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## The Transmission of Values to School-Age and Young Adult Offspring: Race and Gender Differences in Parenting

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### SUMMARY

The current study explores parental socialization practices and the values transmitted to school-aged and young adult off-spring, focusing on race and gender issues involved in parental teachings. A community sample of 187 black and white mothers and fathers were interviewed with regards to their parenting practices using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Higher levels of social concern and other-oriented themes in teachings were found among black parents, in contrast to a higher prevalence of individualistic themes among white parents. Interactions with child gender and age revealed that parents were more likely to mention individualistic skills and less likely to mention concern for others to older rather than younger daughters, with a reverse pattern found for sons. Parents remain active teachers in the lives of their children beyond the first and second decades of life, instilling skills and values shaped by ethnicity and gender. Comparison of socialization practices between racial groups reveals a notable capacity of black parents to promote personal development as well as societal well-being.

### Keywords

African Americans; parents; values; intergenerational support; adulthood; parent-child relationship

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Socialization is the process whereby an individual's standards, skills, motives, attitudes, and behaviors are shaped to conform to those regarded as desirable and appropriate for his or her role in society (Parke & Buriel, 1998). Parents play a key part in the socialization process as they transmit values molded by their own traditions and beliefs and embedded in family, social, economic, and historical contexts (Zarit & Eggebeen, 1995). Public policy debates often refer to the importance of parents' transmission of values to prepare children for the worlds they face, particularly as children enter adulthood and take their place in society. Historically, black and white families have faced very different worlds and these differences are likely to be reflected in the values that parents instill in their children for success. Similarly, men and women have traditionally experienced distinct social contexts that may

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be reflected in both the value systems of mothers versus fathers as well as parenting practices and expectations for daughters versus sons. This investigation explores parental socialization practices and the values transmitted to school-aged and young adult offspring through the prism of race and gender that is embedded within social and historical conditions, and uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

## **SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES OF BLACK AND WHITE PARENTS**

Most research on parent-child relationships has investigated white middle-class families in suburban areas, neglecting the influence of non-majority culture and ethnicity in shaping child rearing beliefs and behaviors. Considerable differences exist between white Americans' and African Americans' social experiences. Black adults are poorer than their white counterparts with increased disability, higher premature death rates, lower formal educational attainment, and a lower proportion of marriage for both males and females (George, 1988; Jackson, 1988; Stanford, Peddecord, & Lockerly, 1990; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). There are also important cultural differences. Although majority American families may emphasize individuality over collectivism (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990), African American cultural heritage has held strong traditions that promote community well-being and responsibility for others (Nobles, 1988).

Although a number of small, primarily qualitative studies on the family life of African Americans have pointed to the critical socialization roles that black elderly assume in protecting, maintaining, nurturing, and serving as role models to their families (Dilworth-Anderson, 1992; Taylor, 1985), the content of black parents' teachings to their children remains unclear, as does whether these parenting practices differ from white parents independent of socioeconomic influences. Parke and colleagues (1994) posit that parents influence their children by educating them concerning the norms, rules and mores of their culture, and providing advice about strategies for negotiating social challenges. Black parents may pass on values and beliefs regarding personal development and relations to others that are believed to facilitate successful coping within social systems historically characterized by discrimination and limited socioeconomic resources.

## **SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS TOWARDS SONS AND DAUGHTERS**

The literature on child socialization focuses on the different social worlds of boys and girls within the family, in schools, and in other external environments. Researchers have examined differences in mother-child and father-child interactions and parenting practices with sons versus daughters. Overall, research suggests that, despite changing cultural norms, there has been little shift in parents' tendencies to emphasize achievement, competitiveness and emotional control with sons, and warmth and close supervision of activities with daughters (Turner & Gervai, 1995).

Although much of the research examines mother-child interactions, research has been expanding on fathers. Overall, it appears that parents tend to be more rigid in reinforcing the gender-typed behaviors of their same-sex child. Fathers, more so than mothers, appear to be committed to ensuring culturally-defined gender-typed behavior in their sons and to seeing themselves as having a special responsibility to be a role model to their boys (Gervai, Turner, & Hinde, 1995; Lytton & Romney, 1991; Parke, 1996). Other than this, however, there is little information about how parental practices differ by the gender of the parent.

