite white woman, and while acknowledging this privileged position, she presents her perspective as one that is applicable to most women. Her perspective is informed by assumptions about the definition of "good" motherhood, the ideal configuration of the family, what children need to be well taken care of, and how and by whom children should be parented.

The relationship between the marketplace and the family can be configured differently, yet rarely do scholars consider that answering the question, "Can women have it all?" depends on what "having it all" means. The current definition implies that women can climb the upper tiers of their chosen career trajectory while simultaneously being the same dutiful caregiver at home as idealized in 1950s and 1960s sitcoms of the nuclear family. I suggest this is because in the traditional market-family matrix the identity of mother is strongly associated with caregiving. Men, often those who are economically elite and white, have a different definition of "having it all" that has been enabled by a specific gendered division of labor that privileges paid employment in men's identities. The workplace assumes that employees conform to the model of the ideal worker, whose home front is taken care of by dedicated, generally female, caregivers. This configuration of work and family is overlaid with a traditional gendered division of labor, which leads to a market-family matrix of conflict when mothers combine work and family. It encourages men/husbands/fathers to focus far less on the home front and delegates the work in the home to women/wives/mothers. Nevertheless, certain groups of mothers have continuously participated in both the public and the private spheres as a matter of course and do not view such practices as harsh compromises that they must defend or justify.

REMAKING MOTHERHOOD

Part of "having it all" might mean sharing it all—that is, sharing the work of the marketplace and the family in ways that honor them equally, structuring them in ways that traditional gendered divisions of labor do not. Having it all might require incorporating family and community members

who extend beyond the nuclear family. Related to redefining what "having it all" might mean is reconsidering how the social identities of the person performing the work of parenting and mothering can impact how that work is valued and defined. Social identities often limit what people see as possible for themselves and what their immediate community and the broader society view as possible or permissible. It requires revisiting Hochschild and Machung's "stalled revolution" and hooks's "revolutionary parenting."[19] It requires critically assessing and unmaking the categories of man, woman, mother, father, husband, wife, family member, and worker to produce different versions of the market-family matrix that offers less conflict for parents and families. Scholars and others also must interrogate what it means to have it all from a perspective that includes the experiences of men and non-elite women.

It might be tempting to view studies of African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers' approaches to work, family, and parenting as examples of intersectional research that principally repairs a gap in the literature by including a previously understudied perspective. But this research does more than add an additional voice to the choir of diversity. These findings demand that existing dominant analytical frameworks of the family and work be revisited to critically examine the subjective perspectives from which they derive. These findings demand that we mark the unmarked normative categories of power and privilege.[20] Rather than explaining an exception to the *assumed norm* of white middle-class mothers and families, the findings from this research *particularize the norm* as something that has been produced by a distinctive set of circumstances not shared by all mothers and families. A difficulty in explaining African American middle-class mothers' orientations to childcare stems from a tendency to focus on structural or cultural characteristics within the family while failing to examine the challenges related to racism, sexism, and gendered racism in the broader society that these families must navigate. This book contributes to this scholarship by underscoring how characteristics within the broader mainstream society that are external to individuals and families can work to constrain one individual's choices while empowering another's.

I have presented a framework that more fully takes into account how the motivations and underlying processes that produce different versions of motherhood and parenting are raced, classed, and gendered, not just

for African American middle-class mothers but for all mothers. Mothers confront different expectations depending on their racial identity. By mapping out how African American middle-class mothers parent their children, my research reveals that despite the economic advantages of being middle-class or upper-middle class, these mothers worked to provide their children with the skills that will enable them to overcome race- and gender-based stigmas that they will likely encounter in their current educational environments as well as in their future employment settings. These mothers also taught their children how and when to emphasize their racial identity and class identity.

African American middle-class and upper-middle-class mothers are not alone in being confronted with different historical and contemporary experiences that influence their decisions related to work and family or how they approach parenting their children. This alternative framework for organizing work and family underscores family diversity and demands that scholars and policy makers rethink how *all* families function and are configured, and that they attend to the cultural specificity involved in research focusing on motherhood and work–life balance.

APPENDIX Methods

This research differs from previous studies of African American middle- and upper-middle-class populations because of its dual focus on the cities and suburban areas within the San Francisco Bay Area. Other research has largely concentrated on Midwest or East Coast cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.[1] These and other landmark studies of the African American middle class have either focused on a broad outline of its overall contours or on geographic areas across the United States in which African Americans have had a long-standing presence, have grown in size to a critical mass, and have well-established middle-class populations and neighborhoods.[2] The respondents for this research were not all connected to a specific African American neighborhood or community. Instead, they were drawn from a variety of neighborhoods, including urban, suburban, and exurban areas, around the San Francisco Bay Area. As a result, the mothers in my research were often negotiating different neighborhood demographics and resources than respondents in other studies.

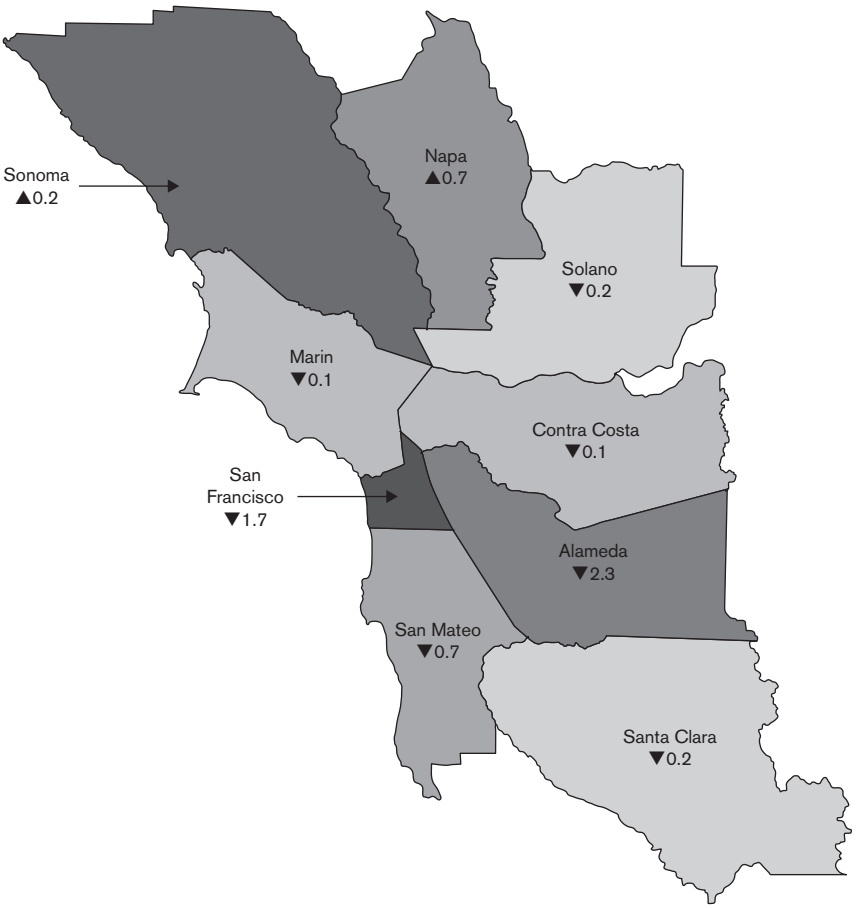
The African American community has never been large in the San Francisco Bay Area, and it has had a shorter historical presence relative to other areas of the country. It was not until World War II that the African American population began to expand, which coincided with San Francisco becoming one of the central locations for war-related jobs.[3] During that period, the African American population in San Francisco expanded from approximately 4,850 (less than 1 percent of the population) in 1940 to approximately 43,000 (5.6 percent) in 1950, reaching its peak in 1970 of around 96,000 (13.4 percent).[4]

