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For Our Children:
How Black Parents Approach Homeschooling

By

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Doctor of Philosophy

Sociology

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For Our Children:
How Black Parents Approach Homeschooling

By

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the
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Abstract

For Our Children:
How Black Parents Approach Homeschooling
By Matthew Rankin

This dissertation is comprised of three separate yet related empirical studies, centering the motivational, curricular, and instructional dimensions of Black homeschooling praxis, respectively. Employing a mixed methodology—consisting of multiple surveys, solo and paired interviews, and focus group discussions—I examine how 1) the genders of parents and their children combine to shape homeschooling motives; 2) faith and race independently *and* concertedly shape curricular development; and 3) parents conceptualize and engage collaborative teaching, within the broader stylistic continuum of homeschooling instruction.

Paper One couches gender as a nuanced, but no less substantive, motivator for Black homeschooling. Using gendered ethnic-racial socialization (GERS) as a theoretical frame, I argue that parents' motives stem from inverse processes: *building from without* (i.e., for homeschooled Black boys) and *building from within* (i.e., for homeschooled Black girls). Paper Two showcases faith and race as prime cultural influences, on parents' homeschooling curriculum. While research typically frames faith and race as either discrete, or inversely related, forces, I demonstrate how they mold curricula separately *and* jointly, via formal and informal means. Paper Three analyzes the philosophical and logistical underpinnings of parents' teaching styles. Providing a granular view of how adult-led, child-led, and collaborative instruction comingle on the stylistic spectrum, I frame homeschooling instruction as a malleable, evolutionary process—one tailored to the goals and needs of individual families. Furthermore, I show that Black homeschoolers, though immersed in a society with racialized barriers, create holistic and limitless educational experiences, through pedagogical versatility.

Findings inform parenting and education research generally, while pointedly advancing homeschooling research, particularly that which foregrounds educative dynamics within Black familial contexts. By examining gendered homeschooling motives, cultural influences on curricula, and dynamic instructional methods, this project highlights the inner complexities of home education. Last, this study is also poised to impact traditional education practices. Given the fraught history between traditional schooling and Black students, its findings address longstanding, or previously unnoticed, deficiencies in private and public schooling—factors that help undergird the rise of Black homeschooling.

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Introduction

Homeschooling is a form of private education that is parent-led, deliberate, and signifies an alternative to traditional schooling (i.e., private, public, or charter schooling) (Gaither, 2017; Ray, 2021). The roots of this practice date back to the colonial period, during which parents customarily assumed responsibility for teaching their own children (Cook et al., 2013; Gloeckner & Jones, 2013). Industrialization, however, transformed the economic and sociopolitical landscapes of the U.S., forever changing how people lived, worked, and learned in society (Groeger, 2021). The advent of compulsory education epitomizes such change, as schooling relocated from the private sphere (i.e., home) to the public sphere (i.e., schoolhouse) (Cai et al., 2002; McKeon, 2007). The ensuing passage of compulsory education laws (i.e., from the mid-1800s, through the early 1900s) all but vanquished home-based learning, rendering it obscure until the 1970s—the dawn of modern homeschooling (Jolly & Matthews, 2018; MacConney, 2022).

Fifty-plus years later, homeschooling now lies at the fore of the popular imagination, when considering the most prominent trends in education. A persistent rise in the U.S. homeschooling population accentuates this point. To establish perspective, there were approximately 13,000 homeschoolers in the 1970s; this number climbs to nearly 5 million, by the year 2021 (Ray, 2017, 2021). Homeschooling has not only grown more populous, but it continues to diversify with respect to familial motives, pedagogical methods, and social demographics (Fields-Smith, 2021; Pannone, 2017). Within the modern era, White, middle-class Evangelicals—those motivated by religious purpose(s)—have served as archetypal homeschoolers (Van Galen, 1988). Yet, as more people of varying faiths, class statuses, and ethnic-racial distinctions join the fold, the look of a "typical" homeschooling family remains in a state of flux.

Throughout American history, the Black educational tradition has always carried a subversive quality. Systemic models of racial exclusion and marginalization (i.e., spanning the eras of chattel slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow) rendered conventional paths to education (e.g., private and public

schooling, from K-12 to the collegiate level) inaccessible for most Black families. In response, Black parents and community leaders routinely educated their children *outside* the confines of traditional institutions, whether in home-, church-, or community-based spaces (Anderson, (2010[1988]); Walker, 1996, 2000, 2018). While Black homeschooling—as a matter of both public awareness and quantifiable measure(s)—has been historically overshadowed by White homeschooling, it is vital to note that Black communities are not entirely foreign to this alternate mode of education.

Today, Black Americans—perhaps more than any other social group—typify demographic shifts in home education. Just as the broader homeschooling populace has increased, so, too, has the number of Black homeschoolers. The emergence of COVID-19 intensified the growth of this burgeoning subset. Prior to March 2020, Black families made up 3.3% of homeschoolers. This figure swells to 16.1% by Fall 2020, signaling an expansion that outpaces all other ethnic-racial groups (Eggleston & Fields, 2021; Wamsely, 2021). (Note: These percentages refer to Black families who are homeschooling voluntarily, as opposed to those who are performing traditional school-sourced tasks online.) Furthermore, even after school districts lifted virtual learning mandates, scores of Black parents chose to remain as home-based educators. *Why have so many Black families chosen to eschew traditional education, in favor of the once-fringe practice of homeschooling?*

Like so many others, Black parents homeschool for various reasons. Early studies cast ideological (i.e., religious) and pedagogical (i.e., curricular) motives as leading causes for homeschooling (Van Galen, 1988). However, parental concerns about children's mental, emotional, and physical safety (i.e., due to academic stress, bullying, fights, school shootings, etc.) also represent prime motivators (Mazama & Lundy, 2015; Rimm, 2017; Williams-Johnson & Fields-Smith, 2022). While Black parents may attest to either one—or all—of these misgivings, ethnic-racial motives for homeschooling prove highly significant. The legacy and promise of *Brown v. Board* notwithstanding, there are qualitative *and* quantitative differences between how Black and non-Black students experience traditional education. More pointedly, research has long addressed the fraught relationship between the traditional schooling apparatus and Black students (Annamma et al., 2016; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). The

compounding of interpersonal biases (i.e., whether implicit or overt) and structural racism (e.g., stark racial disparities in honors course placements; extracurricular club enrollments; school punishments; curricular frameworks; etc.) yield negative experiences—and outcomes—for Black girls and boys (Cartledge & Dukes, 2009; Losen & Skibba, 2010; McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Fearing that racial discrimination will stunt—or damage—their children's psychological and socioemotional development, many Black parents seek alternative modes of education. Through homeschooling, Black parents maximize pedagogical freedoms, customizing curricula and instruction in ways that befit familial goals and needs.

Commonly, Black homeschoolers promote culturally grounded learning, specifically that which centers African diasporic themes (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama & Lundy 2012, 2013, 2014). These lessons bode well for Black homeschooled children, whose ethnic-racial identities are reflected in—and thus reinforced by—the very content of their studies. In addition to bolstering racial pride, confidence, and self-esteem, scholarship reveals tangible benefits to homeschooling for Black children (e.g., standardized learner outcomes, as compared with Black and non-Black traditionally schooled students) (Ray, 2015).

Research Questions

Despite advances in Black homeschooling literature, several queries remain unanswered vis-à-vis parental motivations, curricular design, and instructional methods. First, scholars highlight the ethnic-racial implications of homeschooling, yet it is unclear how *gender dynamics* (i.e., between Black fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons) imbue parents' ethnic-racial motivations. Studies demonstrate that gender shapes Black parenting techniques, indicating how Black fathers and mothers differ in transmitting cultural messages to their daughters and sons (Brown et al., 2017; Davis Tribble et al., 2017). Given that Black parents routinely bestow cultural messages via homeschooling, how gender impacts said messaging is worthy of empirical study.

Second, although notions of race weigh heavily in Black homeschooling, the cultural influence of faith rings every bit as loudly, in many families' pedagogy (Mazama & Lundy, 2014). Former studies treat race and faith as inversely related forces, with either one featuring predominantly—or absolutely—in homeschooling curricula. Yet, how Black parents construct race and faith as *joint* cultural influences is less known and, thus, requires deeper investigation.

Third, scholars reveal that Black homeschooling instruction runs the stylistic gamut (Llewellyn, 1996; Mazama, 2016; Murphy, 2012). Depending on individual, familial, or logistical goals/needs, parents may practice adult-led, child-led, or collaborative (i.e., varying blends of adult- and child-led approaches) teaching styles—whether discretely, or in combination—often yielding instructional control as children mature. Instructional diversity defines Black homeschooling, but research typically examines teaching styles in isolation, rather than showcasing transitional adjustments, from one end of the stylistic continuum to the other. Moreover, although most Black parents perform collaborative instruction, few works discuss the philosophical and logistical components of this approach, much less how it dovetails with the broader instructional spectrum. This gap marks a research opportunity, whereby elements of Black homeschooling instruction—namely that of varying teaching styles, decreasing parental control, and increasing children's independence—may be analyzed in cohesive, evolutionary terms.

This dissertation—a project comprised of three separate, yet topically related, empirical papers—engages these three research voids. The following research questions anchor the respective studies:

1) *How do the genders of parents and their children combine to shape Black homeschooling motivations?*

2) *How do faith and race concertedly shape curricular development for Black homeschoolers?*

3) *How do Black parents conceptualize and engage collaborative instruction, within the stylistic continuum of homeschooling instruction?*

Methodology

I employ a mixed methodology, incorporating both quantitative measures and qualitative procedures, to answer my research questions. My study sample consists of respondents from 31 Black

homeschooling families, totaling 43 participants in all (i.e., 31 mothers; 12 fathers). Quantitative measures take the form of three surveys: 1) Self-Report Survey; 2) Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI); and 3) Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS). By implementing the self-report survey, I glean individual-level data (i.e., respondents' ages, incomes, education, marital statuses; etc.), familial data (i.e., family compositions), and homeschooling practice-based data (i.e., number of homeschooled children per household; duration of previous and/or current homeschooling stints; approximate monthly/annual cost of learning materials/experiences; etc.) from respondents (Kapitulik, 2011). The MIBI and EDS measures—both multi-item Likert scales—gather data pertaining to (respondents') perceptions of racial identity and racial discrimination, respectively (Sellers et al., 1997; Williams et al., 1997). More specifically, while MIBI data reveals the degree to which race anchors respondents' self-concepts, EDS data gauges the frequency with which respondents encounter racialized mistreatment.

Qualitative procedures consist of solo interviews (i.e., with either one mother or one father), paired interviews (i.e., husband-wife couplings), and focus groups (i.e., three-parent, all-female or all-male discussion panels). (In the aggregate, I conducted 27 solo interviews with mothers, 8 solo interviews with fathers, 4 paired interviews, and 2 focus group discussions.) Interview and focus group data unveil into how Black parents conceptualize, rationalize, or justify gendered homeschooling motives, culturally informed curricula, and stylistic adjustments to instruction.

Overview of Three Research Papers

Paper One observes homeschooling motives through the lens of gender, unpacking how parents articulate reasons for teaching their daughters versus sons. In conjunction with solo and paired interviews, I employ focus groups to obtain qualitative responses from Black mothers and fathers. I perform comparative analyses of mothers' and fathers' responses, using gendered ethnic-racial socialization (GERS) as a theoretical frame (Brown et al., 2017; Davis Tribble et al., 2017). While the process of ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) signifies the transmission of cultural lessons from parent(s) to child(ren) (Hughes et al., 2006), GERS posits that said processes are gendered in nature. Specifically,

mothers and fathers confer dissimilar cultural lessons—due to their gender differences as parents, and due to the gender differences of their children. Findings reveal subtle, yet meaningful, differences in Black parents' homeschooling motives, denoting two inversely related processes: *building from without* (i.e., for Black homeschooled boys) and *building from within* (i.e., for Black homeschooled girls).

Paper Two examines the cultural forces of faith and race, showing how they shape curriculum-building for Black homeschoolers. I complement parents' interview and focus group responses with quantitative data from both MIBI and EDS surveys. Analyses construct three subset categories, from the larger sample; each category reflects the cultural emphasis parents attribute to their curriculum-building: 1) faith (i.e., as a singular, primary cultural influence); 2) race (i.e., as a singular, primary cultural influence); and 3) faith + race (i.e., as joint, primary cultural influences). Findings suggest that faith and race inform curriculum-building separately *and* concertedly, with parents using formal and informal vehicles to teach cultural messages. Furthermore, survey data convey that Black homeschooling mothers—who are chiefly responsible for building curricula and leading instruction—value race significantly (i.e., regarding one's self-concept, or perceptions of discrimination), irrespective of subset categorization.

Paper Three foregrounds the diversity of Black homeschooling instruction. Building on Mazama's (2016) study, I explore how instructional variation manifests in parents' teaching. To this effort, I highlight three focal points on the stylistic continuum: 1) adult-led teaching; 2) child-led teaching; and 3) collaborative teaching. Self-report survey data—particularly those centering teaching experiences (i.e., by grade level) and allotted time (i.e., for administering instruction)—orient data from mothers' interview and focus group responses. Findings couch instruction in evolutionary terms, foregrounding pedagogical and logistical links between adult-led, child-led, *and* collaborative teaching styles. Tracing the instructional continuum, I highlight qualitative shifts in parental control, and in children's independence, as stylistic adjustments are made. Furthermore, I reveal how Black families create holistic—and limitless—learning experiences, by leveraging the versatility of homeschooling pedagogy.

This dissertation constructs Black homeschooling as a dynamic enterprise, one marked by breadth, depth, and complexity. Comprehensively, these three papers showcase how Black families curate viable alternatives to private and public education. Findings are poised to advance homeschooling literature, especially that which examines gender, cultural, and educative dynamics in Black familial contexts. The rising number of Black homeschoolers not only flags pathways for future homeschooling studies (e.g., anti-racist strategies in home education), but opens lanes for research on understudied pitfalls in traditional schooling (e.g., how lacking a culturally diverse curricula may impact Black girls and boys differently). Relatedly, this project also signifies a contribution to the Sociology of Education, which typically casts the traditional school as the primary site for empirical investigation. The motivational, curricular, and instructive processes I detail not only show the inner complexities of Black homeschooling, but suggest that extra-institutional learning (i.e., settings, methods, etc.) warrants the (increased) scholarly attention is it currently receiving. Ultimately, the desire for bespoke pedagogy—one tailored to the goals and needs of Black children *and* parents—represents a chief catalyst for this rapidly advancing movement, one that is poised to change the face of education.

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PAPER ONE

Subtly But Surely: The Gendering of Black Homeschooling Motivations

Abstract

This paper investigates how gender shapes Black parents' homeschooling motivations. Using interviews and focus groups, I analyze Black mothers' and fathers' explanations for teaching their sons and daughters. Findings reveal that gender is a nuanced yet substantive driver of Black homeschooling. The theoretical frame of gendered ethnic-racial socialization (GERS) elucidates these findings, showing that Black homeschooling motives stem from inverse processes: *building from without* and *building from within*. The former entails the preclusion of external threats to Black boys' well-beings, as learners. The latter refers to the values imparted to Black girls, intended to help them navigate forms of gendered racism. Analyses forward Black homeschooling and GERS literatures, by highlighting gendered educational and anti-racism practices in vastly understudied contexts: Black homeschooling spaces.

Key Words

Homeschooling motivations; Black parenting; Gender; Race

Introduction

Since the 1970s, interest and participation in homeschooling have only expanded. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which home-based education skyrocketed (i.e., per virtual learning mandates), the U.S. homeschooling population had already experienced significant increases in membership (Fields-Smith, 2020). Consequently, as one of the fastest growing educational initiatives, homeschooling continually garners public and scholarly attention. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of homeschooling is that of motivations—the *WHYs* fueling parents' decisions to remove their children from traditional schools (i.e., private, public, or charter), or forego enrolling them altogether. Early studies foreground the motivations of White homeschoolers, who have historically comprised the bulk of at-home educators. Although these works reveal the popular ideological (i.e., faith-based) and pedagogical (i.e., curriculum-based) underpinnings of homeschooling motivations (Van Galen, 1988), they do not capture the ethnic-racial dynamics that impact homeschooling motives—for families of color generally, and for Black families specifically.

Black homeschoolers—like other homeschoolers—critique and/or eschew traditional schools for various reasons: 1) to circumvent observed or perceived inadequacies; 2) to counterbalance structural limitations (e.g., for special education services); 3) to enhance safety measures (i.e., curbing bullying); and 4) to maximize situational dynamics (e.g., family relocations). Motivational overlaps notwithstanding, it is important to note that Black homeschooling motives can be vast, nuanced, and complex (Jolly & Matthews, 2018). Whether Black homeschooling families' motives are interrelated or distinct (i.e., vis-à-vis non-Black families), key sociocultural factors impact their decision-making processes, meaning the (negative) impact of race on said processes cannot be understated.

Black and non-Black students do not experience traditional schooling similarly. Studies have long documented the racial disparities in school discipline, which show that Black students are far more likely to incur detentions, out-of-school suspensions, and on-campus arrests than non-Black students (Annamma et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2010). Like patterns even manifest in schools where students from

different racial groups commit similar infractions. Structural racism, alongside disciplinary outcomes, also imbues academics (Cartledge & Dukes, 2009; McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Disproportionality occurs in course placements, carrying substantive implications for students' academic trajectories. Cultural misunderstandings and unconscious biases—between school personnel and students—often lead faculty to mischaracterize Black students' academic abilities and potential, yielding lopsided referrals to remedial and special education classes. When considering the ostensibly positive aspects of school (e.g., academic achievement, advanced course enrollments, student club participation), students of color trail behind White classmates, even when controlling for variables like family educational attainment, income, and socioeconomic status (Puckett, 2022). Last, salient and subtle cultural biases permeate traditional school curricula. Across various subjects (e.g., English, History), core themes and content typically favor Eurocentrism (i.e., iconography; historical events; prominent figures), thus marginalizing Black students on either end of the achievement spectrum.

Citing frustrations with administrative, instructional, and sociocultural elements of traditional schooling, many Black parents see homeschooling as the best, or only, educational option for their children. Homeschooling is seen as a viable pathway toward a culturally relevant, high-quality education—a primary vehicle to accomplish the following, for Black children: 1) preempt, or offset, the destructive impact of racialized discrimination in traditional schools; and 2) instill positive senses of racial awareness and pride (i.e., via cultural-specific instruction, behavioral modeling) (Mazama & Lundy, 2012). Black parents champion culturally grounded and/or race-focused education, believing it facilitates the development of confident, intelligent, well-rounded learners and, ultimately, productive citizens.

Black parents transmit cultural information to their children via homeschooling, signifying the process of ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) (Hughes et al., 2006). Parents share formal and informal lessons about the Black Diaspora (e.g., ancient African history, modern Black American history, intergenerational Black experiences), conferring teachings as sources of knowledge and confidence—tools their children may wield to combat a racially stratified society, as they mature into adulthood.

ERS—as both process and theoretical frame—dovetails with examinations of homeschooling motives, for Black parents see ERS as vital to the development of their children, and because many practice ERS via homeschooling.

While Black parents prioritize ERS, research suggests that Black girls and boys receive unequal cultural messages, due to gender differences between parents and their children. For instance, parents often teach lessons about intrinsic values and comportment to their daughters, yet they commonly bestow anti-discrimination strategies to their sons. Gendered ERS emerges in Black parenting studies, although no works have explored how gender shapes Black homeschooling, particularly in terms of parental motivations. Ultimately, an examination of gendered homeschooling motives stands to inform research on diverse educational praxes, whether occurring inside or outside Black households (i.e., traditional schooling; parenting; ERS).

I showcase the intricacies of homeschooling motivations, arguing that various social experiences render motives dynamic and multi-layered. I subsequently explore the specifics of Black homeschooling motives, delineating factors that repel Black families from traditional schooling, and steer them toward home-based education. To frame how gender informs Black homeschooling, I employ the theory of gendered ethnic-racial socialization (GERS) (Brown et al., 2017), which contends that gender differences between Black parents and their children beget unequal ERS messaging. Utilizing data from interviews and focus groups, I observe how Black fathers and mothers articulate motives for homeschooling their daughters and sons. Findings suggest that gender is a nuanced yet substantive catalyst for Black parents' homeschooling motives. Black fathers and mothers seek to build up their children, but do so through gendered, inverse processes: *building from without* (i.e., for Black boys), and *building from within* (i.e., for Black girls).

Background

Dynamic Motivations

Familial commitments to homeschooling ideals may prove steadfast, but scholarship casts homeschooling motivations as inherently dynamic. Sociological factors render motives multifaceted, and susceptible to copious influences and temporal change. While Van Galen (1988) frames motives as solely dichotomous (i.e., ideological or pedagogical), later works expand the bandwidth of possible reasons for homeschooling. Survey-based research augments the bilateral framework, highlighting four predominant motives: 1) religious/moral formation; 2) academics; 3) child safety; and 4) strengthening of family bonds (Murphy, 2012). Quantitative data successfully broaden homeschooling motives, but their a priori and cross-sectional designs earn criticism from qualitative scholars, who claim survey-based research negates respondents' worldviews and temporal shifts in homeschooling motives (Neuman & Guterman, 2019a).

To compensate for seeming gaps in homeschooling research, Neuman and Guterman (2019a) analyze participant narratives via in-depth interviews, yielding four motivational categories (i.e., *super themes*): 1) educational situation (i.e., pedagogical concerns); 2) deliberate change (i.e., ideological preferences); 3) opportunity (i.e., extraneous circumstances); and 4) flow (i.e., unplanned lifestyles). Kunzman and Gaither (2020) further advance the intricacies of homeschooling, noting five ways that motivations change over time: 1) Push-Pull Dynamics (i.e., pushes from traditional schools, toward homeschooling); 2) Homeschooling Select Number of Children (i.e., within a given household); 3) Softening Ideologies (i.e., attenuating stringent beliefs, which initially motivated homeschooling); 4) Acquainting New Subculture (i.e., gradual adoption of homeschooler identities); and 5) Post Hoc Justifications (i.e., self-justifications for homeschooling).

Literature shows that community contexts also inform homeschooling motivations, although findings are mixed (Miller, 2014). Decisions to homeschool hinge on myriad community factors, such as educational attainment (i.e., of parent(s) and other adult community members), socioeconomic status, and traditional school quality and options. Some homeschoolers may hail from conservative, rural, upper-class neighborhoods with robust private- and public-school options. Yet, others come from educated,

middle-class, White families whose communities lack quality private- and public-school options. Ultimately, homeschooling does not pertain to a singular community, family, or individual "type," but is practiced under varying conditions, by assorted peoples, and for different reasons (Marks & Welsch, 2019).

Black Homeschooling Motivations

Ethnic-racial dynamics constitute another mode of influence on homeschooling motivations. Recent literature finds that Black families are motivated to homeschool for numerous reasons. Black and non-Black families share comparable motives, such as concerns about traditional school epistemology (i.e., breadth and depth of school curriculum), safety measures (i.e., anti-bullying policies), and ideological preferences (i.e., faith- or values-based teachings). However, scholars assert that Black homeschoolers' religious motives can be "mixed" with various pushes and pulls, ranging from racialized mistreatment in traditional schools (i.e., pushes) to the promise of racial diversity in homeschooling curricula (i.e., pulls) (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013).