## REALMS OF DIFFERENCE IN SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES

Given the scarcity of prior research on race differences in socialization practices, this research explores how parents teach their children about a range of issues. The qualitative component of our study allows open-ended assessment of issues that parents themselves deem most important. It also seeks to expand on prior research regarding the socialization of sons versus daughters to older children. Furthermore, we consider how the gender of the parent influences socialization practices. Using what limited information exists, we form hypotheses of racial and gender differences in what we expect parents teach their school-aged and young adult children about worldviews, individualism versus interdependence, religion, hardship, and education.

### Values of Individualism vs. Interdependence

The ancestral worldviews of many ethnic minorities may be incompatible with an American culture that is dominated by ideals of competition, autonomy, and self-reliance (Harrison et al., 1990). Ethnic minorities tend to hold a more inclusive conception of the person or self as attached to families, households, and communities. African Americans have been described as possessing a worldview that is more akin to an African belief in collectivism than a European belief in individualism (Harrison et al., 1990; Nobles, 1988). Qualitative research with black college students found a strong orientation toward taking care of others resulting from the black family's promotion of interdependence within relationships (Holliday, 1985). In contrast, studies of predominantly upper-middle-class white parents have observed that adults pass on autonomy-oriented values to their children (Scanzoni, 1987). Thus, we predict that white parents will be more likely to teach individualistic skills whereas black parents will stress the development of characteristics to improve the well-being of others and society.

Literature on gender differences in self-concept suggests that women incorporate interpersonal relationships into their own self-definition, emphasizing values of interdependence (Cross & Madson, 1997; Gilligan, 1982; Lykes, 1985). Recent research indicates that while both men and women have interdependent aspects in their self-concept, men tend to be more group focused or collective and women appear more relational (Madson & Trafimow, 2001). Given this body of research, we predict that mothers will be more likely to emphasize social connectedness and interdependence than fathers.

Social constructionist theories relate these reported differences to the distinct social worlds of men and women. As the primary caretakers and kinkeepers, women spend more time nurturing emotional ties to other people and, thereby, see those relationships as more central to their sense of self (Gilligan, 1982; Di Leonardo, 1987). Some have suggested that the social positioning of the individual in society influences self-concept. Individuals with less societal power may value interdependence because they see their own autonomous action as limited (Lykes, 1985). Because of their socio-historical positioning, black fathers and white mothers may resemble each other more in terms of other-focused value transmissions than race or gender alone would predict.

Being of service to others is also a common theme of many religions, and maintaining religious traditions is an important goal of people of color (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989). Religious and spiritual development have been shown to be important through the life span development of African Americans (Smith, 1993). In a national sample of African American fathers, Bowman and Forman (1997) found that commitment to the religious socialization of children was a core cultural value that was retained regardless of marital status or income. Thus, we expect that black parents will place a greater emphasis on religion than white parents.

## Hardship and Educational Attainment

Adults' beliefs about ethnicity shape the socialization goals and techniques of minority families (Harrison et al., 1990). As people of color learn which strategies are effective, they seek to develop these competencies in their children (Obgu, 1981). Because black parents may foresee more difficult life situations, we expect that black parents will be more likely to emphasize preparation for difficult circumstances with their children than will white parents. This may be reflected in concern for educational achievement. Some of the hardships associated with poverty can be overcome through educational attainment, which may lead to financial opportunities. Although education is important to white and black achievement alike, it may be more critical for black economic success due to lack of existing wealth as well as employment discrimination.

## Gender Roles

Gender is an important structural axis around which family relations are organized, although race significantly modifies its orbit. As a social adaptation to historic circumstances, roles in black families became flexible in definition, responsibility and performance (Bowman, 1993). Although little is written about the supportive and caregiving roles of fathers in older adulthood, some evidence suggests that they, like aging mothers, play important roles in the religious and race-related socialization of their children (Bowman & Forman, 1997). Yet black men still resemble white men in having fewer investments in their children than mothers (Hogan, Eggebeen, & Clogg, 1993).

As noted, the traditional female role in the family has been theorized as contributing to women's more relational self-concept. Social-structural factors may also contribute to valuing interdependence versus individualism. A greater focus on interdependence may lead to greater involvement in children's socialization. We expect parental involvement, therefore, to reflect a combination of the historical social positioning of both race and gender. We predict that mothers will have higher levels of involvement in parental socialization practices than fathers and that black fathers will be more involved in parental socialization practices than white fathers.