Table 2 Changes in African American Population in the San Francisco Bay Area

County	*Percent Point Change*	*Percent Black Population in 2000*	*Percent Black Population in 2010*
Alameda	▼2.3	14.9	12.6
Contra Costa	▼0.1	9.4	9.3
Marin	▼0.1	2.9	2.8
Napa	▲0.7	1.3	2
San Francisco	▼1.7	7.8	6.1
Santa Clara	▼0.2	2.8	2.6
San Mateo	▼0.7	3.5	2.8
Solano	▼0.2	14.9	14.7
Sonoma	▲0.2	1.4	1.6

Forty years later, according to the 2010 census, African Americans represented a meager 6.7 percent of San Francisco's population.[5] Since then, the population has continued to decline. This is particularly notable given that San Francisco is a city once known for its Fillmore District, a neighborhood that until the late 1970s attracted many African Americans who migrated to the area for work and that became a recognized cultural center for jazz. Despite this history, in 2005 San Francisco's then mayor, Gavin Newsom, created a task force to examine the problem of African American out-migration from San Francisco.[6]

Oakland, another city within the San Francisco Bay Area, followed similar spikes and declines in its population, despite having a larger overall representation of African Americans. Before World War II, African Americans comprised approximately 3 percent of Oakland's population. During the war, African Americans were also attracted to the area due to war-related industries and perceived lower levels of explicit discrimination.[7] By the end of the war, African Americans comprised 12 percent of Oakland's population; by 1980 this population reached its peak at approximately 47 percent. In a place where the Black Panther Party was founded, the African American population declined from approximately 44 percent of Oakland's population in 1990 to 27 percent in 2010.[8] Although African Americans remain the largest ethnic group, their percentage of the population has dramatically decreased. Similarly, in Berkeley, in 1970 the African American population peaked at approximately 24 percent of the population,[9] and in 1980 it peaked in Richmond at 48 percent.[10] In 2010 the African American population stood at approximately 27 percent in Richmond, and 10 percent in Berkeley.



Map 1. Change in African American population in the San Francisco Bay Area, 2000 to 2010.

Overall, across the Bay Area, counties have experienced decreases in their African American population, with some small increases in areas with few other African Americans (see table 2 and map 1).

Government and civic organizations have investigated the issue of African American out-migration in Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond, as well as other cities nationwide, to understand what is causing these decreases. In San Francisco, this effect has often been the result of middle- and upper-middle-class African Americans who moved to the suburbs, including Antioch, Brentwood, and Tracy, all of which have experienced increases in their African American

populations.[11] Many of those moving from the San Francisco Bay Area are middle-class African Americans leaving for neighborhoods in the East Bay and for places outside of California in search of better schools for their children and better housing and employment opportunities for themselves.[12] Some have referred to the demographic shift of African Americans leaving urban centers and migrating to southern states in the United States as the New Great Migration, referring to the Great Migration of African Americans from the South starting in the early 1900s.[13] Notably, the increasing cost of housing that is also associated with the out-migration of African Americans has, in part, been produced by the gentrification of these regions by upper-class whites who are employed by the booming technology sector and who increasingly prefer to live in urban centers.

The Bay Area is not exceptional in the decline of its African American population.[14] Indeed, it represents a trend that is specifically happening to middle-class African Americans across the United States.[15] This out-migration of African Americans from cities to suburbs is happening in multiple cities, including Detroit, Chicago, and New York, with related increases in the suburbs of many of these cities.[16] Recent US census data show that slightly more than half of African Americans are now living in the suburbs of metropolitan areas rather than in urban centers.[17] Perhaps because of the increasing out-migration of middle-class African Americans in the Bay Area, the mothers in this research had to be more deliberate and explicit about their orientations to racial identity and the strategies they used to create or join certain types of communities.

THE STUDY

This research examines how African American middle-and upper-middle-class mothers approach work, family, and childcare and how those approaches are informed by intersections of race, class, and gender. To investigate these mothers' approaches, I conducted in-depth interviews with sixty African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers in the San Francisco Bay Area.[18] Through these accounts, I examined these mothers' day-to-day decisions on family, work, parenting, and the meanings they attached to those decisions.

I chose semistructured, in-depth interviews as my method for data collection because I wanted to examine the extent to which existing theories and frameworks adequately captured the experiences of African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers. I also wanted my research participants to have the opportunity to describe the social categories and processes that were important to them in making decisions related to work, family, childcare, and parenting that might extend beyond what social scientists had previously identified. Using this method, I was able to maintain a consistent set of questions and topics with each mother while also allowing some flexibility for each mother to explore topics

of her choosing. Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful to explore the mental maps, meanings, and motivations individuals attach to their beliefs and practices.

Recruitment

I recruited participants to the study by using modified snowball sampling techniques. I emailed study announcements to African American and mainstream professional organizations, women's and mothers' organizations, and sororities. This email outreach was followed up with phone calls when telephone numbers were available for organizations. I also posted study announcements on the bulletin boards at community colleges, laundromats, cafés, local union offices, and hair salons. I visited churches, posted study announcements on church bulletins, and/or announced the study during the announcements portion of church services. I also posted these announcements on listservs catering to mothers or parents generally and to African American mothers and parents specifically. Study participants were also referred to the study by both African American and non–African American individuals who were not connected to organizations. I approached recruitment in this way to diversify the kinds of mothers who would be included in the research in terms of their organizational connections or lack thereof. I also approached sampling in this way to diversify the kinds of communities in which mothers might be embedded. After each interview was completed, I asked participants to refer other mothers they believed met the study requirements. Using these strategies, I recruited sixty participants who met the qualifications of the research: middle- or upper-middle-class African American mothers who were raising at least one child that was aged ten years or younger.

All of the interviews were conducted in person in a location of the participant's choosing. Locations included their office, my office, cafés, restaurants, homes, conferences rooms, and parks. I dressed in business casual clothing for the interviews. On several occasions when my initial contact with a prospective participant was over the phone, I was asked if I was black or African American. Each time I was asked this question, I responded yes and then asked why participants had asked this question. As a reminder, my announcements specifically recruited African American middle- and upper-middle class mothers. This information was clearly important to some participants in agreeing to participate in the research and their willingness to share their contacts with me. Interviews lasted from 60 to 180 minutes and occurred between 2009 and 2011.