Sociocultural factors shape Black parents' decisions about homeschooling (Mazama & Lundy, 2015). For many, racial protectionism is *the* prime motivator (Mazama & Musumunu, 2015). Research has long addressed the fraught relationship between Black students and traditional education. School personnel tend to cast Black boys *and* girls more negatively than their non-Black classmates, resulting in disproportionate discipline and academic outcomes. Negative school experiences, whether in terms of interpersonal prejudices (i.e., from school personnel) or institutional racism, repel Black families away from traditional schools and toward homeschooling (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009). Black parents homeschool to shield their children from environments seen as *uniquely* hostile to their emotional, mental, and intellectual development (Mazama & Lundy, 2013). Consequently, homeschooling is intended to preempt, or buffer, the negative aspects of traditional schooling, which stand to impact Black boys and girls. It fulfills a dual function for Black families, enabling parents to exercise racial protectionism for their children, and assume direct influence over their (children's) educational careers.

The promise of instructional freedom is both attractive and auspicious for Black homeschooling parents. Many incorporate ethnic-racial and/or culturally specific content into home-based curricula, with the hope of stimulating pride, confidence, and intellectual curiosity in their daughters and sons (Mazama & Lundy, 2013). Research suggests that Black girls and boys reap the benefits of home-based instruction, performing on par—or better—on academic assessments than their Black and non-Black peers in traditional schools (Ray, 2015).

Gender and Homeschooling Motivations

Whereas the sociocultural motivations for, and the attendant benefits of, homeschooling for Black families are well examined, no works directly address how gender shapes Black homeschooling motivations. Studies of race, traditional schooling, and parenting shed light on this topic, albeit indirectly. As noted, Black girls and boys experience interpersonal mistreatment (i.e., from school staff, faculty) and punitive measures with higher frequency, and harsher consequences, than their non-Black peers (Blake et al., 2011). Historically, Black boys have dominated trends relating to school discipline, remedial course placements, and special education referrals (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013). Teachers and administrators often cite Black students' behavioral or academic challenges as justifications for such recommendations. This is especially true for Black boys, who school personnel may perceive as threatening, lazy, or less intelligent than their non-Black classmates. Research suggests that special education placements have tangible consequences for students, often producing negative educational outcomes (Mazama & Lundy, 2012).

Ferguson (2010[2001]) illustrates how the construction of a particular Black masculinity—the "bad boy"—occurs through repeated interactions between Black males and public school personnel. This archetype proves consequential, for it (re)produces preconceptions of delinquency and criminality, thus facilitating disproportionate punishments for Black boys. Hence, Black parents feel combined senses of urgency and accountability to homeschool, voicing needs to "rescue" their sons from antagonistic learning environments (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009). The impetus to "rescue" may explain why Black

males are homeschooled more than Black females, even among siblings from the same households (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013).

If race fixes the parallels between Black girl's and boys' (negative) educational experiences, gender is the nuance that belies their commonalities. Black female and male students do, in fact, face like experiences in traditional schools. For instance, the rates at which Black girls are punished exceed those of non-Black girls, and are comparable to those of Black boys (Annamma et al., 2016). Black girls also confront unique challenges in education, as many are chastised—or formally disciplined—for appearing overly loud and aggressive. Unable to reconcile Black girls' dispositions and actions with White, middle-class standards of femininity (i.e., docility, quietness), school officials misinterpret Black girls as defiant and disrespectful, punishing them more frequently—and severely—than non-Black females (Morris & Perry, 2017). Homeschooling literature engages Black parents' racial protectionism, but the way gender shapes Black homeschooling motives remains unexamined. Thus, I pose the following research question: *How do the genders of parents and their children combine to shape Black homeschooling motivations?*

Gendered Ethnic-Racial Socialization and Black Homeschooling Motivations

To analyze how gender impacts Black families' homeschooling motivations, I employ the theory of gendered ethnic-racial socialization (GERS). GERS builds on the tenets of ethnic-racial socialization (ERS), the latter entailing the transfer of cultural knowledge from parents to children (Hughes et al., 2006). Black parents, through verbal and behavioral communication, instill ethnic-racial awareness and pride in their children, equipping them with strategies to ascertain—and combat—forms of ethnic-racial bias and discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1999). With respect to these cultural transmission practices, GERS accounts for the genders of *both* parent(s) and child(ren), making it suitable for examinations of ERS via homeschooling.

Scholars argue that Black fathers and mothers approach ERS practices unequally, due to a host of different yet related variables (Jones & Neblett, 2019). Parent-related factors, such as gender distinctions, prior experiences with racism, socioeconomic status, and racial identity salience spur variation in ERS

messaging (Howard et al., 2013). An example of this variation pertains to messaging frequency. Although Black fathers *and* mothers champion ERS, mothers confer messages more frequently than fathers (Brown et al., 2010).

Gender pairings between Black parents and their children also inform ERS practices. Brown et al. (2009) argues that parents' genders moderate relationships between ERS and Black children's school grades, respectively. While Black fathers' and mothers' socialization efforts yield neutral or positive associations with boys' grades, they bear negative associations with girls' grades. Considering the idiosyncratic differences between Black children and their respective family units (e.g., age differentials, individual personalities, academic capabilities), Black parents may even adjust their approaches to ERS (i.e., via academic socialization practices), either to accommodate specific needs or achieve certain goals (Cooper & Smalls, 2010).

The genders of Black children even prompt variation in parents' ERS (Davis Tribble et al., 2019). Black parents' messages to daughters veer toward themes of self-esteem, comportment, and independence, while messages to sons contain strategies for overcoming racial bias and discrimination. Varner and Mandara (2014) posit that GERS is rooted in parental concerns about their children's specific needs and environments (e.g., schools, neighborhoods). Black mothers, fearing their sons' encounters with racism, and their daughters' encounters with gender discrimination, conjure different sets of concerns and expectations for their children. Dissimilar concerns and expectations, ultimately, beget dissimilar ERS messaging for Black children.

Prior studies address how GERS manifests unequally, yet these works center either parenting practices or traditional school-related outcomes (i.e., student grades). The ways in which GERS unfolds in Black homeschooling contexts, however, remain unstudied. What lingers is the question of how gender shapes Black homeschooling parents' motivations.

Methods

Recruitment

To garner participant interest, I initiated contact with an Atlanta (GA) Metropolitan area-based homeschooling organization. I chose Atlanta as the primary research site because it constitutes a hub for Black homeschooling families, due to its demographic characteristics (i.e., significant Black and/or African American population) and relatively permissive homeschooling laws (i.e., vis-à-vis other states). After establishing rapport via email, the organization leader disseminated my digital recruitment flyer via the organization listserv. This facilitated my recruitment efforts significantly, netting me 43 emails of interest. My snowball sampling efforts were also made possible through the recruitment flyer-posting (Lune & Berg, 2016). That is, parents whose interviews were facilitated via (their) initial "email of interest," shared knowledge of their research experience with Black homeschooling parents who were unaware of the project.

Interested parties contacted me via email or phone; afterwards, I began the screening process to assess study candidate eligibility. Eligibility criteria included: 1) self-identify as native-born African American, or Black American, homeschooling fathers or mothers; 2) be currently homeschooling voluntarily—or had prior experience with voluntary homeschooling (i.e., for at least six months)—at least one child, of Pre-K-to-High School age (i.e., ages 3-18); and 3) begun or concluded the homeschooling experience, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., beginning circa March 2020). I required that study participants identify as native-born African American, or Black American, to eliminate the possibility of significant ethno-cultural differences within the subject pool (owing to foreign-born status/experiences). Furthermore, I required that participants began or concluded voluntary homeschooling experiences prior to the pandemic, during which many families were thrust into home-based education under public health-driven mandates.

Participants

My study sample was comprised of 43 individual Black homeschooling parents (31 mothers; 12 fathers). From the sample, 27 of the 31 mothers participated in solo interviews, while the remaining engaged in paired interviews with a husband. Only one mother fulfilled a supportive homeschooling role (i.e., Maureen); her husband (i.e., Zackery) assumed primary homeschooling responsibilities. Eight of the 12 fathers participated in solo interviews; eleven of the fathers played a supporting homeschooling role. Tables 1 and 2 provide additional information about study participants. (I generated pseudonyms for all respondents.)

[Table 1 and 2 about here]

Data Collection

Data collection spanned from Fall 2020 to Summer 2022. To collect sample characteristic data, I administered a self-report survey to study participants. The self-report survey yielded individual-level (i.e., demographic variables), family-level (i.e., family unit composition characteristics), and homeschooling practice-specific data (Kapitulik, 2011). Homeschooling practice-specific data contained variables such as the number of homeschooled children (per family); the average number of daily homeschooling hours; and the average cost(s) of homeschooling. Most participants emailed me their completed surveys, before the start of their interviews. Participants who emailed me their completed surveys post-interview did so because of scheduling- and/or availability-related constraints.

I collected qualitative data through solo interviews, paired interviews, and focus group discussions. Solo interviews entailed dialogue with a single respondent; paired interviews entailed dialogue with two respondents (i.e., father-mother pairings). I conducted semi-structured interviews, using a guide to facilitate conversations. Although I had pre-written questions to ask respondents, the semi-structured nature of interviews permitted free-flowing discussions about parents' homeschooling motives (Henry, 2017). Below are examples of interview guide-prompted questions I asked respondents:

1) How did you arrive at the decision to homeschool your daughter/son?
2) What factors did you consider, in your decision-making process?

3) Describe the factors that meant the most to you.
4) What do you appreciate most about the homeschooling experience?

I completed a total of 41 interview sessions with Black homeschooling parents. (Of the 41 total interviews, I conducted 27 solo interviews with mothers, 8 solo interviews with fathers, 4 paired interviews, and 2 focus group discussions.) The average duration for interviews was 111 minutes, with the shortest interview running 51 minutes and the longest 257 minutes. Per social distancing measures, all interviews were conducted via Zoom or phone, in a home office. I generated audio-video and audio recordings for all Zoom interviews; I conducted a total of 36 Zoom interviews. Audio files of phone interview recordings were also generated; I conducted a total of 5 phone interviews (i.e., due to study participant preference). Recordings were transcribed for qualitative analysis purposes. I remunerated respondents $50 for solo and paired interview sessions, respectively; therefore, individual respondents and couples *each* received $50 for their participation.

After completing solo and paired interviews, I hosted focus groups to triangulate self-report survey and interview data, thus increasing the validity of my empirical findings. Each focus group included three study participants, comprising either an all-father or all-mother panel. The panel structure facilitated dialogue among parents from different homeschooling contexts, allowing interactive commentary. To prompt discussion, I utilized a focus group guide based upon emergent themes from solo and paired interviews. I conducted all focus groups via Zoom, and created audio-video and audio recordings for each focus group, from a home office. Recordings were transcribed for qualitative analysis purposes. Last, I remunerated all focus group participants $20 for their participation.

Coding and Analysis

I applied open, axial, and selective coding schemes to my qualitative analyses. I open coded interview and focus group data in terms of relevant categories, allowing for thematic patterns to emerge from homeschooling parents' responses. Through axial coding, I located patterns across the open-coded categories. Last, I performed selective coding, constructing a narrative from the most prominent themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Selective coding allowed me to finalize my analysis of Black homeschooling

parents' motivations. Last, I constructed a dyadic formatting structure to highlight gender pairings between Black fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons.

Findings

Building from Without: Motivations for Homeschooling Sons

The motivation of *building from without* centers the preclusion of external threats to Black boys, specifically those germane to traditional educational contexts (e.g., heightened surveillance, scrutiny, and punishment). Below, the relational dynamics of mother-son and father-son dyads frame this gendered homeschooling motive.

Black Mothers

The motive of protection features prominently among Black homeschooling mothers. Instances of racial bias and discrimination emerge within several dimensions of society, with traditional education acting as a primary site for such processes. Accordingly, mothers reference the plight of Black males in public education. Kima laments how Black boys are mischaracterized as "bad" in traditional schools:

"I cannot tell you how many parents have pulled their sons out of public school[s] because their sons were being mistreated. Just outright mistreated. Not by kids—but by the adults at the school[s]. Whether [the teachers were] Black, White, or indifferent. [Black boys] are not tolerated. If [the Black boys] are not sitting there [saying], 'Yes, ma'am,' [or] 'Yes, sir,' they are not tolerated."

Homeschooling takes on a particular importance for Kima. While acknowledging it as beneficial to all Black children, she deems homeschooling as essential for boys because they are disproportionately targeted—and labeled—in traditional schools. She describes the internal costs of targeting, stating that Black boys' academic confidence suffers because of it:

"The child is not bad. Because he can't sit still for six-and-a-half hours does not make the child bad. Does he have to get up a lot? Yeah. Does he talk [loudly], maybe? Yeah. But he's not bad. He's definitely not dumb. But you can see they don't have the self-confidence. You can see that sometimes they don't know what they should know, at that point. But you can work with them."

The internal costs of racialized targeting are only compounded by structural pitfalls. Dawn alludes to the school-to-prison pipeline, when articulating the import of homeschooling. Despite her own positive experiences with traditional schools, she believes homeschooling is the best option for her son:

"I was very clear about the, sort of, target on the back for young Black men, right. And I was determined that my son, or any of my children, were not going to be statistics. They were not going to be fed into the prison pipeline. I [didn't] care what I had to do. They just were not going to go that route. I would do my

best to make sure. Now, whatever choices they [make] after they [leave] me…that's on them. But I was going to make sure that I [would not raise] a child who would not be a productive member of society."

Her adult son's successful career in the Air Force belies complaints she received from his former teachers. Dawn shares that school personnel recommended medication to remedy his purported academic and behavioral "issues." She contextualizes these problems within the scope of the school's permissive stance on distractions—and negative influences—for students (e.g., video gaming during aftercare hours). Not wanting to administer medication, and seeing no alternative course of action, she unenrolled him. It is important to note the implications of a continued enrollment for her son. Had she decided to stay, his academic and behavioral challenges—whether contrived by school personnel or otherwise—may have persisted, giving way to prolonged negative labeling. Her agreeing to medication could have served to legitimate said labeling, effectively flagging her son as a "problem."

Maureen expresses similar concerns about labeling, and how it affects Black boys. Homeschooling provides a haven for her son to learn, sans the spatial and bodily restraints of formal classrooms:

"We call [his learning approach] 'moovy groovy.' He'll be reading a book upside down on the trampoline…but he read it! And he can recite back what [he needed] to learn. There's no way he would be able to do that in school, right? But if [he] can consume the information, does it really matter how [he] consume[s] it?"

Black mothers note the physical exuberance of their boys, and fear that traditional school personnel will interpret this energy as indicative of "behavioral issues." While physicality may be applicable to most young boys, the hypervisibility of Black boys facilitates the cursory, critical labeling of their behaviors. Consequently, mothers imagine homeschooling as a loving, affirming context, one in which Black boys can authentically *be*. This authenticity is performed in myriad ways, whether though bodily movement, expressions of creativity, or personality.

The archetype of the "cool kid," presumably less threatening than the "bad boy," parallels the negative stereotyping of Black males. While the "bad boy" posture certainly marks Black males for excessive scrutiny, the social pressure to adopt a "cool" persona may influence Black boys to ditch

academic interests and personal authenticity, to curry social acceptance from peers. Ella feels that homeschooling permits Black boys to enjoy learning, minus the burdens of stereotypes:

"We've allowed [our son] to explore his interests, without the peer input as to whether or not it's cool. And so, he's been able to fully explore his creativity. He's able to enjoy things, [such as] playing with his sisters, and things like that—that you wouldn't otherwise have."

Ella sees homeschooling as freeing Black boys from the confines of false perceptions, allowing them to exhibit immaturity, levity, and curiosity.

Lyric praises the inherent flexibility of homeschooling, specifically its bandwidth to foster holistic learning. She sees homeschooling as conducive to lessons about self-awareness, and believes it is vital for Black boys to examine personal strengths and shortcomings:

"I wanted to make sure that I provided for them, and gave them all the tools that I could, to be able to accomplish and be successful in the world around them. We lived in a predominantly White neighborhood; the schools were predominantly White. It was just important to me that they knew—they knew, going into those environments, their strengths and their weaknesses."

Lyric sees the homeschooling context as apt for holistic learning. More than an educational style preference, she deems holistic development as essential for her sons to thrive in majority-White spaces, such as the traditional schools in her own community. Her statement constructs an "addition by subtraction" dynamic, wherein the absence of traditional schooling clears way for the educational experiences her Black sons need mostly.

She curates a home-based learning space, but her allusions to living in a "predominantly White neighborhood" demonstrate understandings of the broader social context in which her homeschooling practice exists. As Black people, they will have to navigate a majority-White world. She prioritizes lessons about self-awareness for her sons, to help them develop holistic views of themselves, and to help them leverage their strengths and weaknesses in marginalized contexts.

Building from without largely connotes disengagement from harmful forces, but it is not solely defined by the absence of negativity. Rather, it also reflects positive attributes of home-based education. Corin highlights the innate gifts of Black boys, when explaining the significance of homeschooling:

"Being able to just instill values that they otherwise may not get in a school setting. Especially if they're at the school where they don't see a lot of people that maybe look like them, or don't have teachers that push

and encourage them…and let them know, like, 'Hey, you CAN be somebody,' you know? 'You are intelligent. You can make it in the world.'"

Encouragement—the *pushing* of Black boys to realize their full potentials—is essential to homeschooling. Mothers may *want* to believe that traditional educators will prioritize their sons' best interests. Yet, whether due to idiosyncratic traits of school personnel (i.e., prejudices), or structural constraints (e.g., underfunding), some deem traditional education as unwilling, or incapable, of seeing Black boys' capacities for excellence.

A competitive spirit drives Yvonne, as she places high value on her sons' scholastic achievements:

"I'm not lax when it comes to the academics of my children. I understand they've [got to] have the extra. They've [got to] perform on a high…which word do I want to use? When a Black man walks in a room, he's already [got to] be performing on a higher level than everybody else. That's just the way that society has created itself."

Though she would prefer a different reality, Yvonne accepts racial inequality as a fact of American life, and conducts her homeschooling accordingly. Rather than bemoaning the unfairness of her sons *having to* outperform non-Blacks, she frames homeschooling as a vehicle to prepare her Black boys for the stratified society that awaits them, in adulthood.

Mothers centralize Black history and achievements in lessons, to foster positive racial identity development for their boys. Some emphasize the triumphs of Black males, so that academic contents reflect their sons' racial and gender identities. The intent is to transmit factual knowledge, to arm their sons with racial pride and confidence, building shrewd and resourceful Black boys who will become Black men.

The promise of nurturing, holistic learning experiences compels Sidney to homeschool. She deems herself as best suited to teach her children:

"You are not just teaching them academically. You have the opportunity to raise them up, and influence them spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. It's a very significant opportunity to ensure that what you [want to] put into your child as a proud, beautiful, smart, capable Black young man is put in there. That he's not seeing himself through the eyes of someone else, and the way they may have determined that they want to see Black men or Black boys."

Sidney juxtaposes primary educational contexts: the family and the school system. She subliminally engages a broader, philosophical question: *Which institution is most qualified to educate Black boys: the family or the school?* Traditional educators may boast professional credentials and expertise, but they are not *required* to care about, or love, Black children as their parents do. For Black homeschooling mothers of sons, these intangibles make all the difference.

Black Fathers

Black fathers, too, foreground protection when discussing homeschooling motives for their sons. Now adults, these fathers were once Black boys—most of whom were enrolled in traditional schools. Zackery recalls his classroom experiences:

"There's plenty of things that I went through, and I don't like to say everything's racial, but there's a lot of situations I've been in, in school. For instance, I wasn't able to read until around second or third grade. And not because I wasn't capable—it's just because somehow…I missed those steps. There's a lot of times in school where I was getting in trouble for a lot of things I felt as if, maybe I shouldn't have been getting in trouble for situations that happened."

A reluctance to "say everything's racial" conveys discernment, as Zackery leaves room for alternative explanations about his school challenges. It is possible that his trials were not entirely racially motivated, yet shadows of doubt linger on. Although he cannot definitively conclude that structural racism caused his reading lag and disciplinary issues—or that his son would encounter similar experiences in traditional schools—the potential influence of racism is plausible. The mere possibility of racism alone stirs his homeschooling motives. Enrolling his son in a traditional school is a risk he is unwilling to take. Therefore, he eliminates the possibility of structural racism in schooling by not enrolling his son, in the first place.

Homeschooling enables Black families to bypass structural barriers in schools, clearing way for informal types of education. Fathers leverage the curricular flexibility homeschooling affords, and teach practical (life) lessons to supplement academics. Omar relishes opportunities to model pro-social behaviors for his son. He is acutely aware of his role and impact, as a Black father:

"Fathers are important in the development of their children's ability to learn, grasp, tolerate, and even accept and smile. It's very important that those things are understood…because your children look forward to time

with you, as a homeschool[ing] father, in a different light. It's not always throwing the ball. It's always…they always look forward to what the next challenge is."

The challenges Omar references are manifold. His life lessons address topics like romantic relationships, map-reading, everyday math (e.g., counting change with cashiers), and managing interactions with authority (e.g., police, employers):

"As a Black male, there's a certain way that [authority expects] you to act or respond. You can't be passionate, because then they'll take your passion and switch that to anger. We can't be as passionate, so you have to work on control, in that regard. It's just unfortunate that we would even have to [teach these lessons]. I don't necessarily need you to do right. The first thing I need you to do is to be able to come home, then we can talk about the right/wrong, good or bad, respect for authority—even if that authority figure respects you or not. To be able to just…be able to get you to come home."

Omar makes a nod to "the talk," the coming-of-age conversation between Black parents and their children—especially their boys—about navigating scenarios with police. This conversation is unnerving for many Black fathers, yet the primary goal is to equip their sons with a specific knowledge base (i.e., an ERS strategy) needed to survive in society. The importance of this message notwithstanding, there is no reasonable expectation that traditional schools will customize such lessons for their Black male students, much less do so with compassion, empathy, or understanding. Simply stated: there are specific cultural lessons that are far more likely to be taught in Black households than in traditional school classrooms.

Homeschooling is an unconventional path of education, and is oft characterized by its inherent freedoms. The ability to teach one's child(ren) entrepreneurship exemplifies this freedom. Alongside strategies for survival, Black fathers include entrepreneurial lessons in their teaching repertoire. Some fathers see entrepreneurship as representative of confidence, intelligence, and strength—qualities they would like their sons to develop. Usain extols the perks of entrepreneurship:

"That's one of the beauties and luxuries of being homeschooled, and the luxury of being an entrepreneur. Now, I may have to stay up until one o' clock [am], to make up for that work that I didn't do at 1:00 pm. And it's important for them to see me making up for that time. But it's also important for them to see that [I have] tremendous flexibility, and [I don't] punch a clock at seven o' clock in the morning, and come home at seven o' clock at night, dead tired. [I've] never missed a basketball game. [I've] never missed one of [their] volleyball games."

Usain parallels homeschooling and entrepreneurism, seeing both as typifying flexibility and control. Conversely, traditional schooling symbolizes rigidity and restriction. He values formal academic

achievement, but for him, it is not the be-all and end-all. More than academic excellence, he desires happiness for his son. Overall, he wants his son to do what he loves, to earn his living. A sturdy work ethic sustains Usain, but he favors "working smart" over "working hard." The ability to customize his own work schedule (i.e., to attend his son's extracurriculars) provides a framework his son may emulate himself, one day. Thus, he sees the void of traditional schooling as a benefit, for it increases time and opportunity to engage unorthodox forms of teaching and learning.