## Parent and Child Characteristics

Parental age and socioeconomic background are also likely to influence socialization practices. Few studies have examined the socialization patterns of older vs. younger parents due to the common assumption that parental guidance diminishes once children reach adulthood. Yet several researchers have noted the instrumental contributions that older parents make to adult children (Lewis, 1990; Rossi & Rossi, 1991; Walker, Pratt, & Oppy, 1992), their desire to benefit their children even in advancing old age (Martin & Colbert, 1997), and a developmental increase of interest in fostering and guiding the development of the next generation (Erikson, 1982; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1998). Nonetheless, the extent to which older adulthood shapes parental involvement in children's socialization remains largely unexplored.

The influence of socioeconomic status (SES) on parenting behaviors is also unclear. Many parent-child studies do not report information on parental educational or income levels, and others fail to separate the effects of SES. An elaborated understanding of the parenting process needs to distinguish between the effects of social class versus culture. Some studies have suggested that race differences in parent-child interactions disappear when SES is controlled (Mitchell & Register, 1984). Others suggest that racial differences in parent-child relationships are maintained by factors other than SES (Mutran, 1985), or that both cultural and economic forces influence black family patterns (Allen, 1987). We will examine this issue by comparing models that do and do not control for SES.

Parent-child interactions are also guided by the age of the child. The lessons and advice that a parent stresses to a teenager are likely to be quite different than with a child in young adulthood. With the majority of attention paid to parental practices with young children, we know relatively little about parental socialization with older children as they develop into adulthood.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study thus examined three sets of issues:

1. Do parenting socialization practices differ among black and white mothers and fathers?
2. How do parental characteristics of age, gender, and economic status alter parenting behaviors?
3. How do child characteristics and life stage transitions of the child affect parenting behaviors?

## METHOD

### Participants/Sample

As part of a larger study on adults' generativity behavior, 187 families took part in the current investigation. The larger study was conducted by a university survey laboratory in a Midwestern, racially heterogeneous suburb of approximately 75,000 residents (about 20% African American). Respondents were solicited via random-digit-dialing procedures and follow-up phone calls to identify black and white subjects between the ages of 35-65. The overall design, assessment methodology, and procedures of the larger study are detailed elsewhere (Hart, McAdams, Hirsch, & Bauer, 2001). The participation rate for consenting adults was 71% (74% for whites and 68% for eligible African Americans). Eligibility criteria for the current investigation included being a black or white parent living in the community, being above the age of 34 years, having an annual income below \$100,000, having no history of mental illness, and having a child above the age of five years. One parent per child was interviewed for the study.

Eighty-seven families were African American and 100 families were from white backgrounds. Study respondents did not differ from the full sample in terms of educational attainment (measured in years of schooling) or annual income (measured by Hollingshead Index).

Parental age ranged from 35 to 67 years ( $M = 49.70$ ,  $SD = 9.11$ ). Fifty percent of the study sample (94/187) were between the ages of 35-49 years and 50% of respondents were between the ages of 50-67 years. Forty-seven percent of respondents were fathers and 53% were mothers. With regard to socioeconomic status (SES), the black families were mostly working and middleclass, whereas the white families were primarily middle and upper middle class ( $\chi^2 = 24.46$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Among African American mothers, 24% graduated from high school, 30% had some college, 30% graduated from college, and 16% had some graduate education. Among white mothers, 6% were high-school graduates, 6% had some college, 16% were college graduates, and 72% had some graduate education. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) in household income revealed main effects for both race, gender, and parental marital status,  $F(1,186) = 30.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $F(1,186) = 10.26$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $F(1,186) = 92.01$ ,  $p < .001$  respectively, indicating that black families had lower incomes than white families, females reported lower incomes than males, and single parent households had lower incomes than two parent households. Thirty-six percent of respondents were single parents and the average family size was 3.5 members ( $SD = 10.05$ ).

Although black parents were more likely to be single parents than white parents (58% vs. 42%),  $\chi^2 = 5.73$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ , there were no racial differences in the mean number of children in black and white families.

The mean age of the focal child was 23.20 years ( $SD = 10.16$ ; range = 6-35). Fifty percent of the children were male, and 25% were married.

## MEASURES

### Parenting Scales

A review of parenting scales revealed that none assessed target parental socialization practices with wording and item content suitable for both school-age and adult offspring. Thus, four scales were developed to assess parenting variables of interest to this study. Further information regarding the development and psychometric properties of the parenting scales is published elsewhere (Hart, McAdams, Hirsch, & Bauer, 2001). Parents completed each item in regards to their oldest living child using a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 6 (agree strongly).