During interviews, I asked participants questions about their families of origin, their daily lives when they were children, their parents' approaches to child-rearing and childcare, and educational experiences throughout their lives. I also asked questions about participants' work experiences, their trajectory to

motherhood, the types of support they had in their lives as mothers, and their decisions related to paid employment before and after having children. I asked questions about whose advice they sought and valued, other resources they consulted about parenting, and how they conceptualized their responsibilities as mothers. Participants were also asked about their decisions related to childcare, school choice, goals for their children, approaches to parenting, key parenting concerns, and how they addressed those concerns. Finally, mothers were asked to describe their and their families' daily routines and the division of labor within their households. Prior to being interviewed, each participant was asked to fill out a Demographic Information Sheet that included questions on their marital status, education attainment, individual and household incomes, family composition, and the racial identity of their parents.

Sample Characteristics

All of the mothers in my sample had a least one child ten years of age or younger and, on average, were raising two children. Their employment status included working full-time, part-time, or not employed (stay-at-home mothers). Notably, nearly half of the respondents who identified as stay-at-home mothers were actually engaged in some form of paid employment either inside or outside of the home. These mothers seemed to be negotiating the expectation within the African American community that they should engage in paid employment outside of the home and be financially independent, against their own desires to stay at home with their children. This phenomenon is discussed in more detail in chapter 6. The mothers' ages ranged from twenty-five to forty-five years old. The majority had earned a college degree or greater, although several attended only some college, either earning an associate's degree or leaving a four-year program without conferral of a degree. Nearly three-fourths of the participants were married or in a domestic partnership at the time of the interviews, and the remaining participants were divorced, separated, single (never married), or widowed.

Researchers who examine the African American middle class have used various ways to measure class status, including levels of income, education, wealth, and homeownership. For this research, middle-class status was determined through a combination of educational attainment and total family income: mothers had a minimum of a two-year college education and a yearly family income ranging from $50,000 to $300,000. Participants were distributed along four income brackets. This income range is wide by national standards; however, given that homeownership is often viewed as a significant marker of middle-class status, those at the upper end of the income range would be among the few in the Bay Area who could easily become homeowners. In the San Francisco Bay Area the median owner-occupied home value between 2006 and 2010 was $637,000.[19] Half of the participants were homeowners and half were renters.

Table 3 Interviewees' Characteristics

Marital Status	
Married or domestic partner	73%
Divorced, engaged, never married, or separated	27%
Age	
Age range	25–45 years
Education	
Some college	8%
College	35%
Advanced degree	57%
Income	
$50,000–$99,000	27%
$100,000–$149,000	23%
$150,000–$199,000	23%
$200,000–$300,000	27%
Homeowner	
Yes	50%
No	50%

Material resources impacted mothers' abilities to have their children engage in certain kinds of activities. However, the length of time that a mother or her family of origin was middle class mattered more in determining the version of middle-class African American identity she sought to cultivate in her children. For the overall characteristics of the sample of mothers included in this research, see table 3.

Data Analysis

This research was informed by Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory and procedures as well as techniques described by Strauss and Corbin.[20] Interviews were transcribed and then coded to identify recurring concepts, categories, and themes. After a series of interviews were conducted, analytical memos were written to explore the emerging themes from the data. Mothers' accounts were analyzed to identify common and distinct themes and processes.

Although this research cannot be generalized to all African American middle-class mothers, as Charles Ragin asserts,[21] the strength of a case study is its ability to permit the researcher to explore the uncovered diversity present within groups that are often construed as primarily homogeneous in nature. This research begins to uncover both the consistencies and variations in how these

mothers think about, experience, and make decisions related to family, work, and parenting. The sample size in qualitative research using inductive methods is generally significantly smaller than in quantitative research using deductive methods. A consistent benchmark used to determine adequate sample size in research using grounded theory methods, as this study does, is to reach theme saturation.

Key concepts emerged through analyzing the account of mothers' parenting, family, work, and childcare beliefs and practices. The first half of this book focuses on the parenting strategies respondents used to raise their sons and daughters in a racially unequal world. Regarding parenting, key concepts that emerged included concerns on the racial comfort of their children, prioritizing caregivers who possessed racial intelligence (aptitude dealing with racial diversity and racism), building a strong racial self-esteem, protecting sons from being criminalized (being viewed as a "thug"), worrying about sons' bodily safety, and protecting daughters' self-esteem. The accounts of these mothers also revealed differences on ideas about racial authenticity as well as three distinct orientations to middle-class African American identity, which I term border crossing, border policing, and border transcending. These identities were related to mothers' different relationships to and perspectives of the African American community as well as to the class status of their families of origin.

In the second half of the book, I examine how African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers make decisions regarding work, family, and childcare and the cultural, social, legal, and economic forces that influence their decisions. A key concept that emerged is the framework of the market-family matrix (see chapter 5). Other concepts that emerged that were related to work and family included the cultural expectations that mothers be engaged in paid work; strive for economic independence; be flexible about responsibilities; and, if not working, justify not engaging in paid work. Core themes related to childcare included preferences for kin and community members in childcare, privileging experienced mothers over books as sources of advice on child-rearing, and concerns about childcare settings being free from racism.

To better understand respondents' decision-making in relation to perceived dominant societal expectations, this study uses mothers' accounts of their parenting, family, work, and childcare beliefs and practices.[22] Accounts are particularly important for women and mothers because their actions related to work and family are almost always subject to outside evaluation.[23] As a result, women and mothers may feel compelled to develop ways to shield themselves from external criticism and reconcile or justify their decisions in light of that prospective criticism. Although this study collected mothers' accounts of their family and work–life experiences, I approached data collection and analysis without *a priori* assumptions of the societal expectations to which participants' felt accountable in their decision-making.

Through analyzing the accounts of African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers, I revise existing theories and map out alternative theories related to motherhood, family, and parenting. By incorporating extant literature on motherhood, I examine how these mothers' beliefs and experiences converge or diverge with those of white middle-class mothers and denaturalize normative reference points set by that body of scholarship. I identify additional dimensions that influence African American middle-class mothers' decisions related to work, family, parenting, and childcare. I also explore how mothers justify their decisions in relation to societal expectations. Adding to existing research on motherhood, these participants' accounts suggest that mothers may not make decisions against the same or a consistent backdrop of societal expectations. I also examine outliers to better understand the social processes that produced the broader patterns I found in mothers' accounts. Overall, the findings from this research begin to unpack the diversity in societal expectations and how mothers respond to them.

INSIDER VERSUS OUTSIDER

Qualitative sociologists devote much time to analyzing the benefits and detractions of being an insider or outsider to the communities they study. As an interviewer, I shared certain traits with my participants. I am an African American woman who has earned advanced degrees, am a mother, and am middle class. Some of these characteristics were more immediately visible than others. I made the decision that I would not offer that I was a mother but would answer honestly whenever the question was asked and would quickly redirect the focus back to the person I was interviewing.

