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Can't Just Send Our Children Out: Intensive Motherwork and Experiences of Black Motherhood

Mia Brantley

North Carolina State University, USA
Please direct correspondence to the author at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, North Carolina State University,
1911 Building, Raleigh, NC 27695 USA; email: mia.brantley@ncsu.edu.

ABSTRACT

Race and racism play an integral role in shaping mothering practices. Specifically, motherwork examines how Black mothers use strategies and practices to shield children from, as well as help them navigate through, experiences of racism. The necessity of these mothering practices may be fundamental in how motherhood is experienced for Black women. This study used qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews with 35 predominantly middle-class Black mothers of children in adolescence and young/emerging adulthood. A grounded theoretical and Black feminist approach was taken to analyze data. Black mothers take on numerous laborious and exhaustive strategies to shield their children from racism through what I theorize as the concept of *intensive motherwork*. I define intensive motherwork as the exhaustive efforts and effects of Black mothers protecting and empowering their children and themselves in the face of anti-Black racism. Intensive motherwork can be seen in three broad themes: (1) protective mothering, (2) resistance mothering, and (3) encumbered mothering. This work expands current discourse on Black families by highlighting the overlap between the intensive nature of Black women's mothering, the laborious practices that are deployed, and the role of race and racism on Black women's mothering experience.

KEYWORDS: Black families; motherhood; inequality; socialization; identity.

> "That's the difference in parenting, that we always have to be on the defense.... We don't have that luxury of just sending our [children] out into the world." – Anna

Historically, dominant definitions and research on mothering limited our understandings of motherhood to a universal and exhaustive practice that places confines on the lives of women (Hays 1996; O'Reilly 2004). This prevailing idea of motherhood is referred to as *intensive mothering*, a child-centered and labor-intensive ideology where mothers are largely responsible for nurturing and cultivating their child, even at the expense of its financial and physical toll (Ennis 2014; Hays 1996). However, a growing body of scholarship looked for an intersectional understanding of how race influences mothering practices. More specifically, the work of Black feminist scholars sought to center the experiences of Black women within family scholarship in an effort to remove racist boundaries on "good" mothering (Collins 1996; Dow 2016; Few 2007; James 1993; Rodriguez 2016). Collins

(1996) developed the concept of *motherwork,* the practices that Black mothers deploy to fight for the survival of their children in the face of micro- and macro-level structures that perpetuate racism and inequality. By extension, *racial socialization,* defined as the messages provided to children regarding attitudes, values, and beliefs around race (Hughes et al. 2006), is closely related to current understandings of Black women's motherwork. Because Black mothers play a salient role in racially socializing their children in an effort to protect them from the various forms of racism (Caldwell et al. 2002; Dow 2019; Edwards and Few-Demo 2016; Hall 2018; Malone Gonzalez 2019), motherwork is a particularly beneficial framework for understanding Black women's mothering.

Recent research provides important insight into how race and motherhood intersect distinctly for Black women, but this body of work could be expanded in the following ways. First, past work has sought to examine the ways that racially marginalized mothers engage with intensive mothering ideologies (Dow 2016; Elliott, Powell, and Brenton 2015; Randles 2021); however, there is room for extension by exploring the connectedness between practices deployed to protect Black children and generalized notions of mothering. Additionally, studies regarding racial socialization and motherwork practices often center its benefits for children, such as increased self-esteem (Bailey-Fakhoury 2017) and increased academic success (Wang et al. 2020), but this limits current understandings of how these efforts shape Black women's experiences of motherhood. Therefore, this study explores the role of race and racism in influencing Black women's identity as mothers. To capture the complexity of Black motherhood due to anti-Black racism, I ask the following research question: Given the laborious nature of strategies and practices used to protect Black children, how do Black mothers perceive the motherwork they enact shaping their experience of motherhood?