**Social Concerns**—This four-item subscale measured the degree to which parents encouraged their child to help others and to improve the world (e.g., “I talk to my child about ways to contribute to society”). Internal reliability was high (Cronbach's alpha = .80).

**Wisdom**—This four-item subscale assessed the extent to which parents passed on the benefits of their knowledge and experience to their child (e.g., “I try to pass on to my child what wisdom I have acquired in life”). Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .82.

**Role Model**—This three-item subscale measured how much parents felt they acted as role models for their child (e.g., “For the really important things, I am a role model for my child”). Internal reliability for this subscale was high (Cronbach's alpha = .85).

**Disengagement**—This four-item subscale assessed the extent to which parents were involved in decision-making and guidance with their child (e.g., “My child should now make decisions without my involvement”). High scores indicated high levels of disengagement from advising and guiding their child. Cronbach's alpha of these items was .74.

### Parental Teaching Themes

Qualitative data were collected from parents to ascertain the content of what they were currently teaching their children. After the quantitative items, respondents were asked if they were still trying to teach their child about life. If not, they were asked to describe the reasons they stopped and how old the child was when they made this decision. If parents were still teaching their children, respondents were asked to record what they were trying to teach in an open-ended paragraph.

We coded for four themes among respondents who reported that they were still involved in teaching their child. Coding procedures for each theme were derived from a careful reading of 30 practice interview paragraphs. For reliability purposes, two independent coders, unaware of participant classifications, performed the coding on 20% of the sample, which were a random subset of cases; the first author coded all remaining responses. The coders provided a score of 1 for the presence of each theme or 0 for its absence. Examples of each theme are provided in Table 2.



**Global Views**—The first theme in parental teachings was individualism versus collectivism, an indication of whether a child was guided to develop individual skills and talents, on the one hand, or focus on benefiting society and helping others. Coding reliability for the individualism theme was Kappa = .80, and Kappa = .92 for the theme of other-orientation. It was possible for a parent to describe both individualism and other-orientation themes.

**Religion**—The second code was whether parents emphasized religion or God as an important aspect in guiding their child. Coding reliability for the religion theme was Kappa = 1.0.

**Hardship**—The third theme referred to the parents' teachings of potential hardships or struggles that the child could encounter. Interrater reliability was Kappa = .82.

**Education**—The fourth general theme referred to whether a parent mentioned education as an important element in teachings to their child. Exact agreement across 30 interviews was achieved in 30 cases (100%; Kappa = 1.0).

## RESULTS

### Correlations Among Parenting Scales and Themes

Table 1 shows the intercorrelations between the parenting scales and teaching themes as well as the intracorrelations across the scales and themes. The correlations among the quantitative parenting scales were mostly moderate. Few intercorrelations between the parental teaching themes were found, indicating the distinctiveness of each topic. In general, the themes of education, religion, hardship, and other-orientation were positively correlated with the positive scales and negatively correlated with the negative scale dimensions.

### Parenting Scales

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was utilized to test for mean differences, with follow-up univariate ANOVA analyses when there was a significant MANOVA finding. A factorial design was employed with parental characteristics (gender, race, and age group categories of 35-49 years versus 50-67 years) and child characteristics (gender and marital status) serving as independent factors and the four parenting scales constituting the dependent variable set.

Because understanding of parental socialization processes is enhanced by clarification of socioeconomic influences on behavior, analyses controlling for SES (income and educational attainment) were compared to analyses without SES controls. Identical results were found with and without SES controls, indicating that SES had no appreciable effect on these parenting variables. Findings are therefore reported from analyses that do not control for SES. Parental characteristics results are reported first, followed by those of child characteristics.

A MANOVA of the four parenting scales revealed a significant main effect for race,  $F(6, 152) = 5.26, p < .001$ , with ANOVAs indicating that the effect was significant for social concerns,  $F(1, 157) = 18.59, p < .001$ , wisdom,  $F(1, 174) = 25.01, p < .001$ , and role model,  $F(1, 157) = 2.55, p < .01$ . As shown in Table 2, black parents reported higher scores in the parenting scales of social concerns, wisdom, and role model in comparison to white parents.

Results of the MANOVA also found a significant main effect for parental gender,  $F(6, 152) = 2.72, p < .05$ , with ANOVAs indicating that the effect was significant for social concerns,  $F(1, 157) = 5.43, p < .05$ . Mothers reported higher levels of social concerns ( $M = 22.28, SD = 2.18$ ) in regards to raising their oldest child than fathers ( $M = 20.74, SD = 3.24$ ).