Shared background characteristics with my respondents facilitated building rapport and provided an environment in which they seemed willing to share intimate details of their lives and concerns about race as they intersected with class and gender. Some of my research participants in their interviews expressed a reluctance to talk about issues related to race with white people, so had I been a white researcher it may have been more difficult for these individuals to share their concerns. Despite these benefits, my shared background characteristics required that I remain vigilant in not taking for granted that I understood a participant's meanings. For example, an interviewee might say, "Well, you know how they treat us," or "You're a mom, so you know how it is." I responded with some variation of, "I think I know what you mean, but could you explain just so I'm sure and not making any assumptions?" In this way, I tried to continue building rapport while not making assumptions about shared understandings. I used a similar approach when mothers assumed understandings based on other shared identity traits, such as race, gender, or educational or occupational status.

In the vast majority of cases, respondents readily shared their perspectives on race and gender with me. On the few occasions when they did not, they often used words that served as proxies for race, such as "cultural" or "ethnic" background. Even in these instances, when asked specifically about the impact of race on their parenting decisions, these participants typically retold their stories, swapping out euphemistic language to speak about race more directly.

Unlike questions on race, gender, and motherhood, class differences were, at times, more challenging to discuss. Although many of the mothers easily revealed their opinions about African Americans who were from lower and higher socioeconomic class backgrounds, some exhibited initial discomfort when class differences were the topic of discussion. This manifested itself in changes in body language, long pauses between comments, attempts to reframe the question, or listing several caveats before providing their perspective. In general, I tried to put the interviewees at ease by saying something like, "I realize talking about class can sometimes feel uncomfortable. I'd really appreciate hearing your thoughts." More often than not, recognizing their discomfort enabled participants to move on and share their thoughts more freely. It seemed participants were reluctant to discuss class because they were uncomfortable making generalizations about poor African Americans and felt in doing so they were potentially revealing African Americans' "dirty laundry" to a broader mainstream public. Given longstanding assumptions of a linked-fate orientation among African Americans, discussed earlier in this book, for some respondents it may have been easier for them to talk about class distinctions with someone who did not share their racial background.

As a researcher, discussing class underscored two items related to methods. First, no magical configuration of shared or divergent characteristics best supports uncovering the most "accurate" depictions of the lived experience. The research process demanded that I attend to the strengths and challenges associated with my own standpoint and to how I might be perceived by the study participants. Thus, in some cases, being an insider or an outsider was a benefit or presented challenges I had to navigate. Second, the research process also demanded that I gently attend to uncovering the information contained within physical behavior, for example, pursed lips, stiffened backs, or wringing hands, as well as other behaviors, such as extended silences.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. All names are pseudonyms.

2. Lareau (2011); Hays (1996); Julian, McKenry, and McKelvey (1994).

3. Essed (1991, 31).

4. Ferguson (2000); Pascoe (2007, 46–49); Morris (2005, 2007); Blake, Butler, Lewis, and Darensbourg (2011); Brunson and Miller (2006); Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004); Pager (2003); Noguera (2003, 2008); Gregory (1995); Wingfield (2007, 2009); Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015); Welch and Payne (2010).

5. Ferguson (2000).

6. Ibid.

7. Ferguson (2000); Pascoe (2007, 46–49); Morris (2005).

8. Morris (2007); Ispa-Landa (2013); Blake, Butler, Lewis, and Darensbourg (2011).

9. San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community (2009); Williams, Spiker, Budi, and Skahen (2010).

10. Frey (2004); Ginwright and Akom (2007).

11. Ginwright and Akom (2007).

12. Frey (2004); Tolnay (2003).

13. Hays (2003); Stack (1974); Edin and Kefalas (2005).

14. Lareau, Evans, and Yee (2016); Lareau (2000, 2011); Lareau and Weininger (2003); Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau 2003; Julian, McKenry, and McKelvey (1994); Hays (1996); Landry (1987, 225–32).

15. Collins (2009, 18, 135, 248, 252); Crenshaw 1991.

16. Lareau (2011); Hays (1996).

17. Williams (2000); Hays (1996); Blair-Loy (2003); Landry (2000).

18. Gerson (1985, 176–84); Hays (1996, 131–51); Blair-Loy (2003, 91–141); Damaske (2011).

19. Lareau, Evans, and Yee (2016); Lareau (2000, 2011); Hays (1996); Julian, McKenry, and McKelvey (1994).

20. Lareau (2011).

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.; Kaufman (2005); Calarco (2011, 2014).

23. Blair-Loy (2003); Hays (1996); Gerson (1985); Damaske (2011).

24. Collins (2009); Carothers (1998); McDonald (2007); Barnes (2008).

25. Carothers (1998).

26. Collins (2009).

27. McDonald (2007).

28. Barnes (2016).

29. Barnes (2008, 2016); Dean, Marsh, and Landry (2013); Dow (2015a, 2016a).

30. Kohut et al. (2007); Landry (1987); Lacy (2007).

31. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004); Pager and Shepherd (2008); Oliver and Shapiro (1995); Iceland and Wilkes (2006); Feagin and Sikes (1994); Reardon, Fox, and Townsend (2015); Shapiro (2004).

32. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004); Roscigno, Karafin, and Tester (2009); Shapiro (2004).

33. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004); Roscigno, Karafin, and Tester (2009); Shapiro (2004); Oliver and Shapiro (1995); Iceland and Wilkes (2006); Pattillo (2005); Lacy (2007); Shapiro (2004); Grodsky and Pager (2001).

34. Pager and Shepherd (2008).

35. Oliver and Shapiro (1995, 19–23); Shapiro (2004, 109–11).

36. Heflin and Pattillo (2006); O'Brien (2012).

37. Reardon, Fox, and Townsend (2015); Shapiro (2004, 94); Pattillo (1999, 21–30).

38. Feagin and Sikes (1994); Feagin, Early, and McKinney (2001); Ray (2017).

39. Feagin (1991, 1992); Feagin and Sikes (1994); Feagin, Early, and McKinney (2001); Ray (2017).

40. Sharkey (2009).

41. Pattillo (1999, 6–7).

42. Harrison et al. (1990); Hill and Sprague (1999).

43. Bluestone and Tamis-LeMonda (1999); Hill and Sprague (1999).

44. Julian, McKenry, and McKelvey (1994); Hill and Sprague (1999); Pew Research Center (2015b).

45. Ladner (1971).

46. Crouter et al. (2008); McHale et al (2006); Hill (2001); McHale et al. (2006); Taylor (2000); Dow (2016a).

47. Feagin and Sikes (1994); Ausdale and Feagin (1996); St. Jean and Feagin (1998); Tatum (1992); Johnson and Staples (1993, 220); Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015); Dow (2015a, 2016b); Todd, Thiem, and Neel (2016); Uttal (1999).