This inquiry is imperative because current studies of Black women's motherwork and racial socialization efforts have rarely questioned how these efforts shape the experience of motherhood. In doing this, I seek to understand what Black mothers do to contend with the threat of racism on their children, and how these efforts shape the mothers' experiences. Most commonly, scholars have highlighted how Black women's mothering is distinct from early conceptualizations of intensive mothering (Dow 2016, 2019; Elliott et al. 2015; Hamilton 2020). To expand this scholarship on race and motherhood, I demonstrate through my introduction of the concept of *intensive motherwork* – the exhaustive efforts and effects of Black mothers protecting and empowering their children and themselves in the face of anti-Black racism – that the experiences of mothers in this study lie in the overlap of intensive mothering and motherwork. Specifically, the labor of Black mothers to maintain the success and safety of their children is both a form of protection, and an act of resistance, due to the ubiquitous nature of racism in Black women's motherhood. Through the narratives of Black mothers, I find that Black women's intensive motherwork powerfully shapes their experience of motherhood, while also providing a space to resist historical and racist notions of Black mothering.

BACKGROUND

Intensive mothering practices capture the highly gendered and intentional efforts mothers engage to ensure the well-being of their children (Ennis 2014; Hays 1996; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2020). Current understandings of mothering for Black women recognize the saliency of race and racism within that process. More specifically, although much of the family sociology literature focuses on intensive mothering as a dominant mothering ideology (Damaske 2013; Ennis 2014; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2020), a growing body of scholarship finds its foundations in the work of Black feminist scholars who suggest that Black women's motherhood is distinct due to the realities of anti-Black racism (Bailey-Fakhoury 2017; Dow 2019; Hamilton 2020). The theory of motherwork argues that race and racism play an integral role in defining and transforming motherhood and mothering practices for women of color (Collins 1996). Additionally, few studies have extracted how this motherwork may influence Black women's experiences of motherhood. Through this extending of a motherwork conceptual framework, I review the current literature on intensive mothering and Black women's motherwork, specifically underlining motherwork's relevancy to racial socialization, to highlight the role of motherwork in the lives and everyday experiences of Black mothers.

Intensive Mothering

The dominant ideology in sociology used to define mothering stems from Hays' (1996) work on intensive mothering as the defining guideline of motherhood. The intensive mothering ideology suggests that "good" mothers should place caregiving as a central aspect of motherhood (Hays 1996). More specifically, intensive mothering is a child-centered, labor intensive, emotionally engrossing, and financially costly ideology where mothers are largely responsible for nurturing and cultivating their child (Ennis 2014; Hays 1996). These practices primarily involve preparing children for particular academic and social futures – e.g., successful careers, and they include mothers being particular about the social activities in which their children engage (Ennis 2014). The work of Blair-Loy (2003) points to the selflessness from women regarding their children as a significant marker of intensive mothering. The expectation that mothering requires full-time dedication to the well-being of their children lends to the exhaustive nature of intensive mothering practices (McCormack 2005). However, although intensive mothering has been seen as the dominant view of motherhood, this ideology does not fully capture the extent of Black women's mothering. Specifically, due to the lack of attention paid to the role of anti-Black racism in the lives of Black families, intensive mothering is limited in its scope to recognize the multi-faceted nature of Black women's mothering.

Prior studies have suggested that intensive mothering is a race- and class-neutral standard of motherhood that all mothers attempt to meet (Damaske 2013; Hays 1996; McCormack 2005). Yet, intensive mothering has long been centered on white women's motherhood. Moreover, intensive mothering practices, such as placing children in extracurricular activities, has been considered a privilege among the middle-class (Lareau 2011). More recent understandings of intensive mothering indicate that these practices extend beyond the economically affluent (Elliott et al. 2015; Nomaguchi and Milkie 2020). Additionally, due to the potentially high stakes of neglecting intensive parenting practices, such as physical or social harm to one's child, mothers feel pressured to engage in these practices without consideration of themselves (Elliott et al. 2015). However, because of the centering of white mothers within the intensive mothering literature, scholars began to question the merit of these practices with mothers of other races.