Although not significant at the multivariate level,  $F(6, 152) = 1.39, p = .22$ , univariate analyses revealed a significant gender  $\times$  race interaction effect for social concerns,  $F(1, 157) = 5.44, p < .05$ . Simple effects tests revealed a significant gender effect among whites,  $F(1, 100) = 22.01, p < .01$ , indicating that white fathers reported significantly lower social concerns ( $M = 19.91, SD = 2.10$ ) than white mothers ( $M = 21.79, SD = 2.61$ ). No gender differences were found among African American parents. Simple effects tests indicated a significant race effect among fathers,  $F(1, 100) = 18.55, p < .001$ , and among mothers,  $F(1, 100) = 5.27, p < .05$ . Black fathers reported significantly higher levels of social concerns than white fathers, and black mothers reported significantly higher levels of social concerns than white mothers.

At the multivariate level, a main effect was found for parental age,  $F(6, 152) = 2.86, p < .05$ . Univariate analyses revealed a significant age effect for disengagement,  $F(1, 157) = 10.35, p < .01$ . Older adults reported significantly higher levels of disengagement ( $M = 11.82, SD = 2.31$ ) in comparison to younger adults ( $M = 8.74, SD = 2.9$ ).

### Effects of Child Characteristics

At the multivariate level, a main effect for child marital status was found,  $F(6, 152) = 3.11, p < .01$ , with a significant univariate finding for Disengagement,  $F(1, 157) = 13.52, p < .001$ . Parents of married children reported higher levels of disengagement ( $M = 12.55, SD = 2.42$ ) in comparison to those with unmarried children ( $M = 8.48, SD = 2.12$ ). With regards to child gender, a main trend was found,  $F(6, 152) = 1.92, p < .10$ , with a univariate finding for Social Concerns,  $F(1, 157) = 7.07, p < .01$ . Parents reported teaching higher levels of social concerns with their sons ( $M = 22.02, SD = 2.72$ ) in comparison to their daughters ( $M = 20.83, SD = 2.84$ ). With regards to child age, MANOVA models were repeated with the addition of child age as a covariate factor. Child age had no appreciable effect on parenting with the exception that the significant main finding for parental age with the univariate finding for Disengagement became nonsignificant. There were no interaction findings with child characteristic variables.

### Parental Teaching Themes

Of the 187 parents, 20 (11%) reported that they were no longer trying to teach their oldest child. The average age at which these parents stopped teaching was when their child was 23 years ( $M = 23.01, SD = 5.05$ ). Eleven of these parents indicated a reason for no longer teaching; most (10/11) felt their child was old enough to no longer need their guidance and one parent was no longer in correspondence with his child. Although nonteaching parents did not differ from teaching parents in race, gender, or income level classifications, significantly more nonteaching parents than teaching parents were between the ages of 50-67 years ( $\chi^2 = 7.24, df = 1, p < .01$ ) and had lower levels of education ( $F = 5.38, df = 1, p < .05$ ).

Table 2 shows the distribution of parental teaching themes among black and white parents and qualitative examples of each theme. For each teaching theme, hierarchical logistic regressions were conducted with parent age, gender, race, and child age, gender, and marital status entered first, followed by double and triple interaction terms computed for the parent and child characteristic combinations. Table 3 shows the significant logistic regression findings found among the parental teaching themes.



Income and maternal education were also included in the logistic regression models. As with the quantitative variables, results indicated that there were no significant relationships between SES variables and the likelihood of mentioning any of the teaching themes.

**Global Views: Individualism**—Approximately two-thirds (64%; 107/167) mentioned individualistic themes when describing what they felt was important to teach their child. Race was the only variable to significantly predict the individualism theme. White parents were more likely to mention individualistic themes in their teachings in comparison to black parents. As one white parent wrote, “I remind him to develop his individualistic talents and aspirations. I encourage him in his feelings for adventure.”

**Global Views: Other-Orientation**—Forty-four percent of parents (73/167) discussed other-orientation themes in their parental teachings. As shown in Table 2, black parents were twice as likely to mention this theme in comparison to white parents (58% vs. 30%). Although there were no main effects for parental age, gender, or race in the likelihood of mentioning other-orientation themes in parental teachings, a race by sex interaction revealed that black parents and white mothers were more likely to mention this theme in their teachings than white fathers. As one black mother wrote, “The most important thing I've tried to teach my child is that giving to others is better than receiving.”