Last, Black fathers revel in sharing information about cultural heritage. They view this knowledge as a life source, a well from which Black boys can derive the wits and strength needed to face the world. Stephen discusses his contributions to the homeschooling effort:

"The things that I focus on are more…culture, you know—anything that has to do with learning about themselves. Black culture. Black history. I'm like, 'Hey, I [want to] talk to you guys about Madam C.J. Walker.' I'll pull up a video on YouTube, or an old DVD, or book, or we'll talk about the Harlem Hellfighters."

For Stephen, it is imperative his children know their history is not born of chattel slavery. He conjures lessons—planned or impromptu—about various aspects of Black history, to maintain this effort. He believes this will broaden the purview of cultural knowledge for his son, allowing him to see greatness in his forebears, contemporaries, and within himself. On its face, spurning traditional schools may appear as though Black parents are *depriving*, as opposed to *affording*, their children something. However, Black homeschooling fathers like Stephen favor the latter frame, entrusting themselves to teach Blackness more effectively than traditional school teachers, curricular frameworks, and academic standards.

Building from Within: Motivations for Homeschooling Daughters

Building from within refers to the process by which Black parents impart particular values to their girls. Parents' objectives are to foster surety and self-worthiness, arming their daughters against varying forms of gendered racism. At its root, this principle conveys intellectual and intrinsic qualities, emphasizing personal character traits more than external influences. The gendered implications of mother-daughter and father-daughter dyads follow.

Black Mothers

Black mothers stress empowerment as a predominant goal for their daughters. They aim to sow and elevate their girls' confidence, teaching them to appreciate the values of academic risk-taking, self-worth, and beauty. Shunning harmful influences proves concerning, but to a qualitatively different—and somewhat lesser—degree for Black girls vis-à-vis Black boys. It is the draw of peers—not the criticism of traditional school personnel—that worries Hope:

"For the girls…our concern wouldn't be as much…well… it wouldn't be as much of what people are thinking about them, and them not seeing that they could be more than just entertainers or athletes—that kind of thing. However, what we would be concerned about is their social group pulling them away from academics, and [having our daughters believe that] academics [isn't] all that important, because it's [seemingly] more important for [them] to socialize with each other, and just spend time talking and chatting and all that kind of thing, rather than doing our schoolwork."

Hope formulates a gendered comparison between concerns for Black girls and boys. Allusions to "entertainers" and "athletes," labels widely attributed to Black males, signals a fear of her *sons* being pigeonholed via stereotypes—not her daughters. It is not a matter of whether her girls will be reduced to archetypes, but of whether their academic ambitions will be derailed.

In the eyes of some mothers, homeschooling curbs distractions to their girls' education. Distractions can manifest externally (e.g., socialization) or internally (e.g., academic insecurities), depending on the personalities, interests, or vulnerabilities of students. Perhaps in no other area is academic insecurity more relevant than in STEM (i.e., Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)—a flashpoint among Black mothers. Historically, girls and women have faced significant structural, cultural, and individual-level barriers, with respect to access and retention within STEM courses and careers. While contemporary efforts are being made to remedy gender inequity in STEM, underestimations of females' capabilities endure (Puckett, 2022).

Black girls are not exempt from gendered stereotypes, and must thwart negative messaging about their STEM prospects. Zora sees homeschooling as conducive to building anti-sexist learning cultures; she works to bolster her daughter's interests in neuroscience and psychology:

"A lot of that access to STEM, and a lot of the attitudes toward women—especially Black women—in STEM, that you, kind of, pick up from teachers, and the way your school is set up…I believe that Black

girls don't experience this as much in the homeschool environment, as they would in the public school system…where it's, kind of, constantly reinforced that it's okay if you're a girl, and you're not good at math and science."

Mothers cast homeschooling as a medium through which Black girls sidestep gendered racist tropes, which can sort them into certain academic "pockets" or career trajectories. Zora's daughters learn in an environment without "ceilings." They do not have to buffer negative STEM messaging in the same ways as traditional students. Ergo, homeschooling is a pathway through which Black girls can develop confidence, because they can take intellectual risks (e.g., exploring STEM subjects) without others casting doubt on their qualifications.

Black girls are also taught confidence through notions of self-worth and beauty. To cultivate strong and talented girls, mothers teach their daughters to embody senses of pride. Raven articulates the consequences of homeschooling through the prism of self-value:

"Just that pride of self, and the…even as a woman, a woman to be in this world…knowing the responsibility of who you are. We are the first teachers. And, like the saying goes…a person can judge a nation by the—basically, the measurement of the woman. So, I think especially homeschooling a girl—just being embedded in culture…that self-respect goes a long way."

Raven frames homeschooling in immediate and nationalistic terms. She wants her girls to internalize pride and self-respect, for doing so is a civic responsibility that transcends the individual, and impacts society. Although homeschooling is the product of her (singular) family's choice, Raven senses its broader implications, and strives to raise thoughtful, productive citizens of the world.

Aesthetics resonate deeply with Black homeschooling mothers, as they are bound to lessons of confidence and self-worth. Mothers make concerted efforts to show, and tell, their daughters they are beautiful—to fortify their self-esteem, and to reinforce their self-concepts as Black girls. Eurocentrism has historically reigned as the predominate standard in America, permeating virtually all societal institutions, including traditional schools (Mazama & Lundy, 2013). Whether referenced directly (i.e., via curricular lessons) or indirectly (i.e., through peer socialization), Eurocentrism molds the aesthetic standards to which many adhere, oftentimes marginalizing Black girls (Davis Tribble et al., 2019).

Ty counters Eurocentric influences by modeling hairstyles for her daughter:

"For us, I mean, even outside of school—it's just making sure we take care of the hair. Making sure we…how we talk about hair, the terminology that we use—even for me. Me wearing my hair in ways that [my daughter] can wear it as well. And that was something, also, that my mom—my mom, to this day, wears her hair in braids. Growing up, I always had my hair in braids. And so, it was being able to see it 24/7…the image of, *this as a Black woman*. She's beautiful. I'm beautiful. I look like her."

The intergenerational practice of hair-braiding connotes personal meaning and purpose. Ty's mentioning of terminology suggests that, in addition to the *act* of hair-braiding, the *words* she chooses to use (i.e., when discussing hair) are equally impactful, for her daughter. Together, action and language coalesce around a common symbol—Black womanhood—which reflects the self-concepts and cultural identities of Black girls.

Academic risk-taking, self-worth, and beauty help forge strong identities for Black girls. These qualities are essential tools Black mothers use to *build from within*. To reinforce this process, Black mothers teach lessons about Black heritage, to bestow cultural knowledge and instill racial pride in their girls. Jasmine lauds the value of history:

"You want to teach them facts and truth, and I think it's very—the significance of it…it's very important, because it allows the freedom for example. Black history will not be just in February, and [it will] not only [be] about slavery. You will learn more year-round about your culture, your history—all the wonderful things about yourself and your past."

Jasmine believes historical knowledge is paramount for identity development, a key process within the context of homeschooling. Because gender and race can, and most likely will, define core aspects of their daughters' lives, Black mothers venture to equip their daughters with the information—and character—needed to traverse challenges to their well-beings. Identity acts as both anchor and rudder—grounding Black girls with understandings of self, and propelling them toward the frontiers of their capabilities.

Black Fathers

Black fathers prioritize advocacy and affirmation, when contemplating motives for homeschooling their daughters. To be engaged in the learning process, and to be available when needed, signify core facets of their parental responsibilities. Support is applied in various areas, such as academics, extracurriculars, and practical teachings. Academic support manifests directly and indirectly, with fathers acting as leaders or facilitators of academic homeschooling lessons.

Xavier relays informal teachings to his daughter. He cherishes the time to discuss contemporary topics, wherein race emerges prominently:

"One of the things that I love about [homeschooling] also, particularly in this current time, is it allows us to—or gives us the ability to— speak to her about current social issues, and relate some of the things that we're going through now, to the things that Black people have experienced historically…and address it with a certain sensitivity that might be lacking in a traditional, predominantly White environment."

He spotlights the murder of George Floyd, and how this event crystallizes a frayed history between Blacks and law enforcement. That he is both her father and a Black male lends immediacy, and credibility, to this subject. Although Xavier does not assume the role of primary homeschool teacher, his insights make for lasting contributions to his daughter's learning.

Fathers also pinpoint the theme of confidence, which is interwoven with ideas about beauty and self-appreciation. To build confident girls, fathers affirm their daughters by telling them they are smart, beautiful, and worthy of esteem. Curiously, trepidation lies beneath their affirmations, with Black fathers expressing concerns about social ostracization for their girls. Yusef addresses these feelings, using relationship dynamics to accentuate this point:

"My big thing for the girls is…them not being the only little Black girl in the circle. That's something that's become a thought on our [minds]. As they begin to age and mature, and they begin to like boys, and boys begin to like them back…it's a world that's naturally [going to] emerge for them. And in that world emerging, I don't want them left on the sideline."

Black fathers appreciate the practice of homeschooling, due to its ability to stave off potential social difficulties (i.e., dating; relationships). Yusef laments that it is generally easier for Black boys to court relationships—intra-racial or otherwise—than it is for Black girls. Fearing social isolation could, one day, bruise his girls' self-esteems, he is grateful for chances to affirm their worth, during their formative years.

William draws similar references to aesthetics, matter-of-factly noting the likelihood of cultural biases in traditional education:

"Just like we espouse Black art…if you [are] White, you're going to [espouse White art]. So, if the majority of [my daughters'] teachers are White, they're going to do a similar type of thing. If they're homeschooled, we figure that we may be able to give them a better base, to where they appreciate themselves a little bit more."

Echoing Yvonne's sentiments, William frames encounters with cultural and/or racial bias as par for the course, in Black life. To face prejudice is not a question of *if* or *why*, but a matter of *when* and *how*. He conceptualizes homeschooling as the platform upon which his girls may cultivate self-appreciation, a shield that may blunt the impact of inevitable challenges, such as cultural biases and gendered racism.

Last, Black fathers charge themselves with amplifying their daughters' voices. Xavier speaks to this obligation:

"I think fathers play an extremely vital role in the development of daughters—not just educationally, but from life experience, because we are the first man our daughters love. So, I don't take that responsibility lightly. It's my job to show her how she should be treated…by respecting her opinions when we're in [the homeschooling] environment."

Xavier believes that fatherhood carries a sacred responsibility, one in which he can model acceptable forms of behavior and treatment. He knows that his daughter will have to contend with the unjust realities of gendered racism, as she matures. As a Black father, he tasks himself with setting the tone for how others—and men, especially—should demonstrate respect toward her. Thus, fueled by an impetus to protect and advocate on behalf of their daughters, Black fathers—the bulk of whom fulfill supporting roles, while homeschooling—engage the home-educational process meaningfully, teaching via formal and informal academic lessons, as well as bestowing routine affirmations.

Discussion

This study examines how gender shapes Black homeschooling motivations. Prior research addresses the racial implications of Black parents' homeschooling motives, yet the influence of gender remains unexplored. Findings suggest that gender informs Black homeschooling motivations subtly yet impactfully, due to gender differences between children *and* parent-child gender pairings. This research provides deeper insights into Black homeschooling, revealing how gender shapes educational processes and gendered anti-racist practices in Black families.

Respondents' insights mirror themes from earlier works, which showcase ERS practices in Black homeschooling (Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2013; Mazama & Musumunu, 2015). Racial similarities between Black girls and boys prompt their parents to teach culturally specific lessons, elevating Black experiences. These lessons are intended to accomplish the following for Black children: 1) confer positive messages about Black heritage; 2) foster racial identity, which bodes well for their self-concepts, confidence, and feelings of worthiness; and 3) arm them against racial prejudice and discrimination.

Gender differences between Black children explain variation in parents' homeschooling motives. Mothers *and* fathers share like opinions about how harshly traditional schools treat Black boys. This negative treatment compels Black parents to *protect* their sons via homeschooling. Black mothers and fathers place greater emphases on the removal of sons—rather than daughters—from racially hostile settings, thus conducting the process of addition by subtraction (i.e., building from without). By excising traditional schooling from Black boys' educational processes, parents infuse encouragement, spaces for authentic ways of being, and relevant life skills into their sons' learning.

Traditional education does negatively impact Black girls, but Black parents do not voice the need to *save* their daughters, as they do their sons. Rather, Black parents stress the cultivation of intrinsic values in their daughters (e.g., confidence, self-worth, beauty). While curbing negative influences and sharing life lessons are applicable to Black girls' homeschooling—as they are for Black boys—parents devote more attention to the nurturing of daughters' internal qualities, and preserving the integrity of their

self-perceptions (i.e., building from within). In keeping with prior studies (Davis Tribble et al., 2019; Varner & Mandara, 2014), homeschooling motives also disclose how gender imbues ERS processes, shaping discrepancies in Black parents' teachings.

While fathers prioritize life skills for their sons (e.g., navigating authority, romantic relationships, entrepreneurship), mothers' homeschooling motives for Black boys present differently, pointing more toward notions of authenticity, encouragement, and racial identity development. Parents' homeschooling motives for Black girls contain higher degrees of overlap, yet still diverge in some respects. Mothers and fathers equally note the import of affirming their daughters, to develop confident girls with solid understandings of self-appreciation. Yet, mothers express greater concerns about negative social influences (e.g., STEM-related stereotyping), while fathers project worry about social rejection and isolation (i.e., via dating). Race largely accounts for overlaps between mothers' and fathers' homeschooling motives, but examining Black homeschooling through the prism of gender unveils substantive nuance in ERS, magnifying the inner complexities of ERS practices in co-parenting-contexts, specifically (Jones et al., 2022).

Limitations and Future Research

There are two limitations to this study. As a qualitative analysis, its findings cannot be generalized to the larger Black homeschooling population. Despite the small sample size, gender differences between homeschooled children—and those between homeschooling parents—make for notable patterns. Future studies may utilize alternative research methods (e.g., ethnographies, surveys) to further explore the internal dimensions of Black homeschooling. For example, different familial compositions and homeschool settings may spur variation in GERS practices.

The sole focus on parental insights marks a second limitation. Incorporating Black children's voices would inform studies of gendered homeschooling motives, namely in terms of how Black boys and girls articulate the following: 1) the experiential meanings of *building from without* and *building from within*, respectively; and 2) how these GERS practices impact their learning in homeschooling contexts.

Nonetheless, the findings stand to impact traditional education practices. Considering the push-pull dynamics that ultimately transform Black families into homeschoolers, traditional school stakeholders may seek to examine racialized pushes through the lens of gender. Systematic evaluations of curricular packages, disciplinary policies, and student life could illuminate challenges specific to Black girls *and* boys. These evaluations may stimulate campaigns to promote awareness of gendered racial dynamics in schooling, creating more favorable experiences for Black students overall.

Implications

This study bears research and education policy-related implications. First, gendered homeschooling motives reveal the cultural information (i.e., core values; sociohistorical experiences; societal navigational strategies) that 1) matter most to Black fathers and mothers, with respect to raising their daughters and sons; and 2) may resonate the deepest with Black school-age children. Additional studies of gender dynamics may further reveal parent *and* student connections to specific homeschooling topics or themes. Such findings may show how—or why—these lessons prove so impactful for Black homeschoolers.

Second, to improve Black student experiences in traditional education, school personnel may consider gender, when attempting to forge substantive bonds with Black girls and boys. Doing so may cultivate trust in interpersonal relationships (i.e., between Black students, teachers, administrators, and staff), as well as inform behaviors and policies with ethno-cultural significance (e.g., hair-targeting microaggressions) (Essien & Wood, 2021).

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Tables

Table 1: Homeschooling Mothers—Sample Characteristics (n=31)

Name(s)*	Age(s)	Marital Status	Education	Income (K)	Gender Composition of Homeschoolers
Adrian	60	Married (M)	Some College[a]	$50-75	Mixed
Ava	32	M	BA	$100-150	Mixed
Bailey	35	M	MA	$150-200	Mixed
Brooke	45	M	BA	$150-200	Girl(s) Only
Case	40	M	MA	$100-150	Mixed
Corin	40	M	MA	$50-75	Boy(s) Only
Dawn	57	M	BA	$50-75	Mixed
Devon	51	M	Some College[a]	$100-150	Boy(s) Only
Ella	38	M	BA	>$250	Mixed
Elle	50	M	MA	$150-200	Boy(s) Only
Felice	41	M	BA	$50-75	Boys(s) Only
Grace	38	M	BA	$25-50	Mixed
Hope	56	M	Professional	$100-150	Mixed
Ivy	31	M	BA	$100-150	Mixed
Jasmine	44	M	BA	$150-200	Girl(s) Only
Kima	49	M	BA	$150-200	Mixed
Lyric	52	M	Some College[b]	--	Boy(s) Only
Maureen**	--	M	--	>$250	Boy(s) Only
Naomi	42	M	Professional	$75-100	Girl(s) Only
Ovelle	34	M	Some College[a]	$50-75	Mixed
Patrice	34	Single	MA	$100-150	Girl(s) Only
Quinn	50	M	PhD	--	Boy(s) Only
Raven	32	M	Some College[a]	$50-75	Girl(s) Only
Sidney	47	M	BA	$75-100	Boy(s) Only
Ty	35	Living with Another Adult	MA	--	Girl(s) Only
Umaro	48	M	BA	$50-75	Boy(s) Only
Vale	37	M	MA	$50-75	Boy(s) Only
Winter	44	M	MA	$100-150	Mixed
Ximara	59	M	Some College[a]	$100-150	Mixed
Yvonne	42	M	BA	>$250	Boy(s) Only
Zora	38	M	Some College[a]	$25-50	Mixed

*All participants' names have been replaced with Pseudonyms.
**Did not complete Self-Report Survey.
[a]Associate's Degree.
[b]Associate's Degree and Technical/Vocational Degree.

Table 2: Homeschooling Fathers—Sample Characteristics (n=12)

Name(s)*	Age(s)	Marital Status	Education	Income (K)	Gender Composition of Homeschoolers
Omar**	--	Married (M)	--	--	Boy(s) Only
Preston**	--	M	--	$50-75	Girl(s) Only
Quinton**	--	M	--	$150-200	Boy(s) Only
Raymond**	--	M	--	$50-75	Mixed
Stephen**	--	M	--	$25-50	Mixed
Taylor**	--	M	--	$150-200	Mixed
Usain**	--	M	--	$50-75	Mixed
Vernon**	--	M	--	$50-75	Boy(s) Only
William	40	M	MA	$100-150	Mixed
Xavier	43	M	BA	$150-200	Girl(s) Only
Yusef	39	M	MA	>$250	Mixed
Zackery	40	M	Some College[a]	>$250	Boy(s) Only

*All participants' names have been replaced with Pseudonyms.
**Did not complete Self-Report Survey.
[a]Associate's Degree.

PAPER TWO

The Marrow of Pedagogy: How Faith and Race Shape Curricula for Black Homeschoolers

Abstract

Faith and race signify prime cultural influences in homeschooling, with both imbuing motives and curricula for Black families. Literature casts faith as a cornerstone of homeschooling—a popular ideological lens, through which parents confer a specific brand of values-based education. More recently, the ethnic-racial implications of homeschooling have grasped scholarly and public attention. Black parents—many of whom transmit cultural lessons via homeschooling—often tailor curricula to reflect African diasporic studies, which center Black historical and contemporary experiences. When considering how culture impacts curriculum, studies generally frame faith and race as discrete—or inversely related—influences. Consequently, how faith and race contour homeschooling curricula *together*, particularly within Black households, remains underexamined. Using a mixed methodology, this study investigates how faith and race inform curricular praxes for Black homeschoolers. Findings suggest faith and race are dynamic, complementary forces that shape curricula separately *and* jointly, via formal and informal means. Results forward scholarship by attending the complexities of homeschooling curricula, pinpointing how cultural influences steer Black families' pedagogy.

Key Words

Black homeschooling; pedagogy; culture; faith; race

Introduction

Diversification hallmarks modern homeschooling. After national legalization during the 1990s, the homeschooling movement has only increased in subsequent decades, evinced through broadening demographics, parental motivations, and curricular practices (Valiente et al., 2022). Homeschooling renders education customizable; thus, parents curate pedagogy in ways that best reflect their philosophical, curricular, and cultural orientations (Reich, 2002). Studies indicate that White homeschoolers model praxis after, pull curricular materials from, or directly access vast selections of academic resources. Recent works emphasize Black homeschooling motives and curricular topics (Fields-Smith, 2020), yet less is known about how Black families engage curriculum-building processes.

Black families represent a burgeoning segment of homeschoolers, typifying recent diversification trends. For many, the chance to build culturally rooted curricula proves invaluable. Research thoroughly documents the ethnic-racial dynamics alienating Black families from traditional schools (Fields-Smith, 2017). Interpersonal biases (i.e., from teachers, administrators) and structural racism impact Black students doubly, yielding negative educational experiences and outcomes (Wang et al., 2019). Racial disparities manifest in various sectors of traditional schooling (e.g., course grades, extracurricular club membership, and discipline) (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013). School curricula bear similar inequalities, such as tendencies to magnify Eurocentric aesthetics, events, and accomplishments (Mazama & Lundy, 2015). The historical contributions, cultural experiences, and contemporary realities of Black people are often marginalized, if not omitted altogether. These trends prompt Black parents to homeschool, with the hope of devising culturally relevant learning opportunities for their children (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009).

Black-centric education is paramount for many homeschoolers, yet applying faith-based instruction is a comparable ambition (Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2014). For this study, I demonstrate how faith and race work as separate *and* combined forces—cultural influences that shape curricula for Black families. My goal is to demonstrate how faith- and race-based motives translate into material options for curriculum-building. To perform this investigation, I administer three separate

surveys, facilitate solo and paired interviews, and host focus groups to garner—and analyze—data gleaned from 31 Black homeschooling families. While I forge empirical and thematic links with prior and recent studies, I also highlight the most impactful contributions of this study.

Research generally frames Black families as espousing either faith- *or* racial identity-based curricula. While these cultural forces can function discretely via homeschooling, this study also demonstrates how faith and race operate concertedly, with Black parents conferring racialized instruction through the prism of faith. Findings suggest culturally integrative approaches, though not uncommon, are challenging for Black families, given that Eurocentrism dominates religious homeschooling networks and products. The paper concludes by sharing its limitations, suggestions for future research, and broader implications for education research and policy.

Background

The Influence of Faith on Homeschooling Curricula

Cultural orientations shape homeschooling pedagogy, coloring—and constituting—the motives informing families' curricula. Oftentimes, cultural influences stem from religious beliefs. Van Galen (1988) designates parents with religious curricular preferences as *ideologues*: those grounding homeschooling in faith-based principles. White, middle-class, fundamentalist Christians signify quintessential ideologues, for they have, historically, represented the largest homeschooling demographic. Citing the absence of faith-based curricula in traditional schools—or deficiencies in parochial school instruction—ideologues homeschool to teach religious values via curricula. While parents normally devise or select lessons, alternative paths to faith-based instruction exist outside the home. Churches are a leading curricular source for homeschoolers. Assuming the quality and administration of church programs (e.g., Bible clubs; Sunday schools; youth ministries) meet parents' standards, the church symbolizes a homeschooling annex, wherein cultural lessons are reinforced through formal teachings (e.g., sermons) and communal activities (e.g., religious retreats).

The expansion of religious curricula dovetails with the growing homeschooling movement. Christian bookstores, perennial conventions, and curriculum fairs supplement church services, granting parents access to resource materials, publishers, and vendors (Hanna, 2012). Physical and digital products (e.g., magazines; textbooks; testing programs; all-in-one boxset curricula) are also made available for view or purchase (Gaither, 2017; Sherfinski, 2014). The internet heightens access to learning materials for homeschooling families (Isenberg, 2007). As technology furthers itself into educative procedures, homeschoolers experience an increased reliance on e-learning (i.e., for curricular, instructional, or support purposes), sometimes preferring it to non-digital channels (Pell, 2018).