Black Women's Motherwork and Racial Socialization

Although intensive mothering has dominated discourse on mothering in sociology, this dominant definition of motherhood has limited our understanding of the unique experiences of Black women. Scholarship around intensive mothering focuses primarily on the social success of children, such as gaining independence, achieving academic accolades, and securing desirable career placement (Ennis 2014; Hays 1996). In contrast, Black women's practices look to ensure survival of children through safeguarding their mental, emotional, and physical well-being due to an anti-Black society (Bailey-Fakhoury 2017; Collins 1996; Dow 2019; Edwards and Few-Demo 2016; Hughes et al. 2006; Malone Gonzalez 2020). In response to the lack of family scholarship focusing on Black women, Black feminist scholars committed to elucidating the effects of race on mothering, which was rooted in the desire to provide a necessary visibility to the extensive labor of Black mothers and to center their experiences (Collins 1996; Davis 1983; Few 2007; Johnston and Swanson 2003; Jones 1985; Roberts 2014a; White 1999). Additionally, the controlling image of the *superstrong Black mother* (Elliott and Reid 2016) suggests that the focus of Black mothers may be limited to the well-being of their families, which leaves little room for them to care for themselves (Collins 2002; Elliott et al. 2015). Being "strong" is an imposed aspect of Black women's identity, specifically the ability to tirelessly persevere (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007). Building on and extending Dow's foundational work (2019) exploring the protective practices of middle- and upper-class Black mothers with adolescent children, I use qualitative data to explore how the necessity of these racialized strategies Black mothers deploy influences their own experiences of motherhood.

Nash (2018) asserts that Black feminist theorists, in centering Black women, reimagined Black motherhood as a powerful force that resisted society's attempt to relegate Black women to a place of despair due to the multiple forms of oppression they faced. The reconceptualization of Black motherhood led to Collins' (1996) theory of "motherwork." According to Collins (1996), motherwork focuses on how race and racism play an integral role in defining and transforming the overall well-being of Black families. Additionally, motherwork centers Black women by focusing on the practices Black

mothers use to ensure the success and survival of their children in the face of racism, such as racial socialization The(Edwards and Few-Demo 2016). Although not always using the language of "motherwork," scholarship focusing on the racial socialization of Black children highlights practices Black mothers use to protect their children from, or help them navigate, racism (Caldwell et al. 2002; Grills et al. 2016; Harris and Amutah-Onukagha 2019; Hughes et al. 2006). Although racial socialization is founded predominantly in psychological research, I present the clear overlap in both racial socialization and motherwork literature to shed light on the complex nature of Black women's mothering.

Physical Survival

One aspect of Black women's motherwork is physical survival. Ensuring the physical survival of one's children is a general expectation of motherhood. However, the looming threat of anti-Black racism over the lives of Black families, such as state-sanctioned violence, is a constant reminder that physical survival should not be assumed for Black children (Collins 1996; Gurusami 2019; Malone Gonzalez 2019; Roschelle 2017; Smith 2016). Due to the persistent threat of racism in multiple domains, Black mothers' fears of racism and racialized violence resulting in the death of their children, requires additional mothering practices to shield their children (Lorde 1984; Malone Gonzalez 2019; UnderHarris and Amutah-Onukagha 2019). Additionally, several studies exploring the racial socialization practices of Black mothers reveal the similarities between motherwork and racial socialization (Allen and White-Smith 2018; Berkel et al. 2009; Berrey 2009; Dow 2019; Gurusami 2019; Harris and Amutah-Onukagha 2019; Roschelle 2017; Russell-Brown 1998). For example, Harris and Amutah-Onukagha (2019) highlight how Black mothers pass down strategies, such as promoting mistrust and skepticism, to their sons in an effort to protect them if they were to have a police encounter. These practices encompass both motherwork, efforts to protect and empower children, as well as a particular aspect of racial socialization conceptualized as preparation for bias.

Collective Empowerment

A second aspect of motherwork is collective empowerment of Black children and community, which has often been a focus of Black mothers (Berkel et al. 2009; Collins 1996; Davis 1983; Jones 1985; Lorde 1984; White 1999). Motherwork centers Black women's motherhood as an area to resist oppression, instead of focusing on motherhood removing individual power. Collins (1996) asserts that the struggle to ensure the survival of their children, as well as thwarting the racist narratives told to their children, are persistent themes of maternal empowerment for Black women. This aspect of motherwork intersects with features of racial socialization, such as instilling racial and cultural pride, as well as preparation for bias, by providing narratives to assist in navigating racist institutions. Indeed, Black mothers make numerous efforts to combat the negative stories told to their children about the social location of Black people in the United States (Berkel et al. 2009; AfricanEdwards and Few-Demo 2016; Elliott and Reid 2016; UnderHarris and Amutah-Onukagha 2019; Powell and Coles 2020; Stevenson and Arrington 2011). Specifically, the work of Powell and Coles (2020) found that Black mothers were hyper-aware and skeptical of the role of educators in instilling confidence in their children, which led to vigilance in the form of promoting empowering counter-narratives to ensure their children did not internalize the anti-Black racism encountered. Combating the destructive narratives Black children receive from social institutions provides maternal empowerment by thwarting these harmful narratives. Although this prior scholarship elucidates the common practices of Black mothers to empower Black children in the face of threatening social forces, there is still room for expansion by exploring this role of this hyperawareness in how their motherhood is experienced. Understanding how the constant need to protect and empower their children influences their motherhood provides a necessary insight into the insidious nature of racism in the lives of Black families.