Although black parents focused more on other-orientation themes in their teachings, 53% also encouraged the development of individualistic skills. Yet the emphasis on the individual appeared to be accompanied by a concern for the well-being of others. As one black father wrote “I try to instill values that I was raised on. These are respect for yourself, relatives, parents, and others—first always. Being able to accept failure and still continue optimistically in his life is next.” White and black parents differed in the frequency of including both global and individualistic views in their teachings. A third of white parents (34%) who mentioned individualistic themes in their teachings also discussed other-orientation themes in comparison to 62% of black parents.

**Religion**—Of the 167 parents, 26 (16%) mentioned religion. There were no main parental age, race, or parental gender differences in the likelihood of mentioning religion in parental teachings. However, there was a significant gender  $\times$  race interaction. Additional logistic regressions were conducted with gender and race dummy variables to ascertain significant differences between black and white mothers and fathers. Results showed that black mothers were significantly more likely to mention religion in comparison to black fathers, white fathers, and white mothers. White fathers were significantly less likely to mention religion in comparison to both white mothers and black fathers.

**Hardship**—Fourteen percent (23/167) of parents described themes of hardship in their teachings to their child. Whereas parents did not differ in terms of age or gender in the likelihood of mentioning the parental teaching theme of hardship, black parents were significantly more likely to emphasize this theme to their child than white parents.

**Education**—Eleven percent (18/167) discussed education as an important element in their parental teachings. There were no age, gender, or interaction differences in the likelihood of mentioning education in parental teachings. However, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, race was found to be a significant predictor of the likelihood of mentioning education, with 20% of black parents mentioning this theme in their teachings in comparison to 2% of white parents.

**Effects of Child Characteristics**—Child age, gender, and marital status, and interactions with child characteristics were also entered into the regression models with each parental teaching theme (see Table 3). With regards to child age, several main and

interaction findings were found. With each advancing year of child age, parents were less likely to mention education in their teachings. A race by child age interaction for the theme of other-orientation revealed that with each advancing year of child age, black parents were more likely to mention the theme of other-orientation in their teachings. White parents' emphasis of other-orientation in their teachings did not change as their children aged.

Although no main effects for gender were found, gender by child age interactions for the theme of individual and other-orientation revealed that a parent was more likely to mention individualistic skills and less likely to mention concern for others to a daughter as she grew older. An example of this finding is seen with one parent who wrote about her 28-year-old daughter, "I still try to teach this child about budgeting her money and caring for herself. She has a tendency to do for others and disregard herself." A reverse pattern was found with sons, with parents less likely to mention individualistic skills and more likely to mention other-orientation in their teaching. For example, one parent of a 27-year-old son wrote "I try to show my son what giving and sacrifice he must make in his relationships."

As shown in Table 3, two main findings were found with regards to child marital status. Having a child that was married significantly decreased the likelihood that the parent was still teaching the child and that the parent would mention individualistic skills in teachings.

## DISCUSSION

Parents are among the primary agents that shape the outlook and disposition of the next generation. The current study provided a unique opportunity to explore socialization patterns among black and white parents and the values they believe are important to instill in their children. Black parents reported higher levels on the wisdom and role model scales than white parents irrespective of SES. These findings parallel those found in small qualitative studies that illustrate the critical socialization roles that black parents assume in nurturing and serving as role models to their families (Dilworth-Anderson, 1992; Taylor, 1985). As predicted, black parents were more likely to mention the importance of educational attainment, religion, and preparation for hardship than white parents.

There have been mixed findings regarding the contribution of socioeconomic influences to racial differences in parenting practices. The racial differences found in the current study provide support to the contention that parenting practices among black families are due to factors other than social class (Mutran, 1985). Irrespective of income levels, black parents may enforce these elements in their teachings to prepare their children against discrimination or to buffer them from negative societal messages regarding their racial background. These socialization strategies may have been generated in prior historical periods in order to overcome hardship and may continue to be passed on to future generations in order to insure continued economic advancement.