48. Oliver and Shapiro (1995); Feagin and Sikes (1994); Conley (1999).

49. O'Donoghue (2004).

50. Zinn (1994).

51. Omi and Winant (2015).

52. Dawson (2001, 11).

53. Waters (1999, 5–7, 46, 90, 93, 285, 329, 332).

54. Kohut et al. (2007).

55. Lacy (2007).

56. US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017); Hays (1996); Blair-Loy (2003); Walzer (1998); Smith (1993).

57. Williams (2000, 19–33); Hays (1996, 30–35); Parsons and Bales (1955, 3–35).

58. Landry (2000, 22–25); Williams (2000, 1–3); Hays (1996, 30–35).

59. Hays (1996, 6–9).

60. Blair-Loy (2003).

61. Ibid., 172–91; Hays (1996, 131–78); Gerson (1985, 216–32); Walzer (1998, 174–85); Christopher (2012); Arendell (2000).

62. Blair-Loy (2003); Gerson (1985); Hays (1996); Walzer (1998); Damaske (2011).

63. Dill (1986); Collins (1987, 2009); Glenn (1991, 1992); Glenn (1994); Segura (1994); Garey (1999); Dow (2016a).

64. Collins (2009, 5–6); Glenn (1994); Christopher (2012); Barnes (2008); Dean et al. (2013); Landry (2000); Carothers (1998); Dow (2016a); Hock, Gnezda, and McBride (1984); Shuster (1993); Volling and Belsky (1993).

65. J. Jones (2010); Glenn (1994); Glenn (1992); Collins (2009); Dill (1986); hooks (1984, 133–47), Landry (2000).

66. Dill (1986).

67. Collins (2009); Glenn (1991, 1992, 1994); Zinn and Dill (1994).

68. Choo and Ferree (2010).

69. Zinn (1998); hooks (1984, 133–47); Hill (1999, 79–80).

70. Glenn (1992); J. Jones (2010).

71. Dill (2008).

72. Glenn (1992, 1994); J. Jones (2010); Zinn (1998); Carothers (1998); hooks (1984); Roberts (1997, 2002).

73. Collins (2009); Glenn (1992); J. Jones (2010); Landry (2000); Carothers (1998); hooks (1984, 133–47); King (1988); Higginbotham (2001).

74. Collins (1987, 2009); Higginbotham (2001); Dean et al. (2013); Barnes (2008); Dow (2016a, 2016b).

75. Barnes (2008); Dean et al. (2013); Tatum (1992); Dow (2015a, 2015b, 2016b).

76. Collins (1987, 2009); Landry (2000); Barnes (2008); Dean et al. (2013); Glenn (1992, 1994); Dow (2015b, 2016a).

77. Collins (1987, 2009); Dean et al (2013); Landry (2000); Dow (2016a).

78. Collins (1987, 2009); Landry (2000); Lorde (1984, 72–80); Higginbotham (2001); Dow (2015a, 2016a, 2016b).

79. Landry (2000, 31); Collins (1987, 2009); Dow (2015a, 2016a); Higginbotham (2001).

80. Lareau (2000, 2002, 2011); Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003).

CHAPTER 1. CREATING RACIAL SAFETY AND COMFORT

1. Lareau (2000, 2002, 2011); Miller (2015); Pew Research Center 2015b. Lareau (2011) describes how middle-class parents engage in concerted cultivation, an approach to parenting that focuses on enrolling children in a host of enrichment activities aimed toward supporting their individual achievement and development, even if, at times, this is to the detriment of a family's needs. In her research on class reproduction, Lareau argues that both African American and white middle-class parents engage in "concerted cultivation" in raising their children. This approach to parenting encourages logical reasoning and organized intellectual and physical enrichment activities for children. In addition, parents and children have an entitlement and service-oriented view of educational and other dominant institutions across society. Class status is viewed as having a larger impact on parenting practices than does race. Thus, individuals who acquire certain markers of middle-class status, such as a college education, homeownership, and a good income, are thought to have life trajectories that are predominantly defined by these markers.

2. Kaplan (1997); Hays (2003); Edin and Kefalas (2005).

3. Zinn (1994).

4. Edin and Kefalas (2005); Kaplan (1997); Hill (1999).

5. Lareau (2002, 2011); Lareau and Weininger (2003); Calarco (2014).

6. Lareau and Horvat (1999).

7. Ferguson (2000); Morris (2005, 2007); Blake, Butler, Lewis, and Darenbourg (2011); Essed (1991, 31).

8. Strayhorn (2010); Ferguson (2000); Holland (2012); Morris (2005, 2007); Pascoe (2007); Noguera (2003); Dow (2016b).

9. Brunson and Miller (2006); Hagan, Shedd, and Payne (2005); Rios (2009).

10. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004); Grodsky and Pager (2001); Pager (2003); Wingfield (2009, 2011).

11. Holland (2012).

12. Ibid.; Ispa-Landa (2013).

13. Ferguson (2000); Morris (2005); Noguera (2008).

14. Ferguson (2000); Pascoe (2007); Morris (2005).

15. Morris (2007); Ispa-Landa (2013); Blake et al. (2011).

16. Brunson and Miller (2006); Hagan et al. (2005).

17. Brunson and Miller (2006).

18. Alvarez and Buckley (2013); Washington (2012); Coates (2014); Severson (2013); McKinley (2009). This is discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

19. Collins (2009).

20. Schrock and Schwalbe (2009).

21. Ibid.

22. Collins (2004); Ford (2011); Young (2011).

23. Dow (2015b); Wingfield (2007); Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2007, 2009).

24. McLaughlin (2014).

25. Coogler (2013).

26. Ferguson (2000); Morris (2005); Pascoe (2007); Noguera (2003, 2008).

27. Higginbotham (1993, 185–230); Collins (2004, 72–75, 2009).

28. Hunter (2007); Goldsmith, Hamilton, and Darity (2007).

29. Ford (2011); Harper (2004); Harris (2008); Noguera (2003, 2008); Pascoe (2007); Young (2011).

30. Pascoe (2007).

31. In 2015, in part motivated by the death of Sandra Bland, who was arrested for a minor traffic violation and died while in police custody, the social movement #SAYHERNAME began. This movement aims to shine a light on the violence that young African American women confront during their interactions with law enforcement. The movement emerged after the completion of this study, and although it raises important concerns, the mothers in this research were less focused on issues related to their daughters' physical safety.

32. Musker, Clements, and Edwards (2009).

33. *Sesame Street* (2010).