Identity

Black women's motherwork in the home serves as a form of resistance to external systems of oppression (Collins 1996), which consists of fostering their children's racial and cultural identity in the midst of a society that tends to devalue them. For example, Black mothers will teach their children

techniques to navigate and survive experiences of racism, while ensuring such lessons do not come at the cost of confidence and dignity (Bailey-Fakhoury 2017; Dow 2019). Contemporary scholarship on racial socialization has found that Black women continue to instill confidence in their children, as it remains vital to their protection and empowerment through lessons surrounding embracing phenotypic features or providing positive racial representation within the home (Bailey-Fakhoury 2017; Berkel et al. 2009; Edwards and Few-Demo 2016; Elliott and Aseltine 2013; Elliott and Reid 2016; Gurusami 2019; Harris and Amutah-Onukagha 2019; JoAnne Banks-Wallace 2001; Roschelle 2017). More specifically, Black mothers consistently teach their children to positively view their Blackness through role-modeling or specific items within the home, such as books and dolls, which have been found to promote positive psychological well-being (Bailey-Fakhourey 2017) and a positive sense of belonging (Edwards and Few-Demo 2016) among children. Acknowledging the work of Black mothers in building a positive racial identity among their children is necessary. However, with much of the racial socialization scholarship focusing on how this work protects and empowers children, there is still much to examine on the ways Black mothers are also using motherwork practices to empower themselves through motherhood, which is important in understanding the unique experience of mothering for Black women.

Although efforts promoting physical survival, collective power, and identity represent the common practices of Black mothers to protect and empower Black children in the face of threatening social forces, we have a limited understanding of how the need for motherwork and racial socialization impacts their mothering experience. Further examining the role of motherwork in Black mother's formation of their identity as mothers can provide necessary insight into the multiple ways that racism shapes Black families, while also highlighting how motherwork may be used to protect and empower *themselves*, which is also important in understanding the unique experience of mothering for Black women.

METHODS

I draw from 35 in-depth interviews with Black mothers across the continental United States with at least one child in adolescence or emerging/young adulthood (ages 10–24). The study focused on mothers with at least one child in adolescence or emerging/young adulthood because children within this age range have: (1) an increased independence, socially and financially, in comparison to children under ten years of age, while still (likely) maintaining more physical closeness through increased likelihood of living at home or in close vicinity; and (2) better ability to articulate and communicate their experiences with close others, which may increase the awareness of their mothers (Hughes et al. 2006). Additionally, this age group is potentially engaging in activities that can be perceived as dangerous for Black children. Due to increased exposure to racism or racialized violence through these activities, such as playing outside without supervision or driving, mothers are more likely to deploy motherwork with their children within this age range (Gurusami 2019; Harris and Amutah-Onukagha 2019; Hill 2001; Smith 2016). Additionally, Black children in adolescence and emerging/young adulthood start to become more embedded within social institutions, such as schools, which are also a source of concern and fear for mothers (Dow 2019).

Following IRB approval and verbal informed consent from each participant, I conducted interviews between 2019 and 2021. The sampling frame aimed to include a diverse sample of perspectives of mothers with adolescent and emerging/young adult children. I recruited participants using a variety of strategies, including email outreach, snowball sampling, social media postings on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using the hashtags: #BlackMoms, #BlackWomen, #BlackFamilies. After each interview, I provided participants with a flyer to pass along to other mothers who might be interested in participating in the study and meet the recruitment criteria. I conducted all interviews using a medium of the participant's choice. The sample size was chosen in line with thematic saturation (Goldberg and Allen 2015). I conducted three interviews in person in the participants' homes, 26 interviews via Zoom video call, and six interviews over the telephone. Participants were compensated with a $25 gift card, and pseudonyms were given to protect anonymity.