This work also explored the values that black and white parents convey with regards to concerns for others and self. On the quantitative measure of social concerns, levels of reported social concern were high. Yet when parents were asked to describe what they tried to teach their child, only 30% of white parents mentioned the importance of concern for others and contributing to society (other-orientation). The discrepancy between these quantitative and qualitative data was less common for black parents, who were twice as likely to mention the theme of other-orientation in their teachings than white parents. Concern for others, moreover, did not limit black parents from teaching their child individualistic skills. By stressing both a need to develop individual talents as well as to contribute to society, many black parents appeared to resolve the polarity that exists within modern America: the deep desire for autonomy and self-reliance, combined with a strong

conviction that life has no meaning unless shared with others in the context of community (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1982). We cannot conclusively determine whether the greater discrepancy among white parents was due to actual differences in parenting behavior or to differences in their reports of other-oriented teaching (though all parents had completed the quantitative items immediately prior to the qualitative inquiry, so presumably these issues were fresh in their mind). Further inquiry is needed to understand the processes that enable parents to nurture in their children both individuality and a strong concern for societal well-being.

Parenting behaviors differed in both expected and unexpected ways among race and gender groups. Throughout middle age and older adulthood, mothers continue to report higher levels of emotional-expressive leadership in raising children. Black and white mothers reported higher levels of social concerns and serving as a role model than fathers. White fathers reported the lowest levels of social concerns, and were the least likely to mention religion or other-orientation themes in their teachings. In contrast, findings point to the prominent socialization role of African American fathers in the raising of children. Black fathers reported comparable levels of social concerns in regards to raising their child to black mothers. In addition, black fathers did not differ from black mothers in their frequency of mentioning teaching themes of education, hardship, or other-orientation as their child aged. These findings support those who have elucidated the critical parenting that black fathers provide (Bowman & Forman, 1997) and suggest that black fathers, like black mothers (Jackson, 1985), continue to actively raise their school-aged and young adult offspring.

Consideration of social position and power may help explicate the race-gender interaction in transmission of social concerns and other-orientation. Individuals such as women and racial minorities, who have faced structural constraints on their own advancement, may view themselves as being more interdependent with other members of society because they see limits on individual agency (Lykes, 1985). Those for whom society has posed barriers to, rather than opportunities for, social mobility may incorporate social concerns into their own sense of identity and value system and pass these on to the next generation. White fathers may report the lowest levels of social concerns because the socio-historical privileging of white males in American society has provided greater opportunities for education, employment, and personal economic advancement. Women and racial minorities may be more likely to perceive social structures as restricting and repressive, limiting their opportunities for individual advancement (Lykes, 1985). Although black fathers could be expected to be less concerned with social change due to their gender, their social positioning as African Americans, whose advancement has been historically tied to social movements, may result in an awareness of social concerns similar to women's. The lack of difference in social concerns found between black fathers and black mothers may result from the fact that they share a common place on the racial axis of social position, although differing on the gender axis.

Social discrimination, in addition to instilling feelings of having a common fate with others and a concern for social issues, may also increase the importance of interpersonal relationships (Hooks, 1984). This sense of self in relation differs from the collective self because it places primacy on interdependence between individuals rather than between an individual and a group (Madson & Trafimow, 2001). If an individual sees her own autonomy as restricted by social structures she may focus on interpersonal relationships as a means of and forum for personal achievement and advancement. Although literature has focused on women's heightened sense of self-in-relation (Cross & Madson, 1997; Gilligan, 1982), race as well as gender may influence this type of other-orientation. The fact that white parents were more likely to mention individualism as a teaching theme supports this

analysis and suggests that gender alone is not the axis around which relational identity theory revolves. Race and social power are both important factors to consider.

Although it is often assumed that parents in middle age and older adulthood are no longer caring for their children, the current study reveals that parents in middle and older adulthood did not differ significantly in many of their parental guidance behaviors. Across parental and child ages, parents demonstrated similar efforts to pass on social concerns and wisdom, serve as role models, and guide their children with respect to education, religion, hardship, and worldviews. Few parents in older adulthood reported that they were no longer teaching their child. These findings are congruent with others (McAdams, Hart, & Maruna, 1998; Stewart & Vandewater, 1998; Zarit & Eggebeen, 1995) which indicate that many aspects of generative behavior do not decline with age.

An interesting pattern of results emerged with regard to child gender. Parents appear to be unusually concerned about their daughter's individual development as she reaches adulthood. In contrast to male children, qualitative data showed that parents reported more individualistic themes and less other-oriented themes in their teachings to their daughters. Quantitative data revealed the same pattern with parents emphasizing social concerns more to sons than daughters. Since prior research has indicated that girls tend to be socialized to attend to others, and boys to focus on individual achievement (Gilligan, 1982), these findings may reflect parental concern with underdeveloped skills and attitudes in their children as adults, particularly during an historical era which has highlighted the need for less traditional gender roles.