34. Kanazawa (2011).

35. Carter (2007).

36. Collins (2009, 21–44, 1986, S24).

37. Du Bois (1903, 2–3).

38. Shelov, Altmann, and Hannemann (2009).
39. Lareau (2011).
40. Collins (2009).

CHAPTER 2. BORDER CROSSERS

1. Steinberg (1989, 82–88).
2. Ibid.
3. Carter (2003; 2005, 10; 2006); Glaser and Strauss (1967, 147–63); Strauss (1971).
4. Carter (2006); Higginbotham and Weber (1992).
5. Higginbotham and Weber (1992).
6. Bettie (2002; 2003, 150–56); Landry (2000); Higginbotham and Weber (1992); McDonald (1997; 2007, 1–63).
7. Higginbotham and Weber (1992); Wharton and Thorne (1997).
8. Chiteji and Hamilton (2002); Heflin and Pattillo (2006); O'Brien (2012).
9. Higginbotham and Weber (1992); Landry (2000); McDonald (2007); Bettie (2002; 2003, 150–56).
10. Dawson (2001, 11).
11. Waters (1999, 5–7, 46, 90, 93, 285, 329, 332).
12. Garcia-Lopez (2008).
13. McDonald (1997; 2007, 1–63).
14. Bourdieu (1984, 169–75).
15. Reardon, Fox, and Townsend (2015); Pattillo (1999, 21–30).
16. Pattillo-McCoy (2000).
17. Tatum (1992, 113–30).
18. Reardon, Fox, and Townsend (2015).
19. Roscigno, Karafin, and Tester (2009); Pager and Shepherd (2008); Oliver and Shapiro (1995); Shapiro (2004, 109–11).
20. Oliver and Shapiro (1995); Pager and Shepherd (2008).
21. Waters (1999).
22. Bourdieu (1984, 169–75).
23. Fordham and Ogbu (1986); Neal-Barnett (2001).
24. Landry and Marsh (2011).
25. Graham (1999, 1–44).
26. Ibid.
27. Edin and Kefalas (2005, 138).
28. Montgomery (2006).
29. Reardon, Fox, and Townsend (2015); Wen et al. (2013); Zenk et al. (2005).
30. Bourdieu (1984, 169–75).
31. Carter (2003, 2005, 2006).

CHAPTER 3. BORDER POLICERS

1. For a general discussion of race as denegated ethnicity, see Wacquant (1997).
2. Bonilla-Silva (1997).
3. Dawson (2001, 11); Simien (2005); Austin, Middleton, and Yon (2012).
4. Kohut et al. (2007).
5. Anderson (1999); N. Jones (2010); Lacy (2007); Banks (2010).
6. Anderson (1999); N. Jones (2010).
7. Lacy (2007).
8. Banks (2010).
9. Pattillo (2000, 22–30); Oliver and Shapiro (1995).
10. Edin and Kefalas (2005).
11. Anderson (1999); N. Jones (2010).
12. Fryer, Pager, and Spenkuch (2011).
13. Ibid.
14. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004).
15. Fryer et al. (2011).
16. Eliasoph (1999).

CHAPTER 4. BORDER TRANSCENDERS

1. Loving v. Virginia, 388 U.S. 1 (1967); Haney-Lopez (2006, 203).
2. Rockquemore and Brunsma (2004, 2008, 36–38).
3. Pew Research Center (2015a); Qian (2005).
4. Pew Research Center (2015a).
5. Wang (2015).
6. Kohut et al. (2010); Qian (2005).
7. Brown and Douglas (1996); Jones (2011); Qian (2004).
8. Haney-López (2011, 2014); Wise (2010); Dawson (2011).
9. Ibid.
10. Haney-López (2011).
11. Ibid.
12. Wenner (2012).
13. Obama (2017).
14. Scholars have found that African Americans generally, and those who are middle class specifically, continue to face varying degrees of discrimination in lending and housing (Roscigno, Karafin, and Tester 2009; Massey, Gross, and Shibuya 1994) as well as in occupational opportunities (Pager 2003). Based on the historical legacy of de facto and de jure discrimination in the United States, African American families possess far less wealth than their white counterparts

(Conley 1999; Oliver and Shapiro 1995; Shapiro 2004; Taylor, Kochhar, Fry, Velasco, and Motel 2011; Kochhar and Fry 2014). In addition, based on how the public educational system is structured, children of African American middle-class families are often educated in schools that are poorly funded, lack adequate infrastructure, and have lower levels of student achievement (Pattillo 1999). These children are also more likely to grow up in neighborhoods that have higher levels of crime and that do not have the same level of community services as their white middle-class peers (Pattillo 1999, 2000, 22–30). Additionally, African American children are treated differently based on their gender by major institutions within society, such as at school (Ferguson 2000; Pascoe 2007; Morris 2005, 2007; Noguera 2008); by law enforcement (Brunson and Miller 2006); and as adults within the workplace (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Wingfield 2007, 2009; Pager 2003). Scholars have documented that African American boys routinely face harsher disciplinary treatment in the school system because they are more often labeled as aggressive and violent (see chapter 1; Ferguson 2000; Pascoe 2007; Morris 2005). African American girls are also confronted with different and negative assumptions about their behavior, including being viewed as aggressive, sassy, or unladylike (see chapter 1; Morris 2007).

15. Davis (2001); Qian (2004); Rockquemore and Brunsma (2008).
16. Davis (2001); Rockquemore and Brunsma (2008).
17. Haney- López (2006, 20, 83).
18. Jones (2011); Rockquemore and Brunsma (2008); Qian (2004).
19. Pew Research Center (2015a).
20. Ibid.; Rockquemore and Brunsma (2004, 2008, 87–102).
21. Pew Research Center (2015a).

CHAPTER 5. THE MARKET-FAMILY MATRIX

1. Sojourner Truth (1851).
2. Dill (2008); hooks (1984, 133–47).
3. Roberts (1997, 305–7).
4. Zinn (1994).
5. Ibid.
6. Collins (1986, 2009, 173–200); Dow (2016a).
7. Hays (1996, 1–18); Blair-Loy (2003).
8. Dean, Marsh, and Landry (2013); Landry (2000); Dow (2016a).
9. Dill (2008); hooks (1984, 133–47); Glenn (1991, 1992, 1994); Zinn (1994).
10. Smith (1993); Welter (1966); Williams (2000); Davies and Frink (2014).
11. Williams (2000); Hays (1996); Landry (2000); Welter (1966).
12. Hays (1996); Williams (2000); hooks (1984).
13. Welter (1966).

14. Coontz (1992); Landry (2000); Welter (1966); Williams (2000); Zinn (1994).

15. Hays (1996); Weber (1930, 362).

16. Smith (1989, 35; 1992).

17. Coontz (1997, 55); Landry (2000, 28–31); Laslett and Brenner (1989).

18. Davies and Frink (2014).

19. Mink (1995, 9–13).

20. Quadagno (1994, 117–54).

21. Ibid.

22. Mink (1995, 9–13).

23. An excerpt from this Supreme Court case reads as follows: "That woman's physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence is obvious. This is especially true when the burdens of motherhood are upon her. Even when they are not, by abundant testimony of the medical fraternity, continuance for a long time on her feet at work, repeating this from day to day, tends to injurious effects upon the body, and as healthy mothers are essential to vigorous offspring, the physical wellbeing of woman becomes an object of public interest and care in order to preserve the strength and vigor of the race." Muller v. Oregon, 208 U.S. 412 (1908) at 421–23.