Homeschooling networks are equally valuable educational tools. Contrasts between individual needs, academic foci, available resources, and cultural preferences beget differences in network mission, size, and functionality. Kunzman and Gaither (2020) pinpoint three network strands: 1) support groups; 2) time-tabled groups; and 3) co-ops. All networks are designed to support homeschoolers yet operate

differently. Support groups, the most informal type, are defined by flexible meetup times and scheduling. Noted for informal resource-sharing among members, time-tabled groups prioritize scheduling for logistical purposes (i.e., time management; location selection). Co-ops reign as highly influential networks among homeschoolers (Anthony, 2015). The most formalized network type, co-ops provide routinized classes for students (i.e., in person; virtual), and are taught by homeschooling parents, hired teachers, or tutors. Homeschoolers elicit co-op services because of their academic, social, and cultural benefits (Cui & Hanson, 2019).

Faith-based co-ops, particularly Christian groups (e.g., Classical Conversations), rank as some of the most popular homeschooling networks (Gaither, 2017). The proliferation of religious curricula reflects this popularity. For example, Sherfinski (2014) references US Amazon.com rankings to show the predominance of Christian book sales. Through religious co-op membership, families coalesce around shared cultural and curricular goals. Some co-ops even mandate members to draft formal statements of faith, to encourage group-wide commitment to religious principles. The promotion of Christian values (i.e., via identity formation; worldview sharing) is a top priority for religious co-ops, but many are just as renowned for their academic rigor (Anthony & Burroughs, 2012; Hahn, 2012).

Faith-based networks prove attractive to various homeschoolers—from the devout to the secular—due to their preceding reputations and ample resources. This broad appeal transcends ethnic-racial boundaries. Black homeschoolers commonly engage Christian networks and curricula, to maximize rigorous *and* religious educational experiences. Despite the allure of faith-based learning, many religious groups and products reflect, and thus favor, White homeschooling audiences (i.e., shown via majority-white network membership, product imagery) (Monds, 2022). Therefore, while faith factors heavily into Black families' considerations, the cultural influence of race is also of paramount importance.

The Influence of Race on Homeschooling Curricula

Many Black homeschoolers centralize race in their curricula (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Mazama & Lundy 2012, 2013, 2014). Mazama (2016) examines the

cultural foci and impact of Black homeschooling, arguing that diasporic studies instill racial awareness, pride, and confidence in Black children. Black parents champion the flexibility of homeschooling because they can fashion relevant, cultural lessons. The process by which Black parents bestow cultural knowledge is ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) (Hughes et al., 2006). ERS is substantively rooted in parenting studies, yet research illustrates that Black homeschoolers channel ERS via formalized lessons (e.g., history assignments), informal conversations (i.e., about current, racialized events), and behavioral modeling. Behavioral modeling entails strategies (e.g., verbal affirmations, retorts; mannerisms) parents teach their children, to foster positive—or counter negative—racial attitudes (Hughes et al., 2016; Priest et al., 2014). Black parents, like others, employ various methods to share curricula, using home- (i.e., heirlooms; books; internet), community- (i.e., libraries; museums; parks), and group-based (i.e., co-op) sources to teach Black heritage.

Literature on Black co-op participation is limited, but recent works spotlight these learning experiences (Ali-Coleman, 2022; Gatewood, Jones, & Monds, 2022). Along with providing academic support, co-ops forge meaningful bonds between Black families and others. The degree to which a co-op centers ethnic-racial studies may not constitute a precondition for every Black homeschooler. Yet, the promise of ethnic-racially centered education captivates many, and thus, cannot be understated or summarily dismissed (Hirsch, 2019; Wells, 2021). Despite the lifting of COVID-spurred, virtual learning mandates, scores of Black families remain as homeschoolers to date, marking a 3.3% to 16.1% spike in Black homeschooling since 2020 (Eggleston & Fields, 2021). Co-ops, particularly those foregrounding ethnic-racial themes, are instrumental in sustaining Black interest and commitment. As cultural education hubs, co-ops offer unique learning opportunities to Black families—opportunities that may be rare, or nonexistent, in traditional classrooms.

The Combined Influence of Faith and Race on Homeschooling Curricula

Faith and race—both of which feature prominently in Black homeschooling motives—permeate curriculum planning. Many Black parents engage pedagogy through the prism of Christianity.

Accordingly, faith is the vehicle through which parents fulfill a higher calling: the teaching of their own child(ren) (Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy, 2014). Moreover, it is a curriculum-building framework, within which academics and extracurriculars are organized on the foundation of belief. To show how faith informs Black homeschooling, Mazama and Lundy (2014) reference the spectrum of "Christian Protectionists," defined as parents who homeschool to shield their children from moral threats in traditional education, or in the world at large. *Evangelicals* and *fundamentalists*, both of whom prioritize teaching Christian values as the *sole* concern for homeschooling, occupy one end of this spectrum. For members of these groups, race may play a significant role in daily life, but faith takes precedence as the supreme cultural influence. *Christians with multiple concerns* fall on the opposite end of this spectrum. Although categorized as Christian Protectionists, these individuals prioritize other matters *alongside* religious values (e.g., academic rigor; school safety; ethnic-racial representation in curricula).

Mazama and Lundy (2012) frame racial protectionism comparably to religious protectionism. "Racial protectionists" are characterized as such:

"Black parents who have opted to educate their offspring at home, at least in part in an attempt to shield their children from the racism they have experienced in school, or that they do not wish their children to be subjected to" (p. 733).

Racial protectionists see traditional schools, and their operators (i.e., administrators, teachers, staff), as inherently committed to White hegemony and antithetical to Black prosperity (Lundy & Mazama, 2014; Mazama & Lundy, 2013, 2015). Deeming traditional schools as bastions of structural and interpersonal racism, racial protectionists excise their children from ostensibly harmful environments, to promote a culturally grounded education at home.

Faith and race may appear as discrete cultural influences, but they share an empirical relationship. Denominational affiliation informs the degree to which Black parents perform ERS (Mazama & Lundy, 2014). Black parents who cast religious teachings as sole priorities (i.e., Evangelicals, fundamentalists) practice ERS far less than Christians with multiple concerns, who tend to leave room for ethnic-racially focused lessons. While there is no guarantee that Black Evangelicalism/fundamentalism precludes ERS absolutely, or that multiple concerns decrease the import of faith, an "either-or" dynamic emerges still,

whereby either faith or race shapes homeschooling curricula individually or predominantly—not *conjointly*. Although faith and race are equally poised to shape curriculum-building, literature frames them as distinct, or inversely related, cultural influences for Black homeschooling motivations. What remains underexamined is how faith and race operate as complementary forces in Black homeschoolers' curriculum development. Therefore, I pose the following research question: *How do faith and race concertedly shape curricular development for Black homeschoolers?*

Methods

Recruitment

To garner participant interest, I initiated contact with an Atlanta (GA) Metropolitan area-based homeschooling organization. I chose Atlanta as the primary research site because it signifies a hub for Black homeschooling families, due to its demographic characteristics (i.e., significant Black and/or African American population) and relatively permissive homeschooling laws (i.e., as compared to other states) (Fields-Smith, 2008). After establishing rapport via email, the organization leader disseminated my digital recruitment flyer via the organization listserv. This facilitated my recruitment efforts significantly, netting 43 emails of interest. My snowball sampling efforts were also made possible through the recruitment flyer-posting (Lune & Berg, 2016). Parents whose interviews were facilitated via (their) initial "email of interest," shared knowledge of their research experience with Black homeschooling parents who were unaware of the project.

Interested parties contacted me via email or phone; afterwards, I began the screening process to assess study candidate eligibility. Eligibility criteria included: 1) self-identify as native-born African American, or Black American, homeschooling fathers or mothers; 2) currently homeschooling voluntarily—or had prior experience with voluntary homeschooling (i.e., for at least six months)—at least one child, of Pre-K-to-High School age (i.e., ages 3-18); 3) begun or concluded the homeschooling experience, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, commencing circa March 2020. I required that study participants identify as native-born African American or Black American to negate consequential ethno-cultural differences within the subject pool (owing to foreign-born status/experiences). Furthermore, I required that participants began or concluded voluntary homeschooling experiences prior to the pandemic, during which many families were thrust into home-based education under public health-driven mandates.

Participants

My study sample was comprised of 43 individual Black homeschooling parents (31 mothers; 12 fathers). From the sample, 27 of the 31 mothers participated in solo interviews, while the remaining engaged in paired interviews with a husband. Only one mother fulfilled a supportive homeschooling role (i.e., Maureen); her husband (i.e., Zackery) assumed primary homeschooling responsibilities. Eight of the 12 fathers participated in solo interviews; eleven of the fathers played supporting homeschooling roles. Tables 1 and 2 below reveal additional information about study participants; I generated pseudonyms for all participants:

[Tables 1 and 2 about here]

Data Collection

Data collection spanned from Fall 2020 to Summer 2022. To collect quantitative data, I administered three separate surveys to participants: 1) Self-Report Survey; 2) Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI); and 3) Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS). The self-report survey yielded individual-level (i.e., demographic variables), family-level (i.e., family unit composition characteristics), and homeschooling practice-specific data (Kapitulik, 2011). Homeschooling practice-specific data contained variables such as the number of homeschooled children (per family); the average number of daily homeschooling hours; and the average cost(s) of homeschooling.

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) and Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS) surveys—four- and seven-item Likert scales, respectively—captured data pertaining to respondents' racialized experiences. The MIBI pertains to the "centrality" dimension of racial identity—the extent to which race is a core part of a respondent's self-concept (Sellers et al., 1997). Its four prompts ask respondents to rank, on a one-through-five scale (i.e., 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree), the degree to which they agree with the following statements:

1) I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.
2) Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.
3) In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.
4) I have a strong attachment to other Black people.

The EDS measures the frequency of respondents' perceived encounters with discrimination (Williams et al., 1997). Each of the seven prompts of this measure relays a scenario of negative treatment (e.g., "People act as if they are afraid of you"), to which respondents select one of the following answers: 1 = Never; 2 = Less than once a year; 3 = A few times a year; 4 = At least once a month; 5 = Almost every day.

I incorporated these measures to assess the extent to which parents' perceptions of racial identity and discrimination reflect, or inform, the cultural influences on their homeschooling. Most participants emailed me their completed surveys, before the start of their interviews. Participants who emailed me their completed surveys post-interview did so because of scheduling- and/or availability-related constraints. [Note: Since mothers assumed the bulk of homeschooling responsibilities (i.e., from curriculum-building to teaching), my quantitative analyses are based on mothers' survey responses only. For data transparency purposes, the number of completed surveys from mothers are: Self-Report Survey (31); MIBI (31); and EDS (30).]

I collected qualitative data through solo interviews, paired interviews, and focus groups. I conducted semi-structured interviews, using a guide to facilitate conversations. Although I had pre-written questions to ask respondents, the semi-structured nature of interviews permitted free-flowing discussions about parents' homeschooling curricula (Henry, 2017). Examples of interview guide prompts are as follows:

1) Describe how you construct(ed) your homeschooling curriculum.
2) How much of your curriculum is/was self-generated, borrowed, or shared?
3) To what extent would you describe your curriculum as culturally specific?

I completed a total of 41 interview sessions with Black homeschooling parents. (Of the 41 total interviews, I conducted 27 solo interviews with mothers, 8 solo interviews with fathers, 4 paired interviews, and 2 focus group discussions.) The average duration for interviews was 111 minutes, with the shortest interview running 51 minutes, and the longest 257 minutes. Per social distancing measures, all interviews were conducted via Zoom or phone, in a home office. I generated audio-video and audio

recordings for all Zoom interviews; I conducted a total of 36 Zoom interviews. Audio files of phone interview recordings were also generated; I conducted a total of 5 phone interviews (i.e., due to study participant preference). Recordings were transcribed for qualitative analysis purposes. I remunerated respondents $50 for solo and paired interview sessions, respectively; therefore, individual respondents and couples *each* received $50 for their participation.

After completing solo and paired interviews, I hosted focus groups to triangulate self-report survey and interview data, thus increasing the validity of my empirical findings. Each focus group included three study participants, comprising either an all-father or all-mother panel. The panel structure facilitated dialogue among parents from different homeschooling contexts, allowing interactive commentary. To generate discussion, I utilized a focus group guide based on emergent themes from the interviews. Below is an example of an emergent theme-inspired prompt:

While all subjects hold value, many parents name Black History, Language Arts, and Mathematics as their most heavily emphasized subjects. To what degree does your homeschooling reflect this emphasis?

I conducted all focus groups via Zoom, and created audio-video and audio recordings for each focus group, from a home office. Recordings were transcribed for qualitative analysis purposes. I remunerated all focus group participants $20 for their participation.

Additionally, eight participants shared examples of the following homeschooling artifacts, for content analysis purposes: 1) imagery; and 2) digital files. Imagery refers to photographic (i.e., still shots) or videographic (i.e., shown during Zoom interview sessions) allusions to physical homeschooling materials, learning spaces, and/or experiences. Experiences entailed family- or homeschooling group-based camps, field trips, seminars, or conferences. Digital files refer to snapshots (e.g., from mobile phone cameras) or documents (e.g., Word; PDF) of homeschooling-related contents (e.g., workbooks; worksheets). My intent was for these artifacts to exemplify the tools Black parents use to engage curriculum design and application.

Coding and Analysis

I applied open, axial, and selective coding to my qualitative analyses. To conduct open coding, I analyzed the aggregate of interview and focus group responses, foregrounding the most prominent themes (e.g., curriculum-building approaches; source(s) of cultural influence on curricula; format(s) of curricular tools). These themes represented the categories needed for axial coding, which I performed by identifying patterns—and further crystallizing major themes—across openly coded categories. Last, I administered selective coding to the axially coded patterns. Through selective coding, I generated narratives about the cultural influences of faith and race, both of which constitute thematic pillars for the current study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Findings

General Patterns for Curriculum-Building

The innate flexibility of homeschooling makes curriculum-building dynamic—exciting and fulfilling, while simultaneously tedious and exhausting. Considering the plethora of resources made accessible to parent-teachers, some perceive, and very well experience, curriculum-building as empowering yet daunting. These sentiments ring loudest at the start of homeschooling endeavors, or during key transitional periods (i.e., curricular adjustments)—times at which parents (re)assess academic pathways and goals for their families. The fact remains: no amount of preparation, discernment, or scrutiny can *guarantee* the relative successes, or failures, of one curriculum over another. Consequently, there is a palpable trial-and-error to homeschooling, whereby parents place their best judgements—and sometimes literal faith—in amassing curricula that befits their homeschooling ambitions.

Qualitative responses from parents—virtually all Black mothers—frame curriculum-building in terms of one, or a combination of two, approaches: 1) Self-generation (i.e., drafting original curricular resources); and 2) À la carte (i.e., assembling curricula from various sources). The à la carte approach may entail prepackaged curricular materials solely, or an amalgam of prepackaged and self-generated materials. (For clarity, prepackaged materials are also referenced as "pre-made," "preset," or "vendor-purchased" curricular materials/products). Twenty-five out of thirty-one parent-teachers (81%) name à la carte as the principal mode of curriculum-building, irrespective of compositional and demographic differences across families.

Brooke attests to the à la carte technique:

"To start, it was curriculum-in-a-box, and then things I would find that I wanted to do. [This hodgepodge] was the first year—going to expos and talking to other homeschooling families. I was already seeing for myself, that we change curricula all the time. It's okay [to not] finish something. You can move on to something else. Sometimes, it hurts me that we pay for something, and [we don't] use it, or we don't finish using it. But I've changed many things, many times."

Her curriculum-building is evolutionary—piloted by preset materials, only to branch toward viable alternatives. Opinions about when, or how, families should truncate the use of a given curricula varies among parents. However, Brooke spotlights the inborn freedoms of her curricular process, noting that

while adjustments are sometimes disappointing or painstaking, parents can rest assured by knowing they *can* be made.

Parents tap formal and informal sources to engage the à la carte strategy. Vendor-packaged materials (i.e., physical, digital resources), co-op programs, online resources (i.e., instructor-led (a)synchronous classes; websites), and tutoring services (i.e., in person, virtual) are the sources from which parents cull *formal curricular tools*. Conversely, familial dialogue and behavioral modeling qualify as *informal curricular tools*.

Most mothers obtain curricular tools from assorted media. However, nearly all practitioners of the à la carte strategy have—or still—practice self-generation to some degree, but mainly as a supplementary method. Shifts in family lifestyle and logistics, or to curricular preferences and needs, stimulate change in curricula. The natural maturation of children epitomizes such change. Homeschooling young children (e.g., Pre-K – Grade 1), though not devoid of challenges, generally entails lower degrees of academic complexity and logistical pressure. This bodes auspiciously for parents, as it creates space for greater curricular control and creativity. Unlike Middle and Upper School curricula, which possess higher degrees of sophistication, Lower School activities typically demand less time for planning and execution. (As compared to Middle and Upper schoolers, younger children are relatively more compliant, and thus meet parents' expectations with less resistance.) Therefore, as a general trend, parents reserve self-generation for Lower Schoolers. This helps to explain why only six out of thirty-one parents (19%) name self-generation a primary curriculum-building strategy.

Sources of Cultural Influence on Curricula

Twenty-eight out of thirty-one parents (90%) classify their curricula as partial to one, or a combination of two, cultural orientations. Black parents centralize faith solely, race solely, or a coupling of faith and race, when discussing cultural influences on curricula. (Note: Three parents (10%) describe their curricula as non-culturally specific (i.e., universalist). Consequently, survey and interview data from these parents are excluded from subsequent analyses.) Specifically, ten out of thirty-one parents (32%)

claim faith as the primary cultural influence; the same number and percentage label race as a primary influence. Eight parents (26%) cast faith and race as joint influences. Overall, these patterns suggest that faith and race function as cultural pillars of Black homeschooling curricula.

Every homeschooling enterprise bears its own unique signature. Nonetheless, observable patterns emerge across curricula. Table 3 below reveals how faith- and race-based curricula manifest, whether as singular or combined influences. Moreover, faith- and race-inspired learning are each comprised of *formal* and *informal* curricular tools. The ensuing sections reveal similarities and contrasts, across faith- and race-based curricula.

[Table 3 about here]

Formal Curricular Tools: Faith-Based Learning

Preset materials and institutional programs largely constitute formal curricular tools for faith-based learning. Noted for their popularity—due to successful reviews or firsthand accounts from other families—Christian products exert a significant presence in homeschooling markets. To maximize educational opportunities, Black parents devote hours to researching, and ultimately acquiring, resources they see as most befitting of their curricular goals. Faith-based materials commonly fit the bill, even if religious studies are not overarching priorities.

Felice, who uses the *Easy Peasy* curriculum (alongside other formal sources), addresses this seeming contradiction:

"We don't do anything formally with the curriculum, based on religion. The *Easy Peasy* curriculum is a Christian curriculum. I chose it more [so] for the core classes. If [my son] wants to do Bible classes outside of [homeschooling] hours, absolutely. He can do it. I don't make that a part of his curriculum, but it is there as an option, if he wants to do it."

She attests the quality of her prepackaged curriculum, particularly regarding its "core" subjects (e.g., language arts; math; science). While religious studies are a formal curricular option, Felice prefers that faith-based instruction occur during extracurricular hours. She illustrates the dynamism of curriculum-building, for although she does not prioritize preset religious studies, she chooses a formal curricular tool

defined by Christian values. She does not mandate faith-based learning from the text, but still affords the *choice* of preset Bible study. This, and the fact that her son is enrolled in off-hours Bible class, suggests that faith holds cultural value for Felice, even though it does not spreadhead learning objectives.

Bailey, also a practitioner of the à la carte method, discusses the use of preset materials:

"I actually used the Common Core [standards], and…based on what they're supposed to know, I actually build my curriculum for that. Most of it is pre-bought curriculum. I use ABEKA for math. I've used Horizons for math. They're all different programs, but just based on what I think provides the best learning experience for the child, and the easiest teaching experience for me."

Although homeschooling, she leverages state (i.e., public school) learning standards to build a curricular scaffold, where upon she combines materials from different Christian vendors. She employs multiple products for math specifically, highlighting the practice of intra- and inter-subject application of preset tools. Should concerns arise with one or more products (i.e., due to formatting organization, stylistic incompatibility, etc.), parents may swap out formal learning tools, until a more suitable "fit"—for one or more subjects—is discovered.

Institutional programming encompasses formalized, group-based initiatives, oftentimes affiliated with churches, co-ops, and homeschooling networks. As formal curricular tools, program membership is typically established through agreements (i.e., written; verbal) between homeschoolers and a governing body. Parents enroll their child(ren) in assorted classes, clubs, and teams, for academic and social enrichment. Brooke—along with her husband, Xavier, and their daughter—enjoys Classical Conversations co-op group membership. She references her daughter's participation in Bible Quizzing—a competitive game of memorization:

"She is pretty well-versed in scriptures, and so what they're learning, she is familiar with it already. Some of the students are…some are not. Because it's a competition, we practice. We try to involve someone else. We had one girl who would come over. We usually have one other person that would come, so that they can try to compete together. [My daughter will] take the initiative—to try to teach scriptures, and [memorize] verses, and give ideas on how to memorize scripture[s] for [her co-op mates], because they have to know it verbatim in the competitions. She takes the leads on that."

Parents like Brooke and Xavier view co-op membership quite favorably. As devout Christians, they appreciate the curricular opportunities that Bible Quizzing affords their daughter. This institutional program accomplishes three important goals: 1) stimulates intellectual growth (i.e., via rapid recall of

Bible verses); 2) fosters camaraderie (i.e., between their daughter and her teammates); and 3) reinforces their family's religious beliefs. Brooke punctuates the connection between faith and formal curricular tools:

"I have the Bible, and I'm like…all [of our academic textbooks] are important, but this is the lens that we want to view the rest of these things from. And then with Classical Conversations—because it's a Christian program…on the board, they have all the subjects written. But they have arrows going to the middle, with God in the center. All of these things stem from God, who created everything. And so, we try to approach it from that lens, for the most part."

Academics certainly bear significance, but for Brooke, faith is the bedrock upon which other forms of knowledge stand.

Formal Curricular Tools: Race-Based Learning

For race-based learning, formal curricular tools assume the following formats: 1) experiential learning opportunities; 2) book volumes; and 3) hired personnel. Recounting a family field trip, Brooke champions the benefits of education that normalizes Black accomplishments:

"We do a visit with the Girl Scouts at the Apex Museum…and I'm like, 'Oh, look! It's the guy who was the richest!' [To which her daughter replies], 'Oh, Mansa Musa—I know who that is.' To her, it's, 'Yeah…the richest guy.' I'm [thinking] *If I had known this when I was your age*. But to her, it's normal."

Having learned of the Malian king only months prior, Brooke expresses fascination at the exhibit glorifying his legend. Yet, her daughter beholds the exhibit matter-of-factly, belying Brooke's excitement. These contrasts notwithstanding, Brooke praises her family's Christian co-op, which foregrounds Black experiences in its curricula. Although its membership is predominantly White, she sees the co-op as a vessel for homeschooling—an extension of her household. These sentiments are rooted in the fact that co-op instructors center Black accomplishments, culture, and identity in their formal curricula. Said practices convey deep meaning to Brooke and her family, and they are tenets of ERS processes.