Table 1 shows that the majority of mothers have both daughters and sons, with the average age of the child(ren) being 17 years old, and all participants were the biological mother of their child(ren).

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of Participants (N = 35, mean age = 46 years, and modal number of children = 2)

Category	Sub-category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Partnership Status	Married	17	49
	Divorced/Separated	11	31
	Single/Never Married	6	17
	Widowed	1	3
Highest Degree Attained	Some college	2	5
	Associate's degree	2	6
	Bachelor's degree	8	23
	Master's degree	15	43
	PhD or Professional degree	8	23
Household Income	Less than $50K	9	26
	$50K to under $85K	8	23
	$85K to under $100K	2	5
	$100K or more	16	46
Gender of Child(ren)	Both daughters and sons	16	46
	Only sons	11	31
	Only daughters	8	23
Geographic Region	South	17	49
	Northeast	9	26
	Midwest	5	14
	West	4	11

Note: Mean age of children = 17 years; All children were the biological offspring of their mothers.

The mothers in this study are predominantly middle-class, with most of them holding an advanced degree and having a household income greater than $85,000, where the median household income for Black Americans in 2020 was $47,000 (Shrider et al. 2021). The advantages and challenges of the study sample are discussed further in the limitations section of this article. A full demographic table, including participant pseudonyms and ages, can be found in the appendix.

I used an interview guide to maintain consistency within the topic and questions discussed within each interview, while also allowing the semi-structured format of interviews to permit flexibility (Charmaz and Belgrave 2012). The semi-structured interviews were divided into three broad sections that covered several topics, such as: how mothers define and understand motherhood and who influenced those ideas, how motherhood differs based on race, how race shapes their child(ren)'s life, and how their child(ren)'s experiences of racism impact their well-being.

For the present study, I focused on aspects of the interview that discuss mothers' understandings of how race shapes their motherhood and mothering practices. All interviews were coded using "NVIVO" qualitative software. I used both inductive and deductive methods closely tied to grounded theory (Charmaz 2006), as well as a Black feminist theoretical framework, to analyze the narratives of the mothers in this study. Through a Black feminist lens, I analyze the narratives of Black women to understand the ways racism impacts parenting and identity; center their experiences of motherhood as unique by validating the necessity of their stories without a comparison group; and expose the vicarious impact racism has on Black families in the United States. Through their stories, I explored what particular practices mothers deploy around their children's experiences of racism, as well as how they viewed these efforts influencing their experiences of motherhood.

Data analysis was done through an iterative process that allowed for both inductive and deductive coding. In line with Charmaz (2006), after coding a number of interviews, I would engage in analytic memo writing to analyze emerging codes and concepts to gauge any necessary additions of questions or probes to my interview guide. After each interview I noted my initial thoughts, feelings, and

understandings surrounding the interview. I used Otter.ai transcription software to transcribe interviews. Transcripts were then be cleaned by going over the audio and video (when applicable) recording of the interview and correcting any discrepancies, as well as the addition of gestures or facial expressions. After my initial coding process, I began to code map using the analytic memos as a guide. The code mapping consisted of focus and axial coding that allowed me to thematically reorganize codes. Specifically, axial coding is defined as the development of codes linking (sub)categories within and between participant narratives (Charmaz 2006:60). An example of this is an in-vivo code captured by one participant who stated, "a mom is so many things," in reference to her general expectation around motherhood, as well as specific racialized experiences. I use this as a sub-category to categorize the multiple roles that participants discussed they must play in their children's lives, which then fit under the larger theme of *encumbered mothering*. Additionally, I also used several demographic factors as axial codes, such as marital status and social class – more specifically as they related to education and income. Finally, I generated a framework from the broader categories mapped. These theoretical codes included participants' expectations of motherhood, racialized mothering practices, as well as the impact on mothering experience.

RESULTS

Black mothers must contend with generalized notions of motherhood, such as caretaking and nurturing, while also navigating the presence of racism within their family life. In this article, I highlight how Black women are engaging in intensive mothering and motherwork simultaneously, which influences their own identity and experiences of motherhood. