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The purpose of this study was to learn more about the experiences, beliefs, and practices of married or cohabitating African American parents with a toddler son. This study also examined salient aspects of family life and how child rearing practices supported positive emotional and social development of their toddler sons. Through a theoretical lens that recognizes development in children of color is rooted in societal aspects and mechanisms (such as discrimination, racism, oppression) that affect family life of African American parents with male toddlers, careful attention was given to the unique experiences of each of the six families who participated in the study. A phenomenological research design was used, which included 12 individual interviews (one with each parent), an interview with each couple, and an observation with the family. Extensive field notes were recorded also.

Results include seven essences and three themes shared by the six families that reflected the beliefs and practices they valued to ensure the positive social and emotional development of their sons. Despite the deep commitment and love the families share with each other, parents reported challenges with having enough quality time to spend with their toddler sons and family. In addition, regardless of the young age of their sons and significant financial means in some families, most felt their parenting goals were influenced by negative societal views of African American males as well as expectations for academic achievement. Furthermore, fathers emphasized their efforts to improve

upon the models they experienced growing up and to make sure they are actively present in their sons' lives. Information these African American families shared about the intricacies of their daily lives, childrearing beliefs and practices, and the influence of societal expectations could have implications for early childhood teacher preparation, early intervention, and policies for young children and families.

UNDERSTANDING BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN  
PARENTS WITH MALE TODDLERS: A FOCUS ON  
EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

by

Sheresa Boone Blanchard

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To My Family, my biggest cheerleaders while achieving this dream

APPROVAL PAGE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Rationale for the Study

Research on developmental trajectories and achievement for young African American<sup>1</sup> children documents a disturbing picture of current and long-term outcomes (American Psychological Association, 2008; Aratani, Wight, & Cooper, 2011; Children's Defense Fund, 2012; Nieto, 2000; Nieto, & Bode, 2011). Clarifying the extent of this concern, results of the 2010 census indicate African American children are 14.4% of the child population (birth through 17 years) in the United States, despite their higher representation in categories that could negatively influence child wellness (Children's Defense Fund, 2012; Macartney, 2011). A variety of investigative studies and information reporting on indicators relevant for understanding developmental outcomes for children suggest young African Americans fare worse than most counterparts:

- African American children under five years of age are the second lowest group socioeconomically, only above young American Indian children (Children's Defense Fund, 2012; Macartney, 2011);
- African Americans comprise 25% of children in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2012; Macartney, 2011);

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<sup>1</sup> Changes in language occur based on multiple factors, including social, political, and historical reasons, influencing the terms one uses (Nieto, 2000). The terms African American, American Indian, European American, and Latino will be used. When referring to non-European American groups in general terms, the term "people of color" is used (Nieto, 2000).

- At nine months old African American babies score lower on measures of cognitive development than European American babies (Aratani, Wight, & Cooper, 2011);
- Sixty-four percent of African American students graduate from high school within four years compared to eighty-two percent of European American students (Children's Defense Fund, 2012);
- In 2009, thirty-one percent of all juvenile arrests and fifty-six percent of juveniles serving life sentences without parole were African American (Children's Defense Fund, 2012); and
- During the 2003-2004 academic year, expulsion rates for young children were highest for those who were African American, male, and/or an older preschoolers (Frabutt, & Gathings, 2006; Gilliam, 2005).

These disturbing outcomes have initiated cause for alarm and a need for action on behalf of African American children to understand family perspectives about child rearing practices that support positive emotional and social development of young African American boys and to work to understand factors that contribute to the emergence and often persistence of gaps in school readiness (American Psychological Association, 2008; Aratani, Wight, & Cooper, 2011; Zehr, 2011).

### **Research Problem**

Most young children, including African American male toddlers, are situated in families of various configurations and arrangements (Hanson, & Lynch, 2004).

Generally, many aspects of daily life (e.g., someone else, often an adult, has to take care

of their basic need for food, clothing, and shelter) for young children vary, but some are similar such as whom they live with, where they live, whether or not they have siblings, and child care type and provision. These variations interact with the developmental context of the child, possibly influencing outcomes (Franklin, 2007; Hanson, & Lynch, 2004; Knopf, & Swick, 2008).

Race, as well as ethnicity, social class, and gender are among the most salient attributes in the United States because of a long history of discrimination and differential treatment based on them (Bush, & Bush, 2013; Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Gordon, 2012; Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). Therefore, focusing on these attributes in this study, African American boys of various social classes, acknowledges that the salience of race, gender, and social class characteristics may influence parenting and child outcomes. Thus, a closer look at this population is important to providing information about childrearing goals and toddler socialization in African American families and ultimately improving their life trajectories through more complete and accurate information (Bush, & Bush, 2013; Zehr, 2011). While aspects of childhood and child rearing have bidirectional influence, the developmental context of young children, including African American children, is the foundation for later outcomes and therefore important to understand (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007; 2010; Sroufe, Coffino, & Carlson, 2010; Walker et al., 2011). Therefore, a closer look at African American male toddlers will provide additional knowledge about how parental beliefs and practices may influence their child's emotional and social development.

Research with African Americans families and children primarily focuses on those in poverty and/or single parent households. Additionally, research frequently compares African Americans with other groups or uses quantitative methods and/or laboratory observation to probe and describe outcomes related to a specific construct, yielding a specific type of information (Dodson, 2007; McLoyd, Hill, & Dodge, 2005). While a wide variety of methods are critical to better understand young children and families, there is a dearth of research that describes beliefs and practices of pairs of African American parents with toddler sons from their perspective, despite support that beliefs and practices have been shown to influence childrearing, socialization, and child outcomes (Barnett, Shanahan, Deng, Haskett, & Cox, 2010; Hill, & Tyson, 2008). Furthermore, emotional and social development is considered the foundation for development in all other areas (Bagdi, & Vacca, 2005; Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006; Kress, Norris, Schoenholz, Elias, & Seigle, 2004) and therefore one of the most important developmental areas to support progress in all other areas. Current expectations, policies, and practices aimed at improving and supporting the positive development of African American boys should result from sound familial information. Therefore, understanding beliefs and practices of African American parents of male toddlers and ways they could support emotional and social growth is important for positive developmental outcomes for African American boys.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This qualitative study uses a phenomenological approach to understand parental beliefs and practices that contribute to positive emotional and social developmental

outcomes for African American toddlers, paving the way for more optimistic school readiness and life trajectories. Congruent with Part C of the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers With Disabilities (IDEA 2004), infants and toddlers are defined as children under age three (IDEA, 2011). More specifically, toddlers between 12 months and 3 years old are the focus of this study since most research on young African American children focuses on preschoolers and older children and research clearly shows positive interactions during the early years results in better outcomes (Chen, & Siegler, 2000; Underwood, & Rosen, 2011). Two questions guide this research:

- a) What are beliefs and goals of parents of African American male toddlers for their sons?
- b) How do parental beliefs and goals of parents of African American male toddlers socialize them for emotional and social success?

In the following chapters I will first discuss the theoretical framework followed by the theoretical perspectives guiding this research. Next, I will discuss emotional and social development milestones and aspects of childrearing such as socialization and discipline. Chapter three describes the methodology, recruitment, and measures for the study. Next, summaries of each family and results of the study followed by a discussion of the results and their implications are shared.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical and evidence-based contexts can inform an understanding of development and typical milestones for African American toddlers, which can guide research. These contexts include: (a) a theoretical framework focused on the integrated nature of child development for children of color and (b) research on emotional, social, familial, environmental, and genetic outcomes and influences on development (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Shonkoff, 2010). Focusing on varied contexts can provide a foundation for inquiries that explore factors promoting positive emotional and social development (and therefore, increasing the likelihood of positive life outcomes) for African American male toddlers. Therefore, a thorough review of relevant literature was conducted to understand the complexities of emotional and social development in general and for African American toddlers and boys in particular.

Four methods of inquiry were used to find the most recent and relevant studies on emotional and social development in young children. First, six databases [*Academic Search Premier, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), ERIC, PsychARTICLES, and SocINDEX with Full text*] were searched for published articles, books, and reports using the keyword combinations (Appendix A). Initially, this search focused on items published between 2000 and 2014, but was expanded to 1990 due to limited results from initial searches, especially in the areas of

development and parenting of African American children of varying economic status. Second, a review of the reference lists from relevant articles, books, and reports on social development, brain development, parenting, and African American children yielded additional sources, including foundational literature (e.g., Guralnick, 1990; McAdoo, 2002). Third, relevant and often cited journals (e.g., *Infant Mental Health*) that include articles on infant development, social or emotional development, or social competence in young children were searched via online databases using keywords or through relevant special edition issues. Infant and toddler development books were also used to document typical emotional and social development. Finally, all issues of *Zero to Three* from 2006 through November 2012 were searched by hand to find relevant articles. In addition to reviewing relevant literature, attention to one's position and perspective, including one's theoretical perspective(s) or framework, regarding a topic assists with understanding individual interpretations of literature and research results. The primary theoretical foundation of this study is described below.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Young (2008) describes theoretical frameworks as important to assist with describing and explaining process and “often [provide] a distinct vocabulary representative of underlying epistemological and ontological perspectives” (p. 43). This study is mainly influenced by the integrative model, which assists with understanding development in children of color (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). The methodology and data analyses used in this research included careful consideration of each construct in the model.

While various research theories, methodologies, and analyses exist, for over a decade, scholars have called for designs that take into account child rearing and socialization contexts as well as the developmental outcomes for African American children and families through acknowledgement of the racialized American society (Dodson, 2007; McAdoo, 2002; McLoyd, Hill, & Dodge, 2005; Peters, 1997; 2007). Since categorization such as race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status are socially constructed (Smedley, & Smedley, 2005), contexts influencing the definition of each will be discussed through theoretical perspectives. Currently, among the recommendations for quality research with African American families, a push toward the ecological contexts of development within diverse children and families exists. In particular, the integrative model (discussed in detail next) is one perspective suggested for the advancement of sound knowledge about the family dynamics and socialization processes in families of color (McAdoo, 2002b; McLoyd, Hill, & Dodge, 2005). This theoretical perspective was influential in this study from the design and conceptualization to the interpretation of the results.

Child developmental outcomes are influenced by a multitude of factors and systems including societal, state, regional, local, and familial impact in a multidirectional context. Before contemplating the systems related to a child's development, one must first consider the constant presence of societal power. This power includes the systems of oppression that intersect through the constructs relevant to the child (such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status) and permeate each system as it supports or inhibits the child's development (Collins, 2000). With such consideration, one cannot look at

systems in isolation, but must consider the presence of power, oppression, and privilege within each system (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996). When considering the emotional and social development of African American toddlers, it is imperative to use a theoretical lens that addresses the nuances needed to understand the complexity of development. In order to move toward a strength-based perspective of developmental outcomes, one can consider how strengths emerge from a foundation rooted in societal power (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Hill, Murray, & Anderson, 2005). Through such a lens, one can recognize child strengths and developmental competencies for a particular group (such as African American male toddlers) because he or she is not necessarily looking for outcomes that mirror the dominant culture, but ones that are relevant and functional for the group of interest.

### **Integrative Model**

The integrative model incorporates societal and contextual issues, such as racism and segregation, into child developmental outcomes and differences in development between children of color and European American children (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996). Predominately, scholarly literature has focused on comparing children of color with their European American counterparts instead of what is “normal” in the populations of color studied (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Peters, 2007). Developmental pathways for children of color are influenced by segregation (residential, economic, social, and psychological), racism, and social position factors (Hattery, & Smith, 2012; Hill, Murray, & Anderson, 2005; Hopson, & Hopson, 1992; McAdoo, 2002; Ogbu, 2007; 2008). In addition, inhibiting/promoting environments influence family processes and interact with

children's characteristics to promote or inhibit aspects of development (Hill, Murray, & Anderson, 2005; Peters, 2007). The integrative model is comprised of seven socially constructed areas: (a) social position variables (social position based on "social stratification," p. 1897; i.e., race, social class, ethnicity, and gender), (b) social stratification mechanisms (macrosystem effects on child development such as racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression), (c) segregation, (d) promoting/inhibiting environments, (e) adaptive culture, (f) child characteristics, and (g) family.

Social position variables include socially defined categories such as race, social class, and gender (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996) and are guided by three assumptions of social stratification: (a) social position is accompanied by related segregation, (b) social position is a strong determinant of one's social mobility, and (c) each person considers him or herself in relation to others on the social ladder. Since the terms are socially constructed, research has challenged definitions and measurement of each construct such as how racial categories are defined in research (who is a member of which category) (Hill, Murray, & Anderson, 2005; Nieto, & Bode, 2012). In addition, social stratification operates through racism, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, and segregation to mediate a child's developmental outcomes. Key to the mechanisms of social stratification are the use of power, bias, and assumption to discriminate against and intentionally and unintentionally organize groups of people (Barnes, 2000; Collins, 2000; Milner, 2009; Nieto, & Bode, 2012; Noguera, 2006). Through consideration of social position variables and social stratification mechanisms, environments (such as school, child care, neighborhoods, and health care) can be considered promoting and/or inhibiting. One of the aspects that

determine how an environment can support and/or inhibit development is the availability of resources (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996). In addition, whether or not an environment is supportive could affect the child's self-esteem and emotional and social development. As a result of the level of social stratification and the degree of access to promoting environments, many families develop an adaptive culture unique to them that incorporates life experiences at home and in society such as cultural traditions and socialization, migration, and acculturation to the United States, as well as demands of the current contexts (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996).

Next in the integrative model, the characteristics of the child determines how the environment and culture effect and are affected by the child. Also, these qualities have a bidirectional influence on the child's family and the developmental competencies. Family includes attributes such as socioeconomic status, membership composition and roles, values, beliefs, and goals of the family, and the degree of racial socialization (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Hill, Murray, & Anderson, 2005). Therefore, child attributes such as health status, biology, age, temperament, physicality (e.g., skin tone), and family attributes have unique contributions to child outcomes.

Input from the integrative model constructs could provide clarity to developmental competencies of children of color. Although competency level may be based primarily on the typical development of European American children, it should also consider whether or not development for children of color manifests itself in an adaptive, albeit different, way (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996). For example, toddlers may react to physical contact from a caregiver in different ways based on their preferences,

previous experiences, etc. In order to understand what the child's reaction communicates, the caregiver would need to intimately know the child. In addition, since disability identification is often based on qualification in a category, it is important to understand the influential processes that contribute to children of color's current developmental competencies (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996). Furthermore, recognizing familial and cultural diversity is important for beginning to understand how the cultural foundations of special education could differ from the beliefs and values of many families (Kalyanpur, & Harry, 1999). Additional research operationalizing the integrative model could improve emotional and social outcomes in several ways: (a) assist with a better understanding of what alternate competencies for children of color might look like, (b) provide information to influence policies and interventions based on knowledge gained from alternate competencies, and (c) underscore how research in this area is a valuable contribution to all people in society. Through this framework, one might be able to cast a more accurate picture of the functionality of child and family outcomes for families of color.

**Application of the integrative model.** The integrative model has framed and/or influenced research from infancy through adulthood. While some researchers use the model mainly while discussing their findings, others describe it as influential in study design. Nonetheless, it has been included to discuss developmental variation in children of color.

Several studies focusing on young children (birth through kindergarten) and their families have incorporated the integrative model (e.g., Anthony, Anthony, Morrel, &

Acosta, 2005; Lea, 2006; Suizzo, & Stapleton, 2007). In one study, Lea (2006) interviewed adolescent mothers with children receiving early intervention services and their service providers. She also observed service provision in various contexts. While this researcher purports Coll's earlier cultural variant perspective (1993) framed her study, many similarities exist with the later integrative framework. In relation to collaboration and service provision in early intervention, Lea (2006) suggested Coll's 1993 work could assist with influencing a shift to relationship focused family-provider relationships, making a relevant connection from Coll's early work to early intervention.

Studies focused on elementary-aged children range from first through fifth graders and often include European American comparison groups for children of color and low income families (e.g., Ackerman, Izard, Schoff, Youngstrom, & Kogos, 1999; Ackerman, Brown, & Izard, 2004; Hughes, Bigler, & Levy, 2007; Terry, Connor, Thomas-Tate, & Love, 2010; Thomas, Townsend, & Belgrave, 2003). In one line of research, Ackerman and colleagues (1999; 2004) included the integrative model to justify their decision to focus on low income families, but did not clearly include elements of the model in their study. In another study, Terry, Connor, Thomas-Tate, and Love (2010) used the model to discuss the need to include consideration of the contexts of development when considering literacy performance. Inclusion of the model ranged from a sentence mentioning it to an extensive integrated discussion to assist with understanding child development results in the study.

For studies including those in middle school through college, the integrative model has been applied to populations in the United States and other countries as well as

to those of various socioeconomic status (e.g., Benner, & Graham, 2007; Eisenberg, et al., 2009; Ford, Hurd, Jagers, & Sellers, 2013; Juang, Lerner, McKinney, & von Eye, 1999; Lam, 2007; Lamborn, & Felbab, 2003; Nebbitt, Lombe, Doyle, & Vaughn, 2013; Prelow, Bowman, & Weaver, 2007; Verkuyten, & Thijs, 2006). Several studies employed the integrative model to discuss the importance of considering developmental context for children of color. Prelow, Bowman, and Weaver (2007) incorporated the model to discuss the lack of research on variation in children of color as well as the prominence of context. In one Indonesian study, Eisenberg and colleagues (2009) cited the integrative framework as one of three sources to assert that low socioeconomic status is common among people of color. Although the integrative framework has been widely used before (primarily in planning and data collection stages) to understanding development in children of color before, for this study, the constructs of the framework were considered throughout planning, data collection, and data analysis to undergird the importance of consistently keeping knowledge of these developmental pathways and contexts prominent throughout each stage.

### **Defining Early Emotional and Social Development**

Based on a review of the literature, the terms *social competence* and *social development* are two terms used to understand emotional and social development of infants and toddlers. Guralnick (1990) defined *social competence* as “the ability of young children to successfully and appropriately select and carry out their interpersonal goals” (p. 4). However, Coleman (1999) defined the area of *social/emotional* development as “the developmental area that involves skills which enable the child to

function in a group and to interact appropriately with others” (p. 336). These and other definitions of *social competence* and *social/emotional development* typically include aspects of social development such as child-caregiver relationships, attachment, and peer relationships and aspects of emotional development such as temperament, emotions, and sense of self (Gross, 2008; Parlakian, & Seibel, 2002; Witherington, Campos, & Hertenstein, 2001). Therefore, in this review of the literature, research addressing the development of *social competence* as well as studies addressing *social* and/or *emotional development* and *social skills* are used with an understanding that a child who displays emotional and social development typical of his or her age is moving toward gaining emotional and social skills to support interact with caregivers, peers, and society.

Research on the emotional and social development of infants and toddlers has expanded in recent years. The Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (2008) adapted a definition of social and emotional development to include the variety of factors related to healthy development:

The term social emotional development refers to the developing capacity of the child from birth through five years of age to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; and explore the environment and learn—all in the context of family, community, and culture.

In addition, the literature on healthy social and emotional development for very young children uses the term “infant mental health” in a synonymous manner (Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, n.d.; Parlakian, & Seibel, 2002; Zenah, & Zenah, 2000). Therefore, infant mental health intersects many disciplines such

as early childhood, special education, psychology, and social work. Three key aspects of supporting social emotional health include prevention of poor outcomes, intervention to support development when needed, promotion of activities and behaviors that aid in healthy outcomes, and treatment for children who have a need for intensive intervention (Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, n.d; Blair, & Fox, 2011; Zenah, & Zenah, 2000). In addition, it has been documented that supporting and promoting positive relationships and expression of emotions is important in toddlers for preventing social and emotional challenges (e.g., Gillespie, & Hunter, 2008).

### **Importance of Positive Emotional and Social Development**

From birth, emotional and social development occurs through complex, multidirectional processes, including maturation and interaction with caregivers and environment. Research continues to document milestones of development in very young children through testing assumptions about how infants and toddlers think, attach, and develop such as response to and understanding of parental speech, maternal emotional signaling as well as the development of theory of mind, and social attachment and temperament (Bornstein, & Cote, 2009; Bremner, & Fogel, 2001; Houck, 1999; Muir, & Slater, 2000). Developmental disabilities develop for a variety of reasons, including genetic and environmental causes, and in addition to culture and other factors, can influence variability in developmental outcomes (Howard, Williams, Miller, & Aiken, 2014; Kalyanpur, & Harry, 1999; Rauch, & Lanphear, 2012). For toddler social development, the frequent focus is on child-caregiver relationships and interactions including caregiver sensitivity and depression as well as the development of trust and

attachment. The emotional development of toddlers often focuses on temperament, understanding and expressing emotions, and the developing sense of self. Consideration of both the emotional and social areas of development provides a more comprehensive scope of the variety of skills toddlers are working on as they move toward mental and emotional health.

Emotional and social development is often assessed in the child care or school context through interaction with peers, teachers, and the social context. Social competence skills and academic achievement of the same children from preschool through elementary school age have been documented (Howes, 2000; Malecki, & Elliott, 2002; Nile, Reynolds, & Roe-Sepowitz, 2008). In one study examining social skills and child outcomes, the Chicago Child-Parent Center Preschool Program, described how a low-income, primarily African American (93%), sample who participated in this early intervention model had better social development outcomes at 12 – 13 years of age than same age peers who had not participated in the model (Niles, Reynolds, & Roe-Sepowitz, 2007). The program provided educational and family support services to low-income families with children between three and nine years old. At follow-up, when families had early support related to their child's acting out behavior, the children had fewer acting out behaviors in adolescence, despite the high risk nature of the families included. Also, children who participated longer in the program realized more benefits as a result of their participation. This research suggests that, not only is children's behavior at a young age related to adolescent behavior, but also that parents who received assistance with their

child's behavior and development at an early age were able to produce more positive outcomes for their child later in life.

Lack of social competence in young children may result in negative outcomes as children progress through elementary and secondary school. Malecki and Elliot (2002) found evidence of a relationship between the social skills ratings of teachers and the students and the academic competence of those students. While these results could not be confirmed as a causal relationship, they may support the premise that teacher perspectives and student perspectives of social skills may interact to negatively affect academic achievement when students are perceived to lack social skills. In addition, Whitted (2011) discussed how deficits in young children's social and emotional skills could predict school failure and how characteristics of the family and community prevent skill development in these areas. However, a focus primarily on familial and community deficits and how they contribute to child emotional and social skills is important, but also simplistic as it does not address the dynamic nature of development in children of color as well as systemic and societal influences as the theoretical model of this study does.

Systemic and societal influences can be difficult to measure and therefore challenging to recognize as part of the reason for how certain outcomes in children of color occur in the manner they do. One possible instance of this challenge is the Abecedarian Project. The Project is a longitudinal randomized design study of the long-term effects of three to eight years of intervention in the early childhood and primary years for a low-income, mostly African American group who mostly entered the intensive child care around four-months-old. The 30-year follow up for the Abecedarian

Project found a lack of results in some areas. For example, although the treatment group was more likely to be consistently employed and have a four-year college degree than the control group and less likely to have used public assistance, their income level, job prestige, and level of criminal activity did not significantly differ, which was surprising (Campbell, et al., 2012). Although the current economy and unknown other factors were described as possible reasons for a lack of significant results, the possibility of interactions from social position factors such as race, ethnicity, and gender could assist with explaining such unlikely results, but were not included. Learning more about how African American families of toddler sons describe their beliefs, routines, and practices can assist with understanding more about the variety in families of young children and how their daily lives might include influences from social stratification factors.

### **Components of Emotional and Social Development**

Due to the wide range of child behaviors included in emotional and social development, various constructs have been explored to better understand the influence and interaction of parental and child factors related to child outcomes in components relevant to emotional and/or social development such as empathy, behavior, social competence, and self-concept. Through a better understanding of child temperament and attachment qualities and their interaction with parental factors (and traits), one can explore how the beliefs, practices, and experiences of parents shape (and are shaped by) toddler emotional and social development.

## **Areas of Emotional and Social Development**

Two common areas of research related to emotions are temperament and understanding and expressing emotions (Bocknek, Brophy-Herb, & Banerjee, 2009; Calkins, & Mackler, 2011; Gross, 2008). Through reviewing research in these areas, one can glean an understanding of what has been learned and topical need areas, especially for children of color.

**Temperament.** Although researchers define and measure temperament in different ways, temperament generally includes the continuum of ways young children respond to and interact with their environment such as “irritability, soothability, motor activity, sociability, attentiveness, adaptability, response to novelty, arousal and regulation of states” (Gross, 2008, p. 324). Generally, research on temperament focuses on one or more of these characteristics. Temperament has often been studied as it relates to bidirectional influence with caregiver or child characteristics, such as self-concept and social competence (Bornstein, & Cote, 2009; Degnan et al., 2011). Understanding temperament is complex because differences could result from interactions with individual neurological profiles and biological impacts such genetics, nutrition, and biomedical indicators (preterm birth) as well as environmental factors (Wachs, & Bates, 2001). Early temperament qualities may be persistent over time and could provide an additional perspective for understanding variability in behavior (Gross, 2008).

Various perspectives exist regarding the reliability of parental report of temperament, the stability of temperament from infancy through toddlerhood, and the predictability and endurance of different aspects of temperament and related emotional

and social attributes. Parent reported temperament and its ability to reliably predict outcomes in other developmental areas varies. Bornstein and Cote (2009) found maternal report of toddler temperament was significant in determining correlates of self-concept for the three cultural groups studied (Latin American, Japanese American, and European American) while the temperament type itself was not. In an international comparative study, Cozzi and colleagues (2013) found U.S. mothers scored toddler males with a significantly higher soothability score than females, but this was not true for the Italian sample. In addition, U.S. mothers also rated their toddlers with higher levels of shyness and inhibitory control and lower levels of impulsivity when compared to the Italian toddlers. Although this 800 participant study provides evidence of the variance in temperament characteristics between toddlers in two countries, the inclusion of almost all European American, highly educated U.S. participants limits the generalizability to other U.S. populations. The sample, from Italy and the U.S., included almost no African American participants. Thus, studies that gain information from African American parents about their toddlers is important.

Longitudinally, at least one study found toddler temperament was stable from 24- to 36-months (Degnan et al., 2011). Further, high levels of positivity, approach, and sociability (i.e., exuberance factors) at younger ages predicted exuberance when older. Finally, social competence outcomes at five years of age were predicted by measures of early exuberance when combined with frontal electroencephalogram (EEG) asymmetry. In another study, Houck (1999) found temperament and self-concept at 24- and 36-months-old was related to social competence level at 12-months-old. These mostly

European American samples (64% and 79% respectively) of mothers provide evidence of the stability and nuances of temperament when rated in laboratory settings, but is limited by sample demographics and non-naturalistic study location (Degnan et al., 2011; Houck, 1999). These findings illustrate the importance of understanding temperament, its stability, and connection between temperament and other child characteristics and yet there is a paucity of research in this area for African American toddlers.

**Understanding and expressing emotions.** Research on emotions in infants and toddlers focuses on its function, its relation to other aspects of development, and to what extent young children can understand and produce various emotions (Lamb, Bornstein, & Teti, 2002). Newborns express differences in emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear (Lamb, Bornstein, & Teti, 2002). The understanding of emotion in very young children is marked by several milestones including fear of strangers in the second half of the first year and self-awareness and embarrassment at around 15 months (Witherington, Campos, & Hertenstein, 2001). For example, social referencing (noting someone else's reaction to evaluate situations and regulate one's response) has been studied with a wide variety of topics such as reactions to strangers (Field, 2007; Witherington, Campos, & Hertenstein, 2001). In addition, toddlers are becoming increasingly able to regulate their own emotions through having fewer peaks and valleys in their emotional expression and managing negative arousal (Field, 2007). While research on infant and toddler emotions focuses primarily on European American and/or middle class children and families (e.g., Leerkes, & Wong, 2012; Repacholi, 2009), a few studies include predominantly African American participants. In a longitudinal study that focused on the emotion regulation

practices in 803 low-income African American families over one year, the mostly single mother sample (77%) did not significantly differ in their supportive practices for toddler boys and girls (Bocknek, Brophy-Herb, & Banerjee, 2009). However, maternal supportiveness (sensitivity and positive regard) only explained a small percentage of the change in emotion regulation over time, pointing to other factors such as neighborhood, stress, and relationships with relatives and caregivers that might assist with further understanding this construct (Bocknek, Brophy-Herb, & Banerjee, 2009).

In one study examining the modeling and coaching of emotion in two parent families of 7 – 9 year olds, African American mothers' anger and sadness coaching was related to lower child depression 18 to 24 months later (Bowie, et al., 2013). Bowie and colleagues (2013) underscored that differences among ethnic groups (African American, European American, and Multiracial) existed and therefore warrant additional research in this area and with families of color. Further probing into parental beliefs and practices related to African American young children's emotional and social development is needed to assist with understanding the variability in the expression of milestones.

### **Influence of Parental Behavior, Interactions, and Attributes**

Child-caregiver relationships are one of the foundations of infant and toddler social development (Gross, 2008; Parlakian, & Seibel, 2002). These relationships could include interactions with primary caregivers in the home such as parents and/or extended family members as well as relationships with others who spend time with the child such as non-residence family members, close friends, and child care providers, nannies, or baby-sitters (Parlakian, & Seibel, 2002). A large body of research on infants/toddlers and

their caregivers focuses on the study of interactions between mothers and their young children, including infant/toddler attachment to caregiver(s), as well as the individual and relational qualities that lead to positive or negative child outcomes (e.g., Bornstein, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2001; Clincy, & Mills-Koonce, 2013; Tamis-LeMonda, Song, Leavell, Kahana-Kalman, & Yoshikawa, 2012). In one study, Clincy and Mills-Koonce (2013), found that low-income African American mothers of boys in rural communities varied in their levels of intrusiveness with their sons from when they were six-months-old to 36-months-old. However, an increase in maternal intrusiveness resulted in lower levels of expressive language and cognitive performance at age three and less ability to control impulses (independently or when prompted) just before kindergarten. Researcher are beginning to learn more about the context of development for young, African American boys, but additional research is needed with families of a range of socioeconomic levels.

Research on infant and toddler development provides assumptions of early social development. According to some research, infants and toddlers thrive in caregiver relationships that are responsive and reciprocal (Field, 2007; Rochat, 2004). In fact, the degree of synchrony between parents and their toddlers could influence outcomes. In the area of toddler behavioral support, maternal perception of the toddler as well as the toddler's temperament influenced the emotions and behavior of mothers (Bryan, & Dix, 2009). Mothers showed more disappointment and anger behavior while interacting with more active toddlers (who were often less compliant) than fearful ones (who were often more compliant). In addition, the typicality of temperament displayed affected maternal restrictiveness with more fearful boys experiencing more restrictions (Bryan, & Dix,

2009). Despite the mainly European American sample (90%), Bryan and Dix's (2009) observational and mother-report study sheds light into how maternal perception of the toddler can influence emotional and behavioral outcomes.

Parental sensitivity, attitude, and mood interact with toddler temperament to influence emotional and behavioral outcomes (Barnett, Gustafsson, Deng, Mills-Koonce, & Cox, 2012; Garner, & Dunsmore, 2011; Gudmundson, & Leerkes, 2012; Kiang, Moreno, & Robinson, 2004; Kiel, & Buss, 2010; Leerkes, 2011; Laible, Panfile, & Makariev, 2008). Various measures of toddler mother's level of sensitivity has been linked to preconceptions about their infant, maternal coping style, infant and toddler temperament and attachment, and later receptive and expressive language development (Barnett, Gustafsson, Deng, Mills-Koonce, & Cox, 2012; Gudmundson, & Leerkes, 2012; Kiang, Moreno, & Robinson, 2004; Leerkes, 2011). However, maternal sensitivity was not linked to the amount of conflicts between toddlers and their mothers (Laible, Panfile, & Makariev, 2008). Although maternal sensitivity has been found to be important for the development of a secure healthy attachment relationship to the mother, the variety in attachment between and within racial, ethnic, and cultural groups and the extent to which caregiver sensitivity is a reliable predictor of attachment is uncertain (van den Boom, 2001; van Ijzendoorn, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2004; Wittmer, 2011). From the six studies described above, only one had more than 25% of participants as African American. In addition, while some studies reported a high percentage of participants (mothers) in intact relationships with the toddlers' biological father, all study participants were mothers and their children, leaving out fathers. Further research on

beliefs and attitudes African American mothers and fathers of toddlers is needed to provide a more complete picture of parenting young children.

Relevant research that includes African American fathers focuses on a wide age ranges (infant through adolescents) and various topics including involvement/co-parenting and child outcomes (e.g., Harper, & Fine, 2006; Leavell, Tamis-LeMonda, Ruble, Zosuls, & Cabrera, 2012; Parent, Jones, Forehand, Cuellar, & Shoulberg, 2013; Penha-Lopes, 2006; Riina, & McHale, 2012; Threlfall, Seay, & Kohl, 2013; Thullen, Henly, & Hans, 2012). Regarding studies including fathers of infants or toddlers, at least two focused on socialization outcomes (Leavell, Tamis-LeMonda, Ruble, Zosuls, & Cabrera, 2012; Mitchell, & Cabrera, 2009). Mitchell and Cabrera (2009) found that in a group of low-income African American fathers of toddlers, a higher stress level in the fathers was not correlated to more reported children behavior problems or less social competency, possibly due to other factors supporting positive emotional and social development. Leavell and colleagues (2012) focused on African American, European American, and Latin American families and found that fathers who were married and/or had at least a high school diploma engaged in more literacy activities such as reading books. In addition, African American fathers of sons engaged in more physical play and care giving. Both studies included low income samples.

Several studies focus on African American fathers in low-income families, non-residential fathers and/or use a large scale, longitudinal database such as the National Early Head Start Research and Evaluation project conducted in the late 1990s and include topics such as father-infant engagement (Cabrera, Hofferth, & Chae, 2011), father

involvement (e.g., Coley, Lewin-Bizan, & Carrano, 2011; Thullen, Henly, & Hans, 2012), and father vocabulary (e.g., Pancsofar, Vernon-Feagans, Odom, & The Family Life Project Investigators, 2013). None of the studies found address the beliefs and practices of African American mothers and fathers with a male toddler. Therefore, additional research with married or cohabitating fathers' contribution to positive social development of male toddlers from the African American community may illuminate the complexity of these relationships. The degree to which and in what way each construct of the child-caregiver relationship is salient for social development and positive developmental outcomes of African American male toddlers is inconclusive. Next, a closer look at possible contributions of genetics and the brain on emotional and social progress will assist with setting the context for the complicated nature of development.

### **Precursors and Influence of Genetics and Neuroscience**

Biological, environmental, and societal factors influence child development (Medina, 2010). Brain development is a manifestation of the interplay of these factors as they impact and sustain neural pathways. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms prompting early brain development could assist with deeper, more comprehensive consideration of the multiple layers of child emotional and social development. In addition, studies incorporating the role of changing neurochemicals, such as serotonin, oxytocin, and cortisol, in the development of attachment and social relationship in humans as well as to measure stress responses and their effect have become a budding and progressive field in this millennium (Blair, et al., 2008; Dougherty, Tolep, Smith, & Rose, 2013; Obradovic, Bush, Stamperdahl, Adler, & Boyce, 2010; Sturge-Apple,

Davies, Cicchetti, & Manning, 2012). Therefore, recent research underscores the importance of considering the neurological connection to emotional and social development in young children (Carver, & Tully, 2011).

Brain development begins prenatally and is a lifelong process (Medina, 2010). Early brain development includes neurogenesis (creation of neurons) and synaptogenesis (neuron migrating and connecting), resulting in synapses or spaces between the connected neurons responsible for transmitting electrical signals to allow them to communicate with one another (Akins, & Biederer, 2006; Medina, 2010). Underscoring the importance of early development, 83% of synaptogenesis occurs postnatally through individual neurons making an average of 15,000 connections (and up to 100,000) with other neurons (Akins, & Biederer, 2006; Medina, 2010). Synaptic formation and subsequent pruning of unused synapses begins in the last quarter of pregnancy and goes through puberty (Fox, Levitt, & Nelson, 2010). However, the “blueprint” for the completion of brain development, influenced by environment, is virtually complete within the first three years of life (Fox, Levitt, & Nelson, 2010; Knickmeyer, et al., 2008). Epigenetics can be helpful to understanding the complex nature of gene expression.

Epigenetics is “a functional modification to the DNA that does not involve an alteration of sequence” (Meaney, 2010, p. 57). In other words, gene expression is manifested through one's behavior, but the environment first influences how genes are expressed. Knowledge of epigenetics is important for early intervention and child development because it highlights critical periods of development and the possibilities for

intervention when critical periods are missed or influenced in a negative manner, although brain development is continual and amenable. Early environmental experiences and interactions can change the expression of one's genes – which ones are turned on, off, or not expressed at all (Gottlieb, 2004; Meaney, 2010; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010). However, these variations may be amenable to change when needed, underscoring the importance of targeted early intervention efforts.

Epigenetics is helping to show that what families and caregivers do in the early years matters for paving the way to positive long-term development. Shonkoff (2010) and other researchers have conducted studies that demonstrate environmental effects, possibly even prenatal ones, which interact with genes to create memories for how the brain needs to respond to such stimuli. Shonkoff's (2010) biodevelopmental framework stresses the notion that development can often be traced back to one's epigenome. Relatedly, emotional development is built from the imprint of early emotional experiences including interactions with caregivers and the emotional and social climate of early environments (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). A foundation of stable relationships and environments assist with the development of positive neural circuits.

While intervention has shown promise to ameliorate the effects of early deprivation and lack of supportive environments, relationships, and experiences, prevention remains paramount (Fox, Levitt, & Nelson, 2010). Therefore, brain development and epigenetics relate to emotional and social development because they draw attention to some of the underlying influences of gene expression and toddler behavior.

A twin study on one aspect of toddler temperament, inhibitory control, found genetic variance in temperament at 24 months, supporting a biological connection to early temperament qualities (Gagne, & Saudino, 2010). Gagne and his colleague (2010) found that environment contributes to temperament as well. Despite the majority white middle class (88.2%), participants and lab protocol, this study provides some evidence to support the genetic and environmental contribution to toddler temperament. Research with African American toddlers in this area has been minimal. Therefore, it also underscores the need for more research on emotional and social development of toddlers from diverse racial groups, such as African Americans.

### **Influence of Familial/Cultural Beliefs and Practices**

Familial and cultural factors are included in the influential developmental aspects in the lives and development of young children (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; McLoyd, Hill, & Dodge, 2005). Factors include family structure, beliefs and practices, racial socialization, and family socioeconomic status (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; McAdoo, 2002; McLoyd, Hill, & Dodge, 2005). Due to the lack of research on the diversity of African American fathers, a section on unique aspects of African American fathering is included (McAdoo, & McAdoo, 2002). Through a review of the research literature on African American parental child rearing, racial socialization, and discipline practices, one can see some of the variability in families of color with young children as well as some of the areas in need of additional research.

### **Child Rearing Practices**

Parenting includes a variety of behaviors, practices, and responsibilities aimed at guiding children toward implicit and explicit behavior. Parenting, also called child rearing, can include a wide range of practices and goals. Child rearing includes parental behaviors such as nurturing, protecting, guiding, disciplining, teaching, and language use (Brooks-Gunn, & Markman, 2005; Greder, & Allen, 2007). Presently in the United States, many children are nurtured by a wide range of caregivers including responsible children (such as siblings) and adults (such as relatives and child care providers). In addition, families are becoming increasingly more diverse than in decades past, making it imperative to consider the diverse beliefs, values, goals, and practices of caregivers and the wider range of cultural influences in rearing children, especially for African American boys (Doucet, & Hamon, 2007; Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; McLoyd, Hill, & Dodge, 2005; Spicer, 2010).

Research has taken a critical look at the interconnectedness of race, culture, and parenting/child rearing practices with the developing young child (Fitzgerald, Mann, Cabrera, Sarche, & Qin, 2009; Liangputtong, 2007), underscoring the notion that parenting behavior is complex and variable. This expanded focus has increased research with infants, toddlers, and families of color and immigrant populations, which assists with improving our understanding of the commonalities and variability in families and child rearing practices (Fitzgerald, Mann, Cabrera, Sarche, & Qin, 2009). Since “parenting is culturally constructed,” one must remember that practices in the home, such as sleeping and eating routines, may or may not be reinforced by the cultural values

of primary child care providers, resulting in differences in expectations, responses, and practices as well as differences in infant and toddler expectations and behavior (Harkness, & Super, 2002). For example, sleep patterns could illustrate parental views of maturity and independence. Practitioners working with a child who has a sleep challenge at child care must take parental practices and priorities into account as well as cultural norms for that family. In addition, sleep arrangements could also reflect other aspects of child rearing, such as length of breastfeeding and parental responsiveness (Harkness, and Super, 2002; Liamputtong, 2007; Rogoff, 2003). When viewed through the lens of ethnicity and culture, understanding parental behaviors becomes even more complex as the practices common and functional in one culture may be foreign to a child in another culture. These ideas give further support to the tenuous nature of working with families in relation to the ideals and practices valued by child care providers and what implications these priorities could have for the families and children involved.

In addition to being related to culture, differences in parenting behavior were found to be correlated to maternal knowledge of child development measured when the infant was 2-4 months old (Huang, Caughy, Genevro, & Miller, 2005). Huang and colleagues (2005) found diverse correlates of child development knowledge for different racial groups. For European American mothers, higher quality interaction with the child during a teaching task at 16-18 months was the only measure positively correlated to more knowledge of child development. For Latino mothers, more knowledge of child development was correlated with most of the measures, including appropriate parental interaction, stimulation and materials provided, and parental involvement. Finally, for

African American mothers, more knowledge of child development was positively correlated to scores on the Home Observation for the Measurement of Environment (HOME) scale (similar to Hispanic mothers), which related to parental stimulation, interaction, and materials. Contrary to expectation, maternal knowledge of child development was only partially related to parenting behaviors. However, mothers of all three racial groups who underestimated their child's abilities reacted in a more insensitive manner. These researchers concluded that differential expectations and possibly lack of racial/ethnic sensitivity of instrumentation may be the cause of such mixed results.

Research supporting unique child rearing practices related to culture has focused on ethnic minorities (Taylor, & Wang, 1997) and African American child rearing (Comer, & Poussaint, 1992; Hill, 1999; Hopson, & Hopson, 1992; McAdoo, 1997; 2007; McLoyd, Dodge, & Hill, 2005; Spicer, 2010). Influential factors on child rearing practices include parental education level, socioeconomic and marital/support status, and parental mental health (McAdoo, 2002; McLoyd, Dodge, & Hill, 2005). Viewing child rearing through such a diverse lens underscores the inability to generalize parenting practices and draw conclusions regarding what is typical for a certain group. The variability among cultures, regions, and ethnic groups further proves that practitioners should balance dominant cultural norms with the priorities of the families they work with (Gonzalez-Mena, & Bhavnagri, 2000). Families will likely achieve their goals more easily when their priorities are valued. An understanding of aspects of emotional and social development is important for determining factors (such as caregiver, child, and environment) that contribute to positive development in this area.

### **Racial and Ethnic Socialization**

Racial socialization involves implicit and explicit messages, values, and lessons passed to children through the socialization process “regarding the significance and meaning of race and ethnicity” (Coard, & Sellers, 2005, p. 266). Racial and ethnic socialization is a promising area of research that could assist with understanding the complexity of developmental outcomes for children of color and its role in socialization of young children. Njoroge, Benton, Lewis, and Njoroge (2009) suggested the beginnings of racial and cultural socialization are present in children birth through age three through their repeated choice of dolls based on phenotype. These researchers call for additional focus on understanding development in increasingly complex and culturally diverse family and caregiver structures as well as additional research on the development of children under age three. Much of the research on racial and ethnic socialization deals with child over age three. Two studies conducted by Caughy and colleagues (2002; 2011) occurred in Baltimore and involved locating families through door-to-door canvassing in neighborhoods and inviting parents to participate in two home visits. One study focused on 200 African American parents of a child between three-- and four and a half-years-old. The diverse sample included varied socioeconomic statuses, mostly mothers, and mostly single parents, however, almost 19.5% of participants were considered nuclear, two-parent families. Homes with a strong presence of African American culture had preschoolers with more fact knowledge and higher problem solving ability (Caughy, O’Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002). In addition, fewer parent-reported behavior issues were predicted by racial socialization such as

promotion of mistrust, spirituality, and racial pride. For boys, but not girls, socialization related to racial pride was related to fewer reported total behavior problems and internalizing problems (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002). In another study, Caughy, Nettles, and Lima (2011) analyzed self-report, interview, and observational data for African American parents of first graders and found parents engaged in different types of racial socialization based on gender. With boys, parents more often used a combination of strategies including cultural socialization and more messages about coping with discrimination and promoting mistrust, but with girls, parents more often stressed just cultural socialization. Additional significant and relevant differences were found in relation to neighborhoods and child behavior. Parents engaged in racial socialization to differing degrees based on the social qualities of the neighborhood such as "potential for community involvement with children" and "negative social climate." Also, for African American boys, those in families who engaged in *Balanced*<sup>2</sup> socialization showed higher cognitive scores, but the *Balanced* group also showed higher levels of internalizing behaviors.

One study focused on the socialization practices of middle-class African American families with preschoolers (Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008). Through interviews and a focus group with 12 African American mothers of preschoolers (ages three to six years), most mothers (eight) felt an important part of racial socialization was to teach their children about African American history and heritage. Most mothers also reported they do not yet actively engage in racial socialization practices because of the

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<sup>2</sup>Group described as having high scores in cultural pride socialization messages and messages that prepare for bias.

young age of their child. Most participants were married (11) and all had at least some college with 11 holding a college degree (Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008). Parents also valued exposing their young children to toys, environments, and books with other African Americans as an important socialization mechanism (Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008), which was similar to a finding in another study involving low-income African American parents (Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004). Additional probing into the extent to which African American parents of young children report engaging in racial and ethnic socialization with their sons and the importance of this construct to positive emotional and social development is needed.

**Fathers.** Fathers are a varied group who are often seen as providers, leaders of their household, and disciplinarians whose diversity is amplified by aspects such as culture, background, and socioeconomic status (Connor, & White, 2006; McAdoo, & McAdoo, 2002; Shwalb, Shwalb, & Lamb, 2013). Researchers are paying more attention to aspects of fathering for young children, for instance, involvement in daily life, level of sensitivity, and relationships with their children (Levant, Richmond, Cruickshank, Rankin, & Rummell, 2014; Lindsey, Cremeens, & Caldera, 2010; Penha-Lopes, 2006; Yoshida, 2012). While these studies are including more fathers and African American fathers in particular, often African American fathers are a small percentage of participants. Further, just as variety exists in fathers, it does in African American fathers as a group (Livingston, & McAdoo, 2007). However, since the 1970s and 1980s through the present, researchers have seen several trends in African American fathers (Livingston, & McAdoo, 2007). Trends paint African American fathers as more involved in daily

child care tasks, more likely to share decision making with a spouse or extended family, and possibly more authoritarian than fathers in other racial and ethnic groups (Connor, & White, 2006; Livingston, & McAdoo, 2007; McAdoo, & McAdoo, 2002). However, these trends are often based on dated research (mostly conducted in the 1980s and 1990s) or includes U.S. fathers as a group, limiting our understanding of African American fathering and a motivating reason for this study (Livingston, & McAdoo, 2007; McFadden, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013).

### **Discipline**

Although about 90% of American families use physical discipline, it is used more frequently by African American parents (Dodge, McLoyd, & Lansford, 2005). Across socioeconomic status, region, and education level, African American parents employ a wide range of discipline strategies (such as providing alternative options and reasoning), but continue to have higher self-reported corporal punishment rates than European Americans. However, despite research done in the 1990s and early 2000s purporting the negative effects of physical punishment on all children (e.g., Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1996; Pinderhughes, Dodge, Bates, Pettit, & Zelli, 2000), conclusions have since stated that the social and emotional effects and later externalizing behavior varies based on the normative status of corporal punishment in a cultural group as well as other aspects of the parent-child relationship and interactions (Dodge, McLoyd, & Lansford, 2005). Scant information exists regarding more specific information related to factors that contribute to physical discipline use in African American families.

In three studies focusing on African American parents of young children and corporal punishment, information regarding parental and environmental factors that contribute to spanking were discussed (Huang, & Lee, 2008; Ispa, & Halgunseth, 2004; MacKenzie, Nicklas, Brooks-Gunn, & Waldfogel, 2011). Ispa and Halgunseth (2004) interviewed nine single, low-income mothers of young children (oldest child less than 13 months old at start of study) enrolled in the National Early Head Start Evaluation over a 5-year period of time. These young mothers revealed they engage in physical discipline for a variety of reasons including the child did not respond to positive measures, influence of other adults who feel it works, a belief that they (or others they know) benefitted from corporal punishment, and a feeling that children should be compliant early on. In essence, the mothers reported they provide physical discipline because they care about their child and his or her future as well as about the importance of respect and obedience (Ispa, & Hagunseth, 2004). In two studies analyzing data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, Huang and Lee (2008) and MacKenzie, Nicklas, Brooks-Gunn, & Waldfogel (2011) found infants and toddlers were more likely to be disciplined physically the older they were and was more likely for African American children who were a male or had a difficult temperament and whose mother reported more stress and/or depression or anxiety. Although these studies shed considerable light into the motives for physical discipline in a low income, female-headed household, African American sample, more research is needed to reveal additional discipline techniques used by two-parent African American households and families of various socioeconomic status.

### **Summary**

Understanding the development of African American male toddlers requires consideration of a variety of contexts (e.g., home, child care) as well as inclusion of alternative explanations for developmental outcomes that include the influence of power, racism, and oppression on development. Factors of development must be considered in an integrated manner (Garcia Coll, Bearer, & Lerner, 2004). Due to the current negative predictions about life trajectory for African American males, local, state, and national contributors to perpetuating negative trends and deficit lens should be challenged. This research serves to document beliefs and practices of African American parents that support socialization and emotional development for their sons and is guided by the research questions as described in chapter one.

### **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

A primary source of development and learning for most young children is their families (Hanson, & Lynch, 2004). While aspects of child rearing are similar for many parents, the race/ethnicity of the family, region or country of residence, marital status, and the ages of the children in the household are all factors that affect parental practices (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; Keels, 2009). Research shows that African American boys of various socioeconomic backgrounds continue to lag behind peers in markers for success (Aratani, Wight, & Cooper, 2011). Therefore, a better understanding of African American child rearing practices that socialize toddler boys for emotional and social success is imperative to constructing systemic policies and practices to effectively meet their needs.

The purpose of this study is to understand beliefs, goals, priorities, and child rearing practices that guide African American parents of male toddlers. Also, this study investigates how these African American parents support and promote emotional and social development of their toddler sons. The fields of early childhood, special education, and early intervention as well as institutional services, policies, and frameworks at the local, state, and national level should be guided by African American families in order to build partnerships and programs that are beneficial to African American boys.

### **Transcendental Phenomenological Design**

Qualitative research is often conducted using more than one method of data collection in natural settings and is guided by an interpretive investigation and analysis. While variations in designs exist, the study is usually focused on the meaning and interpretation participants ascribe to a topic. Additionally, the researcher may use an induction or reduction approach to make meaning from the participant actions and words (Bogdan, & Biklen, 2003; Marshall, & Rossman, 1999; 2011). While qualitative methods are diverse, each inquiry type can be considered a related, but individual method (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2011; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). Specifically, the phenomenological research method, the design used in this study, aids the researcher in learning what participants have in common and “describes the meaning for several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Edmund Husserl, considered the founding philosopher of phenomenology, stressed the importance of learning about the experiences of others in the most unadulterated way possible so the essence, or meaning, participants ascribe to the phenomenon surfaces (Bogdan, & Biklen, 1992; Dowling, & Cooney, 2012; Gallagher, & Zahavi, 2012; Gearing, 2004; Husserl, 1931; 1964; 1964b; Moustakas, 1994).

Transcendental phenomenology is tied to Husserl’s concepts of intentionality and intuition, and the epoché process. Therefore, a transcendental phenomenology research approach extends basic qualitative research features through the addition of more specific attributes, such as focusing on the whole human experience, engaging in a quest for finding the essence of experience, and gathering information from those who experienced

the same phenomenon (Dowling, & Cooney, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Intentionality relates to one's consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). In effect, to be intentional and conscious is to be present regarding one's thoughts and being as well as the things going on around one (Dowling, & Cooney, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Wojnar, & Swanson, 2007). The second concept, intuition, refers to considering things from an individual's own mind rather than from how someone else might think of or perceive it. Also, with intuition, one is aware of the presence of an essence in an experience (Moustakas, 1994). The epoché process, also known as bracketing or phenomenological reduction, involves suspending current knowledge, thoughts, and opinions about a topic in order to see it afresh by "setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions" (Gearing, 2004; Husserl, 1964; Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Consideration of these concepts and processes in transcendental phenomenology and engaging in the epoché are important to discovering the essence of African American child rearing practices for toddler males directly from African American parents. For example, the researcher must bracket one's own knowledge and opinions about the phenomenon of African American parenting throughout the study. It is important to note that many variations in approaches, methods, and processes of engaging in phenomenological research exist, therefore, the hallmark of a high quality phenomenological study is not necessarily the approach, method, or process chosen, but the explicit description, justification, and adherence to such choices from the development or conceptualization of one's study through data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Dowling, & Cooney, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Pereira, 2012;

Wojnar, & Swanson, 2007). The adherence to the selected key elements of phenomenology in this study will be described in more detail in later sections.

### **Bracketing Method Choice**

One important aspect of the research design in a phenomenological study is to make bracketing elements apparent – (a) the type of information that will be bracketed, (b) when bracketing will occur, and (c) how the researcher will systematically engage in bracketing. Since the discussion of bracketing in the early work of Husserl to the present, many variations in type and scope of bracketing have emerged related to qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Gearing, 2004; Tufford, & Newman, 2012). According to Gearing (2004), there are six main types of bracketing influenced by Husserl, students of Husserl, and other phenomenological scholars (e.g., Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Spiegelberg) who have extended it from a philosophy to a research method: ideal (philosophic), descriptive (eidetic), existential, analytical, reflexive (cultural), and pragmatic (p. 1435). This research study is influenced by reflexive, or cultural, bracketing.

Origins of reflexive bracketing can be found in Husserl's 1913 and 1931 writings as well as in the writing of his student Heidegger in the 1970s. Both Husserl and Heidegger were concerned about understanding phenomenon with limited influence from one's cultural and traditional views that exist about the phenomenon (Caelli, 2000; Gallagher, 2012; Gearing, 2004). In addition, reflexive bracketing has also been influenced by the work of Ricoeur, Gadamer, and van Manen who were concerned about the role of culture in research (Caelli, 2000; Gearing, 2004). Key to reflexive bracketing

is the researchers' engagement in identifying and noting personal internal (e.g., values, culture, history) and external (e.g., context, environment) suppositions in an effort to guard against their interference in the study. While internal suppositions are made apparent, external ones cannot be because they relate to the phenomenon and are impossible to set aside. In addition, inclusion of "world suppositions" relevant to the phenomenon is important in analysis. Bracketing can occur at various points in study development and execution (Conklin, 2007; Gearing, 2004; Tufford, & Newman, 2012). In this study, bracketing occurred during initial planning, but will be considered again in analysis and interpretation through a variety of methods outlined in the research design section.

**My bracketing.** Through reflexive bracketing, I will describe my internal suppositions as they relate to the topic of the beliefs and child rearing practices of parents of African American male toddlers and supporting emotional and social development (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Internal suppositions include "personal values, judgments, culture, and history" (Gearing, 2004, p. 1445). Although external suppositions such as the context and culture of African American parents with a male toddler cannot be bracketed, world supposition are included (Gearing, 2004).

I am the youngest child of married African American parents both born in different parts of North Carolina, but initially meeting in New Jersey. After meeting in 1969, they married in 1971 and had their first child, my older brother, in 1973. Both parents have some college, worked full-time in several occupations throughout their careers, and retired from Verizon Telephone Company in different departments. We

lived in a three-bedroom home in a suburban neighborhood of New Jersey, not far from New York City, for most of my life. I attended Catholic school for almost all of my elementary through high school years. According to my parents, they made the investment in private school because they felt it would provide a higher quality educational experience for my brother and I, who both participated in local paid and complementary extracurricular activities including Little League baseball, Girl Scouts, and piano and dance lessons. Reading and books were important from an early age. My parents were dedicated to trying to build a solid life for their family.

Extended family was an integral part of my childhood. We gathered with family members on paternal and maternal sides for holidays and other special events like birthdays and dance or music recitals. My maternal grandmother was the extended family member we spent the most time with. Although she worked full-time until her cancer illness prevented it, we often had Sunday dinners at her nearby home. My childhood and upbringing fostered my values of the importance of a tight-knit immediate and extended family that spend time together frequently and are part of one another's daily lives. It also cultivated the importance of education, taking one's schooling seriously, and the idea that a private school education should be cherished because of the financial sacrifice to provide it. Finally, it bred the idea that parents spend time with their children, guiding them and exposing them to cultural traditions and outings as well as extracurricular activities to assist with building a well-rounded child.

After attending a private, Catholic university in New Jersey on an academic scholarship to become a teacher, I entered the teaching profession through a national

teaching service program in 1998. After teaching for two years in rural eastern North Carolina, I completed my Master's degree in 2002 from a North Carolina public university then worked in several different jobs focusing on children ages birth through five-years-old and their families. While in graduate school, I met my husband and we married in 2003. We have two sons and one daughter with our oldest son currently attending second grade. While parenting African American sons and working in early intervention, early childhood special education, and early childhood mental health consultation, I became more interested in better understanding variations in the development of African American boys. My oldest son had his share of challenges from the time he entered preschool through his early elementary school years. His challenges and those of other young African American boys seemed to follow a pattern I began to recognize in the early childhood fields in which I worked and lived within my family – young African American boys were often referred for early intervention or special education, identified in need of services for behavior, and/or had challenges being successful in the child care or classroom setting.

Through these life experiences and inquiries during my doctoral studies, I have become more interested in the various contexts that contribute to development in African American male toddlers. Limited research on two-parent African American homes and development of African American male toddlers exists. A closer look at parenting beliefs and child rearing practices of this group can provide a better understanding of the meaning African American parents ascribe to their experience of raising toddler sons.

This could provide a more in-depth understanding of factors that contribute to the emotional and social development of African American male toddlers.

My history, life experiences, and review of the literature on child development, parenting, and teacher practices influence my world suppositions. For African American parents of male toddlers, when they are raising their son and making parenting decisions (such as childrearing preferences, child care location, place of residence), they are consciously or unconsciously aware of the challenges and negative biases their son might face as he grows and develops. They might also be aware of the history of slavery and racism against African Americans and specifically the bias against African American men in the United States (Bush, & Bush, 2013). This awareness could influence parenting decisions. In addition, since child development research has focused mostly on European American children and families, some of the premises of national, state, local, and institutional policies, practices, and assumptions may be faulty when applied to African American families. Since the knowledge base about children and families is sometimes not inclusive, child care providers, politicians, and the general public may make false conclusion about African American toddlers and their families. Exposing these biases and unfair practices is important for improving the emotional and social outcomes of African American boys.

### **Research Design**

The paradigm in this study is constructivist (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2003). Therefore, this study also assumes “relativist ontology,” “subjectivist epistemology,” and “naturalistic” methods (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2003, p. 35). Through this interpretive

framework, more than one reality of African American parenting of a male toddler exists. These realities are guided by the participants and researcher. With the subjectivist epistemology, the participants and I will function as co-researchers and will therefore co-create the knowledge gained from the study. Finally, the study will occur in natural settings that participants engage in such as home, work, and/or public places in the community.

The purpose of this study is to explore the beliefs and child rearing practices of African American parents raising a toddler son to better understand how they promote emotional and social development through a phenomenological investigation. In-depth interviews were used with both parents, in addition to individual family observations (Boyd, 1993; Moustakas, 1994). When needed, additional questions were asked to probe for more information about a topic and to obtain more details and clarification. Audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher or a paid transcriptionist. Families received a \$50 Visa gift card and a book for the toddler upon completion of the study.

### **Participants**

**African Americans.** While emotional and social development is one focus for this review, more specifically, development of young children in the African American population is the focal point. Therefore, clear delineation of this group is warranted. The term African American is an ethnic category and often includes cultural and tradition implications while categorization such as Black or White refers to socially constructed race categories (Callister, & Didham, 2009; Drevdahl, Philips, & Taylor, 2006; Nieto, 2000; Rowe, 2005; Smedley, & Smedley, 2005). When using an ethnic or cultural term,

one is often referring to a group of people who share a common history and language (Nieto, 2000; Park, & Buriel, 2002; Smedley, & Smedley, 2005). Enslaved Africans (most captured and sold by African elites) began arriving in the United States via Jamestown, Virginia in 1619, six years after the first free African arrived (Gates, 2011; Nieto, 2000). Although some early Africans arrived in the United States free, 450,000 Africans were brought as slaves and many served an indefinite period of time in this role with descendants also inheriting this status (Gates, 2011; McAdoo, 2002). Due to this original unwilling introduction into the United States, African Americans can be considered “involuntary minorities” and often do not experience full assimilation in society which has wider educational and political implications (Ogbu, 1992, p. 8). This group, and those descending from this group, as well as those with African origins from other countries such as Jamaica who have been in the United States for at least three generations, are the targeted group for this research. However, since racial and ethnic categorization is self-reported in this study, inclusion as an African American will be based on participant identification as part of this category and through an acknowledgement that variation exist within ethnic groups, but those within a group are likely more similar to each other than to those of another racial group (Rowe, 2005; Wang, & Sue, 2005).

**Selection criteria.** This research used purposeful, homogeneous sampling (Creswell, 2007; Marshall, & Rossman, 2011; Miles, & Huberman, 1994). The sample includes African American biological, married or cohabitating mothers and fathers of African American male toddlers. To ensure homogeneity of participants, almost all

parents also share the following criteria: (a) at least one parent who is third generation or greater African American (descendent of Africa) and both parents self-reported as being African American, (b) resident of Guilford County, North Carolina, and (c) with a toddler son. However, due to the extreme challenges locating a second family with a child with special needs, in family six, both parents were born in the United States, but their parents were born in Nigeria and Jamaica. Nonetheless, family six considers themselves African American. In addition to basic study criteria (previously described), at least two of the participants' sons would also have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) to better understand if the parenting experience and socialization of their son would be similar to the parents with a child who has typical development. The minimum age of the parents was 18 years old. Participants were not be restricted by age as long as they are biological parents of the toddler. For the toddler children of participants, the age range for inclusion in the study was 12 months through 33 months. (Chen, & Siegler, 2000; Underwood, & Rosen, 2011). However, to ensure the interviews and observations occurred before the child turned three years old, 2 years and 10 months was the upper age limit.

**Selection procedures.** After receiving study approval from the Institutional Review Board, from October 2013 through May 2014, 10 child care facilities, 14 parents and therapists of children with disabilities, and seven programs or agencies serving young children with and without disabilities were contacted by phone and email to determine whether or not they met the study criteria. Of those contacted, two child care facilities and the North Carolina lead agency for early intervention agreed to be recruiting partners.

Through the recruiting partners and snowball sampling (Miles, & Huberman, 1994), six two-parent families with a toddler son (two with special needs and four with typical development) met the study criteria. Thus, a total of 12 participants, six parent pairs, were interviewed. One observation per family also occurred. All toddlers were biological children of participants. Later in this chapter, additional details about data collection will be discussed in depth.

**Demographic information.** All couple participants were married or in a committed relationship and ranged in age from 25 and 43 years old (see Table 1). Most participants had a Bachelor's degree or higher with only one couple having a high school diploma or some college. Their income levels ranged from \$15,000 to over \$100,000, as shown in Table 1. However, only one family considered themselves high income, four considered themselves middle income, and one felt they were low income.

The sons of the participants were 16 to 33-months-old and two had an IFSP. The number of children in the families included two families with one child, two families with two children, one family with three children, and one family with nine children. All families included only the parents themselves and children living in the home, with no extended families members, friends, or others residing in the home. Four families reported being members of a church or religious organization that they attended at least once a month to every week.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information<sup>3</sup>

Family	Couple	Age	Education Level	Marital Status	Toddler Son	Child Age (months)	IFSP (Yes/No)	Attend child care (Yes/No)	Annual Household Income	Total # of children in home
Family 1	Stephanie Bryant	38	Doctorate	Married	Elijah	21	No	Yes	\$100,000 and above	3
	Thomas Bryant	43	Masters							
Family 2	Karen Spencer	34	Bachelors	Married	Titon, III	33	No	Yes	\$75,000 – 99,999	1
	Titon Spencer	35	Bachelors							
Family 3	Sharon Bennett	39	Masters	Married	Jordan	24	No	No	\$100,000 and above	2
	Jonathan Bennett	39	Masters		Luke	24	No	No		
Family 4	Trina Hill	27	High school	Committed Relationship	Christopher	28	Yes	Yes	\$15,000 – 24,999	9
	Rakim Freeman	34	Some college							
Family 5	Tracey Wilson	29	Masters	Married	Jason	16	No	Yes	\$50,000 – 74,999	1
	Maurice Wilson	32	Bachelors							
Family 6	Angela Johnson	26	Bachelors	Married	Greg, III	31	Yes	No	\$35,000 – 49,999	2
	Greg Johnson	25	Bachelors							

<sup>3</sup> Names changed to protect participants.

### **In-Depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews were conducted using 15 questions for each interview, including an individual interview with each mother and father and a joint interview with both parents together. The individual interviews provided specific information from each parent including a description of their son and his characteristics and temperament and family routines and activities. Through the joint interview, parents provided a collaborative interpretation of their parental choices, beliefs, and practices. Each in-depth interview lasted about 45 minutes.

### **Measures**

The instruments include a demographic form, semi-structured interview questions, and an observation in the home with the toddler present. In addition, field notes were recorded throughout each family interaction. Each method of data collection is described below.

**Demographic form.** The demographic form included questions about basic family and child information and was organized in three sections: (a) child information, (b) child's educational information, and (c) household and family information (see Appendix C). In addition to basic demographic information, a couple of questions related to the constructs of the study's theoretical perspective, the Garcia Coll et al. (1996) integrative model were included.

Table 2

*Contents of Demographic Form*

Demographics	Variable
Child Information	Name of child
	Date of birth
	Gender
	Racial/Ethnic group
	Health care provider
	Reason for choosing health care provider
Child's Educational Information	Name of child care center
	Length of time child attending center
	Current teachers and length of time with child
	Disability status
	IFSP status and services received
Household and Family Information	Name of person completing form
	Status of person completing form (mother, father, marital)
	Parental education level
	Number of people in household and their ages
	Names of fictive kin
	Household income, income level, and people supported by income
	Street address and zip code
	Membership in religious organization

**Semi-structured interview questions.** Interviews were led by a protocol of semi-structured questions. These questions were developed based on the elements of the integrative model, aspects of toddler emotional and social development, and due to their particular relevance to African American parenting, child development, and/or emotional and social development (see Appendices D and E). Interview questions probed four areas: (a) child, (b) child and family, (c) region, neighborhood, and society, and (d) final question. Questions in the child section related to the child's birth, temperament, disposition, and relationships with others. The child and family section of questions

requested information about daily activities, care, and routines and discipline. These questions were related to the constructs of the study's theoretical perspectives, mainly the Garcia Coll et al. (1996) integrative model, and include questions regarding promoting and inhibiting environments (i.e., schools, neighborhoods, and health care), child characteristics (i.e., temperament, health status, biological factors, and physical characteristics), and family (i.e., structure and roles, values, beliefs, and goals, racial socialization, and socioeconomic status). Questions in the region, neighborhood, and society section requested information about parental feelings, beliefs, and values regarding living in Guilford County, North Carolina, values important for their son, and issues related to societal perceptions of African American males. The final question was designed to encourage the parent(s) to share any additional significant thoughts about raising an African American male toddler. An additional question just for families with a child with a delay or disabilities asks parents to think about how their child's special needs affected their parental interactions.

**Observation.** An observation occurred in the home or a public location chosen by the family and included the male toddler(s) and at least one parent. Parents and the researcher chose a mutually agreed upon time to observe based on when they most often interacted with the child or have a block of time at home with the toddler(s) present. Observations generally occurred on weekday evening during family time or meal time to see family interaction and child activities, conversation, and other occurrences. The observation protocol involved writing descriptive information, such child rearing practices, dialogue, and the physical setting observed along with reflective notes.

Examples of information included: the location of the toddler(s) and other family members, activities the toddler was engaged in, and interactions and conversations between the toddler and other people (e.g., parents) present. Reflective notes (e.g., personal judgments) were recorded as well (Creswell, 2007; 2009; 2014; Marshall, & Rossman, 2011). Notes from the observation were used to triangulate information gained in parental interviews when relevant.

### **Procedures**

Each parent completed a consent form to participate in the study at the beginning of the first meeting. The demographic form was completed by whichever parent was interviewed first after providing signed consent. Therefore, during the first meeting with the mother or father, the demographic form was administered and the individual parent-specific in-depth interview occurred. Completing the demographic, consent forms, and interview took approximately 45 – 90 minutes. During the first meeting with the second parent, the additional consent form was completed and the individual parent-specific in-depth interview occurred, lasting approximately 45 – 90 minutes (Appendices D and F). After each parent individual interview was completed, a joint, in-depth interview with both parents occurred and lasted 45 - 90 minutes. In a separate visit or during an interview visit, a 30 – 60 minute observation occurred with the toddler present (see Appendix G). Finally, the parents reviewed an electronic or hard copy of their textual-structural summary and they were asked to verify its content. Each parent provided clarification needed and when or if there were any inaccuracies or corrections, the researcher made changes to the summary as requested.

### **Data Analysis**

In phenomenology, data analysis usually consists of creating themes and textural descriptions through several readings of the transcripts (Miles, & Huberman, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). Using the complete transcript for each family as well as field and observation notes, the researcher analyzed the data using the “Modification of the Van Kaam Method” (Moustakas, 2004). Steps of this method include: (a) listing and preliminary grouping; (b) reduction and elimination; (c) clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents; (d) final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application-validation; (e) construction of individual textural description; (f) construction of individual structural description; (g) construct individual textural-structural description; and (h) construct a composite description (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 120-121). Details of the process and purpose of each step are described below.

During the first step of listing and grouping the transcript content, the researcher engaged in the horizontalization process (Conklin, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Through horizontalizing, the researcher highlighted significant statements that are relevant to parenting an African American male toddler and toddlers in general. Next, the researcher reduced the number of statements by examining each statement more carefully to collapse or eliminate overlapping statements. The invariant constituents are the statements that are left. In the third step, the researcher created core themes of African American parents raising a toddler son by clustering the invariant constituents. In step four, the researcher validated the invariant constituents and core themes by checking them against transcripts they were derived from. The constituents and themes that remain

will be those that either clearly match or are attuned to the original transcript content for each family and then for the families as a group (Conklin, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The last three steps relate to creating textural descriptions. First, the researcher created an individual textural description for each family that described his or her experience raising an African American male toddler. Next, the researcher created an individual structural description for each family that combines the individual textural description with my individual consciousness of the phenomenon of raising an African American male toddler. This would be the essence of the experience or the parts of the experience that one cannot change without changing the experience (Gallagher, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Finally, a textural-structural description with constituents and themes inserted was created. Each family yielded a detailed description of that included the parental and familial experiences combined (Conklin, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). To summarize the beliefs, child rearing practices, and values of African American parents raising male toddlers, I created a composite description based on all study participants. The composite, as well as all textural-structural descriptions are reported in Chapter 4.

### **Ethics**

The protection of participants should be considered in formal and informal ways during research (Angrosino, & Mays de Perez, 2003; Bloomberg, & Volpe, 2012; Caelli, 2001; Creswell, 2007; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005; Marshall, & Rossman, 2011). This study received institutional review board (IRB) approval before the pilot was initiated (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005; Marshall, & Rossman, 2011). After feedback from the dissertation committee at the proposal meeting, any changes or additions requested were

made to the IRB documents through modifications submitted to the Office of Research Integrity. As needed throughout the study, revisions were made to forms and re-submitted to the IRB office for approval before use. Participants provided informed consent to engage in the interviews and observations of the study and it was explained that they can withdraw at any time.

In addition to procedural safeguards, this study was be guided by moral principles of “respect for persons, beneficence, and justice” (Marshall, & Rossman, 2011, p. 47). Through respect for persons, participants were be respected as valuable co-researchers who deserve privacy and not research subjects whose participation provides a service to the researcher. As co-researchers, participants were asked to include any additional topics salient to their parenting experience they were not asked about and to validate the researcher interpretations of interviews and observations. With beneficence, the participants were protected from physical or mental harm throughout the research process through an awareness of their state of mind, reactions, and comfort level so interviews and observations could be ended by the researcher, if needed. Justice was addressed with an underlying attention to the beneficiaries (e.g., society, other researchers) of this study and the role this study plays in addressing social justice for African American parents of male toddlers and the toddlers themselves. Each moral principle is an important part of being aware of the bigger context of this research with African American families.

Finally, research often contains unanticipated ethical dilemmas in which the researcher must reflect and protect participants (Caelli, 2001; Marshall, & Rossman, 2011). Through my reflective notes, I considered the ethics of and reasons for decisions

made during the study. I also protected the anonymity of the participants while allowing their voices to be projected in study results by reporting textural descriptions and eliminating demographic or personal information that could be identifiable by readers. I was also aware that participants could make a decision to alter child rearing practices and beliefs as a result of reflecting on them and reporting them during study participation, but I respect their right to do so (Caelli, 2001). Any decisions I was uncertain about was recorded in my notes, reflected upon before a decision was proposed or finalized, and discussed with my advisor, other committee members, and/or the university Office of Research Integrity when needed.

### **Trustworthiness**

Constructivist paradigms are focused on interpretation and constructed knowledge (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2003). Therefore, in qualitative research, trustworthiness of the data involves focusing on the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the data to demonstrate attention to rigor (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2003; Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). Six strategies will address trustworthiness of this study (See Table 3). For credibility strategies, data was triangulated through interviews with mothers and fathers and observations with the parent(s) and child along with the field notes. In addition, I engaged in regular peer debriefing with my dissertation advisor and/or another member of my committee as well as other university faculty knowledgeable about qualitative research or phenomenology.

In qualitative research, participants engage in member checks to suggest corrections or clarification to transcript content or researcher interpretation of

observations or interviews (Marshall, & Rossman, 2011). Therefore, study participants also engaged in member checks by confirming the accuracy of their textural-structural descriptions. Also, the dependability of the data is documented through an audit trail which outlines methodological decisions made and their rationale throughout the process. Reflexivity and confirmability was documented through a reflective diary and field notes through data collection. Finally, transferability was evident through the thick descriptions of the phenomenon of African American parenting of a male toddler, including context, research methods, and raw data examples, in the results section (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2003; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Lincoln, & Guba, 1985; Miles, & Huberman, 1994). Adherence to sound practices provides validity to one's study (Miles, & Huberman, 1994).

*Table 3*

*Strategies to Determine Rigor*

Approaches to rigor	Strategies
Credibility	Triangulation Peer debriefing Member checking
Dependability	Audit trail Reflexivity
Confirmability	Audit trail Reflexivity
Transferability	Thick descriptions

## CHAPTER IV

### FAMILY DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARIES

The results presented in this chapter are based on the data collected through the demographic information form as well as prominent details each couple shared about their lives. These textural-structural summaries provide a picture of each family and their beliefs about child rearing practices as an African American parent. The structural summaries of the six families are presented in the order the initial contact with the family occurred: (a) Bryant family, (b) Spencer family, (c) Bennett family, (d) Freeman/Hill family, (e) Wilson family, and (f) Johnson family. Additionally, a composite structural summary across all six families follows after the individual family summaries.

#### **The Bryant Family<sup>4</sup>: Thomas, Stephanie, and Elijah**

The Bryants met while they were undergraduate students at a local historically black university. However, they did not date at that time, but began dating years later. Thomas earned a Master's degree and works in higher education administration and Stephanie holds a Juris Doctorate degree and is a lawyer. They have three sons, one in third grade and two in child care. Elijah is their youngest at 21 months old. The couple has been married for 14 years and considers themselves high income with a combined income of over \$100,000 annually.

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<sup>4</sup> Fictitious names to protect confidentiality.

At the time Elijah came along, the pregnancy and delivery progressed without fanfare or significant occurrences. Thomas was in graduate school and working full-time while Stephanie continued to work before and (some) right after delivery. Although the couple were both working full time and already had two sons then, they felt they had to extend themselves even more, which resulted in more stress, especially for Stephanie. In order to organize responsibilities with the children including drop off, pick up, and after-school activities, Stephanie developed an Excel spreadsheet and the family also used a white board at home to keep track of everything. Life continues to be very busy and stressful. Thomas typically cooks dinner, cleans the kitchen and pays the bills, and Stephanie organizes daily life and does most other household cleaning. She feels that her organization helps the family, but her high stress level influences her patience. Thomas feels he is relaxed and “a calming force.”

Elijah was an “easy” baby who was and is agreeable and happy. Currently, his parents describe him as funny, active, very loving, and social. He also gets along well with his siblings and has other favorite people such as his grandmothers and his babysitter. Elijah enjoys playing and tends to get upset when he is not able to do what he would like. He and his brother (who is 18 months older) go to bed around 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. nightly. The Bryants alternate the responsibility of getting them in the bed depending on who is available.

The family depends on extended family some, mainly the mothers of both parents, for assistance with child care when Thomas travels for work. Each live in Virginia and the maternal grandmother typically does all cooking and some cleaning/laundry when she

is visiting. However, there are times when Stephanie cares for all children and no relatives visit to assist while Thomas is away. Occasionally the maternal aunt visits to help out when needed.

The family sees extended family members when they visit their hometown areas in Virginia, such as during family events or holidays. They also have three families who are fictive kin or friends who are like family. They get together with them often and two of the three couples are godparents of the Bryant children. In addition, the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University Annual Homecoming is an important event for the family because they have friends (and sometimes family members) come into town, many of them staying with the family. They also attend homecoming events and have gatherings at their home.

Stephanie feels her mother influenced her approach to parenting the most. Thomas feels he is very different from his father because he makes a special effort to show affection more than his father did. He enjoys being a father and role model to his sons. Also, Thomas talks with other African American fathers about raising sons and they sometimes have informal forums with all of their sons together, sharing tips for success such as staying out of trouble and appreciating their current lifestyle. Both parents want their sons to possess values such as integrity, respect, honor, and a good work ethic. They also feel they can do more to assist with their sons' spiritual development by being an example of the importance of God and spirituality in daily living.

The Bryants feel their sons will have to deal with stereotypes about African American males, such as that they are not smart or gifted. They realize their sons will need to work to defy the stigma related to being an African American male. They also feel their sons could be socially excluded because of their high socioeconomic status and not being like many other African American boys in how they carry themselves and educationally, but will likely be included in a variety of circles for the same attributes. They would like to socialize their sons to interact with a wide range of people without “chang(ing) who they are” and to appreciate African American culture. Stephanie reported engaging with the teachers of their school-age son before school starts to counter any negative assumptions or low expectations that might be formed before meeting her son. Being clear from the beginning has helped their oldest son be successful in elementary school.

#### **The Spencer Family<sup>5</sup>: Titon, Karen, and Little Titon**

The Spencers met after college when mom, Karen, attended an event organized by dad, Titon’s, business. However, they were loosely acquainted while attending college at a local historically black university because they had mutual friends, but never formally met. Titon states he was aware of Karen, but was too nervous about approaching her while she does not recall Titon during that time, except for hearing his name, while in college. They both hold Bachelor’s degrees, with Titon having some graduate credits. Both work full-time outside of the home. He owns an entertainment business and Karen works for the city of Greensboro. They have one child, “Little

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<sup>5</sup> Fictitious names to protect confidentiality.

Titon,” who is almost 3 years old, but both mentioned they would like to have another child. They have been married about 3 ½ years and consider themselves middle income with a combined income in the \$75,000-\$99,999 range annually. Initially, they stayed in Greensboro after getting married due to Titon’s business being located there. However, although Karen was previously ready to relocate before they met, she is now comfortable with staying in Greensboro. They both feel the city offers a comfortable cost of living and is family friendly. They enjoy accessing its parks and venues like the Children’s Museum. They also enjoy the flexibility of easily accessing other metropolitan areas within several hours drive.

The couple quickly went from a dating relationship to marriage to parenthood, getting married about two years after they met, then having their son about nine months after their marriage. This caused them to immediately focus on the birth of Little Titon directly after their honeymoon. The pregnancy was smooth and Karen felt good, working full-time throughout her pregnancy. The delivery was quick, progressed without incident, and occurred as expected. Karen was overwhelmed by her difficulty nursing so they stayed in the hospital an extra day before going home with their newborn son to ensure she was comfortable. The maternal grandparents made it to the hospital for the birth and the maternal grandmother stayed with the couple when they went home, cooking and assisting them with the initial transition to parenthood. Karen described the initial transition as emotional and difficult. Titon reported “a mixture of emotions” during the pregnancy and delivery because of his concern for having a healthy child and being good at supporting and attending to his wife’s needs. With the newborn home, Titon

became “very protective” and frequently checked on him to make sure he was breathing. He also assisted with caring for his son so his wife could rest or sleep when she needed to. However, he describes being extremely tired during this time. Titon also became “more responsible” during the fairly quick transition from single guy to husband and father and had to make individual changes to support this adjustment. Karen reluctantly returned to work when Little Titon was about two-months-old (continuing to breastfeed for about four or five more months), so he began attending child care full-time. The obstetrician referred them to a pediatrician and they are very happy with her and her support of his development.

As an infant through the present time, Little Titon is described as happy. Recently, he is upset when something is taken away from him or he has to stop watching television when he is not ready. His parents feel he is average developmentally and a “momma’s boy,” but he has become increasingly more attached to his father, demonstrated most recently by playing rough with him, asking for him, and looking for him while the family is home. Although Little Titon forgets that he has to be gentle with his mother, dad is interested in making sure he is “rough and tough” because as an African American male, he feels it is important that he not be “soft.” He gets most excited by new toys and is an active child. Little Titon is most happy “being around friends (and) being around family.” He likes to stick with his typical routine and prefers a small number of favorite foods. The Spencers feel his personality and temperament are not like either of them, but he does display some of the same mannerisms as dad.

Little Titon's routine is different every day, but he has a schedule that stays fairly consistent. Around 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning, he usually wakes up and goes into his parents' bed and falls back to sleep. He then wakes up around 7 AM while mom is getting ready for work and mom gives him milk and muffins for breakfast while he is watching television. When Karen goes down to pack lunches, she wakes Titon up (although she would like him to be up earlier) who gets him ready for school. In the evening, she picks Little Titon up around 5:30 p.m. and they head home for him to eat dinner around 6:00 p.m. while watching television. Little Titon generally eats something a home or what they pick up, such as Chick-fil-a, on the way home. Karen usually gets Little Titon ready for bed and into bed and Titon cooks dinner for the parents so they can eat when Karen comes back down. In addition to cooking for the couple, Titon does grocery shopping for their meals and consciously tries to be the leader of his home and make sure the "bills are getting paid" and his "family is protected." Karen does most of the other household tasks besides cooking including shopping for Little Titon's food and doing household chores. However, Titon assists with chores when she asks. Karen does not have much free time. On weekends, their schedule is "more flexible" and they often attend church on Sundays.

Beyond his parents, Little Titon is closest with his maternal aunt and maternal grandparents. He usually sees his aunt (who lives in Greensboro) daily and maternal grandparents (who live in South Carolina) monthly, either in Greensboro or South Carolina. For babysitting, the Spencers rely mostly on the maternal aunt and sometimes maternal grandparents who occasionally take Little Titon for weekend visits. This saves

them a lot of money on babysitting and allows them to have time together. As for paternal family members, the family sees them (mostly the paternal grandmother) about three to four times a year, mainly during holidays and family gatherings. They spend more time with family members during holidays and go on a yearly Father's Day beach trip the maternal family members (grandmother, grandfather, and aunt). While mom's relationship with her sister is strong, dad describes his relationship with his brother as almost nonexistent. Little Titon travels well as he enjoys looking at the scenery and often naps on trips. Since traveling to see both sides of the family during Christmas has become more difficult, the couple has decided to stay home for the next Christmas holiday to begin their own traditions and routines as a family.

The Spencers would like their son to possess many values including being "dependable," "a man of his word," a "strong" decision maker and in physical body, "handy" around the house, "nice to people," not "easily influenced," find value in family life, and have "a relationship with God." They feel it is important for them to teach Little Titon these values through "leading by example." Since they have recently received a positive report about him from the child care center, the Spencers feel they are "doing something right" as parents. While they would not advocate for their son being homosexual, the couple feels they will always support him no matter what.

The couple feels they are still young parents and many aspects are challenging. Specifically, preparing for events, vacations, and the daily activities and routines is difficult due to the number of items they have to remember to collect and pack for their son. Despite the challenges, they feel it is easy to love Little Titon and support each

other with discipline and expectations. Their discipline strategy varies “depending on what is going on.” In public, mom generally quietly tells him to “calming down” or they are leaving and will then leave if needed. However, if the misbehavior is at home and deals with an expectation they have reviewed many times, they usually spank him instead of just verbal reminders. Although their mothers’ were the disciplinarians growing up, they both handle discipline in this household.

The Spencers feels their parenting roles as “guardian” and “provider” are similar. However, Titon enjoys more time wrestling with their son and mom is more of a nurturer. They would like to spend more time as a family, teaching their son instead of having him watch television during times they are occupied with household or routine tasks.

Karen feels her parents are her biggest influence in parenting because she had a good home life growing up and feels she and her sister have turned out well. Titon feels he will choose his parenting style based on his life experiences. As a child, he did not like it when his mother exaggerated potential dangers to keep him safe so he will not do that as a parent. Titon’s father left the home when he was in fifth or sixth grade and he does not have a good relationship with him, last speaking to him shortly after his son was born. Although Titon reports he is not upset about his father’s lack of involvement, support, and guidance, he is determined to be different as a father and feels bad that his father has missed so much. His model father growing up was Heathcliffe Huxtable from *The Cosby Show* as the “dad everyone wanted to have.” He feels strongly about the importance and high value of a man raising a family and being there for his children because the lives one influences are how he will be judged.

The Spencers feel it is a common belief that you have to raise boys to be “rough and tough.” More specifically, they feel African American boys face additional challenges and misconceptions. Titon was more vocal about how society works related to African American males. Although he feels his son will be prepared to face challenges such as seeing people “still clutching purses,” he also feels society does not view African American children positively. Currently, both parents feel their son is “color blind” and plays with a wide range of children of different races and ethnicities. Both parents attended predominately European American high schools for some of their teen years (for mom until she moved to SC) and feel their experience attending a historically black university was very different from their earlier schooling experiences, but important. They each value exposure to a range of racial and ethnic groups and feel Little Titon’s current child care facility should be more diverse. Also, they do not feel they have started to directly prepare Little Titon for biases he might face growing up, but raising him to be the “best of the best” should help.

#### **The Bennett Family: Jonathan, Sharon, Jordan, and Luke<sup>6</sup>**

The Bennetts met while in college; both were undergraduate engineering students. Jonathan enlisted Sharon’s help in a Math class and they soon began dating. A few of years after graduation, they married and relocated to the Piedmont Triad area of North Carolina for employment. After about seven years in the area, they decided to start a family and were surprised and overwhelmed to find out Sharon was pregnant with twins during their first ultrasound appointment. Their sons, Jordan and Luke, are 24-months

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<sup>6</sup> Fictitious names to protect confidentiality

old and stay home with a nanny during the day while both parents work outside of the home. Jonathan is a chemical engineer at a plant and Sharon works for the city of Greensboro. The couple has been married for 10 years and considers themselves middle income with a combined income of over \$100,000 annually.

At the time Sharon got pregnant with the twins, the couple had been married for 8 years. Although twin births have occurred on both sides of the family, they were surprised and “ecstatic” to find out they were having twins. Sharon described her reaction as being “in shock” from the beginning as she began to worry about putting her sons through college. They went out to dinner immediately following the ultrasound so they could celebrate the pregnancy. Although Sharon began to have more difficulty engaging in her typical activities such as exercising and walking to her office, she continued to work throughout the pregnancy, transitioning to working up to three days at home in the last several months. She generally felt good and the pregnancy was free of complications. Although she was prediabetic before becoming pregnant, but was happy she did not need to advance to taking insulin during the pregnancy. The fraternal twins were born at 38 weeks gestation after induced labor and went home with their parents from the hospital, although they all stayed at the hospital an extra couple of days. Luke, who was born second following a breech presentation and who was slightly smaller at birth, had trouble latching on during breastfeeding, so the extra days were to assist with improving his nursing intake. For the first four months, Jordan and Luke drank breast milk and formula, transitioning to all formula when Sharon returned to work when they were four months old. The first few months were challenging and Sharon described this

time as “rough the first four months especially the first two” because the boys were eating every two to three hours. Sharon’s mother came to help out for the first postnatal month and together, they were able to push the bedtime later so Jordan and Luke were eventually sleeping through the night. The couple described the transition into parenthood as “a whole lifestyle change,” “different,” and having a feeling of their life being “taken away.” Also, Sharon decided to stay home an additional month than originally planned, four months total, because she felt it would be easier to return to work after they were sleeping through the night.

Jordan and Luke were “good babies” and each has a similar personality and temperament to one of their parents. Jordan is similar to his dad and his dad’s family in that he is very laid back. Luke is more active, like Sharon and her family. According to the Bennetts, each twin also looks similar to their respective parent. The twins act differently when they are apart because they are more “laid back.” When they are together, they compete more for attention and each attempts to get the same interactions and affection. They have also reached developmental milestones such as crawling and walking in a different order and time frame. Jordan likes baths and Luke does not. Each child is a unique individual. Both boys are happy about eating, especially Luke, and both like to go outside, but Jordan enjoys this the most. They also both enjoy sucking their thumbs and do not like quick transitions from activities they are enjoying. The Bennetts feel their sons are generally loving toward each other, but are “partners in crime” and sometimes do not get along.

Currently, the boys usually sleep through the night and wake up around 7:00 a.m. Sharon gets them dressed and ready to head downstairs when their nanny, an associate pastor at their church, arrives between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m., with Jonathan leaving for work between 7:00 and 7:30 a.m. Sharon generally leaves around 8:00 a.m. for work. The boys are home with the nanny during the day and have some outside activities like Kindermusik and from time to time go to the library to participate in children's programming. They are also very involved with their church as Jonathan is an associate minister. Sharon returns from work around 6:00 p.m. and begins heating dinner. Jonathan arrives home between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. Luke and Jordan eat dinner at around 6:30 p.m. whether the adults are ready to eat then or not. The nanny typically joins the family for dinner. After dinner, the boys watch television and play until bedtime, which has recently been a bit later, around 8:00 p.m. They generally sleep through the night unless they are sick.

As parents, the Bennetts feel they are similar because they both pray over the boys and have similar goals and expectations. However, they do routine tasks and interact with the boys in different ways. Also, Sharon is the primary caregiver, and Jonathan is the secondary one. Both parents feel they have a good relationship with their sons. Jonathan gives them affection but is also the "disciplinarian." Sharon feels she has become more compassionate since she has had the boys. They rush to greet both parents when each gets home from work. She would also like to have more time teaching the boys basic concepts and having them around others. With discipline, Sharon feels it is difficult to find a balance. She also feels she is a good organizer, which keeps the boys on

a routine, but sometimes does not give them the opportunity to communicate their wants and needs. Both parents “pray over” the boys at bedtime for continuing positive growth and development. Each parent wishes he or she were able to spend more time with their sons, Jonathan to take vacations, learn the routine better, and spend time interacting at home. Sharon would like to spend more time teaching them. Jonathan does not feel discipline is that difficult for him, but balancing work and family demands is. He also feels he is able to observe when Luke and Jordan are not acting in a typical manner (maybe sick), but feels he should do better learning their daily routines and activities. Jonathan feels his main role in the family is being the provider, although he also feels he shares this role with Sharon. In addition, he thinks he should be a “positive role model” for his sons. Sharon feels she has “multiple roles,” but mainly is a caregiver for her husband and children. She cleans the house with a bit of assistance from the nanny. She generally cooks lunch and dinner on the weekend for the entire week. Jordan and Luke often eat a different meal than the adults, but sometimes eat the same thing.

The Bennetts initially took their sons to a small pediatric practice recommended by coworkers, but became dissatisfied with them while the boys were still infants because Sharon did not like some of the advice the doctor gave her and the practice did not follow through on some of the responsibilities/appointments the family had spoken with them about. They feel more “comfortable” with their current pediatrician and feel she is “honest” and “open.” She has recently talked to Sharon about the boys’ speech development and they are going to “watch it” before checking to make sure there are not developmental concerns that warrant an evaluation or services.

The Bennetts see their extended family a few of times a year. Jonathan has a brother in Winston Salem, but they do not see him often. The rest of Jonathan's family is in the Wilmington, NC area and Sharon's family is in the Fayetteville, NC area. Generally, they travel to see both sides of the family (including both of their mothers) on holidays or for celebrations. Occasionally, maybe once or twice a year, their mothers will visit the Bennetts home. Although it is easier to travel since the boys are getting older, due to work and church obligations, the family finds it difficult to make the time to travel and see extended family. Sharon sometimes uses FaceTime on her cellular phone to talk with her sister. Likely as a result of the distance, the Bennetts do not rely on extended family for help or support. They do not depend on outside child caregivers besides the nanny. For the twins' first birthday, the family had a large gathering at Sharon's mother's home with extended family from both sides present. Although the boys recently turned two-years-old, they were sick so the family did not have a birthday celebration.

Since Luke and Jordan have been born, according to Jonathan, the Bennetts have experienced two other major changes. Jonathan changed jobs, which was a promotion for him, and partly motivated by the birth of the boys and being a positive role model for them. Jonathan was also ordained a deacon and a minister and as a result will "praise God harder" and also has more time he is obligated to spend for church-related duties. He feels this change positively affects the boys because they also praise God more now. Sharon has not really had any major changes since they have been born.

Jonathan reported his relationship with his sons is similar to his relationship with his father. One main difference is his father was retired from the military so he was home often than he is. Having been a head barber in the Navy, his father continued to work in this capacity from home during retirement. His mother is his biggest influence as a parent, but he feels parenting is something everyone has to figure “out as you go.” She was also retired and very involved, attending Jonathan’s activities and performances. He feels it is important to provide discipline to children early to guide their behavior in the form of spankings and time out. Jonathan also worries about sending his sons to child care because they would have to trust someone they do not know. Sharon gets a lot of parenting advice from her mother, her grandmother, and her aunt. She also prays about parenting challenges she faces.

The Bennetts enjoy living in the Piedmont Triad area because they were able to find a home in a diverse neighborhood with various family types which is also conveniently located for both of them to commute to work. They have been in their home for 10 years. The Bennetts also enjoy visiting local parks and have taken the boys to downtown Greensboro for a holiday festival, but do not like the crowds. They also occasionally eat at local restaurants as a family about twice a month, but prefer to eat take-out at home. Jonathan stresses the importance of making time for your spouse. The Bennetts would like their sons to know “you have to work hard,” the importance of education and the value of a “good work ethic.” They also would like their sons to be “God fearing men.” Sharon’s mother has mentioned she would like them to be good men so they can be a good husband one day as well. The Bennetts feel they will share these

values with Jordan and Luke by having them work and clean now around the house. Sharon also teaches them to count and would like them to know the value of money. The boys like to have books read to them, but Jonathan feels they should read to them more like they used to do.

Jonathan stressed it is important to “never let society define you,” despite the negative societal views of African American boys. He shared these negative views include that African American boys are not smart enough or good enough, but he hopes and prays that the world will be better in this regard when his sons are his age. Although society is moving in a positive direction, Jonathan feels the advice his father gave him to be “three times better” than those he is competing with just to be considered is still true. Sharon does not want current societal views to cause her sons to “have a chip on their shoulder.” Jonathan feels that money, not race, is the prevalent driving force in the business world. He would like for his sons to travel to see different people and areas and realize people do not owe them anything. Sharon stressed the boys’ interactions with others can help to be an example and counter false notions about African American boys. The Bennetts feel keeping their sons involved in church and other outside activities will help them to overcome negative societal views.

**The Freeman/Hill Family: Rakim Freeman, Trina Hill, and Christopher Freeman<sup>7</sup>**

After being acquainted previously, the couple saw each other in Walmart while Trina was shopping for a stereo with her oldest daughter and Rakim, shopping with his girlfriend, offered to install it for her. At the time, they were both in different

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<sup>7</sup> Fictitious names to protect confidentiality.

relationships, but felt “our relationships sucked basically.” Rakim was in a relationship with a mother of his children who was not faithful and bragged about how good she had it with him. Trina felt trapped in an abusive relationship with a man who was incarcerated at the time and who she felt made it impossible for her to leave. The two began talking frequently on the phone, which initially consisted mostly of Trina providing advice about relationships to Rakim. This led to daily phone conversations and then daily face-to-face visits. Although they first began as friends, they eventually decided to leave their other relationships and become a couple. However, they asserted, “We didn’t live together in the beginning,” but soon decided to combine their households and forge a relationship together. They have four children of their own and five children from other relationships in the household. The nine children range in age from 14 years old to a 1-year-old. Rakim shares, “It’s a beautiful thing to have this many kids.” Although they are not legally married, Rakim inserts, “I really do love this lady...And I plan on spending the rest of my life with her.” Trina feels they have grown together and do better with arguments, although Rakim shared, “I’m not confrontational with women” so he prefers to not have disagreements. Both are committed to their relationship and family. Rakim has some college and is head security for security business. Trina is a homemaker and manages most aspects of the home. They have been in their current home since September 2013. The couple has been together for five years and consider themselves low income, earning between \$15,000 - \$24,999 annually.

The couple like living in High Point but commented, "I’m so glad that we’re out of Greensboro” for a couple of reasons including High Point being less expensive and

allowing them to be farther away from family. Rakim especially felt for his family, “when there’s trouble, they call you.” The two first met in 2009 after Rakim had been in the area for a couple of years, relocating from New York. When he ran out of money and paid employment, Rakim stated, “I sold drugs and like I sold a lot of drugs.” When they decided to become a couple he went on to state, “I stopped selling drugs when I got with her because like I did all of that when I was younger in New York...I don’t want to be a 34-year-old drug dealer.” When Trina’s previous boyfriend got out of jail, he initially acted in a threatening way about her moving on, but once he met Rakim after calling him for a security job (unaware that he was Trina’s new boyfriend), he backed down and Rakim shared, “he was working for me for almost a year and a half.”

When Christopher was born, the family already had seven children at home, the youngest being about eight months old. Trina felt they “had a lot going on like mentally and physically” and “it was overwhelming” during this time, but they had planned the pregnancy. They wanted another son after the loss at birth of one of their twin sons in January of that year. Rakim feels the pregnancy with Christopher “was cool,” but noted they were arguing a lot. Christopher was born about two months early and spent a few weeks at Wake Forest University Baptist Hospital before coming home. His parents remember him as a good baby who cried a lot and was “very demanding.” Trina spent 45 days in jail shortly after Christopher was born and reported, “I’m kind of glad I did it because now I don’t have any charges or anything.” While Trina was away, Christopher spent a lot of time with his maternal grandmother as a primary caregiver in the household

and he became very attached to her and continues to be. Trina feels he is just recently becoming more attached to her.

Currently, Christopher's parents describe him as a "cool dude" who likes to eat, play with cars and motorcycles, watch television, and spend time with grandma. Sometimes he stays with grandma for the weekend. Christopher gets frustrated "when he doesn't get his way," but is usually happy. He has a good relationship with his siblings, especially his oldest sister, who sometimes takes him to her room to help him fall asleep at night. He and his older brother (the one born in the same year) get into physical fights often and their relationship is described as "best friends that disagree a lot" and they "fight like they're the twins." He and his siblings directly older and younger than him (the three youngest children) are potty training and Trina sometimes feels overwhelmed by the process. He is also transitioning from using a bottle and working on drinking out of a cup. The couple feels Christopher has Trina's attitude and Rakim's temper, but "it depends on the situation. If he doesn't like it or don't want to do something, he definitely express that emotion."

All of the children in the household get up at 6:00 a.m. Although Christopher is "not a morning person," he wakes up in a good mood. After he wakes, his parents wash him up and dress him, and then he has juice or fruit. He and his younger sister are picked up by the child care van around 7:35 a.m. and eat breakfast at child care. They get dropped off at home around 4:15 p.m. Around 5:00 or 6:00 p.m., Rakim or Trina begin cooking dinner and "it's chair time" for the youngest three children (they sit in car seats while watching television) and Christopher especially does not like this, but it helps he

and his siblings stay out of trouble and be safe. Rakim typically cooks dinner and it is served around 7:30 p.m. Christopher goes to bed at 10:00 p.m. Although he typically sleeps through the night, when he does not, he usually goes to his parents' room or his oldest sister's room.

The family is not satisfied with their current pediatrician's office because "they put you through so much BS," "they're ghetto," "they're lazy," and "it's horrible."

Reasons for their dislike include the practice being unprofessional, making mistakes on appointment times, and calling Child Protective Services on the family, reporting their youngest daughter was underweight. They also are not flexible with the family when they occasionally miss an appointment. The Freeman/Hill's report they are "good parents" who go "above and beyond" for their children. Although they are looking for another health care provider, they stay with the practice because it is close to their home.

The Freeman/Hill family "try to do a lot of stuff as family because we try to instill in them that...regardless if anybody doesn't like you, this is what we have." One common family outing is eating at their favorite restaurants, including CiCi's Pizza, Pizza Inn and Golden Corral, about twice a month. They also frequently go to local parks and "catch a lot of free activities" around town.

As for extended family, the Freeman/Hill's see the maternal grandmother a couple of times a week. Also, the maternal grandmother sometimes takes the kids for a visit or for the weekend at her home which allows the parents to have a break. Rakim's mother lives in New York and the children have met her once. During that visit, Rakim and his mother got into a disagreement and he feels he "set a bad example" for his children and

feels terrible about it, especially because his mom is in poor health now. Trina stated, “Nothing better than family time to me” and “Sundays for us is family day.” She also has a close relationship with one of her four siblings, a sister, although they have their “ups and downs.” Trina also has fictive kin or girlfriends who she feels are like sisters because they are so close, although they do not see each other often. They do not rely on others for support and help.

The Freeman/Hill family celebrates many things, especially accomplishments, and they recognize them with something special. Also, they usually have house parties for the kids’ birthdays with food, music, and dance competitions. Rakim reported, “Christmas is everything to us” and commented about decorating and celebrating with the family during this time of year.

Trina and Rakim both had a tough early life and feel this has influenced them as parents and individuals. Rakim about his early life commented, “I was raised wrong.” He went on to say, “I didn’t have guidance there to teach me what you’re supposed to do as a man...I had to be self-taught.” After going in and out of different foster homes, he ended up in prison at 12-years-old. Trina also went through a lot in her early life. A shared challenging early life helped to pull the couple together because they felt bad about each other’s pain and have a tough start in common. About themselves as parents, the couple agrees stating “we’re more different” as parents than similar. Trina commented “a lot of my ways also reflect on how I grew up” and Rakim remarked their differences are because “I was also brought up in a different era, in a different way.” One

big parenting issue they had to address is “showing favoritism to different kids.”

Compromising has helped them to resolve these differences.

Rakim reported, “My main responsibility would probably be to keep my family safe” and he also makes sure to occasionally shows his wife how much he appreciates her by doing nice things like running her a hot bath or telling her to sleep in. Trina stated, “I kind of do a lot, everything...some of the stuff I do I do because I don’t want nobody else to do it.” She also feels that she is working to understand how important mothers are to their children, although she does still get frustrated that the kids usually call for her instead of her husband. Rakim also feels “She does *way* more than I do.” One of the toughest times for the family was when they were homeless with six children because Rakim lost his job after a late night car accident on the way home from work resulted in no transportation. This led to the family being evicted after they were unable to pay the rent. They were later able to move out and get another home. Since Christopher has been born, according to Rakim, the main life event that occurred was another house the family “lived in had an electrical problem” that caused the meter to record more power than they were using. The power and water were eventually cut off and they continued to live in the home without electricity and water for a while, borrowing both from a neighbor until they had to move out.

Rakim feels “right now, me and my dad have a good relationship.” They hang out and party on Rakim’s birthday. He also shared, “I didn’t learn anything from my father, I didn’t learn anything from whoever else tried to be my father.” He would advise his sons, “Don’t be just any man, be the best man that you can be.” Regarding being a

man, Rakim feels each person has to teach himself to be one. He also feels his sons should not jump in and out of relationships, but stick with one person. He did not learn to read until 18-years-old, which affected his life and he feels I “just don’t want them to go down that path.” Due to his large stature, he would fight classmates in school and others in jail who tried to tease him about his inability to read. He also feels he intimidated teachers with his size so they let him just sit in class. He later learned dyslexia was the reason he could not read while in grade school.

As a parent, Rakim feels one of the foster families he lived with when he was about 15 are his biggest influence. When thinking about them, he commented, “For the short time that I was with them, they showed me what it meant to have a child.” Trina feels her husband is her biggest influence because “he is a great parent and a great dad” and also a “good support system.” Both parents feel they have learned a lot from each other.

Trina and Rakim would like “to start spending more time with them (the kids) individually.” Rakim would like to “to do more boy stuff with the boys” to help them “to use their energy positively,” especially because several of the boys have a large stature like him. He also feels that sports will be important for his kids to have a better life because he does not want his kids to go through the struggles he did. Rakim also shared, “I want to quit smoking...it’s like I feel like I’m not taking my kids into consideration of how they feel when I smoke.” Trina shared, “I scream and yell a lot” and she would like to do that less. One point they disagree on is mom does not agree with “do as I say, not as I do,” but dad does which sometimes can affect their decisions and behavior around the

kids. Nevertheless, they feel that all kids are expensive and one gender is not easier to raise than the other.

The couple, especially Trina, feels it is challenging having two children on medication, one for ADHD and the other for multiple diagnoses, especially because they are completely different when they do not take it. Christopher is not on medication. Trina also feels having a “teenager and her being curious about the little boys” is a challenge. Rakim reported, “I think the most challenging is waking up every day knowing that you have nine children in this house.” However, he also shared “but at the end of the day, I would rather do everything I can to keep this lady as my wife other than my baby mama.” Trina feels the tasks that she knows well are easy for her, such as making the dinner plates. Rakim countered, “I guess just loving my kids and my family. That’s easy to me...Everything else is difficult.”

Trina feels “I have a lot of strengths now” and reports “organization,” “taking care of the kids better,” and getting the kids to school every day are some of them. She also feels her main weakness is keeping up with household cleaning and chores and this affects her because “it’s frustrating.” Both parents agree that Rakim’s weakness is “they don’t listen to him like they listen to me (mom).” About his weakness, Rakim feels “as far as letting the kids run me sometimes, it does affect me as a parent because as dad, I know I need to put my foot down.” He also feels he should spend more time focusing on helping out more around the house.

Rakim and Trina feel the discipline they use “depends on the situation.” They also feel “it’s a difference if you know better...” Rakim went on to say, “I may be like

easy dad, but I'm not gonna let you walk over top of me." They feel they use physical discipline when they have to.

Trina and Rakim would like for Christopher and their other children to live by several values and ideals that they feel will help them in life. These values include

- anything in life, you have to work for.
- nothing's easy
- we stop taking responsibility for what you're capable of after 13.
- respect yourself because without respecting yourself, there's no need to respect anybody else.
- the person that you are is gonna rub off on somebody else.
- make sure you treat people the way you want to be treated and you live the rest of your life that way

Regarding boys and African American boys specifically, Trina stated, "The little boys that are, you know, the roughest grow up to really be something compared to the ones that you sit there." So now she feels it is fine and maybe helpful for her sons to play with and pretend to have guns. She has also given her children advice such as "black comes with ghetto. Don't act like that" because she feels "we're already labeled." Trina went on to state she tells her children, "I'm determined for ya'll to grow up and be something." They have not encountered bias or prejudice related to Christopher, but feel one of their daughters did. She was told by another "Mexican" girl "to get away from her because she stink and she looked dirty."

The special services Christopher receives have affected these parents “in a good way” because, according to Trina, it “shows me different ways that I can interact with all my children, not just the special need kids...Different things that will help them learn.” For the younger children with special needs, Trina reported she had to “adjust” and “bring it down some” for them. Rakim feels he has not had to do things differently, but about the children’s delays he stated, “It has made me more aware of the possibilities of my children having a learning disability later on life.” He also wants to “just make sure that these resources are in place for them so this way they can...don’t have to feel like they’re an outcast or feel differently.”

When asked about sharing anything else she would like, Trina responded, “I think the most stressful time... was, oh my God, everybody sick at the same time...that’s really stressful!”

### **The Wilson<sup>8</sup> Family: Maurice, Tracey, and Jason**

Maurice and Tracey Wilson met while they were both undergraduate students at a local state institution during Maurice’s visit with a friend in Tracey’s dormitory. Tracey mentioned she needed someone to connect her cable television and Maurice volunteered. When he went down to Tracey’s room to hook up the cable, he asked her for her phone number and the two began dating, about six months later they became an exclusive couple. After being in a relationship for seven years, the couple married in 2010. Following almost two years of marriage, they decided to have a child and Jason was born at the end of 2012. Both work full-time, Tracey as a licensed professional counselor

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<sup>8</sup> Fictitious names to protect confidentiality.

associate (LPCA) and Maurice for a health insurance provider. Jason is 16-months-old and the couple feel they may have another child in the future. With a combined income between \$50,000 and \$74,999, the Wilsons consider themselves middle income level.

The Wilsons feel the pregnancy with Jason was a “fun” and “exciting” time and the “pregnancy was awesome.” They were “elated” about the pregnancy and Maurice felt “more special” to know they were expecting a son. Tracey was laid off around the time she was about six months pregnant, which allowed her to take advantage of this time to prepare for Jason’s birth and get his bedroom ready. Almost a week after Thanksgiving, a healthy Jason was born about four weeks before he was due. Despite a mild case of jaundice right after birth, the newborn period went well as Jason was a good eater and sleeper. Maurice felt things changed “significantly” and he was excited to have “someone he co-created.” Tracey did not return to work outside of the home until Jason was about three-months-old, so she felt the early months were a good time for her to master breastfeeding and spend time with her new son. During these early months, Maurice also bonded with Jason as he woke up during the night to change his diaper, feed him a bottle of breast milk, rock him back to sleep, or take him to Tracey for nursing. Although the couple were prepared financially and managed with one income, they were happy Tracey found employment to bring in more income and support Tracey’s desire to work outside of the home. Maurice commented that Jason “gave him a sense of purpose” and the couple became more conscientious of their habits and practices such as ending the use of profanity to be a better example for their son.

Jason is described as “laid back,” “calm,” “patient,” “relaxed,” and the “best thing ever” from infancy through the present. He enjoys being outside and is bothered when he is not allowed to do the things he would like to do. Jason’s independent nature was present early on and his parents have tried to foster it some, especially through sleeping and exploring. Maurice has been especially awed by each developmental milestone and accomplishment Jason has reached, but also has found this difficult at times and would prefer, for example, that Jason stay very close by instead of going off to explore his surroundings. He also would like him to allow them to feed him so it is less messy. Jason and Maurice have a very close relationship and Jason runs to see his dad when he arrives home from work and does not want to leave his side. They often play together for the rest of the evening. Although discipline is shared, Tracey is probably seen more as the disciplinarian. Related to behavior and discipline, Maurice feels it is important that Jason knows how to handle himself in different environments and contexts so he can be safe and not seen as threatening which could result in him being injured or arrested. Although Tracey has not really thought much about her relationship with Jason due to his age, she feels it is good, but she has to remind herself that he is still a baby so she does not get frustrated.

Jason wakes up between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. in the morning, and then has a bottle while watching television as his parents get ready for the day. When Tracey was recently staying at home for a couple of months between jobs, they would eat breakfast and go on an outing to the library, a friend’s house, or participate in another local activity. Jason would take a nap between noon and 3 p.m. and go to bed for the night between 9:00 and

10:00 p.m. Generally, he sleeps through the night unless he is sick, has had shots, or is teething. Tracey typically bathes Jason and gets him ready for bed, while Maurice usually puts him to bed by singing, rocking, and spending time with him until he gets tired. Since his diet is fairly limited to food he eats well, Jason eats snacks throughout the day such as yogurt, squeezable fruit, mashed potatoes with gravy or another type of potatoes, corn, or rice. Sometimes he eats what his parents eat for dinner and often has something different.

As for extended family, the Wilsons see both sides of the family about once or twice a month. Tracey's mother and step-father live in Winston-Salem and Jason speaks to his maternal grandmother on the phone daily. She also baby-sits him sometimes on weekends so the Wilsons can go out together. Maurice's mother lives in the Salisbury, NC area with his father, brother, and sister home off and on, but primarily living in other areas/states. Maurice's mother and family will take Jason for the weekend periodically so the couple can have alone time.

Maurice has two best friends from college who are now married with children and the Wilsons spend time with both families. One family lives locally and the other lives near Raleigh, but they all travel to each other's homes for visits with the spouses and children, mostly boys and all toddlers and younger. The families have fun together and learn from each other as they parent together. The fathers and sons took a picture together to commemorate their special bond.

The Wilsons searched for a pediatrician online and interviewed a couple before settling on one. They preferred an African American physician and were happy to find

one they both liked. Maurice in particular feels they are comfortable with her because she is knowledgeable and shares current research relevant to Jason's development with them.

The only major life change the Wilsons reported was the recent job change for Tracey that resulted in about two months of unemployment. While Tracey was out of work, the couple took Jason out of child care to save money. This change was disappointing because Tracey felt Jason made good developmental progress while in child care and knew she did not want to be a stay-at-home mother. For Maurice, although he did not report a major change, he feels Jason's birth is compelling him to advance in his company, get a Master's degree, and/or find other work to increase his income.

While most household tasks are not exclusively done by one parent or another, Tracey generally does the grocery shopping and cooking. When Tracey is not up to cooking, Maurice will bring home dinner. Maurice does more household cleaning than Tracey, but she does more laundry. They share equally in the care of Jason and paying the bills. Maurice feels the roles of protector and provider is primarily for him. While Tracey has helped him to not worry about fulfilling these roles as much as he used to, he still has financial worries from time to time.

Both parents have consciously made parenting and marital decisions based on how they were parented and their own childhoods. Tracey feels one of her first cousins is her biggest influence as a parent; they are very close and speak on the phone often. This cousin is a single parent with four children and "finds time to do everything." Her cousin

is also inspirational because she is back in school to earn a Master's degree and makes education and having fun a priority for her children. Tracey also feels she was motivated to get married before she had children because she did not want to deal with some of the struggles of single mothers she knows and wanted to have a father in the home for her children. Maurice is most influenced by his mother as a parent because he spent the most time with her during childhood and also because of her focus on education. While Maurice spent time with his father while he was growing up, his dad was away for a year or more at a time being in the military and was also short tempered. Based on his experiences and relationship with his father, Maurice makes a conscious decision to be present and active in Jason's life and to refrain from yelling by trying to solve conflicts and discipline Jason in a lower voice and more gently. However, Maurice does have fond memories of having fun with his father playing sports and video games which are similar to the interactions he tries to have with Jason. Maurice feels his active presence will help Jason to have a strong relationship with him and be able to trust him as he is growing up.

The Wilsons feel they are similar as parents because they both "want what's best for him." The main difference between their parenting styles is Tracey expects more immediate responses and reactions from Jason when she tells him to do something. Maurice is more patient and gives Jason more chances to comply with what he says. When they are home, Jason sometimes takes a break in his crib to calm down or get rest when he is upset. Maurice is not sure if using the physical discipline of a "pop on the hand" is causing Jason to try to use a similar method to get classmates to stop bothering

him, while Tracey does not think it is related. Both parents feel the discipline they give Jason is so “he comes up as a respectable young man in society and knows how to present himself.” They also feel they show Jason by their example to have respect for others, be kind, and stand up for what he believes in. Maurice would also like for Jason to be more assertive than he is. They strive for Jason to have a balance between intelligence and being his own person so he can address anyone who might bully him because he is smart or not like them. The Wilsons report they are focused on Jason’s future.

When responding on the common beliefs about African-American boys and men, both parents reported several negative views including they are aggressive, scary, interested in “steal(ing), rob(bing), and cheat(ing) everyone,” lazy, and do not respect women. Maurice responded these beliefs are “a basis for the society fear from the Black male.” Both parents are aware of the views and are concerned about how they could affect their son. They purposely chose a name for their son that they feel will not cause him to be passed for opportunities or pre-judged. They would also like to move from the apartment complex they currently live in because they feel the negative things they see going on will have an impact on Jason as he gets older. Even though they currently live in a predominately African-American environment and would like to continue to when they move, they also feel they may provide Jason with better schools and teachers and have neighbors who care more for the homes if they live in an area that is not predominately African-American. Although they feel they are making parenting and lifestyle decisions now that will prepare Jason to face possible biases, they are troubled

they exist and want to protect Jason from the possibility that he might face hopelessness dealing with such challenges. They are also concerned about the influence of peers during the teen years that could challenge some of the values and lessons they have instilled in their son. They feel they will need to directly inform Jason that some in society believe such negative things about him, but he should carry himself in a way that he will not be “perceived as the aggressor.”

Maurice and Tracey have encountered unique biases related to parenting Jason. Maurice recalled being told about possible fluid around Jason’s heart before he was born could indicate Down syndrome. He was insulted by how the doctor discussed this and relatedly the possible options for addressing it, as if, “We wouldn’t care enough to care for him if he did have...some kind of medical condition or developmental condition.” Tracey has encountered bias related to her son being fair skinned, similar to Maurice’s complexion, because she is brown skinned. Some have assumed her husband is European American when they see her and Jason together. She has been offended because these assumptions jump to an inaccurate conclusion.

### **The Johnson Family<sup>9</sup>: Greg, Angela, and Greg, III**

Angela and Greg Johnson met when they were introduced during a Bible Study group while undergraduate students in Maryland. They soon found out Angela was about to begin working at the same on-campus job as Greg. While at work, Greg would often share his food with Angela and they began to hang out after work. They officially became a couple in February 2009 and were married about one year later in January

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<sup>9</sup> Fictitious names to protect confidentiality.

2010. The couple relocated to the Piedmont Triad, North Carolina area in December 2010 for Greg to begin a new job and Greg, III, who was born in October 2011, is currently 31-months-old. Angela does not work outside of the home, but cares for Greg, III and his nine-month-old sister while their dad works full-time and takes classes part-time. Angela and Greg both hold Bachelor's degrees and Greg has an educational goal of attaining a doctorate degree one day. Angela would like to continue her education or a certification as well. They consider themselves middle income with an annual household income of \$35,000 – 49,999.

At the time the couple relocated to North Carolina, Angela had just graduated from college and she began taking classes to become licensed as a nursing assistant. Since Greg, III was due soon after she became licensed, Angela has not yet worked in this field. Nonetheless, the pregnancy went well and she received all of her prenatal care and “felt good” and was “excited” throughout. The delivery was smooth and Greg, III was healthy at birth. The transition home was fine, but difficult due to lack of sleep and no immediate social support in terms of friends or family members, although family did visit when he was a few weeks old. The new couple felt sleep deprived, but happy about having their newborn. Greg reported he began feeling he had “more responsibility” during this time.

The Johnsons reported that Greg, III was an active baby who showed early signs of independence by wanting to stand and eat solid foods within the first four months and also wanting to eat table foods before he had teeth. He also sat up and crawled in early infancy, learning to walk at about nine-months-old. Greg, III is happy when he can do

what he would like to do and unhappy when he cannot. He enjoys playing outside and eating Nacho cheese Doritos. Greg feels his son was calmer as a baby because he would sit and listen to a story longer than he currently does. Both parents feel they have a good relationship with Greg, III. He yells out in excitement when his father gets home. He also likes to play with his sister, but can get frustrated when she tries to take things away from him and he sometimes takes things away from her.

While there is a general daily schedule, Angela would like to get her children on a more consistent one, but find this difficult. Greg, III has breakfast when he wakes up in the morning, often around 8 a.m., but sometimes as early as 6 a.m. and sometimes later than 8 a.m. He does not have a set snack and lunch time, but sometimes has a snack a couple of hours after he wakes up and lunch later in the afternoon. Nap time is usually around 1:30 p.m. and varies in length. Greg, III and his sister eat dinner about 7 or 8 p.m. Bedtime is around 9 or 10 p.m. Angela feels a more specific schedule could help her son communicate more by knowing what to expect.

Angela mainly takes care of the household including cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, laundry, and watching the kids and describes her role as “definitely domesticated.” Greg feels his main responsibility includes providing for his family financially as well as providing safety and security for them. He also feels it is important for him to provide psychological support to his children to sustain their development. Greg occasionally does some of the domestic tasks Angela does such as cleaning, caring for and feeding the children, and getting them to bed. Angela and Greg each feel they are both disciplinarians, but Angela reports it is more difficult for her to be consistent and

respond each time because she is with the children all day and the tediousness of discipline can be exhausting.

The Johnson family is not able to consistently rely on extended family or friends because most of them are back in Maryland. However, they do have family members who send packages periodically with items for the children such as shoes, clothes, and toys. They are grateful for these gifts and look forward to receiving them.

Family members, such as siblings or cousins, visit for a week at a time about once a month. In addition, the Johnson family travels to Maryland once or twice a year around the holidays to visit with family members there. Greg mentioned that the sister of one of his close childhood friends, who has grown children, is like a family member. She lives in the area and the family visits with her about once or twice a month.

Greg would like to take more vacations with the family and Angela would like to take her son out more to community activities such as the museum, but is not sure he is ready yet. Also, Angela would like Greg, III to have less television time and feels she should discipline him more, but wishes she could discipline less. Greg also feels he should try less to make his son independent so he does not go too far in supporting his independent nature. While the couple like living in the Piedmont Triad area, Greg would like to move to Florida where it would be warmer year round.

The Johnsons feel their son's special needs affect their parenting in a few ways. For Greg, he wondered if there was something he could have done to prevent his son's need for speech therapy or if Greg, III just needs more time to develop. Angela initially did not agree with the assessment that her son had delays. However, she has since seen

the progress he has made and feels, whether due to therapy and/or natural developmental progress, Greg III is showing improvement in his development. Also, Angela shared that she is able to “act like a therapist” from seeing how the therapists work with Greg, III to elicit language, vocabulary and actions, even to support what he is doing in therapy. In general, the Johnsons reported a positive experience with early intervention.

As a parent, Angela feels she is most influenced by her parents. She tries to do some things similarly to them and others she tries to consciously do a different way. For Greg, he feels he has been most influenced by his mother and Dr. Ben Carson. He admires his mother’s drive to work as hard as she did to feed her family and finish her schooling at the same time, although it caused her to have little time to spend with him and his siblings. Greg admires Dr. Carson because despite starting without much and having a temper, he worked hard to be successful. Also, since Greg has not met his father, he is motivated to be present in his children’s lives, which is different from his father.

The Johnsons feel there are many negative societal views about African American boys including that most are poor, criminals, always angry, without fathers, uneducated, and also that they want to be a rapper or to play sports and will go to “jail at least once in their lifetime.” They feel they will prepare Greg, III to overcome these negative views by informing him of them, that some people have these limited expectations of him. However, they will also encourage him “to prove everyone wrong” and be successful. Greg’s mother informed him around 8-years-old about negative societal views and although it frightened him, it also motivated him to take a different life path. Personally,

Greg feels he has faced prejudice regarding his name because some employers have assumed he is European American before meeting him. Since his son has the same first name, this bias has continued and occurred with him as well.

### **Composite Structural Description (All Participants)**

The parents in this study were all married or in a committed relationship and shared daily responsibilities and routines to some degree. Most were influenced by their own parents, but some by other significant adults in their lives or other notable role models. In addition, some parents, especially the fathers, felt their own parents presented qualities they wanted to avoid repeating with their own children.

Almost all families relied on extended family and friends in a few ways, even if occasionally, for some aspect of childrearing and care, such as child care and providing for basic needs like clothing or shoes. In general, all families were a family unit and provided most of the daily care for their children, in addition to child care providers (in licensed child care settings or preschools) and a nanny (in the home setting) that provide daytime care for all, except for one, of the children.

Parents reported being stressed by the demands of work, school, and family. Some longed for more time to spend with their children and to take vacations. Also, they described their desire for their children to watch less television and for them to have less stress. They felt the demands of life do not easily allow them the flexibility to make changes that could increase their free time and reduce stress.

All families had a general routine for their children related to waking up, activities during the day, and bed time. Some families were more flexible about the start and end

times of these routines than others. The toddlers tended to get about eight to 10 hours of sleep each night with at least one nap during the day. All of the toddlers were happy when they got to have or do what they would like to. Four toddlers had siblings.

Discipline was important for all of the families and they expected their toddler sons to quickly respond to verbal directions and requests. All families used corporal punishment at times when their toddler did not comply or when he did things he was not supposed to do. In addition, all couples felt their sons were learning how to behave and follow directives that will be important to their successes and/or safety later in life. Most mothers felt they were primarily responsible for planning and completing many of the tasks of daily life and childrearing. Fathers felt they were most responsible for providing for their family and making sure they were taken care of. Fathers also felt they had some responsibility for household and childrearing tasks as well.

Most of the parents felt they will need to prepare their toddlers sons to face negative societal views and injustices related to African American males. They described preparing their sons by giving them a sound upbringing, being involved with them, helping them to be academically and behaviorally ready to be successful in school, and eventually sharing with their sons some of the myths about them. Families tended to see this need as necessary and real regardless of parental educational and socioeconomic status.

### **Conclusion**

The textural-structural summaries for each family and the composite summary across families outline demographic information, daily routines and activities,

childrearing practices, and parental goals for their children. The summaries describe aspects of the essence of rearing an African American male toddler for each family and collectively. The aspects described are also what makes each family and the phenomenon unique and cannot be changed without changing the nature of the phenomenon as shared by the families (Gallagher, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). While there were many similarities among the families, the summaries show that each family is slightly different and unique. In the results section, additional details of each essence across participants will be shared.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the beliefs and practices of African American parents with a toddler son in order to learn more about their routines, goals, and views and how they support their sons' development. A transcendental phenomenological approach was used to examine the data set and learn about the meanings, or essences, the participants attributed to parenting an African American male toddler (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Husserl, 1931, 1964, 1964b; Moustakas, 1994). Through this phenomenological inquiry, seven essences were derived from 12 participants (mother and father) who provided 18 parent interviews (two individual interviews and one joint interview per family) as shown in Table 4. In addition, six family observations were completed, one per family, to further understand family activities, interactions, and routines. The essences were developed based on the recurring ideas that were prominent across at least five of the six participants and therefore capture the meaning participants consciously or unconsciously assign to their parenting experience. Each essence, or summarized statement of shared meaning, is described in detail below.

*Table 4**Essences of African American Parents with a Male Toddler*

Essence	Description
1	Fatherhood Motivation: Present, Active, and Different
2	Child Outcomes and Goals Influence Present Parental Decisions
3	Lack of Time = Elevated Stress and Guilt
4	Extended Family/Friends Provide Network of Support
5	Current Perception of African American Male Cases Shadow on Parenting and Childhood
6	Importance of Faith and Religion
7	Shared Household Responsibility/Division of Labor

**Essence 1: Fatherhood Motivation: Present, Active, and Different**

Five of the six fathers shared goals and practices that reflect their desire to have a father-son relationship different from what they experienced with their own fathers throughout their childhood and young adulthood. These differences mainly focused on two areas: (a) being physically present, maintaining an active role, and engaging in a quality relationship with their sons and (b) embodying different attributes from their own fathers. However, it should be noted that each father reported at least one positive interaction or occurrence with their own fathers.

**Being Physically Present and Actively Involved**

For these fathers, being physically present meant to live in the same household and be present in their son's life every day. One participant, Greg Johnson, described

physical presence in the context of having never met his father. Since his father was not in the home during his childhood, although he has spoken on the phone with his father as a young adult, Greg is motivated to make sure he is present for his children by being in the same household with them. He summarized his sentiments as follows, "I'm determined to be different so that I won't turn out to be like him. Rather than I want to be here for my son....I do want to be here for my son but I really don't want to be like my father." For three participants who knew or lived in the same household as their fathers, the lack of involvement of their fathers was a negative experience for them. Two of these participants had fathers who were in the military and therefore were away from home for deployments or assignments for months at a time. One of them, Maurice Wilson shared,

I do think that we have a more of an interaction just because I think I try to parent how I would have wanted to be parented. So, I would've liked for my dad to be there like all during the time, like obviously I knew that he couldn't...because he was working, but I just try to, everyday I try to make sure that I spend a good amount of time with him as much as can and just that he will remember coming up that I was there...and then that he can trust me and come to me for anything, too.

The third participant, Rakim Freeman, lived in the same household as his mother or father for parts of his life, but grew up in foster care, so he did not maintain a positive relationship with or have consistent active involvement with either of his parents as a child. All three fathers stress not just being present, but also being engaged in their children's daily lives. For example, to be involved in daily routines and activities with their sons is important. They felt being present in the home in a committed relationship or marriage united by their commitment to be part of daily life is key to providing a

different childhood or support in adulthood for their sons and other children. Titon Spencer summarized this goal, “The worst thing a man can do is turn his back on his children...so, once again that is something that kind of motivates me to be there for my family.”

### **Embodying Different Attributes**

Many of the fathers consciously make a decision to exemplify different fatherhood qualities than their own father. The motivation to be different was palpable for many of the fathers as they expressed how and why they wanted to be different, Rakim Freeman shared,

Because from my side of the family, I was raised wrong. You understand? I went from foster home to foster home. I went to prison at the age of 12. Didn't come home until I was like 17. So, I didn't have guidance there to teach me what you're supposed to do as a man... So, I had to be self taught and me self teaching myself, was telling me, “Hey, if you ever get a family, don't do what your dad did. Don't do what your mom did. Don't get wit a woman like your mom that just says, ‘As long as there's a man in her bed, everything else is cool.’” You know?

The last father, Thomas Bryant, felt he had a good relationship with his father and he knew his dad loved him. However, he is consciously more affectionate with his sons than his father was. Thomas described his more affection nature, “I know my dad loved me and we had a great relationship. He was not as,...I guess I'm more affectionate, an affectionate father, so I am hugging, kissing and all of that kind of stuff, saying I love you, you know, just come give me a hug type stuff. My dad wasn't that way.” Since his father was not affectionate and he would have liked him to be, he is motivated to hug and

kiss his sons and to tell them he loves them. Currently, he also encourages his sons to be affectionate with each other.

All of the fathers, except for one, shared at least one way they would like to improve upon the fathering they experienced as children and young adults. These changes focused on living in the same household as their children, being active in their children's lives, or a specific fathering quality they wanted their own father to embody, but were not able to experience. Most of the fathers were keenly aware of their desire to work toward being different from their fathers in some manner.

### **Essence 2: Child Outcomes and Goals Influence Present Parental Decisions**

The second essence, shared meaning was provided by most participants and related to parental decisions. Parents reported that current goals and decisions were related to their hope that their sons would have positive physical, academic, health, and safety outcomes in childhood that could later lead to a successful future. Parental decisions influenced by their goals and aspirations for their sons' future outcomes include: (a) behavioral expectations, (b) academics and learning, and (c) breastfeeding. Parents explicitly and implicitly stated current decisions were based upon their sons being ready for life.

### **Behavior Expectations**

Although parents described a range of discipline techniques including time out, putting the child in his crib or room for a break, and having the child sit in a chair within view for a short time; at least one parent in each family discussed his or her goal of regulating their son's behavior through physical discipline or corporal punishment. One

justification parents gave for using physical discipline is that it serves as a reminder to avoid engaging in behaviors the children had previously been told not to do, such as leaving toys out. Titon Spencer described how he decides when to use physical discipline,

I think it depends on what is going on. It depends on where we are at and what is going on and what he is doing. Like, what he is doing...this is something we have been over countless times. My tolerance just isn't gonna be as high... Like you know you don't leave toys on the stairs. Like, we've been over that a million times. Like I said, it depends on what he's doing. It depends on where we are. Like, if we are out somewhere and you're trying to embarrass me or you are trying to embarrass your Mom, you know it just kind of depends.... You know me. I am a strong advocate for spanking. Strong. Like I just, I don't play.

This practice was also seen as a means to cultivate behavioral qualities that they would like to see. For example, a comment by Maurice Wilson captures the essence of the parents' beliefs about the relationship of discipline to outcomes, "...the things like discipline is always just so that he comes up as a respectable young man in society and knows how to present himself." While they did not all agree, even within families, about how much and how often physical discipline should be implemented, they all supported the need to use physical discipline.

Parents cited two reasons for choosing physical discipline as a necessary aspect of discipline: (a) it was an important and effective form of discipline used with them as children, and (b) social pressure from elders about its importance to properly socialize children. Jonathan Bennett described how learning the expectations of his father included physical discipline,

As I start thinking about things and I am like, “Okay, I know what my dad wouldn’t put up with” and so no, I can’t put up with it. Wouldn’t want to put up with it and I know what would will happen if I let things...and I had this philosophy before I was even married, like, I believe in disciplining them early, cause anybody will tell you that waiting four or five and six is too late, you know, that’s a fact and so I was like, “Yeah, y’all getting popped now. Y’all getting beatings now.”

For others, the authority of elder family members was an important influence for making sure they included physical discipline to guide their children as well as how often they should use it. The need to respect the views of elders for how children should be disciplined, but also forge a slightly different path, was described by Maurice Wilson,

I don’t think that her mother thinks we discipline him enough or appropriately....So, she’s like, “He’s going to be bad. He’s not going to listen to ya’ll cause ya’ll aren’t disciplining him.” So, I think we listen, but we have our own style of parenting...Like I don’t want to use a belt on him. I don’t think that that’s appropriate. So, you know, when she says it, we’re like, “Yeah, well okay, but...” and then we go on...

Maurice Wilson’s thoughts as well as those of other parents reflected on the familial and societal expectation that physical discipline is necessary and should occur, but also their ambivalence about whether or not it is truly the best method to teach their child and whether or not it yields the expected behavior results. Another parent, Sharon Bennett described this ambivalence,

I would say discipline for me because we do pop them, but also do time out, but then I find that when I pop them sometimes they feel like I don’t think like it’s a joke or then they feel like, oh they can do pop, pop too to us. So, it’s like finding a balance in the discipline and I don’t know if it’s common for kids or boys, but you have to be repetitive because I can pop them, get down on their level, talk to them like they are actual eye level, and say, “You know, you shouldn’t do this” and then they do it again and then we even do the time out and it’s still...it’s like

it's a cycle. So, that's my thing. I wonder if I'm a little too easy on them or if that's just the nature of their age and you know, but I don't know, they seem to be kind of smart. So, I don't know if it's just the nature, but that would be my thing about the discipline and how to discipline them properly.

While all families described other discipline techniques they use, such as time out, all included the importance of physical discipline. Both mothers and fathers discussed using physical discipline and while one parent often spoke more strongly about it than the other, the parent who was more of an advocate of corporal punishment was equally likely to be the mother as it was the father. All families reported employing some degree of physical discipline to guide behavior and socialize their children about how to act at home and in public.

The nuances of when parents used physical discipline varied. Some asserted that they use physical discipline in any setting a transgression or misbehavior has occurred. Rakim Freeman described an incident he used physical discipline when one of his son's stole something from a store,

Yeah. Because it varies. Some punishments are more severe than others. It's necessary nowadays, you know, and I don't care about the police, the law, social services or nothing. Until they can come in here and take care of these kids by themselves without the government's help, then I don't want them telling me nothing. So, you're not gonna tell me I was wrong for popping my kid in the mouth or pulling his pants down in the middle of the street because he stole something out of a store. You know? In our family, like, we're not rich at all and we're not poor. You know? We're in between that. Hey, we can do what we want on occasions, but we're gonna do what we have to do all the time, you know? So it's like there's no reason for you to steal. Now you're doing it because it's something you're not supposed to have.

For some parents, while they stated they would use physical discipline in any setting, they still mentioned an instance they would not feel comfortable employing it in certain locations. Titon Spencer discussed an instance when he would not use physical discipline,

I think where it is really different for me is probably at daycare. Like I don't know if I'd really spank him at daycare like in front of his little friends and stuff like that. That I probably wouldn't do.

However, most parents were clear they use physical discipline as well as other methods, but did not differentiate differences between locations or who is present.

### **Academics and Learning**

Education goals encompassed parental goals for all of their children to do well in school in preparation for having a good life and positive future. Jonathan Bennett described the importance of education and being prepared in his sons' lives, "All we can do is just kind of prepare them. Going back to the things I was saying earlier, you know, work hard, get an education, look at your surroundings."

While those with older children focused more on illustrating the importance of their educational goals through them, all parents described education goals in the context of the importance of academics, concept knowledge (e.g., ABCs), or doing well in school. Goals included helping their young child to be academically ready for kindergarten and assisting their older children to maintain a good academic standing in grade school. Four parents reported working on or wishing they had more time to work on academic concepts with their sons such as the alphabet, numbers, or shapes. Karen Spencer commented about her desire to address her educational goals for her son,

I feel like I need to sit with him more and teach him more whether it's his ABCs, 123s, his shapes. Whatever it might be. If we would spend more time like on the weekends. The weekdays, we generally don't have the time to do that sort of thing, but definitely on the weekends I feel like I need to sit down with him more.

The two other parents had older children who were in elementary or high school and they focused more on ensuring these children completed their homework and behave well in school. The Bryant family, for example, pointed out that their oldest son does well academically, so they would expect that their younger sons would also. Stephanie Bryant summarized her view, "...I feel like we give our kids everything they need academically. And if the younger two fall in line with the oldest that's not a problem." Rakim Freeman described the importance of his children completing their homework, "I just don't want them to go down that path [he did]. That is why I am hard on homework and if it's a problem, don't get frustrated because I used to be like...I had dyslexia, and I grew out of it..."

### **Breastfeeding**

Five of the six mothers described the importance of breastfeeding their newborn sons. While the duration varied (3 months to about 1 year), all provided some breast milk for at least three months. Breastfeeding was discussed as an important aspect of providing optimal nutrition and establishing emotional connections with their newborn. Angela Johnson shared the important role of breastfeeding in her forming a nurturing relationship with her children,

I think there's a definite contrast to my husband where I feel like especially because I've breast fed, or I'm breast feeding my daughter, is definitely that I'm more nurturing to them, or ready to give someone a hug or pick them up. You're

gonna see with my husband that he's, and he says this to me, well yeah, my son does this or that and knows that he can get away with things because I was more nurturing and breast fed him and all that.

Tracey Wilson discussed the fortuitous occurrence of her being between jobs when her son was born, which allowed her to focus on breastfeeding, “So I was able to, you know, establish some kind of routine. I was really wanting to breastfeed, so that worked out with that.” Therefore, making a commitment to breastfeeding was seen as an investment in the child’s future through providing nutrients and establishing a bond with the infant.

For the mothers who worked outside of the home, they mainly discussed breastfeeding as a practice they engaged in while still home with their newborn son(s) before returning to work. Karen Spencer mentioned continuing to breastfeed after returning to work when her son was two-months-old, but shared its challenges,

I nursed until six or seven months...(I pumped) once I got back in to work. I would have loved to do it a lot longer, but it was just...just with the work (keeping up, finding a place to pump)...and then like having to go in between meetings and eventually I was just like, “Okay, I am just not going to do it.” Some days are not (busy), but other days it’s like meetings back to back to back and trying to find 15 minutes just to go and...

Karen found it difficult to continue providing breast milk for her infant son through pumping at work due to the challenges of finding the time and place to express breast milk.

Overall, parents were reflective about their choices for discipline, focusing on academics, and making breastfeeding a priority. Their reflections showed that parental decisions were far from rash or isolated, but were part of their frequent thoughts about

ways they can create a positive environment for their children through the results of thoughtfully made decisions. Parents felt sound decisions could lead to successful children and help them meet their behavioral, academic, and well-being goals for their children as well.

### **Essence 3: Lack of Time = Elevated Stress and Guilt**

Having a lack of time was another prominent essence parents described as important to their experience of being an African American parent raising a male toddler. The lack of time led to feelings of guilt or higher stress levels for five families. Four of the six families were dual income families, which in these cases means both parents work full-time outside of the home. They reflected on the lack of time to manage work, household, child, and other familial tasks. Jonathan Bennett described how their weekday evening time is spent,

It's really about feeding them and getting them in to bed. Not really any kind of development or we do a little bit of hanging out, but it's always something, it's always something that you need to go...with us, that's it with us anyway though. It's always something... Even before we had kids and then with the kids it's, you know, so that could be hard just balancing time and work.

For these families, evenings consist of dinner, spending some time with children, and the bedtime routine. Parental time was generally designated for managing routines, schedules, household chores, and sometimes spending time with their child(ren) or their whole family. Some parents lamented they did not have enough time to spend with their children, or leisure time for themselves or with their spouses. Karen Spencer discussed

how she did not want to spend her limited evening time cooking dinner instead of with her son,

I am not a very good cook, but you know, I used to do something, but I think since the kid came along, it's just hard to do stuff. You know, in the morning time, you don't really have any time with him and then in the evening, you literally have two hours with him and that's it throughout the whole day and I'm sorry, but I don't want to be in the kitchen cooking the whole time...

The lack of time and hurried schedule led to feelings of stress for some parents under pressure to get everything done. Jonathan and Sharon Bennett described how the lack of time affects them:

Jonathan: The time though, just finding the balance between work and just spending time with them, enough time, is hard.

Sharon: And not being tired when you're spending time with them.

Jonathan: Yeah...I mean tonight...I mean, we came home, we spent a little bit of time with them, fed them, and then put them to bed. That's it. You know?

Others simply wished they had more time to spend on areas of life they value such as their relationship with their children and spouses.

Although Trina Hill does not work outside of the home, she shared similar sentiments regarding lack of time and stress due to competing demands for time from their nine children in addition to getting household chores completed. Also, this couple wanted to spend more time with each child individually. Trina and her partner, Rakim, both discussed challenges with time. Trina stated,

...when it's a lot of kids, it's hard to spend time with all of them individually... It's easier for us together...But individually, it's like, "Okay, we ain't spending with this one. We ain't spending time with that one."...So, I mean, we do it, you know, in our own separate ways, but for me, that's my goal is to start spending more time with them individually.

Rakim later described the mixture of emotions he and Trina feel dealing with the stress of their large family, but staying true to their commitment to each other and their children,

So like I said, it's like, yeah, there are hectic days and I know sometimes, you know, like maybe you don't know, but I know she knows you know sometimes I may look like, "Yo, I just want to get the hell outta here", you know? And like, "This is too much." In the back of my mind, that's the furthest thought. That's like it looks like I'm saying that, but in reality, it's like, "Yo, what's the next plan?" I may not say it, but I'm like, "Okay, he's screaming, she's dirty, he's hungry, that one is getting on my nerves. What's the plan?" And I'm just sitting there like this (head in hands)...just trying to piece it together because like I told you when we first interviewed, she does everything.

Therefore, this family's lack of time was similar to the challenges of the dual income families but because they are each stretched to provide for themselves and all of their children rather than both parents working outside the home.

In sum, most of the families shared the challenges they face in managing the competing demands of work and home. Consistently spending time with their children was one of the main challenges parents expressed regret about. Regret was related to their feelings of stress and guilt about managing their responsibilities and making their children and spouse or partner a priority.

#### **Essence 4: Extended Family/Friends Provide Network of Support**

One essence the participants discussed was the importance of having extended family or close friends to rely on in some way for babysitting or financial support. All of

the families reported some support from extended family members or close friends to varying degrees, with five of the six relying more on family members than close friends. While only two have extended family members, such as grandmothers and aunts, living in the same city, four of the families relied on family in other cities and states for baby-sitting during evening, weekends, and overnight visits at either home. For example, in the Bryant family, Thomas travels for work several days at a time and his mother, or more often Stephanie's mother, visits during these times to help them at home. Stephanie's mother was described by Thomas as "more engaged" and Stephanie elaborated, "She does everything, so she cooks, cleans, drops off, picks up, washes and folds clothes. I mean, she kind of is the do it all" during her visits. This assistance is invaluable to the Bryants because it allows them to continue with typical daily routines while Thomas is traveling and Stephanie is working.

One family relies more on a close friend from their church than family members. The Bennetts see their extended family, who lives in eastern North Carolina, a few times a year and does not rely on them for support with the children or the household. However, they are close to their church family and their nanny is a member of their church. The nanny takes care of the twins during the week while the Bennetts work. They do not rely on church members or others to care for their children on weekends or in the evening. Jonathan Bennett referred to the challenges of not having family or close friends living nearby to rely on,

I wish we could. It's not like that... Yeah and it [just parents and nanny] can be, it's hard sometimes. I knew I was with my... My brothers are a lot older than me. So, I have nephews that are probably like ten years than me. So anyway, I could

see them bringing their kids and leave them with my parents where they could go do stuff and we don't have that option. I mean like, so I know how it could be. And now my mom... When they can talk better, we might think about doing that... When they get to that point maybe, but not right now.

One family, the Johnsons, were not able to rely on family members for child care or babysitting because all of them are in another state. However, they do have family members who send clothing, shoes, and toys to the kids periodically. These relatives ask if the children need anything and then create and mail a care package of items the Johnsons can use. Greg Johnson explained how this occurs,

I don't think we rely on anyone. I mean say if the kids need clothes we can buy, but we will tell family members just in case they want to help out and usually we haven't really relied on any family members for anything... actually I just picked up a box of shoes they sent from different places today. (Angela)'s mom sent it but yeah everything over here (toys area) probably sent from family members....

The family reported receiving the care packages is helpful to them because they do not have to buy those items.

All but one family reported relying on family for some aspect of childrearing and child care from babysitting to providing clothing items and shoes. The participants shared that it is helpful for them to have family and friends they can rely on because their support helps them address some parental or familial goal such as spending time with their spouse or partner or having free time to take care of other tasks and responsibilities.

#### **Essence 5: Current Perception of African American Male Cases Shadow on Parenting and Childhood**

The salience of race and gender was reflected in the prominent and sometimes subtle ways societal perceptions of African American males influenced their parenting

and it is therefore an essence of their parenting experience. All families felt to some degree that their sons could be impacted by societal views (mostly negatively) of African American males. Concerns included societal views that African American males were lazy, thieves, promiscuous, absent fathers, unintelligent, aggressive, and disrespectful. At least one person in each couple also mentioned his or her childrearing practices, opportunities they provide their son, and/or other methods they used to inform their son about these views and prepare him to face them will assist with counteracting their effects. Titon Spencer summed up his concurrent fear and hope for how his son might be seen and how he might deal with possible negativity as follows:

To this day, this probably happened to me maybe two months ago, like every now and then I will still help someone, like grab a purse or something like clutch their purse or something when I walk by, you know what I mean and it's just so crazy to me and it is not like I am dressed in sweat pants. Like, I have on nice khaki pants, a buttoned up shirt, and it is like, "People are still clutching purses in 2013/2014." So, it's like unfortunately those are the things people are going to think about you before they even know your character. They just look at the color of your skin, they look at your build, they look at hair type, and there's already a conception and their conception is going to be based off of their experience or what they have seen on T.V. or what they think what type of person you are and I think what I'll be most worried about him is probably when he is like 15 to 18, when he's like in high school. I know my son will [be] fully equipped when he is 18. When he leaves the house, he will be prepared for life, I have no doubt between me, between my wife, and just between the supporting cast that we have, he will be prepared, but at 15 to 18 when kids can be foolish and they're still kind of learning their way, I think that's when I will be most worried because by no means I don't plan on babying my son. I gotta let him live and I gotta let him learn his lessons on his own. Unfortunately, still the world doesn't look at black kids favorably, umm, so...

While parents were aware of possible effects of negative societal views, they were also optimistic that they can equip their sons to face life and thrive under such a challenging societal climate.

For some families, balancing negative societal views with pressure from within the African American race is challenging. Thomas Bryant shared his views on this challenge:

...when you talk about going back to the whole integrity thing and just being a good man and just, you know, you want your sons to grow up to be strong men, but you know, compassionate as well and you know, not get caught up in the wrong especially as a Black male and caught up, you know, with the mess and for Black men, I think it's a challenge because especially if you are, I remember back in high school. You know, it is a challenge to be good with the grades, but then also be good with the boys, you know because sometimes it's seen as you dumb yourself down because you want to be, you want to fit in. So, I'm constantly trying to build the self-esteem, build the confidence and let them know it is okay to be smart, it's okay to be, you know, you could still be cool and be smart at the same time. So, it is just that whole trying to instill that now and trying to instill that it is okay to say, "Tell your brother you love him", you know or for us to give hugs and all that kind of stuff, so you know. It's just, you know...and when I see father and son relationships, I am quick to point them out.

Thomas Bryant also went on to talk about the interaction of being a positive African American male can clash with negative societal views and peer pressure from the African American community.

I have to be a model to them, but then just to be able to already knowing some of the challenges that they are going to have. You know, because honestly, to be a Black male, an educated Black male, you have more Black males in prison than you do in college, so you are a rare commodity and there are so many things out there that will try to pull you down out of that to make it, to decrease the value and a lot of it has to do with our lust and our flesh, I mean, you know just wanting to be something instead of just a regular guy, you know, so...whether it be women, money, power or whatever it is.

Thomas shared the importance of his role as a model and guide for keeping his sons on a positive path. He shared the sentiments of other participants in regard to the tenuous line between being educated yourself, rejecting negative societal views, and also being accepted by other African Americans.

Trina Hill described how she hopes the negative expectations for her children could motivate them to have a better life than anticipated,

And it's just like because there's a lot of them, they (in public) expect them to act a certain way. They expect them to be ghetto. Like I tell them, "Ya'll are expected to fail." I tell them all the time. That's just life. One, we're African-American. So, that's a big issue. I said, "And two, it's are a lot of ya'll." So that's why I be telling them all the time, "I'm determined for ya'll to grow up and be something because it's looking like, "Oh, it's too many of them, they can't focus. Them kids ain't gonna grow up to be nothing." But, that's just the way I feel...

Trina and Rakim asserted several times that they would like their children to have a better life than they did and to defy stereotypes people might have about them.

### **Essence 6: Importance of Faith and Religion**

Faith and attending religious services was part of the essence of rearing an African American male toddler for these participants. While only four of the six couples reported being members of a religious organization or church, the husband or wife in each pair mentioned topics related to faith or organized religion such as attending church service, referencing God in a comment, and/or desiring their son have a relationship with God. Therefore, at least one member of each family asserted their belief in God or the importance of attending formal religious services. One parent, Sharon Bennett, described the importance of her faith in her daily life and routines with her twin sons,

I do it out loud, now I do...like I pray in the morning. Like, when I get up, I pray for their health and strength in Jesus' name and I pray for their protection....so sometimes I pray..., but at night I pray that the Lord blesses them and keep them, so I speak that over them and let them know I love them and I put them down.

To varying levels, spirituality, God, and religion is prominent in family life and each couple described how this is true for them and therefore, their child's upbringing.

Three families described their desire to attend church services more often, make God a priority in their lives, or ensure their children are aware of the importance of God.

Stephanie Bryant most adamantly shared her views regarding this,

I don't think it's enough just to say "God is great, God is good" before you eat and "Now I lay me down to sleep" every night. I mean, we do that. I'm talking like having a true relationship with the Lord. And I don't think that our kids see that in us. Which is a big, I think, failure and something that I feel like we don't have a whole lot of time left with the older one to really instill. I mean he and I have talked about this. But that's a problem with where we are right now that really needs to be addressed. And if it's as important to us as we say it is and we want our kids to have that. Just, the relationship, not the formality. You understand what I'm saying.

Stephanie went on to clarify her statement later in the interview,

I think the church probably helps, what I'm saying is a day to day teaching and the way that we live our lives and what we talk about in our discussions. And I think that's missing. Like, even if we went to church every Sunday, which we don't now, cause we don't have time. Even if we went to church every Sunday I'm talking about going deeper day to day. Like if our 10 year old had to reflect on who we are and how we lives, I just don't know if this would be at the top of his list of what's important to our family. Whereas I have, maybe like friends that I think their kids would say that because it's just a difference in what the home life is like. And here again, what you talk about, what you teach on a day to day basis. I know we're getting off on a tangent, but it's my hang up and it's not anybody's fault but my own and that's just something I recognize and carry that burden of having to make a change.

Titon Spencer shared his desire for his family to attend church services more often than once or twice a month,

Maybe it is just a combination of just being lazy. I mean, I guess it could be tired, but, when I think about it, man, it's just I feel like I have such a better week when I go to church. When I start it off at church, I just feel like I have a better week. Just as the head of the house I need motivate the troops and lead 'em into victory.

While several of the families are members of a religious organization, they feel they can make their spiritual lives more of a priority by attending church services more often and/or showing their children the importance of a relationship with God by how they live every day.

#### **Essence 7: Shared Household Responsibility/Division of Labor**

Parents worked to share at least some aspect of daily life with each other as important to their experience of raising their child or children. All couples reported a shared responsibility for caring for their children and/or household chores with most sharing aspects of the home and two mainly sharing only care for the children, but not household chores. Of the four who share both, each couple has some tasks that one person typically does such as cooking or giving the child a bath and others they share based on the day of the week or what is occurring in the home at the time. The degree to which responsibilities were shared varied.

Four of the six couples (Bryant, Spencer, Bennett, and Freeman/Hill) had the mother or father report that the female has more responsibilities than the male. Karen Spencer described her role in the household,

I would say, I don't know if there is one word to describe it, but I do not know, I pretty much, I feel like I do everything...The only thing that I do not do is cook and my husband has just realized, "Okay, she is just not going to do it anymore, so I am going to do it now."

This difference involved depth and breadth of tasks such as more tasks to complete and individual tasks that were completed more often. Rakim Freeman reflected on the difference between his role and Trina's role in the household,

'Cause this entire relationship, I've been the one working. You know? She's been the one taking care of home. I've been doin everything else, but when it comes to this house, that's what she does and that's what I love about her. You know? I don't never, "Babe, you need a job." At first, a couple of times I was like, "Yo! I need help!" You know? But then it was like, "How can I sit here and ask this woman for help when she needs my help more than I need hers?" I can do the bills...you know? I can do the necessities, but I need to jump in here both feet you know and help out with these kids and help out with the house, you know? So, I had to learn that...

While this was recognized by at least one parent in each couple, only two of the four fathers made comments that recognized the claim that the mother does more logistically or physically for the family than the father.

### **Other Prominent Themes**

Additional prominent themes were shared across families, but are not reported as essences because they were either not shared by at least five of the six families or not reported by families to be integral in their family life or experience and are therefore descriptive in nature.

**Schedule**

Families varied in their daily schedule and how strictly they adhered to it. Most of the children (the toddlers of focus) woke up or were awakened around 6 or 7 a.m., with two waking closer to 8 a. m.. Bedtime was most often around 8 or 8:30 p.m., but also as late as 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. Also, most families described a morning routine that included eating breakfast and getting dressed for the day. All of the toddlers have a nap time at school or home. Dinner time also varied from 6 or 6:30 p.m. to as late as 7:00 or 8:00 p.m., with some eating as a family in the evening and two having a more variable and relaxed meal time either in front of the television or sometimes including the parents eating at the same time. While all families followed a general daily schedule, they varied with the timing of routines and meals and the dinner organization.

**Temperament**

Each parent described their son's temperament and general mood. Five out of six couples described their son as a happy, easy, or good baby. However, two families, in this case the two with a son with special needs, also described their son as demanding or active. When describing current attributes of their toddler sons, parents described traits that could be considered typical qualities of toddlers such as independent, often happy, content when he gets his own way, and loving. Nonetheless, parents went on to describe individual characteristics of their son that provide a glimpse into temperament and personality aspects. For example, the Bryants described their son, Elijah, as funny, active, social, and someone who gets along well with others. In another example, the Wilsons reported their son, Jason, is laid back, independent, and patient. Although

parents reported similarities between their toddler sons, they also shared exclusive aspects that make their son unique.

### **Children with Special Needs**

Two families participated in this study who have a toddler son with special needs. One primary similarity existed between the families. Both mothers, Trina Hill and Angela Johnson, described that they are able to learn new ways to interact with their son (and other children) through observing and participating in their sons' therapy sessions. They both reported changes or adjustments in the way they converse or interact with their sons to help them communicate better or teach their sons how to communicate. Besides these specific references to early intervention services, these families reported other aspects of child rearing and discipline similarly to the rest of the participants in the study.

### **Conclusion**

Families shared similar beliefs, practices, and goals for their toddler sons. Overall, each couple agreed about their priorities for their children such as academics, behavior, religion or spirituality, and spending time as a family. In addition, couples shared the necessity to prepare their African American sons for being successful in life by also teaching them about negative societal views and preparing them to face discrimination and bias because of their race and gender. Through a discussion of the study results in chapter six, I will discuss how results align with research on African American parenting and the theoretical framework of this study as well as implications are discussed.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **DISCUSSION**

This qualitative study was guided by a desire to learn more about the beliefs, practices, and childrearing goals of African American parents of male toddlers. In addition, it queried as to the roles that parental beliefs, practices, and childrearing goals play in the emotional and social development of African American male toddlers. As such, a phenomenological design was chosen to contribute to the call of researchers concerned about extending the knowledge base of what is known about young African American children and families through studies that recognize the ecological nature of socialization in African American families (American Psychological Association, 2008; Dodson, 2007, p. 64; Iruka, 2014; McLoyd, Hill, & Dodge, 2005). Through a recognition of the underlying influence of societal power (racism, oppression, and social stratification), this study aims to extend and clarify what is known about the socialization of African American parents of toddler sons, to confirm, counter, and elucidate the knowledge gained to develop policies, opinions, and presuppositions, and to better understand the developmental context of African American male toddlers in two-parent homes.

Results of this study corroborated, challenged, and provided additional texture to previous research on African American male toddlers, African American parenting, and emotional and social development. The integrative model and other relevant literature

were influential in the design of this study, including methodology choice (qualitative), the development of the interview questions (see Appendix E), and the discussion of results (Dodson, 2007; Garcia Coll, et al., 1996; McLoyd, Hill, & Dodge, 2005). Selected elements of the integrative framework (adaptive culture, child characteristics, and family) as well as the second research question (related to emotional and social success), frame the discussion of the results of this study and how they overlap with each (see Tables 5 and 6) and its implications. A discussion of each organizing element as it relates to research question one (essences and themes) follows. Next, a discussion of how the essences and themes relate to participants' beliefs, goals, and practices around emotional and social development is presented followed by suggestions future research.

### **Purpose of Phenomenological Design**

As a methodological choice, “phenomenological research is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). Additionally, although research exists with African American families, a shallow to non-existence research base on African American parenting of male toddlers and African American parenting in two-parent homes necessitated an inquiry method that focuses on understanding the phenomenon of parenting African American male toddlers. Therefore, a phenomenological qualitative design provided an opportunity to learn from the participants what is significant to them about their experience (Creswell, 2009; Marshall, & Rossman, 2011).

### **Essences and Themes: Connections and Implications**

Three elements of the integrative model were selected to frame the discussion of the essences and related themes as shown in Table 5. These three elements: (a) adaptive culture, (b) child characteristics, and (c) family, were chosen from the eight element framework because of their consistent presence in the essences described by families. Earlier elements of the framework such as social position variables (i.e., race, social class, and ethnicity), social stratification mechanisms (i.e., racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression), segregation, and promoting/inhibiting environments are recognized implicitly as directly or indirectly influential within the elements chosen, and are therefore not listed (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). In addition, the final element of the framework, developmental competencies, is considered an outcome and is therefore not discussed in relation to the results of this study because child outcomes were not a study focus. The children of focus are young and while they have reached developmental milestones, this was not measured explicitly in this study.

Table 5

Comparison of Essences and Themes (Question 1) with Select Elements of the Integrative Model

Research Question 1: Beliefs and Practices of African American Parents with a Male Toddler		Selected Elements of the Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children (Garcia Coll et al., 1996)		
Essence (E)		Adaptive Culture	Child Characteristics	Family
E1	Fatherhood Motivation: Present, Active, and Different	x		x
E2	Child Outcomes/Goals Influence Present Parental Decisions	x	x	
E3	Lack of Time = Elevated Stress and Guilt			x
E4	Extended Family/Friends Provide Network of Support			x
E5	Current Perception of African American Male Cases Shadow on Parenting and Childhood	x		x
E6	Importance of Faith and Religion	x		x
E7	Shared Household Responsibility/Division of Labor			x
Other Themes (T)				
T1	Schedule			x
T2	Temperament	x	x	x
T3	Children with special needs	x	x	

## **Adaptive Culture**

Adaptive culture is a lifestyle mechanism families of color often develop to deal with social stratification and disparities in access to resources like jobs and child care (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Adaptive culture includes traditions, histories, migration, acculturation, and demands of the current context (Garcia Coll et al., 1996, p. 1896). The adaptive culture develops as a result of the history of a group (such as African Americans) and “current contextual demands posed by the promoting and inhibiting environments” (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996, p. 1904). For this study, African American parents with a male toddler described beliefs and practices that could be the result of their adaptive culture.

For example, in Essence 1, many of the fathers were motivated to create a home environment in which they are physically present and active in their child’s life. They also were motivated by their familial traditions and contexts as a child to exemplify different qualities as a father than they experienced. Their motivations created the culture of fatherhood they exist within. In addition, fathers in this study were from various income levels, described engaging in literacy and physical play activities with their toddler sons, and also shared child caregiving activities they engage in such as bedtime routines. Though previous literature found similar results with married, low-income African American fathers of young children (e.g., Leavell, Tamis-LeMonda, Ruble, Zosuls, & Cabrera, 2012), this study provides additional details about the daily home lives and culture of fatherhood for African American fathers of male toddlers, described more in the family section below. This has implications for policies and early

childhood teacher training to assist with better understanding the role of African American fathers in their families and households and what motivated them to make specific childrearing decisions for their young sons.

For Essence 2, the contextual demands of the current educational climate of accountability and high expectations for preschool and school age children likely influence these African American parents to ensure their toddler sons are ready to face grade school in knowledge and behavior (Stipek, 2006). In addition, most chose to breastfeed their son's not only to provide optimal nutrition, but to also provide an emotional connection between mother and son. Parenting decisions were grounded in a feeling that they needed to prepare their sons for the future academically and behaviorally. In one area, discipline, participants were similar. Based on several studies with mothers and their young children, physical discipline is employed as a common discipline technique across families of every racial and ethnic group and with children of different ages (Dodge, McLoyd, & Lansford, 2005). Participants in this study provided similar reasons for engaging in physical discipline as single, low-income mothers of infants and toddlers, including the influence of elders, a belief the child should be compliant, and the notion that they benefitted from physical discipline as a child (Isapa, & Halgunseth, 2004). This study corroborates previous research on the use of physical discipline with African American male toddlers and extends it because of its inclusion fathers *and* mothers as well as families from a wide socioeconomic background. Furthermore, mothers and fathers reported in their joint interview that, although one or the other generally functions as the primary disciplinarian, they each supported the use of

physical discipline with their toddlers, despite the fact that they also were concerned about its effectiveness and the frequency with which they should use it.

In Essence 5, parents reflected on what it means to them to be an African American male in the United States and how society perceives this group. Stratification mechanisms such as societal prejudice and bias prominently emerged from the data as influential forces on families raising African American toddlers because of the pressure they feel to help their sons overcome and challenge negative views. In addition, traditions and legacies, as well as American history, converge causing parents of a wide socioeconomic status to feel the sting of discrimination and possible future prejudice based on race despite having financial means. Parents described ways they plan to socialize their toddlers to understand how to be a successful African American male and defy stereotypes and biases. While two couples were already involved in preparing their older sons, most of them discussed the projected future need they felt to prepare their toddlers to face possible challenges later in life. For families with a child with special needs, the culture of their family is influenced by the child in addition to race, ethnicity, and other factors. Acknowledgement of the existence of aspects of an adaptive culture in African American parents with a toddler son could help researchers, policymakers, and interventionists better understand families and why they have the goals and priorities they do. For example, when an African American parent of a toddler engages in a practice or expresses a belief that is unfamiliar, it could be related to the complex nature and development of an adaptive culture to deal with raising a child in United States which contains discrimination, bias, and prejudice. Collectively, as described, parents provided

mutual features of their daily lives and described ways in which they, as African American parents with toddlers, integrate aspects of their history and traditions into reactions and expressions of parenting and family life.

The field of early childhood and early childhood special education are guided by several international organizations that set priorities to help shape the field and its work with young children and families. Two of these organizations, the Council for Exceptional Children/Division of Early Childhood (CEC/DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), have position statements that include recommendations for working with young children and families from all backgrounds and racial and ethnic groups. Their position statements stress the importance of professionals being welcoming, respectful, and knowledgeable in interactions and collaborations with families (DEC, 2010; NAEYC, 2009). For DEC (2010), familial values, culture, and language are stressed as important family characteristics that can enrich and guide professionals. In the NAEYC statement (2009), the importance of including an examination of one's own culture as well as an understanding of the culture of children and families is integral for the successful preparation of early childhood professionals. Both position statements imply a need for current, relevant research with diverse families, such as African American families with toddler sons, to support the advancement of the field of early childhood. While direct interactions with children and families are best to achieve a deeper understanding of the variety present, early childhood professional preparation, through course texts and the inclusion of literature about families, must also represent the wide variability in family

life, especially in African American families. Recent key concept areas in early childhood teacher preparation include children with disabilities, diversity, and infants/toddlers (Early, & Winton, 2001). Since these concepts are considered extremely significant and are, therefore, being included more often in early childhood teacher preparation programs, it is important to continue to advance the research base in understanding the commonalities and differences in the family lives of African American families and those with a male toddler specifically (Lim, Maxwell, Able-Boone, & Zimmer, 2009; Early, & Winton, 2001). Not just familial culture, but a focus on adaptive culture and its importance in the lives of African American parents with a male toddler is crucial to continue to advance early childhood and early intervention teacher and professional preparation.

### **Child Characteristics**

Child characteristics include attributes such as age, gender, temperament, and health or disability status (Garcia Coll, et al., 1996). These are qualities that are influential to and influenced by other contextual factors such as the family, environments, and adaptive culture. Child characteristics are the foundation for Essence 2 due to the bidirectional nature of development as well as themes one and three that include descriptors parents used to discuss their son's temperament and how the child's diagnosis with special needs impacts their parenting. It is important to note that child characteristics of race (African American) and gender (male) were influential in parental decisions. Mothers and fathers possess similarities and differences in their parenting practices. Furthermore, race and gender, in this instance African American males, have been shown to matter in African

American parental interactions and goals and child outcomes such as parental supportiveness and toddler (e.g., Bocknek, Brophy-Herb, & Banerjee, 2009) and control and sensitivity of mothers (e.g., Tamis-LeMonda, Briggs, McClowry, & Snow, 2009). Therefore, parents consciously and unconsciously parent children differently based on child gender in addition to other child characteristics. Child and parent gender are important to consider in processing the results of this study because they are specific to African American parenting with male toddlers.

Many aspects of how participants described their sons in relation to their child rearing practices reflect the range of temperament characteristics in the literature (Gross, 2008). Parents described their sons in many ways including physically active, social, observers, easily upset, and agreeable. Some parents discussed how their toddler is similar to one of them or another family member, underscoring the belief of genetic as well as environmental factors that contribute to behavior (Wachs, & Bates, 2001). Although most of the studies on temperament in toddlers of various racial and ethnic groups took place in laboratory settings, relied on mothers as the primary parent reporter, and included mostly European American participants (Wachs, & Bates, 2001), results are similar to the reports of mothers and fathers in this African American sample. Since child temperament is the result of interaction between genetic and environmental factors and parental perception of temperament is related to how they report temperamental qualities, such an interaction is likely be occurring for participants (Gross, 2008; Wachs, & Bates, 2001). Although the purpose of this study was not to draw direct connections between genetic, environmental, and parental contributors to temperament, it did capture parental

descriptions of temperament and their assessment of possible genetic contributions. Parents connected their behavioral expectations and discipline to child behavior and temperament. Some felt their children needed discipline and guidance based on temperamental and developmental qualities. Parental connections to their own characteristics and those of other family members provide a glimpse into genetic contributions to temperament. More research is needed on temperament in African American toddlers that includes fathers, in addition to mothers, and that focuses on male toddlers.

Toddlers are beginning to display a wider range of emotions and are becoming more able to understand the emotions expressed by themselves and others (Lamb, Bornstein, & Teti, 2002). African American maternal supportiveness was similar for toddler sons and daughters, but only partially explained the changes in child emotion regulation over a year (Bocknek, Brophy-Herb, & Banerjee, 2009). More information about neighborhoods, stress levels, and relationships with others can assist with understanding additional contributors to emotion regulation. In this study, parents shared information about their stress levels related to balancing work and home and also described their sons' relationships with extended family members and caregivers. While direct connections to these factors and their sons' emotional development were not shared, information about parental stress and caregiver relationships provided additional texture to the context of the environments in which early emotional and social development occurs for the African American toddlers in participant families.

Since the inclusion of both mothers and fathers was an essential part of this study as well as its focus solely on toddler boys, it is important to describe the ways in which the salience of gender was prominent in the essences and responses of participants. African American couples instead of single parents, were chosen in this study to begin to fill the identified gap in knowledge about African American families with two parents in the home (Livingston, & AcAdoo, 2007; Marks, Hopkins-Williams, Chaney, Nesteruk, & Sasser, 2010). Also, African American boys were chosen due to the lack of knowledge about African American male toddlers and positive outcomes for African American boys. Relatedly, a few study results appear to be outcomes of study participant characteristics such as gender. For example, this study provided information related to gender socialization because the parents discussed their expectations for their sons' behavior as well as interactions between parents and sons. Some of the fathers shared aspects of their socialization around influencing their sons to be "rough and tough," being a role model to their sons, and ensuring their sons they show affection as well as their active presence in the home. Perspectives of African American fathers of toddler sons are missing in the literature base on African American families.

For the theme of children with special needs, aspects of the child's life described by participants could assist with more accurate determination of whether or not children qualify for services. For example, a toddler would receive early intervention through Part C, which are special education services for infants and toddlers. For one of the families, child health status, in this case prematurity, could be a factor in the development of special needs because their son was born early. However, families should be viewed

through child characteristics, family strengths, and adaptive culture to better understand child outcomes. Furthermore, it is important to note that the two families with a child with special needs were not drastically different from the other families in the study who did not have a child with special needs. All families shared similar childrearing beliefs and practices and goals for their child. Families with a child with special needs are also represented in each essence and theme due to being more similar than different to other participant families. For participants with a child with special needs, their lack of focus on their sons' delays during interviews and the observation, mainly referenced when directly asked about it, show the normative nature of the child's needs and a family focus on strengths and familial coping and functioning rather than one person or part of their family. It is also possible that since the special needs were mild, families' daily lives were not greatly affected as they did not need to address special needs, such as health or mobility necessities, and therefore, the child's needs were not prominent aspects of daily lives for these families. Nonetheless, accurate information about African American families should influence the development of culturally relevant interventions that acknowledge and celebrate family strengths (Stevenson, Winn, Walker-Barnes, & Coard, 2005). This study is a step to better understand African American families with a toddler with special needs.

### **Family**

Since family units were a focus of this study, it is not surprising that more of the essences and themes related to the family element of the integrative framework. One aspect of this element, family values, beliefs, and goals are the crux of this study.

However, other aspects such as family structure and roles and racial socialization were relevant. The most prominent aspects of family reflected in this study are (a) family structure and roles, including extended family and (b) racial socialization. These aspects of family life assist with understanding the dynamics of families of African American male toddlers.

**Family structure and roles.** Essence 7 is relevant for understanding the roles and responsibilities of each family member. Many participants described their roles as either mother or father as distinct, but also had overlap in the type of roles and responsibilities each had such as child care, cleaning, and cooking. While some mothers did most of the cooking in some households, in others, fathers primarily cooked the meals. This was reported in interviews and seen in observations with the families. These results support a budding line of research on more flexible gender roles in African American couples with an increased need to understand more about the variability that exists between families (e.g., Stanik, & Bryant, 2012).

For Essence 4, participants reported extended family members are an important part of their family. Extended family members are often prominent in the lives of African American families for fellowship, advice, and child care (Dilworth-Anderson, & Goodwin, 2005; McLoyd, Hill, & Dodge, 2005). Most of the participants in this study supported this notion, although distance and busy lives complicated these relationships because some families did not see extended family due to distance and lack of time while others traveled and had relatives who travel hundreds of miles monthly for visits. In addition, technology played a role with many families being able to have more frequent

contact with relatives who live far away through video chatting. Relationships with extended family were complex and varied among families. Nonetheless, for most families in this study, a frequent presence of extended family members in family life was important for participants. More research should be done to better understand the variety in the role of extended family for African American married and cohabitating couples and for African American families with toddlers.

**Racial socialization.** According to previous research on the use of racial socialization practices in African American families rearing young children (three-years-old to first grade), parents engage in variety of socialization practices depending on the age and gender of the child (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Caughy, Nettles, & Lima, 2011; Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004; Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008). Since this study did not measure constructs such as behavior, fact knowledge, and internalization, conclusions cannot be drawn about direct correlations from the practices parents used to child outcomes. However, similarly to Suizzo, Robinson, and Pahlke (2008), the parents in this study did not clearly report engaging in conversations or practices to prepare their toddler sons for racial bias, likely due to their son's age, although some feel they will need as they get older. However, some of the information shared by families such as descriptions of racial pride and behavioral and educational expectations could be developmentally appropriate aspects of racial socialization. Nonetheless, four of the six families mentioned socialization efforts through a preference for child care settings, neighborhoods, music, and/or club memberships that included children, families, and artists of many different racial and

ethnic groups, and African American in particular. Therefore, they are engaging in explicit racial socialization as well as *racial socialization planning* which includes practices and topics they feel they will need to focus on as their sons get older, but are not currently focusing on directly. Both are important because they acknowledge the desire of the parents to provide racial socialization to their sons and also supports the idea that parents feel socialization is and will be needed to assist their sons in being successful in life as African American makes. These socialization efforts are similar to those described in other studies of low-income and middle class families of preschoolers (Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004; Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008). Aspects of the family element are important to better understand the similarities and variation in these African American families with a toddler son in areas such as parental roles, extended family, and racial socialization to substantiate, challenge, and extend research previously done with African American single parents and older African American boys.

### **Essences and Themes: Emotional and Social Development**

Beliefs and practices shared by these African American parents of male toddlers through essences and themes in Table 6 highlight some of the ways families are working on child and familial goals that could positively influence emotional and social development. For instance, fathers felt their active presence in the home guiding their sons and taking part in daily life would be beneficial for their son's overall well-being and life trajectories. Such a presence could have positive influence on emotional and social development. In another example, most parents felt faith and religion were important for their son's life. Some felt their faith would support them by helping them

to be able to face life's challenges as an African American male. Since parents felt faith or religion could be a support for their son's in times of difficulty, it can be considered a mechanism that can sustain their son's emotional and social development by providing them with an outlet or support to manage their lives. Participating in organized religion as well as mentioning God, praying, and spirituality in this study aligns with previous research regarding the importance of religious institutions and the role of religion in coping with challenges in life (Mattis, 2005).

Although some families felt they would like to make changes to their daily schedule, each had a general schedule of eating, activity, and sleeping to assist with proper rest and development. Finally, the childrearing beliefs and practices described by parents included conscious efforts to prepare their children for academic demands and to insulate their young sons from what they may face as African American males. Therefore, it is likely that parental efforts will have an effect on emotional and social development.

Table 6

*Comparison of Essences and Themes (Question 1) with Emotional and Social Development (Question 2)*

Research Question 1: Beliefs and Practices of African American Parents with a Male Toddler		Research Question 2: Socialization and Emotional and Social Success
Essence (E)		Emotional and Social Development
E1	Fatherhood Motivation: Present, Active, and Different	x
E2	Child Outcomes and Goals Influence Present Parental Decisions	x
E3	Lack of Time = Elevated Stress and Guilt	
E4	Extended Family/Friends Provide Network of Support	
E5	Current Perception African American Male Cases Shadow	x
E6	Importance of Faith and Religion	x
E7	Shared Household Responsibility/Division of Labor	
Other Themes (T)		
T1	Schedule	x
T2	Temperament	
T3	Children with special needs	

### **Limitations**

This study is important because of its in-depth inquiry into the beliefs, practices, goals, and lives of African American parents with a male toddler. In order to increase the knowledge base with African American families and African American toddlers, multiple research methods are needed. This phenomenological qualitative research provided deep meaning into the lives of African American couples and yielded specific details about the nuances of importance in African American fatherhood and how the racialized American society implicitly and explicitly influences parenting for these families. However, it is important to mention limitations and possible ethical issues that can exist (Marshall, & Rossman, 2011).

First, this study included in-depth interviews with African American parents with a toddler son. Inherent in discussing personal beliefs and practices, it is not possible to determine how comfortable participants felt sharing their stories, and therefore how open they were in their interviews. However, it is important to note that more than one participant mentioned a need to purposely speak openly about a topic or extend their discussion of a topic they felt was important to them. In addition, many participants shared smiles and laughter during their interviews validating their feeling of ease. Nonetheless, it cannot be discounted that it is possible participants were not fully open during interviews or that they felt more or less comfortable or open in individual interviews as opposed to joint interviews.

Second, observations provide first-hand information about aspects of family life mentioned in the interview and were in a natural setting that the families are typically

located such as home or a community setting like the Children's museum. However, participants could have been affected by the presence of the researcher and therefore, one cannot guarantee what the researcher observed is what typically occurs within the family. Triangulation of data sources such as through observation and interview, as in this study, reduces the likelihood of observing and reporting isolated instances that do not typically occur.

Next, due to the methodological choice of phenomenology, a specific group likely experiencing a similar phenomenon was chosen and studied in depth. However, describing child development and parenting practices of one group of participants confirms what they shared, but does not attempt to make claims to groups outside of this. Contrarily, results of this study are similar to previous studies done with African American families with older children and some studies done with African American single parents and/or African American families in poverty. Additional research with this population will assist with determining how common their experiences are to other African American parents as well as what aspects of family life shared by participants is common in families of other racial and ethnic groups. These limitations are inherent with qualitative research and phenomenological studies, but should be clearly outlined due to the dangers they can present to study validity.

Finally, parents were recruited through contacts at partner child care facilities and programs and snowball sampling. Despite the incentive of a \$50 gift card, it was difficult to find two-parent household, African Americans with a toddler son. One possible reason is the busy nature of parents of young children and participation in a study could take

time from other tasks they need to complete. Also, it was not always clear whether or not partners were able to follow up with families, as some just handed out the recruitment flyer (Appendix B). Connecting with more churches and predominately child care facilities could yield additional participants in the future.

### **Future Research**

Future research directions and implications have been discussed earlier in this chapter, but are extended in this section. An important and deleterious product of social stratification mechanisms like racism is its accompanying psychological effects on the persons affected by it (Nyborg, & Curry, 2003; Utsey, & Payne, 2000). Although this was outside of the scope of this study, it is nonetheless an important aspect that can cause negative outcomes for populations affected such as African American males. Nyborg and Curry (2003) found that for 10 to 15-year-old African American boys, those who described experiencing racism showed more externalizing behaviors and higher exposure to racism led to hopelessness and lower self-concept. Though more research is needed in this area, African American parents of male toddlers in this study were aware of the need to prepare their sons to deal with prejudice and racism in the future. The perspectives of participants are important to begin to address the dearth of research with African American parents with male toddlers. Policies and future research should focus on assisting families by protecting very young children from the negative effects of social stratification mechanisms at systemic, national, and state levels to prevent the related effect on emotional and social development.

This research contributes to beginning to understand the dynamic nature of African Americans with male toddlers. However, since few studies focus on this population, additional research is needed to continue to understand more about the childrearing goals of African American parents and the development of their toddler sons to inform early childhood teacher education programs and policy-makers who should be motivated to review and include sound information that speaks to the variety of families, and in African American families particularly. In addition, longitudinally following two-parent African American families and very young African American children is needed.

Future research could include a focus on African American toddler girls in various familial configurations (two-parent, single parent, etc.). Also, since this study included only two families with a child with special needs, additional studies with African American parents with young children with disabilities would extend knowledge in this area. Studies that conduct more parent interviews (more than two per parent) or that conduct multiple joint interviews could be helpful to understanding more about the interplay of parental beliefs and the dynamics of how African American parents arrive at joint parenting goals with different and varied individual opinions. Finally, more observation of specific aspects in the daily lives of African American families and young children is needed.

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**APPENDIX A**

**SEARCH ENGINE KEYWORDS**

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**Combinations**

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- a. African American; male; social emotional development
- b. African American; male; social development
- c. African American; male; emotional development
- d. African American; boys; social emotional
- e. African American; preschool; social emotional
- f. African American; boys; social development
- g. Ethnicity; toddlers; social emotional development
- h. Boys; infants; social development
- i. Boys; infants or toddlers social development
- j. African American male; social emotional development
- k. African American male; social development
- l. Social development; African American; toddlers
- m. Infant; toddler; social development
- n. Infant; toddler; emotional development
- o. Boys: young children; social emotional development
- p. Boys; toddlers; social emotional development
- q. Toddlers; social emotional development
- r. Black; toddlers ; social emotional development
- s. Infant; toddler; social competence
- t. Shirley Brice Heath
- u. Patricia Hill Collins
- v. Sharon Darling
- w. Infants OR toddlers; child rearing; race
- x. African American; parenting
- y. Temperament; toddler
- z. Discipline; toddler; African American

**APPENDIX B**  
**RECRUITMENT FLYER**



University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Specialized Education Services Department

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH  
ON AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTING**

Fall 2013

Hello Parents!

I am a fourth year doctoral student in the Specialized Education Services department and a wife and mother of three young children ages, 2, 4 and 7 years. As part of my studies, I need to complete a study in an area of interest to me. This study, my dissertation, will focus on the beliefs and practices of African American parents with a toddler son. I would like to know more about your routines, beliefs, and opinions through interviews and an observation. My goal is to learn about your unique parenting practices in order to inform others (such as researchers, practitioners, and students) interested in promoting positive emotional and social development of young African American males. I will schedule interviews and the observation at a time that is convenient to you. You will also complete a questionnaire. Both parents need to participate. Total participation will be approximately 8 hours for mothers and 3 hours for fathers over 2 – 3 visits. Time for the observation may involve both parents. If you fit the following criteria, I would love to have you as part of my study:

- Second generation or greater African American mother and father
- In a married or cohabiting relationship
- Have 2-year-old son
- Child attends child care
- Resident of Greensboro, NC

Please complete the information below and I will contact you to set up our first meeting. If it is better for you to get in touch with me, please contact Sheresa Blanchard at (336) 207-1278 or [sbblanch@uncg.edu](mailto:sbblanch@uncg.edu). I look forward to speaking with you and learning more about you and

your family!

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance from, the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I am interested in participating in or learning more about the study.

(Please circle one)

Contact me

I will contact you

## APPENDIX C

## PARENT AND CHILD INFORMATION FORM

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

Child Information

1. Child Name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Child Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy) //20
3. Child Racial/Ethnic Group (Check all that apply)
- |   |   |                      |
|---|---|----------------------|
| Black/African American                            | White/European American                 | Asian/Asian American |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) | American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) |                      |
| Hispanic/Latin American                           |   |                      |
4. Health Care Provider Name \_\_\_\_\_
5. How did you choose health care provider? \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Educational Information

7. Name of child's center \_\_\_\_\_
8. How long has child been attending center? (circle)    0 – 3 months    3 – 6 months    6 – 9 months    1 year or more
9. Please list current teacher names and how long child been with each?
- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| Teacher 1: | Teacher 2: |
| Teacher 3: | Teacher 4: |
10. Disability (circle)    Yes (specify) \_\_\_\_\_    No
11. Does your child have an IFSP? (circle)    Yes    No    Unknown
- a. If yes, circle services your child currently or previously received.
- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Speech               | Physical Therapy    |
| Occupational Therapy | Educational Therapy |
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX D

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PLEASE REFLECT ON YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, THOUGHTS, AND OPINIONS TO ANSWER QUESTIONS. WHEN POSSIBLE, PLEASE RECOUNT A STORY OR CONVERSATION TO ILLUSTRATE YOUR POINT.

#### **Mother**

##### **Child: Temperament, Disposition and Relationships**

- 1) Please tell me about when (child) was born (e.g., pregnancy, birth, birth order).
- 2) Please tell me about your life right after (child) was born. (Probe: In what ways did your life change?)
- 3) Please tell me about (child). (Probe: As a baby, now; What makes him happy, unhappy, excited, frustrated)
- 4) Describe your child's relationships. (Probe: with you, sibling(s), other family members; like to do with others)
- 5) You listed (doctor) as your child's pediatrician. How did you choose Dr. \_\_\_\_\_? What do you like about (doctor)? How does (doctor) support your son's development?

##### **Child and Family: Daily Activities, Care, and Routines**

- 6) Describe your typical routine from when (child) wakes up until he goes to bed (Probe: bathing, meals, bedtime, and transport to and from child care including location and who is involved, Probe: What happens first, next, etc.?)
- 7) Does (child) usually sleep through the night?? (Probe: When he does not, what happens?)
- 8) What kinds of activities does your child participate in outside of your home? (play groups, school, church, the Y)
- 9) Describe time with extended family [Probe: Describe visits with extended family members such as meals, outings, home visits. Probe: How often do you see extended family?]

- 10) Describe time with fictive kin (friends who are like family) [Probe: Describe visits with fictive kin (friends who are like family) such as meals, outings, home visits. Probe: How often do you see fictive kin?]
- 11) What celebrations do you share as a family?
- 12) In what ways, if at all, do you rely on others (family, friends) to help with child(ren), household chores, finances, etc.?
- 13) Have you had any major life changes since your son was born? If so, please describe them. How did these changes affect your son?
- 14) Describe your main responsibility/role in the family.
- 15) What and/or who is the biggest influence on how you parent?

### **Father**

#### **Child: Temperament, Disposition and Relationships**

- 1) Please tell me about your life right after (child) was born. (Probe: In what ways did your life change?)
- 2) Please tell me about (child). (Probe: As a baby, now; What makes him happy, unhappy, excited, frustrated)
- 3) Describe your child's relationships. (Probe: with you, sibling(s), other family members; like to do with others)
- 4) You listed (doctor) as your child's pediatrician. How did you choose Dr. \_\_\_\_\_? What do you like about (doctor)? How does (doctor) support your son's development?

#### **Child and Family: Daily Activities, Care, and Routines**

- 5) Describe your typical routine from when (child) wakes up until he goes to bed (Probe: bathing, meals, bedtime, and transport to and from child care including location and who is involved, Probe: What happens first, next, etc.? Probe: Please describe dinner and bedtime in more detail. Probe: What does he usually do between routines?)
- 6) Does (child) usually sleep through the night?? (Probe: When he does not, what happens?, Probe: How much sleep does he usually get?)

- 7) What kinds of activities does your child participate in outside of your home? (play groups, school, church, the Y)
- 8) Describe time with extended family [Probe: Describe visits with extended family members such as meals, outings, home visits. Probe: How often do you see extended family?]
- 9) Describe time with fictive kin (friends who are like family) [Probe: Describe visits with fictive kin (friends who are like family) such as meals, outings, home visits. Probe: How often do you see fictive kin?]
- 10) What celebrations do you share as a family?
- 11) In what ways, if at all, do you rely on others (family, friends) to help with child(ren), household chores, finances, etc.?
- 12) Have you had any major life changes since your son was born? If so, please describe them. How did these changes affect your son?
- 13) Describe your main responsibility/role in the family?
- 14) How is your relationship similar or different from your relationship with your father?
- 15) What and/or who is the biggest influence on how you parent?

### **Both Parents**

#### **Child and Family: Daily Activities, Care, and Routines**

- 1) Is your son similar to someone else in the family? Who and why?
- 2) Describe things as a parent you feel you should (or would like to) do more of or less of?
- 3) What about parenting is most challenging/easy? Why?
- 4) Describe your strengths/weaknesses as a parent.
- 5) How do you strengths/weaknesses most affect you as a child?
- 6) How do you feel your role as a parent is the same or different from \_\_\_\_\_'s mother/father?

7) How do you handle discipline? (Probe: When do you discipline and how?)

**Region, Neighborhood, and Society**

8) How do you feel about living in Greensboro? (Probe: Describe places you visit as a family in Greensboro.)

9) What are some of the values you feel are important for your son to understand and possess? (Probe: How do you or will you share these values with your son?)

10) What do you feel are some of the common beliefs about African American boys?

11) How do you feel these beliefs affect or will affect your son?

12) What, if anything, have you or will you do to prepare your son to face these beliefs?

13) Tell me about a time you think you encountered bias and/or prejudice related to your son. (Probe: Describe what you thought and/or felt after this incident? How did you react?)

**Final Question**

14) Have you shared all of the significant thoughts, etc. of raising an African American male toddler?

For both parents of children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP),  
How has having a child with a delay/disability affected your parenting?

## APPENDIX E

### QUESTION INCLUSION DOCUMENTATION\*

\*Parent and Child Information form: Documentation for questions other than basic information of child name (#1), date of birth (#2), racial/ethnic group (#3), name of person completing form (#11), marital status of person completing form (#12), parent highest education level (#13), household members and ages (#14), and family income (#16). These questions serve to document that participants meet inclusion criteria.

<i>Parent and Child Information Form</i>	
Question	Sources
#4 – Health Care Provider Name	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (promoting/inhibiting environments); Difference in temperament: Wachs, & Bates, 2001
#5 – How did you choose health care provider?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (promoting/inhibiting environments ) Difference in temperament: Wachs, & Bates, 2001
#15 – Please list other close family members and fictive kin	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (family – structure & roles)
#17 – Please list your household street name and zip code	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (social stratification mechanisms – residential & promoting/inhibiting environments)
#18 – Are you a member of a religious organization?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (promoting/inhibiting environments ); Bronfenbrenner
#18a – If so, what is the name and how often do you attend?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (promoting/inhibiting environments )
#6 – Name of child’s center	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (promoting/inhibiting environments ); Bronfenbrenner Social ecology: Lamb, Bornstein, & Teti, 2002
#7 – How long has child been attending center?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (promoting/inhibiting environments ); Bronfenbrenner Social ecology: Lamb, Bornstein, & Teti, 2002
#8 – Please list current teacher names. How long has child been with each teacher?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (promoting/inhibiting environments ); Bronfenbrenner Social ecology: Lamb, Bornstein, & Teti, 2002
#9 – Disability label (specify) OR N/A	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (child characteristics – biological factors/ physical characteristics); critical disability theory Disproportionality: Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Gabel, Curcie, Powell, Khader, & Albee, 2009
#10 – Does your child have an IFSP?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (child characteristics – biological factors/ physical characteristics);

	critical disability theory Disproportionality: Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Gabel, Curcie, Powell, Khader, & Albee, 2009
#10a – If yes, circle services your child currently or previously received	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (child characteristics – biological factors/ physical characteristics); critical disability theory Disproportionality: Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Gabel, Curcie, Powell, Khader, & Albee, 2009

<i>Parent In-Depth Interviews</i>	
Interview Question	Source
<b>Child: Temperament, Disposition and Relationships</b>	
1) Please tell me about when (child) was born (e.g., pregnancy, birth, birth order).	Bronfenbrenner Epigenetics: Meaney, 2010; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010; Shonkoff, 2010
2) Please tell me about your life right after (child) was born.	Keizer, Dykstra, & Poortman, 2010
3) Please tell me about <u>(child)</u> .	Bronfenbrenner; Temperament: Houck, 1999; Gross, 2008 Bornstein and Cote, 2009 Behavior correlates: Mitchell and Cabrera, 2009 Emotion regulation: Bocknek, Brophy-Herb, & Banerjee, 2009; Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (child characteristics – temperament)
4) Describe your child's relationships.	Bronfenbrenner; Gross, 2008; Parlakian, & Seibel, 2002 Maybe peers: Eckerman, & Peterman, 2001; Early relationships with others: Butterfield, Martin, & Prairie, 2004; Field, 2007
5) You listed (doctor) as your child's pediatrician. How did you choose Dr. _____? What do you like about (doctor)? How does (doctor) support your son's development?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (promoting/inhibiting environments ) Difference in temperament: Wachs, & Bates, 2001
<b>Child and Family: Daily Activities, Care, and Routines</b>	
6) Describe your typical routine from when (child) wakes up until he goes to bed.	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (family – structure & roles); Bronfenbrenner; Possible materials of racial socialization: Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008; Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004 Epigenetics: Meaney, 2010; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010; Shonkoff, 2010 Child rearing: Brooks-Gunn, & Markman, 2005; Greder, & Allen, 2007; Fitzgerald, Mann, Cabrera, Sarche, & Qin, 2009; Liamputtong, 2007

7) Does (child) usually sleep through the night??	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (family – values, beliefs, and goals); Bronfenbrenner Variations in sleep: Harkness, and Super, 2002; Liamputtong, 2007; Rogoff, 2003
8) What kinds of activities does your child participate in outside of your home? (play groups, school, church, the Y)	Same as #6
9) Describe time with extended family. 10) Describe time with fictive kin (friends who are like family)	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (family – structure & roles); Bronfenbrenner; Gross, 2008; Parlakian, & Seibel, 2002 Racial socialization: Njoroge, Benton, Lewis, and Njoroge, 2009; Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Caughy, Nettles, and Lima, 2011
11) What are celebrations you share as a family?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (adaptive culture – traditions & cultural legacies) Bronfenbrenner Racial socialization: Njoroge, Benton, Lewis, and Njoroge, 2009; Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Caughy, Nettles, and Lima, 2011
12) In what ways, if at all, do you rely on others (family, friends) to help with child(ren), household chores, finances, etc.?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (family – structure & roles); Bronfenbrenner; Gross, 2008; Parlakian, & Seibel, 2002 Racial socialization: Njoroge, Benton, Lewis, and Njoroge, 2009; Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Caughy, Nettles, and Lima, 2011
13) Have you had any major life changes since your son was born? If so, please describe them. How did these changes affect your son?	Bronfenbrenner
14) Describe your main responsibility/role in the family.	Garcia Coll et al., 1996;
15) What and/or who is the biggest influence on how you parent?	Barnett, Shanahan, Deng, Haskett, & Cox, 2010; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Hill, & Tyson, 2008
16) How is your relationship similar or different from your relationship with your father?	Fleming, Kraemer, Gonzalez, Lovic, Rees, & Melo, 2002; Kerr, Capaldi, Pears, & Owen, 2009
17) Is your son similar to someone else in the family? Who and why?	Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Gagne, & Saudino, 2010
18) Describe things as a parent you feel you should (or would like to) do more of or less of?	Garcia Coll et al., 1996;
19) What about parenting is most challenging/easy? Why?	Barnett, Shanahan, Deng, Haskett, & Cox, 2010; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Hill, & Tyson, 2008
20) Describe your strengths/weaknesses as a parent.	Garcia Coll et al., 1996;
21) How do you strengths/weaknesses most affect you as a child?	Garcia Coll et al., 1996;

22) How do you feel your role as a parent is the same or different from _____'s mother/father?	Gross, 2008; Parlakian, & Seibel, 2002
23) How do you handle discipline? (Probe: When do you discipline and how?)	Dodge, McLoyd, & Lansford, 2005
<b>Region, Neighborhood, and Society</b>	
24) How do you feel about living in Greensboro? Probe: Describe places you visit as a family in Greensboro.	Bronfenbrenner; Neighborhoods: Caughy, Nettles, and Lima, 2011
25) What are some of the values you feel are important for your son to understand and possess?	Garcia Coll et al., 1996;
26) What do you feel are some of the common beliefs about African American boys?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (social stratification mechanisms); matrix of domination
27) How do you feel these beliefs affect or will affect your son?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (social stratification mechanisms); matrix of domination
28) What, if anything, have you or will you do to prepare your son to face these beliefs?	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (social stratification mechanisms & family – values, beliefs, and goals; racial socialization); Racial socialization: Njoroge, Benton, Lewis, and Njoroge, 2009; Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002; Caughy, Nettles, and Lima, 2011; Possible materials of racial socialization: Suizzo, Robinson, & Pahlke, 2008; Coard, Wallace, Stevenson, & Brotman, 2004
29) Tell me about a time you think you encountered bias and/or prejudice related to your son.	Garcia Coll et al. 1996 (social stratification mechanisms)
<b>Final Question</b>	
30) Have you shared all of the significant thoughts, etc. of raising an African American male toddler?	Moustakas, 1994
<b>For both parents of children with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)</b>	
31) How has having a child with a delay/disability affected your parenting?	Hodapp, 2002

**APPENDIX F****CONSENT FORM****UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO****CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT**

Project Title: Understanding Beliefs and Practices of African American Parents with Male Toddlers: A Focus on Emotional and Social Development

Project Directors: Sheresa Boone Blanchard and Belinda Hardin

Participant's Name:

**What is the study about?**

This is a research project. Your participation is voluntary. The purpose of this study is to learn about the beliefs, goals, and practices of parents of African American male toddlers related to emotional and social development. In addition, this information will provide knowledge about the unique parenting experiences of African American parents and their sons.

**Why are you asking me?**

I am inviting you to participate because you are a parent of an African American male toddler.

**What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?**

As a participant in the study, each mother and I will arrange a mutually convenient time to complete the Child and Family Information form and have the first interview, which will take approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours. Each father will also participate in one interview which will take approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours. The final interview will be with both parents present and will take approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours. Finally, an additional meeting to review the interview transcript summaries and clarifying any interview content will be scheduled with one or both parents. An observation with one or both parents will occur during one of the visits or during a separate visit. The interviews will take approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours and the final visits will take approximately one hour. While visiting each parent to complete forms and conduct interviews, I will take field notes that will include details about what I observe.

**Is there any audio/video recording?**

The interviews will be audio recorded for accuracy. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for the

recorded interviews cannot be guaranteed, although the researcher will try to limit access as described below.

**What are the dangers to me?**

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. However, you may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions or be embarrassed by the observations. You do not have to respond to any questions they may feel uncomfortable answering.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Sheresa Blanchard who may be reached at (336) 207-1278 or [sbblanch@uncg.edu](mailto:sbblanch@uncg.edu) or Belinda Hardin who may be reached at (336) 402-6680 or [bjhardin@uncg.edu](mailto:bjhardin@uncg.edu).

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

**Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?**

There are no direct benefits to participants in this study. The potential benefits of participating in this study are that you will have an opportunity to share your beliefs, goals, and experiences related to raising your son and his emotional and social development, which may help inform others (such as researchers, practitioners, and students) interested in promoting positive emotional and social development of young African American males.

**Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?**

Participation in this study will allow you to discuss your unique experiences raising an African American male toddler, particularly in relation to social and emotion development, to assist others (such as researchers, practitioners, and students) in learning more about you and your perspective.

**Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?**

Each family will receive a \$50 Visa gift card and book for child for participation in the study.

**How will you keep my information confidential?**

Each participant will be assigned a unique study ID number. Your privacy will be protected by using passwords for the electronic files. No personally identifiable information will be stored in the electronic files. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Project directors have a legal obligation to report child abuse. All paper data will be stored in a locked cabinet in 426 School of Education building, stored for three years, and purged and shredded at the conclusion of the three year storage period.

**What if I want to leave the study?**

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data, which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

**What about new information/changes in the study?**

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

**Voluntary Consent by Participant:**

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Sheresa Blanchard .

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX G**  
**OBSERVATION GUIDE**

Understanding Contributions to Emotional and Social Development  
of African American Male Toddlers Study

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/20\_\_

Participant ID Number: \_\_\_\_

Notes	Reflection