MIBI results suggest Black homeschoolers attribute great value to ERS, considering its aptitude for racial identity development. (Since mothers steer curricula for thirty out of thirty-one families (97%), MIBI and EDS averages pertain to mothers' responses only.) Survey data is organized with respect to

cultural influences on curricula; ergo, "faith," "race," and "faith + race" each represent participant subsets. Table 4 contains the averages for each MIBI prompt, across the three curricular subsets.

[Table 4 about here]

Whether spotlighting results per individual subset (i.e., focusing averages for the "faith," "race," and "faith + race" subsets, respectively), or per individual survey prompt (i.e., highlighting averages for the "Sense of Belonging," "Reflection of Identity," "Part of Self-Image," or "Attachment to Others" prompts, respectively), averages number highly across all MIBI indicators. (Variation between subset cumulative averages (i.e., the overall average of an individual subset's four prompt results) measures at only 0.2.) Notedly, the highest averages for each prompt either belong to the "faith" or "faith + race" subsets. What this suggests is that Black identity matters significantly to most parents, *regardless* of the cultural orientation shaping their curricula.

Mothers harbor individualized (i.e., shown via prompts two and three) and collectivized (i.e., shown via prompts one and four) perceptions of Black identity, both of which manifest in their ERS processes. As research claims, diasporic studies nurture positive self-concepts in Black children. They also perform a complementary function; for through race-based learning, parents build individuals *and* connect them to transnational histories and populations.

Formal Curricular Tools: Faith- and Race-based Learning

Formal curricular tools for faith- and race-based learning, when juxtaposed, appear incongruous in format (i.e., vendor-packaged products, institutional programming vis-à-vis book volumes, experiential learning, and hired personnel). Despite formatting differences, faith and race are not mutually exclusive forces in homeschooling. In fact, parents conjure ways to meld these cultural influences, via curricular application. Alterations, or supplements, to preset materials allow parents to teach religious and racial values simultaneously. "Whitewashed" content is ripe for hybrid approaches to cultural education.

Vale, who employs YouTube videos to teach Bible stories, bemoans the lack of diversity in prepackaged materials:

"So, [my son and I] just had those type of conversations. I tell him, 'This is all I can find right now. I want you to see this. We can talk about it.' And every time I show one, I tell him the same thing: 'These people [actually] look more like us. They don't look like this.'"

She deliberately selects books with Black male protagonists, to diversify her formal curricular tools. The intent is to forge racially relevant connections between her son and his formal learning tools, which also center faith.

Parents go to great lengths, to infuse racial diversity in formal curricular tools; this is especially true for preset items that illuminate faith, but lag in racial representation. While some personally contact vendors to voice grievances (i.e., about the lack of racial diversity in products), others may physically color in White story characters, so they appear as Black. See Figures 1 and 2 below:

[Figures 1 and 2 about here]

Yvonne explains how—and why—she alters her formal curricular tools:

"I go in [the workbook] before he even sees it, and I color [the characters] brown with black hair. And I'm so serious about it, because I want [my children] to see themselves [in the illustrations]. Let me tell you…this book is solid. So, I tailor it to what they need to see."

Her qualms lie not with the instructional quality of the workbook, but with its visual representations. Yvonne tries to establish racial links between her children and their formal learning tools. By shading illustrations, she enacts a cultural fusion, whereby she physical maps a form of racial representation onto a faith-centered product. This signals a twinning effect in Black homeschooling, such that faith and race function as parallel influences in educative processes.

Informal Curricular Tools: Faith-Based Learning

Informal curricular tools for faith- and race-focused learning share identical formats. That is, parents transmit both types of cultural lessons through behavioral modeling and familial dialogue. However, while there are formatting similarities, *dissimilarities* in cultural substance persist. The content of familial dialogue varies, according to the source of cultural influence. Brooke describes how she confers lessons about faith, via informal curricular tools:

"I'll ask [my daughter] something about [a current event, and then ask] 'How does the Bible view this situation? Or look at it through the lens of our faith? How does it present itself to you, then? Or how do you think we should approach it?' So, I always try to tie [faith] in."

To further this point, Xavier foreshadows challenges his daughter may encounter, as she matures. He hopes faith will comfort and strengthen her, and provide reassurance of her gifts, capabilities, and identity:

"To be able to tell her she doesn't need to conform to what somebody else thinks is beautiful, or smart, or is in style—to just be who [she is], who God made [her] to be…so that when she comes and steps out into the world on her own, she has that foundation. She's able to shake off these other influences, and things that might [vie] for her attention or affection."

Through informal dialogue, Brooke and Xavier construct faith as a loadstar—an ethical guide, moral ideal, and referential worldview—to which their child(ren) may look, as they become adults. Rather than relying solely on formalized lessons about religion, parents reiterate faith-based values through everyday conversations.

Informal Curricular Tools: Race-Based Learning

As parents strive to arm their children with racialized senses of self and community, family talks possess more immediate, personal qualities, as opposed to abstract or philosophical. Parents retell personal experiences, or pair cultural heritage with current events, to coney the importance of race. Felice recalls how lessons sprout from informal conversation; this dialogue takes place one day after the 2021 Presidential inauguration:

"Sometimes…I do get paper and pencil, or booklets and stuff, when we talk about things…but sometimes I make it very informal, where we just talk about something. For instance, yesterday with [the] inaugural address. We haven't done this yet, but [alludes to Amanda Gorman]…I found the curriculum based on her poem, and so I screenshotted it to my phone, and we are going to go over that. That will be the next thing that we do. It's to break down her poem, and there were some wonderful questions that were being asked. [Using that] as a part of a lesson. I mean, a full-blown lesson based on her poem yesterday."

While she, ultimately, locates curricular materials by phone, the informal conversation about Amanda Gorman—the first National Youth Poet Laureate, and a young, Black woman—catalyzes the ad hoc lesson. This curriculum-building experience shows Felice's gumption, and exemplifies the inherent flexibilities of homeschooling, regarding curricular scheduling. She immediately capitalizes on a relevant

learning opportunity, seeing as how Gorman's performance occurs only one day prior. That Felice finds preexisting curricula suggests others—whether homeschoolers or traditional schoolers—are using it, too. Yet, by virtue of homeschooling, she can spend as much time—or go as far in depth—with the assignment as she likes, since she is not beholden to institutional mandates or standards.

Informal Curricular Tools: Faith- and Race-based Learning

Parents splice the influences of faith and race via familial dialogue. Some perform ERS through the prism of faith, using two frames: 1) Predestination; and 2) Protection. Predestination couches Black achievement and excellence as preordained. Black parents nurture their children's talents, and encourage them to do so independently, because it fulfills a higher calling. Protection frames faith as both compass and shield—instruments used to traverse a racially hostile society. ERS qua protection is a preemptive measure, one that casts racism as part and parcel of Black experiences. Faith thus serves to thwart, or neutralize, racialized threats *when*—not *if*—they arise. Yvonne hearkens back to ancient history, to emphasize this point to her children:

"We begin from the motherland. So, we were created in excellence. We were created to do big things. It's in our DNA to be great. That's why we still advance, even under oppression. This is what we do. This is who we are."

To instill racial pride and confidence, Yvonne constructs the history of Black excellence—and perseverance—in divine terms, denoted by her use of the term "created". She merges the cultural influences of faith and race, setting a high standard of achievement to which her children may aspire. Within this faith- and race-based framework, mediocrity and failure do not exist as options because, as Black people, they are designed for greatness. This does not mean Yvonne expects success to come easily to her children, for she upholds the merits of hard work. Rather, it is the action of hard work, and the achievement of goals, that will enable them to fulfill their respective destinies.

EDS averages reflect Yvonne's allusion to oppression. Measuring perceived racial discrimination, EDS response averages show how often (i.e., from 1 = never to 5 = almost every day) parents perceive others treating them with 1) less courtesy; 2) fear; 3) poor service; 4) less respect; or as 5) less intelligent;

6) dishonest; and 7) less worthy. (Note: A singular participant, from the "faith + race" subset, elected to forego this survey; therefore, response averages from said participant are not included in Table 5 below.)

[Table 5 about here]

EDS averages per subset are comparable; small variation(s) between subset cumulative averages further accentuate this finding. These averages suggest respondents from all three subsets perceive instances of racial discrimination between, "less than once a year" and "a few times a year." When peering at specific averages *within* each subset, the highest responses underscore the concepts of "Courtesy," "Intellect," and "Worthiness." This implies that respondents' experiences with discrimination are most frequent, regarding others' 1) demonstrations of discourtesy; 2) assumptions of (respondents') lesser intelligence; and 3) air of superiority (i.e., towards respondents). However, across all subsets, the lowest response averages fall under the "Fear" survey prompt; this means that situations in which others behave like they are afraid of respondents occur the least frequently.

The EDS predicates mothers' experiences with racial discrimination, yet cumulative and specific average(s) for the "Race" subset are on par with the "Faith" and "Faith + Race" subsets—save the "Fear" and "Dishonesty" prompts. This implies that cultural distinctions in curricula (i.e., between faith and race) do not necessarily lessen the importance of race—or the impact of racism—for faith-driven homeschoolers. Assuming their children must, one day, grapple with forms of racism (e.g., insults to their intelligence), parents merge the cultural influences of faith and race, to support their children as they navigate a racialized society. Faith and race together signify a repertoire that Black children may access, when needing guidance or defense against negative social forces.

Parents also blend faith and race through allusions to history, most notably that of the Black church in America. Spurred by the Reverend Dr. Silvester Beaman's benediction (i.e., at the 2021 Presidential Inauguration), Felice and her son informally converse about the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church:

"He was asking me about the AME preacher who…prayed yesterday, at the inauguration. So, he did ask me, and he honestly didn't know what AME even meant. I told him [it stands for] African Methodist

Episcopal [Church]. I said, 'It is a denomination that [was founded] during the time where, you know, even the churches were segregated.'"

This instance bears a subtle yet pertinent relationship to Felice's Amanda Gorman-inspired lesson. In both cases, real-time events facilitate learning opportunities, for parent and child. The influence of race permeates either lesson, given the social identities of the two inaugural speakers. However, the degree to which these moments translate into formal learning differs, for while the Gorman conversation leads to an extended lesson plan, the Beaman discussion concludes after Felice's explanation. Despite this contrast, it is worthy to note how Felice uses familial dialogue to integrate faith and race. Through her retelling of historical facts, she performs ERS by conferring a specific cultural knowledge—one that is twofold in presentation.

Discussion

This project investigates how faith and race inform curriculum design for Black homeschoolers. Utilizing mixed methods, I compile quantitative and qualitative responses from Black homeschooling parents, relevant to how cultural orientations impact curriculum-building. Prior works treat faith and race as discrete—or inversely related—cultural forces, attending homeschooling motivations principally. While research confirms the impact of cultural influences on homeschooling motives, the question of how faith and race work concertedly to shape Black homeschooling curricula remains underexplored.

Findings suggest faith and race work as discrete and joint cultural forces, actualized through formal and informal curricular tools. As *discrete* forces, faith and race imbue curricular activities, themes, and materials separately, with each constituting a focal point of academic study. Parents use prepackaged materials or institutional programming as formal curricular tools, when conducting faith-based instruction. Contrastingly, book volumes, experiential learning, and hired personnel are formal curricular tools for racialized lessons. As *joint* forces, faith and race are combined, influencing lessons simultaneously. This cultural fusion manifests via institutional programs and alterations to preset materials.

While the source of cultural influence shapes the format of formal curricular tools, the same pattern does not hold true for informal curricular tools. Regardless of whether cultural influence branches from faith solely, race solely, or a combination of faith and race, behavioral modeling and familial dialogue constitute informal curricular tools. The contents of behavioral modeling and familial dialogue change, according to the source of cultural influence. Therefore, whether family conversations centralize faith, race, or a faith-race composite *matters* when considering the substance of informal curricular tools.

Results align with prior and recent homeschooling studies, namely those casting faith and race as substantive cultural forces (Mazama & Lundy, 2014; Fields-Smith, 2020). Minding the connections between homeschooling motives and curricula, it is not far-fetched to observe faith and race in Black homeschoolers' academics. As MIBI results show, the centrality of race—with respect to personal identity—resonates strongly with Black homeschoolers, regardless of whether they profess a "Faith,"

"Race," or "Faith + Race" cultural orientation. MIBI averages, although based on small "n's," counter prior claims that religious orientations reduce the import of race, for Black homeschoolers. High averages from faith-related subsets (i.e., "Faith" and "Faith + Race") may convey even deeper parallels between faith and race, as cultural influences in Black homeschooling activities. The EDS, designed to represent everyday encounters with racial discrimination, also reveals how understandings of race transcend differences in cultural (and curricular) orientation. Although cumulative averages for faith-related subsets narrowly edge that of the "Race" subset, the comparability of subset results further show faith and race as not being mutually exclusive forces. Findings not only suggest that faith and race can function concurrently, but that race may emerge as a function of faith itself (or vice versa).

The major contribution of the study rests with its analysis of faith and race as complementary influences. This finding speaks to the dynamism of curriculum-building in homeschooling contexts. Owing to its intrinsic flexibility, homeschooling allows parents to fashion instructional materials—and tailor instruction itself—in ways that meet personalized curricular objectives. While faith and race each represent cultural bedrocks of homeschooling operations, results show that cultural influences are not bound to absolute terms. Practicality and ingenuity—as displayed through curriculum-building *and* curriculum-altering strategies—enable parents to fuse cultural lessons tangibly. Informal curricular tools demonstrate how ERS practices are woven into curricular praxes (Hughes et al, 2006). The transmission of this cultural information stands to impact racial identity development, every bit as much as formal assignments.

Limitations and Future Directions

Given its small sample size, this study yields no generalizable conclusions about Black homeschooling, specifically in terms of how cultural influences shape curricula. Larger samples can enhance research efforts, by affording more data for quantitative analyses purposes, thus facilitating statistical significance. Future studies may employ robust quantitative measures to investigate curricular strategies. A priori surveys, for example, may incorporate "à la carte," "self-generation," or "all-in-one"

curriculum options for respondents to consider, while characterizing their curriculum-building approaches. Surveys that solicit faith-based data (e.g., religious denominations), in addition to race-based data, are poised to isolate relationships between major cultural influences.

The inclusion of Black fathers in multi-method research can inform understandings of ERS practices in homeschooling. As research shows, gender differences between Black mothers and fathers yield gendered differences in ERS practices (Brown et al., 2017; Davis Tribble et al., 2019). While fathers typically fulfill supportive homeschooling roles, their impact on the educative process is no less impactful. Comparatively analyzing how faith and race shape mothers' *and* fathers' identities—and lived experiences—may further disclose Black parents' ERS messaging via curricula.

Sample demographics account for additional limitations. The predominant focus of the analyses on maternal insights leaves ample room for paternal and student perspectives. For example, studies of fathers' supportive techniques may yield newer views of parental involvement in home education (Williams-Johnson & Fields-Smith, 2022). Subsequent studies can elicit the opinions of Black homeschooling students, querying how faith and race impact their learning experiences. That this study centers Black homeschoolers spells opportunity for studies of cultural influence on other homeschooling subsets. For instance, Latinx homeschooling has increased in recent years (Fields-Smith, 2021). Exploring how cultural influences manifest, or how Latinx parents transmit cultural messages via homeschooling, may prove noteworthy. Juxtaposing Black and Latinx homeschooling processes could make for substantive contributions to the literature.

Prior and recent studies examine the role of the Black church, placing a specific emphasis on its education-based initiatives (Anderson, (2010[1988]); Barnes, 2015; McIntosh & Curry, 2020). While this institution has supported the education of Black families and communities for generations, there is a dearth of literature that examines links between Black churches and homeschooling efforts today. Considering recent spikes in Black homeschooling populations, scholars may unveil parallels between the liberatory messaging of post-slavery-, Civil Rights-, and modern era congregations. Future research may

incorporate analyses of non-Christian (e.g., Muslim; Jewish), faith-based influences on homeschooling curricula, as well.

Implications

Several implications stem from this research effort. First, findings stand to advance homeschooling literature, by engaging a previously understudied topic: the impact of dual cultural influences on Black homeschooling curricula. Examining how faith and race combine to shape curricula may translate into future studies on homeschooling parents' instructional methods. To the extent that homeschooling families are willing to host researchers for in person observations, new insights may be drawn from intra-group studies on curriculum-building (i.e., studies from across Black, Latinx, and White homeschooling subsets).

Second, considering the significance of religion in many homeschooling contexts, researchers may elicit participation from various faith-based co-ops and support group members. Such measures can also be taken for race-based homeschooling collectives. Third, a rapidly diversifying homeschool population could yield opportunities for academic vendors. As noted, parents of color often lament the lack of racial representation in preset materials. While recent strides have been made to accommodate this need, major distributors could fortify plans to enhance diversity in formal learning tools.

Last, comparative analyses between homeschooling and traditional school curricula may inform state learning standards. Increasing homeschool participation may suggest that several push-pull factors remain at play, pushing families away from traditional education, and/or attracting them to home education. Federal, state, and local school boards may take into consideration such findings, in efforts to reevaluate—or revamp—extant frameworks.

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Table 1: Homeschooling Mothers—Sample Characteristics (n=31)

Name(s)*	Age(s)	Marital Status	Education (Degree)	Income (K)	Specified Cultural Influence
Adrian	60	Married (M)	Some College[a]	$50-75	Faith
Ava	32	M	BA	$100-150	Faith
Bailey	35	M	MA	$150-200	Faith + Race
Brooke	45	M	BA	$150-200	Faith + Race
Case	40	M	MA	$100-150	Faith + Race
Corin	40	M	MA	$50-75	Race
Dawn	57	M	BA	$50-75	Race
Devon	51	M	Some College[a]	$100-150	Faith
Ella	38	M	BA	>$250	Faith
Elle	50	M	MA	$150-200	Faith
Felice	41	M	BA	$50-75	Faith + Race
Grace	38	M	BA	$25-50	Race
Hope	56	M	Professional	$100-150	None
Ivy	31	M	BA	$100-150	Faith + Race
Jasmine	44	M	BA	$150-200	Race
Kima	49	M	BA	$150-200	None
Lyric	52	M	Some College[b]	--	Faith + Race
Maureen**	--	M	--	>$250	Race
Naomi	42	M	Professional	$75-100	Faith
Ovelle	34	M	Some College[a]	$50-75	Race
Patrice	34	Single	MA	$100-150	Race
Quinn	50	M	PhD	--	Faith
Raven	32	M	Some College[a]	$50-75	Race
Sidney	47	M	BA	$75-100	Faith
Ty	35	Living with Another Adult	MA	--	Faith
Umaro	48	M	BA	$50-75	Race
Vale	37	M	MA	$50-75	Faith + Race
Winter	44	M	MA	$100-150	None
Ximara	59	M	Some College[a]	$100-150	Faith
Yvonne	42	M	BA	>$250	Faith + Race
Zora	38	M	Some College[a]	$25-50	Race

*All participants' names have been replaced with Pseudonyms.
**Did not complete Self-Report Survey.
[a]Associate's Degree.
[b]Associate's Degree and Technical/Vocational Degree.

Table 2: Homeschooling Fathers—Sample Characteristics (n=12)

Name(s)*	Age(s)	Marital Status	Education	Income (K)	Source of Cultural Influence
Omar**	--	Married (M)	--	--	Faith + Race
Preston**	--	M	--	$50-75	Race
Quinton**	--	M	--	$150-200	Faith
Raymond**	--	M	--	$50-75	Race
Stephen**	--	M	--	$25-50	Race
Taylor**	--	M	--	$150-200	Faith + Race
Usain**	--	M	--	$50-75	Race
Vernon**	--	M	--	$50-75	Race
William	40	M	MA	$100-150	Faith + Race
Xavier	43	M	BA	$150-200	Faith + Race
Yusef	39	M	MA	>$250	Faith
Zackery	40	M	Some College[a]	>$250	Race

*All participants' names have been replaced with Pseudonyms.
**Did not complete Self-Report Survey.
[a]Associate's Degree.

Table 3: Curricular Sources for Cultural Influences in Homeschooling

Source of Cultural Influence	Formal Curricular Tools	Informal Curricular Tools
Faith	Vendor-Packaged Materials (e.g., ABEKA; Alpha Omega Publications; Apologia; Christian Liberty Press; Easy Peasy All-in-One Homeschool; Horizons; Rod and Staff; Sonlight) Institutional Programming (e.g., Bible Study, Quizzing; Co-op Membership; Youth Ministry)	Behavioral Modeling (e.g., prayer) Familial Dialogue (i.e., faith as life model, guide, and/or standard)
Race	Book Volumes (i.e., single installments; full-length series) Experiential Learning Opportunities (e.g., visits to museums, historical sites) Hired Personnel (i.e., teachers; tutors)	Behavioral Modeling (e.g., aesthetic presentation) Familial Dialogue (i.e., about past and/or contemporary events, personal experiences)
Faith + Race	Alterations and/or Supplements to Vendor-Packaged Materials (i.e., to introduce or enhance Black representation) Institutional Programming (e.g., Black church group activities and/or membership)	Behavioral Modeling (i.e., via Black religious customs, practices) Familial Dialogue (i.e., framed via parental encouragements for, or concerns about, their child(ren))

Table 4: Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI)—Subset Averages

Group(s)	Sense of Belonging	Reflection of Identity	Part of Self-Image	Attachment to Others	Cumulative Average(s)
Faith (n=10)	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.6
Race (n=10)	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.4
Faith + Race (n=8)	4.4	4.8	4.3	4.0	4.4

Table 5: Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS)—Subset Averages

Group(s)	Courtesy	Fear	Service	Respect	Intellect	Dishonesty	Worthiness	Cumulative Average(s)
Faith n=10	2.9	2.1	2.6	2.4	2.7	2.2	2.8	2.5
Race n=10	2.8	1.6	2.7	2.6	2.7	1.6	2.9	2.4
Faith + Race n=7	3.0	1.9	2.3	2.9	3.1	2.0	3.1	2.6

Figure 1—Blank Illustration in Formal Curricular Tool

Figure 2—Shaded Illustration in Formal Curricular Tool

PAPER THREE

Dynamic Instruction: How Black Homeschoolers Engage Teaching Praxis

ABSTRACT

Along with marking upticks in the homeschooling population, recent studies highlight the diversification of familial demographics, parental motivations, and pedagogical methods. Spikes in populace and scholarly attention notwithstanding, teaching strategies—particularly those employed by Black parents—remain vastly understudied. This paper analyzes Black homeschoolers' instruction, demonstrating how parents engage the teaching process, while pulling from disparate segments of the stylistic continuum. Using mixed methods, this study traces the philosophical underpinnings and logistical applications of parents' teaching strategies, highlighting three focal points along the instructional spectrum. Findings show adult-led, collaborative, *and* child-led teaching styles—seemingly discrete orientations—to ebb, flow, and overlap in varying degrees, due to a range of individual, familial, and logistical factors. Constructing a granular, comparative view of teaching strategies, this study frames homeschooling instruction in evolutionary terms—a process by which parental control wanes, and children's independence grows, as stylistic adjustments unfold across the spectrum. Through versatile pedagogy, Black homeschoolers carve paths toward holistic learning experiences, enabling them to curate limitless educational opportunities for both instructors and students. Results stand to impact education literature, particularly that which foregrounds instructional dynamics between Black homeschooling parents and children.

Key words: Black homeschooling; instructional methods; teaching styles; curriculum development; pedagogy

Introduction

Homeschooling, once a fringe initiative, stands as one of the fastest growing educational movements in the U.S. (Valiente et al., 2022). Since the 1970s, the homeschooling population has grown only more numerous and diverse, with respect to its practitioners, familial motivations, ethnic-racial demographics, and pedagogical methods (Fields-Smith, 2021; Gann & Carpenter, 2019; Jolly & Matthews, 2020). Parents' ideological (i.e., religious) and pedagogical (i.e., curricular) concerns have historically symbolized prime homeschooling motives (Van Galen, 1988), yet misgivings about school safety (e.g., bullying; interpersonal violence; shootings), dearth of cultural diversity (i.e., in curricular frameworks), and racism (i.e., interpersonal; institutional) prompt families to leave traditional schools (i.e., private, public, charter), or forego enrolling their children altogether (Mazama & Lundy, 2015; Ray, 2015; Rimm, 2017; Williams-Johnson & Fields-Smith, 2022). Broadening concerns, coupled with genuine interest in—or desperation for—alternative modes of education, have spurred continual increases in home education.

Black families constitute a burgeoning subset of homeschoolers and, consequently, have garnered more scholarly attention (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Fields-Smith, 2020; Mazama & Lundy, 2014; Puga, 2019). Newer studies even suggest the growth rate of Black homeschooling outpaces that of other ethnic-racial groups (Eggleston & Fields, 2021). Several "pushes" (i.e., traditional school-based deterrents) and "pulls" (i.e., attractive homeschooling characteristics) steer Black families toward homeschooling (Fields-Smith, 2017). Citing the deleterious effects of interpersonal and structural racism in schools (e.g., microaggressions; racial discrepancies in honors course enrollments, extracurricular participation, and punishments), Black parents covet the prospect of devising culturally grounded instruction, for their children (Mazama, 2016; Mazama & Lundy 2012, 2013; Mazama & Musumunu, 2015). Minding the inherent freedoms of curriculum-building in homeschooling, parents maximize chances to cultivate Black diasporic studies—lessons and projects that centralize Black histories, cultures, and contemporary realities. While rigorous education is essential for

many Black parents, the promise of a comprehensive learning experience—one that builds a "whole" child—is just as imperative.

Black parents, like other homeschoolers, access various curricular resources to accomplish teaching goals. In addition to self-generating materials and activities (e.g., games; worksheets), parents select from an array of physical and digital items, ranging from individual products (e.g., novels; textbooks; project kits) to multi-subject curriculum boxsets (i.e., designed by sole distributors) (Gaither, 2017; Hanna, 2012; Isenberg, 2007; Sherfinski, 2014). Community institutions, such as public libraries, museums, recreation centers, and parks also act as hubs for learning opportunities. Although it is common for parents to assume the bulk of teaching workloads, many outsource instruction via informal groupings, established co-ops, and online platforms (Anthony, 2015; Cui & Hanson, 2019; Pell, 2018). Offloading techniques help ease the burdens of curriculum-building, as well as forge viable homeschooling networks, which provide communal support for parents seeking highly effective modes of instruction.

Early works cast Black homeschoolers in an "unhappy paradox," a dynamic in which Black parents feel compelled to emulate traditional or "school-like" instructional styles, more akin to the traditional schooling they voluntarily eschew (McDowell et al., 2000; Romm, 1993). (Traditional instruction references a rigid, adult-led, and lecture-based teaching style, wherein parents control virtually all homeschooling operations. Thus, stylistic rigidity is principally reflected in parent-managed instruction, curricula, and logistics.) Despite the pedagogical freedoms homeschooling affords, Black homeschoolers adhere to traditional instruction, fearing that society will question—or invalidate—the intelligence of their children, if they are not taught conventionally. Traditional teaching thus signifies a protective mechanism—a buffer or shield against future instances of racial discrimination. This argument implies that proponents of traditional instruction could perceive relaxed, child-led operations as insufficient, with respect to equipping Black children to combat interpersonal and structural racism.

Subsequent literature counters these assertions, claiming that Black homeschooling operates on a broader continuum. Rather than categorize Black parents' instruction as rigid, studies argue that Black

parents' teaching runs the stylistic gamut—spanning from inflexible, parent-led instruction to relaxed, student-driven forms of learning (Llewellyn, 1996; Mazama, 2016; Murphy, 2012). Many Black homeschoolers practice more balanced, or *collaborative*, modes of teaching, whereby parents allow children's interests and talents to inform—or even guide—educative processes. Looming threats of racial discrimination notwithstanding, these parents prioritize child input in homeschooling, believing it will facilitate the growth of well-rounded learners and citizens.

Scholars have advanced the study of Black homeschooling instruction, yet thorough examinations of teaching stylistics—namely adult-led, child-led, *and* collaborative approaches—are sparse (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020; Taylor-Hough, 2010; Thomas, 2016). Literature addresses parental insights and practices that undergird adult- and child-led teaching (Mazama, 2016). While it is confirmed that Black parents' instruction vacillates between adult- and child-led styles, how parents conceptualize (i.e., imagine, rationalize, or justify) *and* apply collaborative instruction—and how these three styles comingle on the instructional spectrum—remains unexplored. Therefore, I pose the following research question: *How do Black parents conceptualize and engage collaborative instruction, within the stylistic continuum of homeschooling instruction?*

My project forwards Mazama's (2016) study, delving further into questions about Black homeschoolers' teaching strategies. Mazama (2016) shows that adult-led, child-led, and collaborative teaching manifests in Black homeschooling, and references how children practice independent learning more so, as they mature. These findings prove insightful, yet the following instructional processes remain unclear: 1) how collaborative teaching (i.e., its philosophical underpinnings and logistical applications) dovetails with the broader stylistic continuum; and 2) how shifts in student independence—and parental control—occur, within the context of instructional stylistic adjustments. Accordingly, this study frames homeschooling instruction as an evolutionary process, unveiling pedagogical and logistical links between adult-led, child-led, *and* collaborative teaching styles. Traversing the instructional continuum, I reveal qualitative changes in (parental) control and (children's) independence, as stylistic adjustments occur.

The background section unspools adult-led, child-led, and collaborative styles of teaching, not as finite distinctions, but as core instructional tendencies homeschoolers use to facilitate learning. Employing quantitative measures and qualitative procedures, I detail the underlying philosophies and logistics of Black parents' instruction. Results show that parents' adult-led, child-led, and collaborative approaches ebb, flow, and overlap across the stylistic continuum, befitting families' instructional goals, needs, and preferences. Additionally, results frame teaching as a holistic, evolutionary process of education for Black family units. Embracing a versatile pedagogy, Black homeschoolers also position themselves to bypass the structural pitfalls of traditional education. I conclude this paper by drawing thematic and empirical connections to former studies, while also sharing its contributions, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Background

Adult-Led Homeschooling Instruction

Vast inter- and intra-family instructional differences pose challenges for researchers, in their efforts to classify teaching styles. Research typically frames instruction as bifurcated, foregrounding adult- and child-led teaching, respectively. Stylistic variation is largely predicated on relative degrees of parental control (Cai, Reeve, and Robinson, 2002; Huber, 2003). Adult-led homeschooling connotes settings in which parents are the sole authority, virtually assuming total leadership of learning operations (McKeon, 2007). (Ergo, this style is defined by inflexibility, affording little—or no—room for procedural deviation, or child input.) Parental control reverberates the strongest, across the following three dimensions: 1) Positional/relation dynamics (i.e., between adults and children); 2) Spatial/material organization (i.e., of workspaces, curricular materials); and 3) Tonal/temporal qualities (i.e., pulse of workdays; time management).

In adult-led contexts, parent-children relational dynamics are constructed hierarchically, such that adults possess—and bestow—knowledge onto the children, who are the receivers of said knowledge. Spatial organization takes form in designated workspaces (e.g., home-based classrooms); material organization entails the collection and administration of learning-based media (e.g., physical/digital workbooks; planners). Regarding tonal and temporal attributes, factors like daily scheduling, teaching/learning style preferences, and curricular content/theme selection, are matters of parental discretion. Rote, systematic, and/or authoritative teaching (e.g., parent-led lectures), rigid time blocks (i.e., for subject sequencing, daily routines), and parent-selected curricula are hallmarks of adult-led instruction.

Cai, Reeve, and Robinson (2002) analyze homeschoolers' personal characteristics, to ascertain determinants of motivation (i.e., teaching) style differences. Dubbing the opposite poles of the instructional spectrum as "highly controlling" and "highly autonomy supportive," the scholars argue that certain characteristics—parents' gender orientations (i.e., specifically males/fathers), cultural influences

(e.g., traditional family values; religious beliefs) and preset agendas (defined as prescribed, or targeted, ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving—e.g., political conservatism)—often yield adult-led instruction.

Mazama (2016) asserts Black parents implement adult-led components (e.g., preset curricular materials), due to personal characteristics like: 1) Ideology (i.e., faith/religion); 2) Convenience and/or insecurity (i.e., particularly for homeschooling novices); 3) Individual preference (i.e., for highly structured curricula); and 4) Competitiveness (i.e., vis-à-vis traditional school families/students). As pertaining to ideology specifically, this finding recalls Cai, Reeve, and Robinson (2002), which addresses how the cultural influence of faith/religion associates with adult-led teaching styles. While the term and concept of "preset agendas" is absent from Mazama (2016), elements of African diasporic studies—which center Black historical experiences and modern realities—could qualify as such, for they advance particular ways of thinking (i.e., about the Black self, and its relation to society).

Child-Led Homeschooling Instruction

Literature frames child-led homeschooling as *welcoming* to student interests, opinions, and preferences (Cai, Reeve, & Robinson, 2002; McKeon, 2007). Child-led instruction purposely grants and cultivates agency in homeschooled children. Parents do not strive to teach students who mechanically absorb and regurgitate information. Conversely, parents seek to nurture agentic and confident life-long leaners (Smets, 2019). Flexibility permeates child-led approaches, with some parents scaffolding their child(ren)'s learning (i.e., allowing freedoms within parent-assembled curricular frameworks), while others provide either few, or no, frameworks at all (e.g., un-schoolers) (Cloud & Morse, 2001). Higher degrees of individualized teaching also emerge, with parents tailoring instruction to accommodate student interests and needs (Dennison et al., 2020; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; MacConney, 2022).

Parents construct relational dynamics with their children collaboratively, acting as facilitators of interest-driven learning experiences. Spatial flexibility is exemplified through children's access to multiple workspaces—whether inside (i.e., bedroom, living room, kitchen) or outside (i.e., yards, parks, libraries) the home; material flexibility permits access to various curricular resources and media (e.g.,

physical books; digital platforms). Child-led instruction typically possesses relaxed tonal and temporal qualities, exhibited through discussion-based learning and naturally paced scheduling. Flexibility permeates other facets of instruction, paving leeway for students' subject and thematic choices, in addition to teaching/learning style accommodations (e.g., individualized teaching; self-directed study) (Anthony & Burroughs, 2012; Thomas, 2016).

Scholarship reveals there are Black parents who strongly favor progressive homeschooling, with "the expectation is that children will learn automatically, and organically, as parents and children explore the world together" (Mazama, 2016: 33). Such parents exhibit attentiveness toward children's passions, believing that learning opportunities are abound, and should not be confined temporally or spatially. Mazama (2016) substantiates these claims, offering that most Black homeschoolers fuse adult- and child-led methodologies, employing components of either style, when most applicable. *Yet, how do Black parents articulate approaches to collaborative teaching? How do collaborative methods jell with the broader stylistic spectrum, given that they borrow from both ends of the instructional continuum? Further, how do increases in child-student independence—and decreases in parent-teacher control—pertain to teaching style adjustments?*

Adult-led and Child-led Instructional Combinations

As Cai, Reeve, & Robinson (2002) suggest, parents may alternate controlling (adult-led) and autonomy supportive (child-led) teaching styles. This argument disqualifies the "either-or" dynamic (i.e., between adult- and child-led instructional options), in favor of one that permits the coexistence of antithetical approaches. Later research thus describes homeschooling instruction as fluctuant—an eclectic mixture of practices, oscillating between either end of the stylistic spectrum (Kraftl, 2013; Mazama, 2016; Seibert, 2002).

Case studies identify variations in parent-teaching, pinpointing combinations of adult- and child-led approaches. Thomas (2016) documents copious factors shaping instructional variation, including but not limited to the following areas: 1) individual (e.g., tenure of parents' homeschooling experiences;

children's ages, academic interests, special needs); 2) familial (e.g., designated homeschooling goals; professional, financial obligations); 3) cultural (i.e., faith-based orientations); and 4) logistical (i.e., relative access, or distance to, community/learning resources). Said factors are even poised to alter homeschooling logistics, such as daily/weekly routines, task sequencing, assignment pacing, and (the extent of) parental involvement (Anthony & Burroughs, 2012; Clements, 2002; Thomas, 2016).

Additional works showcase the dynamism of instruction, relaying how parents sometimes veer from initial forays into adult-led instruction (Gann & Carpenter, 2019; Gray & Riley, 2013). Mazama (2016) shares that Black parents may relinquish control, to ease the natural stressors of adult-led teaching. Punctuating this finding, said study claims that adult-led instruction is a stylistic extremity of homeschooling—not a norm. That is, *most* parents incorporate elements of adult- and child-led instruction into their teaching, rather than occupying either end of the instructional spectrum. What remains unfounded, however, is how parents engage collaborative teaching—and yield instructional control—within an evolutionary process of learning.

Methods

Recruitment

To garner participant interest, I initiated contact with an Atlanta (GA) Metropolitan area-based homeschooling organization. I chose Atlanta as the primary research site because it represents a hub for Black homeschooling families, due to its demographic characteristics (i.e., significant Black and/or African American population) and relatively permissive homeschooling laws (i.e., vis-à-vis other states) (Fields-Smith, 2008). After establishing rapport via email, the organization leader disseminated my digital recruitment flyer via the organization listserv. This facilitated my recruitment efforts substantively, netting me 43 emails of interest. My snowball sampling efforts were also made possible through the recruitment flyer-posting (Lune & Berg, 2016). Parents whose interviews were facilitated via (their) initial "email of interest," shared knowledge of their research experience with Black homeschooling parents who were unaware of the project.

Interested parties contacted me via email or phone; afterwards, I began the screening process to assess study candidate eligibility. Eligibility criteria included: 1) self-identify as native-born African American, or Black American, homeschooling fathers or mothers; 2) currently homeschooling voluntarily—or had prior experience with voluntary homeschooling (i.e., for at least six months)—at least one child, of Pre-K-to-High School age (i.e., ages 3-18); 3) begun or concluded the homeschooling experience, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, commencing circa March 2020. I required that study participants identify as native-born African American or Black American to negate consequential ethno-cultural differences within the subject pool (owing to foreign-born status/experiences). Furthermore, I required that participants began or concluded voluntary homeschooling experiences prior to the pandemic, during which many families were thrust into home-based education under public health-driven mandates.

Participants

My study sample was comprised of 43 individual Black homeschooling parents (31 mothers; 12 fathers), from which I conducted a total of 41 interview sessions. (Of the 41 total interviews, I conducted 27 solo interviews with mothers, 8 solo interviews with fathers, 4 paired interviews (i.e., a mother-father pair), and 2 focus group discussions.) Only one mother fulfilled a supportive homeschooling role; her husband assumed primary homeschooling responsibilities. Eleven out of twelve fathers played supporting homeschooling roles.[1] Table 1 reveals additional information about study participants; I generated pseudonyms for all participants:

[Table 1 about here]

Data Collection

Data collection spanned from Fall 2020 to Summer 2022. To collect quantitative data, I administered a self-report survey to participants. The self-report survey yielded individual-level data (i.e., demographic information, such as parent age, education, and income), family-level data (i.e., family unit composition characteristics, such as marital status), and homeschooling practice-specific data (Kapitulik, 2011). Practice-specific data consisted of variables including, but not limited to, the following: previous and/or current homeschooling experiences (i.e., homeschooling stints that had already begun and concluded, vis-à-vis homeschooling still occurring at the time of the study); the number of homeschooled children (per family); the approximate range of daily homeschooling hours; and the approximate monthly/annual cost(s) of homeschooling. I collected qualitative data through solo interviews, paired interviews, and focus groups. I conducted semi-structured interviews, using a guide to facilitate conversations.

[1] Among respondents, Black homeschooling mothers predominantly lead instruction. Thus, Table 1 data—and my empirical analyses—stem from mothers' solo interviews, paired interviews, and the mothers-only focus group. Given that most Black fathers fulfilling supportive homeschooling roles, data from their qualitative responses do not inform my empirical analyses.

The average duration for interviews was 111 minutes, with the shortest interview running 51 minutes, and the longest 257 minutes. Per social distancing measures, all interviews were conducted via Zoom or phone, in a home office. I generated audio-video and audio recordings for all Zoom interviews; I conducted a total of 36 Zoom interviews. Audio files of phone interview recordings were also generated; I conducted a total of five phone interviews (i.e., due to study participant preference). Recordings were transcribed for qualitative analysis purposes. I remunerated respondents $50 for solo and paired interview sessions, respectively; therefore, individual respondents and couples *each* received $50 for their participation. I conducted all focus groups via Zoom, and created audio-video and audio recordings for each focus group, from a home office. Recordings were transcribed for qualitative analysis purposes. I remunerated all focus group participants $20 for their participation.

Coding and Analysis

I applied open, axial, and selective coding to my qualitative analyses. To conduct open coding, I analyzed the aggregate of interview and focus group responses, foregrounding the most prominent themes (e.g., parents' initial and/or eventual teaching styles; individual, familial, and/or external influences on instructional adjustments; impact of instructional adjustments on parents(s) and child(ren)). These themes represented the categories needed for axial coding, which I performed by identifying patterns—and further consolidating major themes—across openly coded categories. Last, I administered selective coding to the axially coded patterns. Through selective coding, I generated narratives about Black homeschoolers' instructional methods, which constitute thematic pillars for the current study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Although I had pre-written questions to ask respondents, the semi-structured nature of interviews permitted free-flowing discussions about parents' homeschooling instruction (Henry, 2017). Examples of interview guide prompts are as follows:

1) Describe your teaching style.
2) To what extent do you allow your child(ren) to assume control of their learning?
3) If [you have ever changed your teaching style], explain how and why [it has changed].

(Note: Anticipating the "Describe your teaching style" prompt would elicit requests for clarification, or responses unrelated to the teaching styles in question [i.e., adult-led, child-led, collaborative], I used a secondary, a priori prompt for streamlining purposes. Thus, after prompting respondents to describe their teaching styles, I followed with references to adult-led, child-led, "mixtures," and "other" styles to provide them with considerations, while answering the initial prompt.)

After completing solo and paired interviews, I hosted focus groups to triangulate self-report survey and interview data, thus increasing the validity of my empirical findings. Each focus group included three study participants, comprising either an all-father or all-mother panel. The panel structure facilitated dialogue among parents from different homeschooling contexts, allowing interactive commentary. To generate discussion, I utilized a focus group guide based on emergent themes from the interviews. Below is an example of an emergent theme-inspired prompt:

> *4) Can you address the conflict between [Black homeschooling parents] creating limitless educational experiences for their children, [while living] in a society with racialized barriers?*

For the purposes of analytical clarity, organization, and explanation, I frame parental instruction in terms of adult-led, collaborative, or child-led in orientation. (See Table 2.)

[Table 2 about here]

These designations, at first glance, may appear as finite distinctions. Yet, it is vital to reiterate they exist on a stylistic continuum, meaning the lines separating them are conceptually fluid and, thus, permeable. When considering the primary qualities of adult-led education, for instance, facets of this approach may—and do—resonate with parents from across the stylistic continuum. That is, regardless of how parents ultimately categorize their instruction style(s), *conceptualizations* from "collaborative" and "child-led" respondents may prove relevant to those from "adult-led" respondents, and vice versa.

As another example, instructional *applications* that are presumably germane to "adult-led" methods may—and sometimes do—coincide with parents' "collaborative" and/or "child-led" approaches, even if in varying degrees and manifestations. Considering potential overlaps in criteria, the three styles are best understood as core tendencies—not absolute, or mutually exclusive, characteristics. Parents, by

way of self-description, subscribe to either one of the instructional styles, which also correspond to the three subsets of the research sample.

Findings

Sample Characteristics

Mothers constitute the majority of Black homeschooling parents, acting as primary teachers for 30 out of 31 families (97%). Save one father who leads instruction, the remaining eleven fulfill socio-emotionally, economically, and/or logistically supportive roles. The average number of homeschooled children per family exceeds two (i.e., 2.6), with a sample minimum of one and maximum of eight. Comprehensively, families reference 81 individual homeschooled children, with minimum and maximum ages of three and eighteen, respectively. Slightly more than half of parents (16 out of 31, 52%) boast a mixed gender composition for homeschooled children, meaning they have taught—or still teach—at least one girl *and* boy. Notably, a mixed gender composition does not necessitate that girls and boys receive homeschooling concurrently. A single family's instruction for a daughter, for example, may only entail a *previous* homeschooling stint; yet, instruction for a son may only occur during a *current* period. Ten out of thirty-one families have boy(s)-only teaching experiences (32%); five families (16%) note teaching in girl(s)-only homeschooling contexts.

Homeschooling experiences for families with multiple children are often staggered, with teaching stints beginning and/or ending at different times, for each child. Even if a lifelong homeschooler (i.e., one who starts at age three, and finishes at age eighteen) has graduated from secondary school—marking fifteen years of home education—parents' instructional obligations can extend for several more months or years, depending on the next child's graduation, or when parents elect to stop homeschooling (i.e., whether for a select number of subsequent children, or altogether). Correspondingly, families' homeschooling stints range one to twenty years in duration, averaging 8.4 years across the sample. Given the average number of homeschooling years per family, respondents commonly instruct one, or more, children across multiple grade levels. Families' homeschooling experiences, in turn, usually traverse Lower, Middle, and Upper School age/grade brackets. Cumulatively, the 81 homeschooled children

account for 143 separate grade level experiences.[2] Of this grand sum, Lower School totals at 80 (56%), Middle School at 40 (28%), and Upper School at 23 (16%). (See Table 3.[3])

[Table 3 about here]

Table 3 indicates that Lower School instruction leads the whole of respondent's teaching experiences—sample-wise, and across the three subsets. Comparing Lower, Middle, and Upper School experiences *within* each subset, percentages lean the heaviest toward Lower School experiences in the adult-led subset, followed by the child-led and collaborative subsets, respectively. Although Lower School signifies the largest portion of teaching experiences in both child-led *and* collaborative subsets, percentage variations between grade levels is markedly less—i.e., more evenly spread—in these two subsets, versus the adult-led subset.

Intuitively, heavier concentrations of Lower School experiences would correlate with adult-led and collaborative approaches, given that younger students often require more supervision than older students. The high concentration of Lower School experiences in the child-led subset seemingly contradicts this pattern, yet there are several explanatory factors to consider (e.g., small subset size; teaching/learning style preferences; child(ren)'s academic capabilities; learning resource access/comfort). Despite the small number of parents and (referenced) children, findings hint at possible relationships between age/grade level distributions (i.e., within family units) and teaching style orientations.

The amount(s) of money and time families devote to instruction vary greatly, depending on circumstantial differences. Factors contributing to such variation include, but are not limited to, the following: Differences in curricular preference(s); relative access to, (re)usage of, and/or cancellations of curricular materials; budgetary allowances/limitations; number of homeschooled children per household;

[2] A single homeschooled child may account for as few as one, or as many as three, separate grade level experiences (i.e., Lower School; Middle School; and Upper School). Factors such as the number of homeschooled children per family, as well as the start time(s) and duration(s) of each child's homeschooling, impact the total number of grade level experiences, within a given family unit.