24. Davies and Frink (2014).

25. Laslett and Brenner (1989).

26. Parsons and Bales (1955, 151–61).

27. Coontz (1992, 23–29).

28. Ibid., 26–27.

29. Ibid., 24–29.

30. Coontz (1997, 37–39).

31. Ibid.; Hays (1996); Parsons and Bales (1955, 151–61); Smith (1993); Williams (2000).

32. Smith (1993).

33. Williams (2000).

34. Blair-Loy (2003).

35. Gerson (1985).

36. Hays (1996, 2003).

37. Damaske (2011).

38. Belkin (2003); Slaughter (2012).

39. Steiner (2007).

40. Shear and Saulny (2012).

41. Blair-Loy (2003); Hays (1996); Walzer (1998).

42. Blair-Loy (2003); Hays (1996); Walzer (1998).

43. Blair-Loy (2003).

44. Ibid.; Christopher (2012); Damaske (2011); Estes (2005); Gerson (1985); Macdonald (2011), Uttal (1996); Dow (2015b, 2016a); hooks (1984).

45. Collins (2009); Barnes (2008); Dow (2015b, 2016a).
46. Landry (2000); Weber (1930, 362).
47. Parsons and Bales (1955, 9–11); Smith (1993).
48. Glenn (1991,1992, 1994); J. Jones (2010); Landry (2000).
49. J. Jones (2010); Johnson and Staples (2005, 19–22).
50. J. Jones (2010); Johnson and Staples (2005, 19–22); Roberts (1997, 35).
51. Roberts (1997, 34–37).
52. Glenn (1991, 1992, 1994); J. Jones (2010); Rollins (1985).
53. Davies and Frink (2014); Frymer (2008); Quadagno (1994); Collins (2009, 52–58).
54. Collins (2009, 45–68); Landry (2000, 47–55).
55. Quadagno (1994).
56. Glenn (1992, 1994).
57. Glenn (1994); J. Jones (2010).
58. Quadagno (1994); Goodwin (1995).
59. Goodwin (1995).
60. Abramovitz (1996, 314–29).
61. Gordon (1994, 275–77).
62. Ibid.
63. Rollins (1985); Glenn (1991, 1992).
64. Nadasen (2015, 11).
65. Nadasen (2015, 2).
66. Williams (2000).
67. Glenn (1991, 1992, 1994).
68. Nadasen (2015, 10); Rollins (1985); Landry (2000, 48); J. Jones (2010, 2–4).
69. Nadasen (2015, 10); Branch and Wooten (2012); Williams (2000, 163).
70. Jones (2010, 2–4); Rollins (1985).
71. Landry (2000, 28–29).
72. Glenn (1991).
73. Ibid., 1335.
74. Glenn (1991, 1994); Kessler-Harris (2003, ix–x).
75. Roberts (1997); Glenn (1991); J. Jones (2010).
76. hooks (1984, 133–47).
77. Collins (2009, 173–99); Dean et al. (2013); Dow (2015b, 2016a); Landry (2000); Segura (1994).
78. Collins (1986, 2009, 173–99); Landry (2000, 29–31).
79. Dow (2015b); Collins (2009, 69–96); Harris-Perry (2011); Roberts (1997, 2002); hooks (1984, 133–47); Lorde (1984).
80. Collins (2009, 69–96).
81. Ibid.
82. Collins (2009, 72).
83. Collins (2009, 74–76).

84. Massey et al. (2009); US Department of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research (1965).

85. US Department of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research (1965); Dow (2015b); Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009, 25); Collins (2009, 174–75).

86. Collins (2009, 120, 174–75).

87. Ibid.; Blum and Deussen (1996); Higginbotham (2001); Landry (2000).

88. Barnes (2008); Damaske (2011); Dean et al. (2013); Dow (2015b, 2016a); Higginbotham (2001).

89. Frazier (1957, 125).

90. Angelou (1978); Morrison (1970); Naylor (1983); Walker (1982), Edwards (1998); Randolph (1997, 1999).

91. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2007, 2009); Collins (2009, 120, 174–75); Dow (2015b).

92. Dow (2015b); Collins (2009, 120).

93. Collins (2009, 80); Roberts (1997, 17; 2002, 64).

94. Hirschmann and Liebert (2001, 97); Roberts (2002, 64).

95. Douglas and Michaels (2004, 184–91).

96. *Washington Star* (1976).

97. Douglas and Michaels (2004, 184–99); Hirschmann and Liebert (2001, 89–94).

98. Gilliam 1999; Hancock (2003); Nadasen (2007).

99. Roberts (1997, 17).

100. Roberts (2002); Glenn (1991).

101. Blake (2012); Stein (2013).

102. Roberts (1997).

103. Dow (2015b).

104. Roberts (1997).

105. Collins (2009, 69–96).

106. Collins (1986, 2009).

107. Higginbotham (1993, 193–94).

108. Landry (2000).

109. Ibid.; Carlson (1992).

110. Landry (2000); Naples (1992).

111. Landry (2000).

112. Dill (2008); hooks (1984, 133–47).

113. Sennett (1970); Padgett (1997).

114. Collins (1994).

115. Kane (2000); Littlejohn-Blake and Darling (1993); Mosley-Howard and Evans (2000); Sudarkasa (1980, 1996).

116. Collins (1994, 2009, 178–83, 189–95, 209, 218, 241–42).

117. Collins (1994, 2009, 178–83, 189–95, 209, 218, 241–42); Dow (2015a, 2016a); Uttal (1996).

118. Collins (1994, 2009, 178–83, 189–95, 209, 218, 241–42); Landry (2000, 48); J. Jones (2010, 31–43) Stack (1974, 62–89).

119. Collins (1994, 2009, 178–83, 189–95, 209, 218, 241–42); J. Jones (2010, 31–32, 35–43).

120. Taylor et al. (2010).

121. Collins (2009).

122. Collins (2009); Gibson (2005); J. Jones (2010); Taylor et al. (2010); Taylor, Kochhar, Cohn, et al. (2011).

123. Roschelle (1997, 141–43).

124. Brewster and Padavic (2002).

125. Ibid.

126. Blau and Currie (2006); Brandon (2000); Higginbotham and Weber (1992); Hogan, Hao, and Parish (1990); Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004).

127. Brewster and Padavic (2002); Dow (2015a).

128. Bonilla-Silva (1997).

129. Mazama and Lundy (2012); Uttal (1996); Uttal and Tuominen (1999); Dow (2015a).

130. Brewster and Padavic (2002).

131. Yoon and Waite (1994).

132. Ibid.; Cohany and Sok (2007); Landry (2000).

133. Pager (2003).

134. Glauber (2008); Hodges and Budig (2010).

135. Higginbotham (2001, 63–71).

136. Ibid.

137. Vespa (2009).

138. Pew Research Center (2007).

139. hooks (1984, 133–47).

140. Dow (2015b, 2016a); McDonald (2007, 51–52); King (1988).

141. hooks (1984. 133–47).

CHAPTER 6. RACIAL HISTORIES OF FAMILY AND WORK

1. Slaughter (2012).

2. Belkin (2003).

3. Sandberg (2013).

4. Blair-Loy (2003); Hays (1996); Stone (2007).

5. Blair-Loy and Dehart (2003); Damaske (2011, 45).

6. Barnes (2008); Collins (1987, 1994, 2009); Dean, Marsh, and Landry (2013); Dow (2015b, 2016a); Landry (2000).

7. Blair-Loy (2003); Damaske (2011); Gerson (1985); Hays (1996).

8. hooks (1984, 133–47).
9. Gerson (1985, 181); Damaske (2011); Blair-Loy (2003, 113).
10. Gerson (1985, 181); Damaske (2011); Blair-Loy (2003, 113).
11. Landry (2000, 72–75, 5–6).
12. Landry (2000, 56–81).
13. Barnes (2016).
14. Blair-Loy (2003); Hays (1996).
15. Garey (1999, 108–39).
16. Rollins (1985); Glenn (1992).
17. Hays (1996, 138).
18. Barnes (2016, 16–19).
19. Collins (2009, 1–44).
20. Kaplan (1997, 142, 147–149, 155–57).

CHAPTER 7. ALTERNATIVE CONFIGURATIONS OF CHILD-REARING

1. Collins (2009, 178).
2. Hays (1999, 8–9).
3. Hochschild and Machung (2003, 11–21).
4. Macdonald (2011); Christopher (2012).
5. Hays (1996); Blair-Loy (2003); Williams (2000).
6. Williams (2000); Blair-Loy (2003); Gerson (1985); Damaske (2011); Stone (2007).
7. Barnes (2008); Dean, Marsh, and Landry (2013); Dow (2015b, 2016a); Landry (2000).
8. Roschelle (1997, 19).
9. Ibid., 191.
10. Taylor et al. (2010).
11. Stack (1974); Johnson and Staples (2005, 245–76); Padgett (1997); Collins (2009).
12. Johnson and Staples (2005, 245–76); Gibson (2005); Kane (2000); Littlejohn-Blake and Darling (1993); Mosley-Howard and Evans (2000); Sudarkasa (1996, 1980); Taylor, Kochhar, Cohn, et al. (2011).
13. Collins (2009); J. Jones (2010).
14. Collins (2009); J. Jones (2010); Glenn (1992).
15. Brewster and Padavic (2002).
16. Ibid.; Roschelle (1997, 172–78).
17. Roschelle (1997, 107).
18. Stack (1974).
19. Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004).

20. Research suggests that African American middle-class women who became middle class through upward mobility are more likely than their white counterparts to retain relationships with their mothers and rely more heavily on kin and community networks for instrumental support (Higginbotham and Weber 1992). Brewster and Padavic (2002) provide evidence that the use of kin-care has increased among middle-class African American families, and other scholars have suggested both economic and cultural explanations (see Sarkisian, Gerena, and Gerstel 2006; Sarkisian and Gerstel 2004, 2011; Dow 2015a).

21. Roschelle (1997, 142–43).

22. Fathers also played a key part in managing family and work responsibilities. When married or partnered, the mothers who engaged in work outside of the home described their child's father as having routine times when they were responsible for picking up and dropping off of children or caring for them more generally. In addition, among the married or partnered employed mothers, fathers were often the first people they turned to when work–family conflicts surfaced. A few fathers were stay-at-home dads, either in order to extend the period of time younger children remained in parental care or because they were the primary childcare provider for extended periods of time while their wives were the primary breadwinners (see chapter 6).

23. Small, Harding, and Lamont (2010); Wilson (2010), Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004); Roschelle (1997); Dow (2015a).

24. Fordham and Ogbu (1986); Dill (2008).

25. Compton and Pollak (2015); Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004); Roschelle (1997, 135–43).

26. Jayakody, Chatters, and Taylor (1993); Roschelle (1997, 135–43).

27. Garey (1999, 108–39).

28. Ibid.

29. Dean et al. (2013); Collins (2009); Barnes (2008); Dow (2016a).

30. According to Capizzano, Adams, and Ost (2006), African American children under the age of five, regardless of the economic resources of the caregiver, are more likely to be in center-based childcare. For other racial groups, increased parental incomes and educational levels are associated with increased use of center-based care, but there is no significant difference among African Americans from different educational and income levels.

31. Stack (1974).

32. Small (2006).

33. Small (2009).

34. Hays (1996).

35. Hays (1996, 47); Walzer (1998, 15–46, 128–42).

36. Ibid.

37. Iovine (1999).

38. Sears and Sears (2001).
39. Hays (1996).
40. Walzer (1998, 15–46).
41. Walzer (1998, 128–42).
42. Hays (1996); Uttal (1999).
43. Hays (1996); Walzer (1998).
44. Brewster and Padavic (2002).
45. Roschelle (1997, 135–43).
46. Hays (1996); Walzer (1998); Smith (1993).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

1. Lareau (2011); Lareau and Weininger (2003).
2. Lareau (2011); Lareau and Weininger (2003); Calarco (2011, 2014); Wilson (1980).
3. Smith (1993); Hay (1996).
4. Blair-Loy (2003).
5. Lareau (1989, 2011).
6. Brewster and Padavic (2002).
7. Lacy (2007, 220).
8. Ibid.
9. (Dawson (2001, 11); Simien (2005); Austin, Middleton, and Yon (2012).
10. "Bryant Gumble" (2015).
11. Bonilla-Silva (1997).
12. Mazama and Lundy (2012); Uttal and Tuominen (1999); Uttal (1997).
13. Walzer (1998, 146–47).
14. Hochschild and Machung (2003).
15. Ibid.; Walzer (1998, 41); Macdonald (2011).
16. Belkin (2003).
17. Stone (2007); Boeckmann, Misra, and Budig (2015); Jones (2012); Ehrenreich, Garey, and Hansen (2011); Jones (2012).
18. Slaughter (2012).
19. Hochschild and Machung (2003); hooks (1984, 133–47).
20. Frankenburg (1994); Solinger (1994); Collins (2009); hooks (1984); Dill (2008).

APPENDIX: METHODS

1. Pattillo (2005); Lacy (2007).
2. Pattillo (2005); Lacy (2007).

3. Tolnay 2003; Broussard (1993).
4. Bay Area Census (n.d.a.).
5. Bay Area Census (n.d.e).
6. San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community (2009).
7. Ginwright and Akom (2007); Broussard (1993).
8. Bay Area Census (n.d.b.).
9. Bay Area Census (n.d.c.).
10. Bay Area Census (n.d.d.).
11. Williams, Spiker, Budi, and Skahen (2010).
12. Teranishi (2006); Frey (2004); Allen and Turner (2011).
13. Frey (2004).
14. Ibid.
15. San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community (2009); Ginwright and Akom (2007); Teranishi (2005).
16. Frey (2004).
17. Ibid.
18. A total of sixty-five mothers were interviewed. Five were excluded because they did not meet requirements of the study.
19. Bay Area Census (n.d.e).
20. Glaser and Strauss (1967); Strauss and Corbin (1998).
21. Ragin (2000).
22. Orbuch (1997).
23. Damaske (2011, 148–49).

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