The finding that child age had no appreciable effect on parenting may initially seem surprising. However, we purposefully designed our assessment to capture similar types of practices that might occur over the life course, regardless of surface differences that are a function of child age. Thus, both a parent of a thirteen-year-old and a parent of a twenty-eight-year-old scored equally high on the role model scale, yet in the qualitative section, described different role model behaviors that were relevant to the age of the child (parent of thirteen-year-old, "I tell her to stay in school like I did"; parent of twenty-eight-year-old, "I show her by example to take care of her health").

There are several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting results of this study. First, given that all parents reported on their oldest child, it is possible that the findings may be limited to first-born children. Second, there may be other aspects of parental teachings not captured by the coded themes. However, only 12% of respondents did not mention one of the coded themes, indicating that the substantive areas of parental teachings were assessed by the studied themes. The fact that 50% of parents who were still teaching their children mentioned two to three of the coded themes suggests that parents listed most of the prominent areas in which they seek to guide their children. Third, parental generative behaviors are reported from the perspective of the parent only. Because parents tend to rate relationship quality higher than children (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998), parents may have reported higher levels of parental generative behaviors than children actually experienced.

### **Implications for Policy**

The current study contributes much-needed comparative findings on parenting practices of white and African American parents in relation to school-aged and young adult offspring. The twenty-first century will be characterized by parents and children sharing six and seven decades of life. This new demographic picture presents decades of opportunities for parents to continue to teach their children and instill values that strengthen not only the individual, but also the relation of the individual to the community. The continued interest of older

parents in guiding their children towards social concerns and acting as role models may become a critical component of community programs that connect families within the neighborhood and provide opportunities to promote the welfare of others.

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TABLE 1

Correlations Among Parenting Scales and Parental Teaching Themes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Parenting Scales									
1. Value	-	.63**	.38**	-.28**	.07	.27**	.21*	.18	.17
2. Wisdom	-	-	.43**	-.33**	.04	.24*	.19	.12	.15
3. Role Model	-	-	-	-.22*	-.04	.13	.18	.04	.12
4. Disengagement	-	-	-	-	-.14	-.16	-.10	-.00	-.19
Teaching Themes									
5. Individualism	-	-	-	-	-	.05	-.11	.05	-.01
6. Other-oriented	-	-	-	-	-	-	.20*	.04	-.06
7. Religion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.07	.07
8. Hardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.15
9. Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: N ranges from 167 to 187

\* p &lt; .01

\*\*\* p &lt; .001

**TABLE 2**

Examples of Teaching Themes Among Black and White Parents from Qualitative Data

Theme	% Mentioned	% Mentioned by Race		Example
		Black	White	
Individualism	64%	50%	74%	I remind my child that he is responsible for his actions. I try to teach my child to develop her talents.
Other-oriented	44%	58%	30%	I try to advise my son to be kind to others. I teach her to strive to be cooperative with others.
Religion	16%	23%	8%	I am trying to teach my child about God. I'm trying to teach her to live Christ-like.
Hardship	14%	27%	2%	I teach her to forget about the bad things people say about her. I teach him that he must overcome prejudice in society to achieve his goals.
Education	11%	20%	2%	I teach my son that education is always beneficial to him. I teach him to aim high in school.

**TABLE 3**

Significant Logistic Regression Findings Among Parental Teaching Themes

Outcome Variable	Predictor Variable	B	SE	Wald	R	Exp (B)
Individualism	Race ***	-1.15	.35	10.92	-.20	.32
	Child Marital Status **	-1.29	.43	9.22	-.18	.27
Other-oriented	Age Child × Sex Child *	.03	.01	4.13	.10	1.03
	Sex × Race *	.79	.45	3.01	.07	2.20
	Age Child × Sex Child **	-.03	.01	6.55	-.14	.97
Religion	Age Child × Race *	.03	.02	4.19	.09	1.03
	Sex × Race ***	.71	.19	13.59	.28	2.03
Hardship	Race ***	2.84	.76	14.02	.30	17.12
	Race **	2.32	.77	8.98	.25	10.19
Education	Age Child *	-.07	.03	4.92	-.16	.93
	Child Marital Status ****	-1.68	.50	11.19	-.27	.18

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

\*\*\* p < .001