[3] This table excludes grade level experience data from one respondent's previous homeschooling stint, due to an unanswered Self-Report Survey question.

and annual income. Homeschooling may warrant any number of material or experiential costs, stretching from stationery, workbooks, and online courses to daily field trips, weekly camps, and vacations. Thus, minimum and maximum monthly expenses tally at $5 and $1,500, respectively; parents spend an average of $338.89 per month (i.e., $4,066.68 annually) on homeschooling-related products, services, and experiences.

Table 4 aggregates daily instruction time ranges, drawing from the totality of individual respondents' homeschooling stints. These data encapsulate parents' homeschooling stint(s) qualifying as previous (solely), current (solely), and combinations of previous and current.

[Table 4 about here]

Save the adult-led grouping, the "five (hours) or more" designation captures the highest percentage(s) of instruction time, per the sample, and in the collaborative and child-led subsets. This pattern may correlate with individual and familial factors (e.g., child age(s)/grade level(s); number of homeschooled children; parental comfort/experience with instruction) and logistical factors (e.g., curricular frames/formats; scheduling flexibility). While Lower School teaching represents a large swath of instructional experiences (across the sample), children's lower age(s) may have a greater impact on adult-led operations (e.g., facilitating instructional efficiency), yielding less adult-led teaching time vis-à-vis child-led and collaborative subsets.

Adult-Led Instruction

Conceptions of parental instruction, like all forms of inspiration, emerge from somewhere. For many respondents, adult-led instruction marks that starting point. The popular motif is that of the newly minted homeschooling instructor, standing at the front of the (home-based) classroom, teaching lessons to seated children. Parents even allude to traditional classroom iconography, such as chalk/whiteboards, single desks/chairs, and overhead projectors to anchor these ideas.

Eight out of 31 parent-teachers (26%) ultimately classify their instructional style adult-led; three out of this eight (38%) say they imagined themselves replicating adult-led instruction, while homeschooling. Minimum and maximum age(s) for adult-led children are three and thirteen, respectively, with an average age of five-years-old. Gender compositions of adult-led children are as follows: out of eight families, five (63%) are mixed, two (25%) are girl(s)-only, and one (13%) is boy(s)-only. (Sample-wise, when sharing the earliest conceptions of themselves as parent-teachers, adult-led, relational/positional dynamics come to mind for 15 out of 31 parents (48%). Interestingly, of the 15 parents who saw themselves in traditional contexts, nine categorize their homeschooling as collaborative, while three parents describe their teaching as adult-led, and the remaining three as child-led.)

Adult-led instructors voice a "hands-on" teaching approach—one that prioritizes the setting and management of learning parameters, for children. Parameter-setting is typically comprised of academic and logistical elements. If academics are the bricks of instruction, logistics are the mortar. As complementary components, academics and logistics structure parents' teaching operations. The academic component manifests in subject scaffolding. To scaffold, parents select their children's academic courses, extracurricular activities, and learning resources. Logistical elements consist of auxiliary, but no less important, routines that buttress academic instruction. Daily scheduling (i.e., subject sequencing; assignment deadline-setting), lesson/project planning (i.e., procuring, arranging instructional materials) and grading (i.e., assignment-focused corrections, commentary) exemplify logistical components.

Parents mostly credit early notions of instruction to idiosyncratic qualities and experiences (e.g., having "organized/structured" personalities; educational background; professional experiences). Lyric credits her rigid instructional approach to professional experiences and personality traits:

"I worked at a daycare center. There were some [co-workers] there that were my peers, but I was still in charge. I had to be very firm—very structured, to maintain that position amongst my peers. I also [substitute teach] in the public school system [now]. The rest is my nature. I'm a very serious person to begin with, and I believe that pours into the way I educate, and what I require in that arena. I have to make a conscious effort…to be a fun teacher, [and] create fun learning experiences. I, personally, find learning fun, [but] I don't have to be laughing."

Making no apologies for her strictness, Lyric still recognizes—and values—the light-hearted aspects of education. She ventures to strike a balance between firm and fun, seeing both as meaningful parts of learning. Proponents of adult-led instruction view it as the best way to optimize teaching quality and, thus, learning opportunities for children. Concerned that lax instruction may compromise academic success, some look toward formality and structure to accomplish teaching objectives.

Family-oriented concerns, such as child-centered motives, qualities, and needs (e.g., children's age(s); finding the "right" curriculum) compound parents' idiosyncrasies. Corin, describing herself as "structured, by nature," discusses her motives for emulating adult-led school practices:

"[I felt like] I had to be as close to the way that school was run—for me…to feel valid, in a sense. Just [so] I could say to people, 'Oh, yes. We stick to a schedule. He's learning well, and we're very structured.' Just to not have people looking at me a certain way—if I wasn't structured. Or, feeling like that was going to be detrimental to him…to not be structured."

Her trepidation is two-fold. She (initially) mirrors adult-led stylistics to 1) legitimate her homeschooling practice, and 2) ensure her instruction will benefit—and not cost—her son(s). Although Corin separates herself from adult-led instruction, the reach of its influence is palpable, and is a force with which she must grapple, while homeschooling.

Adult-led instruction, while commonly tied to thoughts of stringency, is not entirely devoid of enjoyment or levity. Some parents who conceptualize their homeschooling as adult-led, do so with an air of romanticism. Ava admits her first thoughts about teaching were steeped in lofty idealism, greatly inspired by media (e.g., Lifetime movies):

"I just thought I was going to be so great. I thought I was [going to] wake up early, and have everything laid out for [the children] every morning, and have stuff written on a nice whiteboard for them to see and… no. That's not it. When you have a vision, you're in this dream world. Everything is perfect."

For many, early visions take after personal experiences in traditional education, either as students or teachers themselves. Understandably so, they mirror traditional, adult-led classrooms because, for them, that is what education has *always* looked like.

Technically dubbing herself a "collaborative" teacher, Ella details her mimicry of traditional classroom spaces, to the extent of installing a chalk wall and desk-chairs in her home classroom. She recalls the impact of traditional education on parental conceptions:

"That's how we learned. The teacher stood in front of the class. She talked. We listened, and we responded. As a student, and as a classroom teacher, that's how I imagined [how] school was supposed to be done."

Due to her education and professional training, Ella sees parent-led instruction from two vantage points: that of a pupil *and* instructor. Her statement further alludes to the formal schooling context, suggesting a mutual learning process—one in which students and teachers learn of a singular education model as the "right," or "only," way of learning.

Despite the seeming promise and efficacy of adult-led instruction, it is not attainable—or agreeable—for all instructors and families. Eventually, Ella, like others, would forsake the adult-led approach, in favor of a more relaxed style of instruction.

Collaborative Instruction

Collaborative instruction positions teacher and student on a similar plane, within the homeschooling context. Respondents willingly afford children greater latitude, actualized by increased academic and logistical freedoms, both of which attend commensurate responsibilities. Spatial flexibility, one-on-one instruction, and experiential learning symbolize collaborative efforts. (This finding does not imply that said features cannot arise in adult- or child-led settings. Rather, what it suggests is that the "collaborative" label is appropriate, due to the frequency with which instructors reference said features.)

Nineteen out of thirty-one parent-teachers (61%) qualify themselves as "collaborative" instructors; eight of the nineteen (42%) divulge early thoughts of themselves, as practitioners of collaboration. Within this subset, children's minimum and maximum age(s) are three and eighteen, respectively, with an average age of 12.4 years old. Gender compositions for homeschooled children appear as such: out of nineteen subset families, eleven (58%) are mixed, six (32%) are boy(s)-only, and two (11%) are girl(s)-only.

Excepting parents who never entertain(ed) adult-led instruction via conception or application, some would come to abandon "school-like" approaches *after* initially attempting adult-led instruction. Although viewing traditional teaching admirably, this method proves unfeasible for their families. Recollecting the pressures of solo planning and teaching, Dawn takes direct aim at this point, making a distinction between "school-at-home" and homeschooling:

> "While I took time and effort to create an external environment that mimicked a classroom, what I ultimately learned is…we thought we were bringing school home, but bringing school home is not homeschooling. I didn't know the flexibility and the leeway that I had. I just thought, *I had to get this much math done, and [another subject] done*, not really understanding that I was literally creating a custom program for my son."

As far as she is concerned, while COVID-19 forced millions of parents to teach from home, their efforts do not qualify as homeschooling. Their facilitation of traditional-school produced lessons is just that—no more, and no less. It is the tailoring of learning experiences that makes all the difference, marking a proverbial line in the sand between homeschoolers, and those who "do school" at home.

Some parents admit that after transitioning to collaborative instruction, homeschooling became more tolerable, and thus more satisfying for all family members. Observing a decrease in tension, many laud increases in parental attentiveness (i.e., toward children's talents, interests), as well as student independence, accountability (i.e., for learning tasks), and openness (e.g., sharing insights). Qualitative shifts—whether slight or stark—hint evolutionary processes of homeschooling pedagogy, roles, and obligations. As parents loosen the reins on instruction, they become more facilitators than drivers, permitting and encouraging child input. Children's opinions, regarding the selection and organization of studies and extracurriculars, crystallize this input. Examples of how parents infuse homeschooling with student input are as follows: 1) highlighting interests in curricular/topical themes (e.g., Civil Rights figures; athletics; entrepreneurship); 2) customizing daily schedules (e.g., children set sequence of academic, extracurricular subjects); 3) allowing natural pacing (i.e., student manages speed/degrees of assignment completion); and 4) selecting curricular media (i.e., student chooses task format(s)—be it digital, verbal, written, etc.).

When applicable or possible, instructors incorporate child(ren)'s interests into learning processes, via academic planning, or specified course/activity selection. Prior to the start of school years, Naomi shares curriculum-focused conversations with her children:

"I do consult them, before the beginning of each school year. I ask them, 'What do [you] want to learn? What subject…are [you] itching to learn about?' I try to incorporate that if they have something. I'm going to make sure [it's] something we incorporate, that school year."

Naomi devises a pre-planning ritual, fusing children's interests with instructional frameworks. To have children's interests manifest in the curriculum—during the same year as pre-planning—signifies a return on investment. Seeing themselves reflected in curricula, children are granted immediate stakes in learning operations.

Collaborators exercise degrees of spatial flexibility, seeing multiple rooms as apt for learning. While designated spaces may remain viable options (e.g., home classrooms), children are also free to work in common areas (e.g., kitchen counters, reading nooks). Beds, sofas, and living room floors, too, constitute homeschooling spaces. Even with a home classroom at her disposal, Raven promotes multi-setting approaches:

"We did have [an] art desk for our daughter. We have a classroom, but we also have [her] bedroom—and everything around [her] is going to look like learning. I realized that she learned better at certain times of the day—that sometimes she felt more comfortable being at the kitchen table, or sitting in the living room, sketching on the floor, or going outside. Whether it was in our backyard, or at the park…the whole entire home, and everything outside of that, became the learning environment."

For Raven, the world is a classroom, minus the physical and temporal boundaries of formal school buildings and schedules. Her family orients themselves to education much differently than others, mainly because they are not bound by space and time, in the same ways others are. Home education allows her to practice organic instruction, thus engaging the rhythms, textures, and pulses of her natural surroundings.

Parents' underlying—or overarching—goal(s) are to curate learning experiences suited to their children's tastes/needs. While "couch work" may prove as arbitrary as "bench work," that children are given options evokes mindfulness—and responsiveness—from parents. Ultimately, the allowance of spatial freedom conveys that instruction belongs to the children, every bit as much as it does to adults.

Individualized instruction can be a byproduct of spatial flexibility, depending on the circumstances. Should multiple children seek different learning spaces (simultaneously), parents may individualize instruction to meet competing needs. When space is not of concern, parents use one-on-one teaching to communicate lessons more effectively. Conversational students, for example, are sometimes prime candidates for individualized teaching.

Quinn, possessing a conversational instruction style, highlights the benefits of educating through discussion:

"We're able to sit there and talk. If he has to learn about Columbus, I'm [going to] tell [him] the real story. He had kept reading [a passage] when [Europeans] were calling them 'Indians.' Let's talk about why that's wrong. Let's have a conversation about it. He's able to be active, in his own learning. And he will remember that later. It's things like that—having that conversation, based on the academics. [When] you hear him speak on it later, you know that he's getting it. He's actually learning something, and not just memorizing facts."

Winter enacts similar methods, to confer sociocultural lessons to her children. She ponders the challenge of balancing limitless opportunity (i.e., via homeschooling), within the context of a racialized society:

"[I keep my children] aware that [racial] boundaries are created by other human beings. They have been *created*. [I aim] to not make that something that's just not spoken about. At [their] young [ages]…just making that apparent."

Quinn and Winter forge relevant, meaningful connections with their children, through individualized and conversational instruction. Anchoring dialogue with sociohistorical facts, they construct anti-racist lessons, thus facilitating indelible learning experiences.

Experiential learning, especially that which is predicated on children's interests and talents, also falls under the collaborative instruction umbrella. Whether during weekly errands (e.g., counting a cashier's change; classifying grocery store foods) or pre-planned events (e.g., field trips; vacations), parents facilitate organic and coordinated learning opportunities outside the home, to show that education is not—or *should not*—be confined by space and time. Unlike traditional schooling, which positions brick and mortar schools as centers of instruction, homeschooling transcends location and time periods by making education universal.

Collaborative parents validate their children's academic and extracurricular preferences, wielding them as guideposts for interactive lessons. Yvonne, for instance, institutes field trips by adjusting instructional time:

"I changed our learning time to four days a week, and then we field trip. Almost every week, we find something outside of the house to do—which I never thought we would do. It hit me…I would say, 'Hey, we don't need to learn [for] five [consecutive] days.' So, the ability to shift, and be willing to make the changes [that] my children needed."

Yvonne relives the moment she realizes—and fully appreciates—the inborn flexibility of homeschooling. Juxtaposing the expectations and realities of education, she leverages this flexibility to enhance her instruction, shortening the school week for the sake of interactive teaching.

Child-Led Instruction

Four out of thirty-one parents (13%)—the smallest number/percentage of the sample—classify their instruction as child-led. Neither of the four mothers claim to have envisioned this stylistic orientation, prior to homeschooling. The minimum and maximum age(s) for children are five and 14, respectively; the average age is 11.6 years old. The gender composition of students manifests like so: three out of four (75%) families homeschool in boy(s)-only contexts; one family (25%) teaches in a girl(s)-only setting; and no families (0%) reflect a mixed composition.

It is paramount to maintain perspective on conceptions—and applications—of child-led instruction, for certain levels of control will always lie with instructors, as the custodians of school-age children. Simply put, adults have the final say in what does, or does not, occur within their homeschooling. However, children exercise the highest degree of autonomy under this stylistic framework, as compared with adult-led and collaborative teaching.

Within the scope of this project, child-led instruction caps an evolution of natural maturation and skill-acquisition. As students age, they learn more about their own (dis)likes, strengths, and weaknesses, as individuals. By the same token, they grow more in tune with themselves, as learners. Homeschooling becomes as much about *how* they access and retain information, as it is about what they learn. As compared with adult-led and collaborative instruction, wherein *parents* mesh children's interests with

curricula, the responsibility pivots in child-led learning, with *students* managing the pursuit of curricular goals. Through collective thought, implementation, and reflection, students assume greater ownership of educative processes, while parents fulfill the roles of coaches, consultants, or advisors.

Parents strive to instill principles of free inquiry, self-advocacy, and personal accountability into their children, to rear self-driven, responsible citizens. Teacher-generated scaffolding may very well persist, exemplified via pre-selected materials (e.g., books); parent-taught lessons; outsourced classes (e.g., online classes); and extracurriculars (e.g., musical instrument courses). These parameters support students, as they embark on independent study.

Thriving independence notwithstanding, child-led approaches are not entirely comprehensive. Student freedoms manifest in different forms, and in unequal measures. Parents sometimes limit freedoms to highly specific arenas of homeschooling. Zora uses the term "non-negotiables," when underscoring such limitations:

"[My children] don't have any input [regarding content] they can take out [of homeschooling]. [My "Big Three" subjects] are Math, Language Arts, and History. Those are my non-negotiables. But they've had a LOT of leeway, when it comes to the Sciences—especially in [their] early years. They've been able to explore any, and every, topic they've ever been interested in. Also, with their independent reading, they delve into topics that we may not have touched on, in the curriculum."

Zora identifies an offsetting effect, in which she sets rigid limits for certain subjects, while affording considerable latitude to others. Moreover, this practice reflects popular tendencies among respondents, wherein they allow several degrees of freedom within prescribed limits.

In other cases, parents frame student interests/needs as catalysts for specific action items. While Patrice supports her daughter's authorship goals, she stresses the import of gumption:

"I hired a consultant who helps people self-publish. I said [to my daughter], 'You're going to be responsible for setting up those meeting times with her.' I'm going to be [in the room, during the meetings], of course, [because] I'm paying [the consultant]. I said [to my daughter], 'You have to conduct the business. You can't keep looking at me. This is your book.'"

Though a collaborative instructor, Patrice employs child-led methods to strengthen her daughter's independence. The monetary investment in the consultant compels her to monitor, yet she insists her

daughter spearhead the conversation. The repeated use of the words "you," "your," and "you're" commit her daughter to the consultation, effectively making it *her* (i.e., the daughter's) transaction.

Facilitator roles even transition to that of coach or advisor—someone the children visit, only when necessary (e.g., to garner advice; obtain second opinions)—depending on idiosyncratic, logistical, and contextual factors. As Sidney explains, children's ages, maturity levels, and capabilities weigh heavily:

"My oldest does have more input, in terms of what kind of learning he wants. He wants to take a lot of politics and government [classes]. [He's] scored incredibly high on [a] standardized test, but that doesn't mean [he's] ready to be shoved into a college environment. *[Does he] want to be among people? [Does he] want to be at home? [What does he] want [his] days to look like? What can I do to foster that?* My youngest, I've given him more input, in terms of seeing where his interests lie. *Would [he] like to take [a] third class? Would [he] like to do more science experiments? How can we make that happen?*"

Sidney's internal dialogue reveals the complexity of her considerations, as negotiating student input is not a one-size-fits-all matter. A mother of multiple children, she carefully considers age differences, personality traits, and learning objectives. This helps her customize plans of action, ensuring their individual needs are met.

Discussion

This research investigates Black homeschooling instruction, unfurling parents' teaching methods across the stylistic spectrum. Employing a mixed methodology, I combine pedagogical applications with parental insights, highlighting the mechanisms that underlie, and inform, instructional variation among families. Accordingly, I advance previous works, which suggest Black homeschooling instruction is, by and large, an eclectic mixture of adult- *and* child-led teaching orientations (Mazama, 2016; McDowell et al., 2000). Building on Mazama (2016) specifically, my project further elucidates how Black parents conceptualize—and apply—adult-led, child-led, *and* collaborative teaching. Its empirical contribution manifests in the conceptual and logistical links I draw, between the three stylistic tendencies. Findings detail—and thus, flesh out—internal components of the teaching continuum, framing instruction as a dynamic, evolutionary process in Black homeschooling.

Although respondents identify as either adult-led, collaborative, or child-led homeschoolers, natural and circumstantial variation (e.g., personality/teaching/learning style differences; academic subject/extracurricular demands; digital/physical resource access) informs teaching, yielding stylistic variation from singular instructors. Instructional diversity owes to a host of individual (i.e., parent- and/or child(ren)-related), relational (i.e., parent-child(ren) dynamics), and contextual (i.e., learning resource access) factors, either or all of which are subject to temporal change. Overall, the breadth and complexity of instructional influence may help explain why most parents fall under the collaborative umbrella—a theoretical midway point on the instructional continuum—as opposed to the opposing poles.

In addition to confirming diversity in Black homeschooling instruction, findings corroborate past research on various fronts. The research sample reflects the pattern of Black mothers leading homeschooling instruction (Mazama, 2016). Moreover, parents will sometimes make stylistic adjustments (i.e., from adult-led to collaborative or child-led approaches), to create more tolerable homeschooling experiences for the household. Stylistic shifts, however, are not always absolute. That is, parents may implement higher degrees of flexibility in holistic fashion (e.g., academically and logistically), or in targeted areas of homeschooling (e.g., within specific subjects, like science) (Kunzman

& Gaither, 2020; Mazama, 2016). Yet and still, increased flexibility tweaks the fabric and pulse of homeschooling operations, even stretching spatial bandwidth for individualized and/or experiential learning activities (e.g., independent study; one-on-one teaching) (Dennison et al., 2020; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; (Kolb & Kolb, 2009; MacConney, 2022).

Recalling parents' earliest conceptions (i.e., of themselves, as homeschoolers), traditional education models (can still) shape homeschoolers' understandings of what instruction is, can be, or should be. This explains parental angst about instructional validity and efficacy, with specific respect to adult-led teaching (Llewellyn, 1996; Romm, 1993). Mothers' instruction also exemplifies ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) processes, whereby parents transmit cultural information to Black children (Hughes et al., 2006). As pertaining to homeschooling, parents share lessons to bolster historical accuracies, foster sociological awareness, and promote anti-racism strategies for children.

Implications

This study contributes to extant research, by displaying the characteristics of Black homeschooling instruction in spectral fashion. Rather than organize instructional components in discrete categorizations, its analyses construct a dynamic process of instructional progression, ranging from adult-led, to collaborative, to child-led endeavors. Parental insights flesh out their instructional applications. By threading rationale with holistic educational practices, this research stands to broaden—and deepen—understandings of Black homeschooling praxis, which continues to grow in popularity.

Investigations of Black homeschooling pedagogy—an increasingly popular alternative to traditional education—are poised to reveal deficits in traditional school instruction. Moreover, Black homeschooling studies reflect the successes of parent-teaching, shedding light on pedagogical methods that resonate most deeply with Black students. Findings relating to instructional time, for instance, represent a slight departure from prior works (Thomas, 2016), with Black families devoting "five hours or more" to teaching, daily. Such data points may inject bases of comparison into future studies of homeschooling procedures.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are limitations that must be considered, regarding the above study. With digital and phone interviews as the sole means of communication (i.e., between researcher and respondents), firsthand observations of families' homeschooling spaces, curricular materials, and teaching methods are not incorporated into qualitative analyses. Therefore, this information is solely predicated on respondents' self-report surveys, which may not capture these data to the highest specifications (i.e., compromising data validity). Future multi-method studies—those employing in person observations, and more sophisticated surveys—may be equipped to ascertain factors that shape teaching most impactfully.

As a cross-sectional study, temporal adjustments to parents' instructional practices remain unseen. Longitudinal studies of Black homeschooling instruction may illuminate unforeseen variables and patterns (e.g., chief causes of increased/decreased instruction time), across the evolutionary process of parental instruction. Last, scholars may utilize several qualitative methods, to examine how—or why—parents may use different teaching styles, to confer various anti-racist lessons via homeschooling instruction.

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Table 1: Homeschooling Mothers—Sample Characteristics (n=31)

Name(s)*	Age(s)	Marital Status	Education (Degree)	Income (K)	Instructional Style
Adrian	60	Married (M)	Some College[a]	$50-75	Collaborative
Ava	32	M	BA	$100-150	Adult-Led
Bailey	35	M	MA	$150-200	Adult-Led
Brooke	45	M	BA	$150-200	Adult-Led
Case	40	M	MA	$100-150	Collaborative
Corin	40	M	MA	$50-75	Collaborative
Dawn	57	M	BA	$50-75	Collaborative
Devon	51	M	Some College[a]	$100-150	Collaborative
Ella	38	M	BA	>$250	Collaborative
Elle	50	M	MA	$150-200	Collaborative
Felice	41	M	BA	$50-75	Child(ren)-Led
Grace	38	M	BA	$25-50	Collaborative
Hope	56	M	Professional	$100-150	Collaborative
Ivy	31	M	BA	$100-150	Adult-Led
Jasmine	44	M	BA	$150-200	Child(ren)-Led
Kima	49	M	BA	$150-200	Collaborative
Lyric	52	M	Some College[b]	--	Adult-Led
Maureen**	--	M	--	>$250	Adult-Led
Naomi	42	M	Professional	$75-100	Collaborative
Ovelle	34	M	Some College[a]	$50-75	Adult-Led
Patrice	34	Single	MA	$100-150	Collaborative
Quinn	50	M	PhD	--	Collaborative
Raven	32	M	Some College[a]	$50-75	Collaborative
Sidney	47	M	BA	$75-100	Child(ren)-Led
Ty	35	Living with Another Adult	MA	--	Adult-Led
Umaro	48	M	BA	$50-75	Child(ren)-Led
Vale	37	M	MA	$50-75	Collaborative
Winter	44	M	MA	$100-150	Collaborative
Ximara	59	M	Some College[a]	$100-150	Collaborative
Yvonne	42	M	BA	>$250	Collaborative
Zora	38	M	Some College[a]	$25-50	Collaborative

*All participants' names have been replaced with Pseudonyms.
**Did not complete Self-Report Survey.
[a]Associate's Degree.
[b]Associate's Degree and Technical/Vocational Degree.

Table 2—Instruction Style Continuum

Key Elements	Adult-Led	Collaborative	Child(ren)-Led
Positional/Relational Dynamics (i.e., between parents, children)	Hierarchical	Parallel	Hierarchical, Parallel
Spatial/Material Organization (i.e., of workspaces, curricular products)	Designated, Pre-Selected	Flexible, Negotiable	Flexible, Negotiable
Tonal/Temporal Qualities (i.e., pulse of workdays; time management)	Regimented, Scheduled	Relaxed, Customized Pacing	Relaxed, Customized Pacing

Table 3—Sample and Subset Grade Level Experiences[4]

Grade Level Experiences	% of Grade Level Experiences (Total Sample) n = 31	% of Grade Level Experiences (Adult-Led) n = 8	% of Grade Level Experiences (Collaborative) n = 19	% of Grade Level Experiences (Child-Led) n = 4
Lower School (Pre-K – 12)	80/143 (56%)	20/24 (83%)	52/105 (50%)	8/14 (57%)
Middle School (6 – 8)	40/143 (28%)	3/24 (13%)	32/105 (30%)	5/14 (36%)
Upper School (9 – 12)	23/143 (16%)	1/24 (4%)	21/105 (20%)	1/14 (7%)

[4] The number of individual families within study sample, and within each subset, is represented by "n."

Table 4—Sample and Subset Instruction Time Ranges[5]

Hourly Ranges	% of Time Ranges Selected (Total Sample) n = 31	% of Time Ranges Selected (Adult-Led) n = 8	% of Time Ranges Selected (Collaborative) n = 19	% of Time Ranges Selected (Child-Led) n = 4
1 to 2	2/38 (5%)	0/9 (0%)	2/24 (8%)	0/5 (0%)
2 to 3	8/38 (21%)	4/9 (44%)	4/24 (16%)	0/5 (0%)
3 to 4	5/38 (13%)	2/9 (22%)	3/24 (13%)	0/5 (0%)
4 to 5	9/38 (24%)	1/9 (11%)	6/24 (25%)	2/5 (40%)
5 or more	14/38 (37%)	2/9 (22%)	9/24 (38%)	3/5 (60%)

[5] The number of individual families within study sample, and within each subset, is represented by "n."

Conclusion

What do the gendering of parental motives, bicultural influences on curricula, and stylistic diversity in teaching reveal about Black homeschooling? What is the broader significance of these empirical foci, as relating to parenting, homeschooling, and the Sociology of Education scholarship? What do families, educators, administrators, scholars, and other relevant stakeholders—whether part of the Black homeschooling community or otherwise—stand to gain from this research project? Last, how may findings speak to larger conversations about race, gender, culture, and pedagogy, as matters of sociological import?

The three papers comprising this dissertation, both separately and collectively, foreground the complexity of homeschooling among Black practitioners. Conducting a mixed-methods study, I exhibit Black homeschooling as a multidimensional production—one possessing motivational depth, cultural range, and instructional variation. Examinations of gender, culture, and pedagogy help dissolve monolithic conceptions of Black life generally, while broadening analyses—and honing interpretations—of Black homeschooling praxis, specifically. My findings counter unidimensional perceptions of Black experiences and eventualities, which may cast race as the *sole* determinant of social patterns and outcomes, for Black individuals, groups, and/or communities. To be clear, ethnic-racial motives undoubtedly sway the push-pull dynamics Black families encounter, within the context of school choice (Stewart, 2020). The ethnic-racial realities Black parents voice, in turn, must be taken seriously, as they often spur families to (at least) consider home education, if not adopt the practice altogether (Fields-Smith, 2017). Yet, to focus *only* on the ethnic-racial implications of homeschooling clouds awareness, and understandings, of other processes vital to families' educative methods.

Accordingly, in Paper One, I argue that gender meaningfully shapes Black parents' homeschooling processes. Findings yield qualitative differences in parental motives, as relating to the homeschooling of Black children. These differences limn distinct concerns for Black girls and boys, respectively, showcasing what Black parents see as the: 1) greatest threats to their children's

psychological and socioemotional growth; and 2) primary ingredients for high-quality, identity-responsive educational experiences. Therefore, it is important to note that gender dynamics—like racial dynamics—impact how society views, interprets and, ultimately, treats Black children. How Black girls and boys are *educated* qualifies as a specific, consequential form of this societal treatment.

Black homeschooling parents see themselves as capable of offering their children what (most) other teachers cannot: an intimate, firsthand knowledge of Black experiences, communicated through the perspectives of Black women and men, who were once Black girls and boys themselves. Traditional educators, administrators, and stakeholders may consider Black homeschooling parents' insights, whilst trying to engage—and forge meaningful, productive relationships with—Black female and male students. This approach may lay groundwork for healthier, and more fruitful, educational careers for traditionally educated Black children. More so, as homeschooling literature advances, a focus on gender dynamics (i.e., as impacting Black parental motives, or other dimensions of homeschooling) may open topical pathways to future studies.

Paper Two frames cultural influence on homeschooling curricula in a new light. Accounting for the complementary forces of race *and* faith, I demonstrate how they function separately *and* conjointly, while formulating thematic substance for assignments. Rather than treating faith and race as inversely related—or mutually exclusive—forces, I contend that parents meld these cultural tenets while meeting instructional goals. By constructing racial achievement, encouragement, and preparation (i.e., for bias, discrimination) through the prism of faith, parents customize lessons in ways unique to Black children. This finding spotlights a particular brand of curricular ingenuity, one that may prove highly unlikely, if not impossible, in traditional school contexts. Moreover, it lends a view into Black familial, parenting, and educational strategies, rendered in the form of parent-to-child(ren) anti-racism messaging (Brown et al., 2017; Davis Tribble et al., 2019; Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes & Chen, 1999; Varner & Mandara, 2014). As pertaining to future research, scholars may engage alternate cultural forces in homeschooling, explaining how—and to what extent—they manifest in curricular development and implementation (i.e., separately, concertedly, etc.).

Paper Three illuminates the breadth of stylistic variation in Black homeschooling instruction. While former works mainly classify—and analyze—teaching styles discretely (Mazama, 2016), I cast parents' teaching spectrally, unfurling a cohesive framework anchored by adult-led, collaborative, and child-led stylistics. Using the instructional spectrum as an analytical frame, I show that teaching adjustments reflect gradual shifts in families' homeschooling goals, needs, and interests. These shifts bear a temporal quality, with parents yielding control, and children gaining independence, over the course of homeschooling experiences. I unpack the philosophical and logistical foundations of teaching styles, arguing that instructional change is a dynamic, fluid, and evolutionary process—one that cannot be defined in terms of finite, consecutive stages. With respect to instructional dynamics, my findings accomplish the following: 1) rebut early claims, which characterize Black parents' teaching as rigid and emblematic of traditional education (McDowell et al., 2000; Romm, 1993); 2) further substantiate later studies, which describe parents' teaching as markedly eclectic (Llewellyn, 1996; Mazama, 2016; Murphy, 2012); and 3) situate parents' teaching on an instructional continuum, to display stylistic adjustments in evolutionary terms. Future studies may employ quantifiable, longitudinal measures of instructional adjustments in Black homeschooling settings. Doing so may allow researchers to pinpoint specific time periods, and mechanisms, of stylistic transition within parents' teaching.

Notions of freedom and creativity hallmark the Black homeschooling movement. This enterprise, though, bears its share of internal and external challenges. For although Black homeschoolers generally reflect middle-class statuses (i.e., which largely enable families to homeschool, in the first place), parents make immeasurable sacrifices—both material *and* immaterial—to craft bespoke learning experiences for their children. Case in point, mothers—more so than fathers—sometimes forego professional careers (and, thus, potential earnings) to homeschool on full-time bases (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009). Moreover, the time and energy required to 1) research and acquire curricula; 2) plan lessons; 3) teach materials; and 4) grade and/or revise work extract heavy tolls. As Zora describes, the stressors of parent-teaching, if unchecked, can lead to feelings of burnout:

"In the beginning, my older kids said I was essentially Ms. Frizzle (i.e., from the Magic School Bus television series). I was 'Team. Too. Much!' It was great, but I learned over time that it [doesn't] take all of that. Everything doesn't need to turn into an all-out unit study. Everything doesn't *have to* go down a rabbit hole. I've learned to fall back and give [my children] the tools, to go down rabbit [holes] themselves. I stopped trying to make everything so big and grand. Being so high-energy—being 'on' all the time, caused a burnout…and I crashed, and I burned."

It goes without saying that Zora cannot speak for *all* Black homeschooling parents. Yet and still, her story illuminates the possible setbacks of home education, which are every bit as real and impactful as its potential triumphs.

In addition to managing finance-, time-, and energy-related expenses, homeschoolers also grapple with varying forms of resistance to their efforts. The seeming and evident benefits of homeschooling notwithstanding, this practice is not without its critics and detractors. At the institutional level, scholars propose that homeschooling signifies a major detriment to school-age children, that being a failure to equip them for productive civic engagement (Apple, 2000; Fineman & Shepard, 2016; Martin-Chang, Gould, & Meuse, 2011). Others argue that homeschooling renders children vulnerable to copious parental abuses and, thus, should be banned presumptively (Bartholet, 2020). Scholarship also pinpoints resistance to Black homeschooling, with some believing that it engenders self-centeredness among Black children (Murphy, 2014).

At the social level, homeschooling parents commonly face questions (i.e., from family, peers, non-homeschoolers, etc.) about the quality, or degree, of socialization their children receive, as compared to traditionally educated students. These questions may be rooted in genuine curiosity or concern, but they are sometimes laced with palpable tones of skepticism or derision. Critical assumptions routinely underlie questions about socialization. Perhaps the most popular assumption is that homeschooled children lack "appropriate" qualities and quantities of socialization and, as a result, lack the skills to engage social relations "normally." To this very point, when recalling preconceptions of homeschooling, several respondents invoke tropes about "weird" or "socially awkward" children who spend time "in the woods." Such caricatures may be attributed to all homeschoolers, in a general sense. Black families are not exempt from this type of labeling. Ava discusses the typecasting of homeschoolers:

"Growing up, whenever I saw a kid that was home schooled, everyone always said, 'Oh, they're weird. They don't talk. Look [at the] shoes they have on. They don't even have on Jordans.' Why does it matter, [whether or not] they have on Jordans? And talking to family members, when I told them that I was going to homeschool, they [would say], 'Your [kids are going to] be weird. They're not [going to] have social skills. They're not [going to] know things [that are] going on in the media, because they're not in [traditional] school talking about it.' But my kids know what they should know. They're age-appropriate, which I like."

The burden of facing, or even dismantling, stereotypes may transcend homeschooling demographics. Some trials, however, are unique to Black homeschoolers.

A legacy of racial injustice, and the battle for Civil Rights, form the sociohistorical backdrop of the Black homeschooling movement. The fight for racial equality, which entails the quest for high-quality schooling, is a staple of the Black freedom struggle. A staunch adherence to this legacy, for some, foments opposition to Black homeschooling. From this vantage point, homeschooling dishonors the memory and landmark victories of the Civil Rights struggle, namely that of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Since many Black Americans devoted their lives to the promise of future generations, anti-homeschoolers see commitments to traditional education as 1) an homage to the sacrifices of Black forebears; and 2) both a practical and essential path towards upward mobility. These feelings connote a spirit of racialized, communal responsibility (or obligation), regarding Blacks' pursuit of education. Like sentiments even trickle down to the familial and individual level. Mothers, like Ella, consider the trade-off(s) between fulfilling personal ambitions (i.e., professional career, earnings) and homeschooling her children (i.e., a collective endeavor and goal):

"Knowing that so many people fought for me, as a Black woman, to be able to get an education. I got that education, and then I decided that I wasn't going to use it, in terms of a career. That was a real struggle for me because I felt like, *Wow, my family sacrificed so much for me to go to college*. They sacrificed to be able to give me these opportunities. And now—quote, unquote—I'm 'wasting' it [by] being at home. I think that when I would read blogs, and books, [about] staying at home and homeschooling—from stay-at-home moms—I often felt like, *These White women don't know how much I sacrificed to be in the same position [as them]*. Because education is *so* important to *my* community—is so important to my family. Me making this decision to stay home is *huge* for so many reasons.

Ultimately, Black mothers and fathers first choose—and *continue* to choose—home education because they believe it is worth doing so. Acknowledging the attendant strains of homeschooling, parents

still see the rewards as outweighing the challenges. Yvonne, who forewent a lucrative career in STEM to homeschool, conducts her own cost-benefit analysis:

"So, I was in corporate America for nine years. I was a project manager over software technology, and I've made lots of money. I've worked with people from all over the world. There is nothing more satisfying—there's nothing more important—than the building up of my [children]. There's nothing more important. At the end of the day, what comes out of my home is a direct reflection of me. I want my children whole. I want my children confident in who they are. I want my children empowered to be their best selves. I feel that homeschooling allows me to do that."

Yusef shares a similar point of view, framing home education as the ultimate investment:

"If you're going to homeschool, [you've got to] have a certain openness to your kids. You have to have a certain level of investment in them, as people. It pains me when I hear co-workers saying, 'Ugh, I can't deal with my kids,' or 'I'm so mad when the daycare center [is] closed.' I'm, like, *Well, why'd you have [your children]*, then—if it's *that* hard to be around them and parent them? [They're] having angst about [their kid], and [the kid is] six or seven. What hope do you have? Because they're going to become teenagers, and [the parents are] not going to know them, and [the kids] are going to reject [the parents], and there [are] going to be all kinds of problems. I feel like, *Are you waiting for them to [become] adults, so they can move out of your house, and then you'll have a relationship with them?* So, if you want to homeschool, you have to be invested in your kids, as people—in who they are, and how they fit into your family, and how they fit into this world. You [have go to] have that heart for it."

It is fitting to note an irony that accompanies debates about Black homeschooling. Just as some view this practice as flying in the face of Black history, proponents (and many practitioners) see it as innately revolutionary (Cooper, 2007; Lyman, 2000). Black parents, rather than relying on a traditional school system that has historically failed Black students, teach as a form of self-determination. Through homeschooling, parents vie to democratize high-quality instruction, while also forging Black-centered learning experiences—something from which all family members can benefit. These endeavors qualify as anti-racism strategies, by countermanding curricular frames in traditional schools, which have often lagged in terms of ethnic-racial diversity.

In closing, this project broadens the analytical purview of homeschooling literature specifically, and the Sociology of Education literature more generally. By excavating Black homeschooling methods, I shed light on the internal workings of families' educative dynamics, while also showing how learning manifests *apart from* the traditional education system. As a contribution extant scholarship, this study is suited to prompt a reimagining of "education" (i.e., with respect to the presentation, function, and intent

of education), as practiced by those from historically marginalized families and communities. Ultimately, as education policies continue to de-racialize segments of traditional education (e.g., K-12 American history curricula; college admissions) (Nadworny, 2023; Russell-Brown, 2022), and as the nation continually grapples with social injustice (Lapon, 2021), Black homeschooling may yet persist in its expansion, as a holistic exercise in liberatory action.

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Appendices

Self-Report Survey

Directions: This portion of the interview entails the completion of a self-report survey. The purpose of this survey is for the researcher to obtain descriptive information about each study participant. In the interest of preserving your anonymity, please choose a pseudonym by which you would like to be referred, for the remainder of this interview session. Thank you for your participation.

Please provide a pseudonym of your choice: _____

Participant Characteristics

1) What is your current age? _____

2) What is your sex category? _____

Female _____
Male _____
Transgender _____
Other (please specify) _____

3) Please indicate your marital status:

Single (i.e., never married) _____
Single (i.e., divorced) _____
Married _____
Legally Separated _____
Living with Another Adult_____

4) How would you describe your household type?

Immediate Family Only_____
Extended Family_____
Blended Family_____
Other (please specify) _____

5) What is your highest level of education?

Did Not Complete High School_____
High School Diploma or GED_____
Some College_____
Associate's Degree_____
Bachelor's Degree _____
Graduate Degree_____

Self-Report Survey (continued)

6) Please list any and all certifications you may hold:

7) About how much is your TOTAL FAMILY INCOME, including both you and your spouse and/or partner, plus any investment income you have (i.e., over the whole year, before taxes)?

Please check one:

Less than $10,000___
$11,000 to $20,000___
$21,000 to $30,000___
$31,000 to $40,000___
$41,000 to $50,000___
$51,000 to $60,000___
$61,000 to $70,000___
$71,000 to $80,000___
$81,000 to $90,000___
$91,000 to $100,000___
$101,000 to $150,000___
$151,000 to $200,000___
$201,000 or more___

8) Please describe your employment status:

Employed (full-time) _____
Employed (part-time) _____
Unemployed_____

*About how many hours do you work per week? _____

9) What is your current zip code? _____

10) What type of schooling did you receive, while growing up?

Please check all that apply, and the number of years for each:

_____Public (years_____)
_____Private (years_____)
_____Religious (years_____)
_____Homeschooled (years_____)

11) Who is the primary homeschooling teacher in your household?

Father_____
Mother_____
Other (please specify) _____

Self-Report Survey (continued)

12) Approximately how much time do you devote to homeschooling, per day?

0-30 minutes_____
30-60 minutes_____
1-2 hours_____
2-3 hours_____
3-4 hours_____
4-5 hours_____
5+ hours_____

13) Please describe your homeschool teaching/learning environment:

Parent-led_____
Child-led_____
Mixed_____
Other (please specify) _____

14) Please describe any teaching materials, or resources, you use to homeschool:

Check all that apply:

Pre-set Curriculum (i.e., learning guides; workbooks; worksheets) _____
Parent-Made Materials_____
Internet_____
Film(s) _____
Field Trips_____
Activities (e.g., games) _____

15) Are you a member of a homeschooling co-op group or network?

*Yes_____
No_____

*If yes, for how long have you been a member?

Please specify:

_____Days
_____Weeks
_____Months
_____Years

16) Please describe your homeschooling curriculum:

Race- or Culture-Specific_____
Universally Focused (i.e., multi-cultural) _____
Other (please specify) _____

Self-Report Survey (continued)

17) Please list the number of children you have? _____

18) Please list the number of children currently living with you: _____

19) Please provide the sex categories of your child(ren):

Female_____
Male_____
Other (please specify) _____

19) How many children have you homeschooled/are you homeschooling? _____

20) What were/are your homeschooled child(ren)'s grade level(s)? _____

21) Approximately how much do you spend on homeschooling-related materials, resources, or experiences:

Per Week? _____

—OR—

Per Month? _____

22) Please describe your homeschooled child(ren)'s preferred learning style:

Check all that apply:

Auditory_____
Conversational_____
Hands-On_____
Visual_____
Independent_____
Group-Oriented_____

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI)

Directions: The purpose of the following survey is to gather information about your racial identity. Please answer each survey question, to the best of your ability.

Please indicate how much you agree, or disagree, with the following statements about race:

1) I have a strong sense of belonging to black people.

1=Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5=Strongly Agree

2) Being black is an important reflection of who I am.

1=Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5=Strongly Agree

3) In general, being black is an important part of my self-image.

1=Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5=Strongly Agree

4) I have a strong attachment to other black people.

1=Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5=Strongly Agree

Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS)

Directions: The purpose of the following survey is to gather information about your personal experiences with discrimination. Please answer each survey question, to the best of your ability.

1) You are treated with less courtesy than other people are

1 = Never
2 = Less than once a year
3 = A few times a year
4 = At least once a month
5 = Almost every day

2) People act as if they are afraid of you

1 = Never
2 = Less than once a year
3 = A few times a year
4 = At least once a month
5 = Almost every day

3) You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores

1 = Never
2 = Less than once a year
3 = A few times a year
4 = At least once a month
5 = Almost every day

4) You are treated with less respect than other people are

1 = Never
2 = Less than once a year
3 = A few times a year
4 = At least once a month
5 = Almost every day

5) People act as if they think you are not smart

1 = Never
2 = Less than once a year
3 = A few times a year
4 = At least once a month
5 = Almost every day

Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS) (continued)

6) People act as if they think you are dishonest

1 = Never
2 = Less than once a year
3 = A few times a year
4 = At least once a month
5 = Almost every day

7) People act as if they're better than you are

1 = Never
2 = Less than once a year
3 = A few times a year
4 = At least once a month
5 = Almost every day

Parent Interview Guide

Motives

1) When, or how, did you first become aware of homeschooling?

2) When did you begin homeschooling your daughter/son?

3) How did you arrive at the decision to homeschool your daughter/son?

4) What did you consider, in your decision-making process?

a) Describe the factors that meant the most to you.

5) Describe particular individuals, or events, that encouraged your final decision?

a) What would you say was the greatest motivator, in your decision to homeschool?

b) What do you appreciate most about the homeschooling experience?

6) From your vantage point as a black father/mother, how would you describe the meaning, or significance, of homeschooling a black boy/girl?

Curriculum

7) Describe how you constructed your homeschooling curriculum.

8) How would you compare your homeschooling curriculum to your previous school's curriculum?

9) Which academic subjects, or themes, do you feel are most important for your daughter/son to learn?

10) What would you say are the greatest rewards and challenges of curriculum-building?

Instruction

11) How did you imagine yourself, as a parent-teacher?

12) What sorts of experiences do you think influenced how you imagined yourself?

13) How did/does this vision translate into your instructional style?

14) Describe your teaching style.

15) Describe your daughter's/son's learning style.

16) To what extent do you allow your daughter/son to have input, or assume control, regarding her/his learning?

Conclusion

17) What would you want others to know about the homeschooling experience, particularly those who are curious about homeschooling, or who know very little about it?

Focus Group Guide

Motives

18) Common themes appear to emerge from the solo and paired interviews—that of building from without (i.e., for Black boys) versus building from within (i.e., for Black girls). Could you speak to either or both trend(s)? To what extent would you agree or disagree with either or both trend(s)?

Curriculum

19) While all subjects hold value, many parents name Black History, Language Arts, and Mathematics as their most heavily emphasized subjects. To what degree does your homeschooling reflect this emphasis?

Instruction

20) Can you address the conflict between creating limitless educational experiences for your children, while living in a society with racialized barriers?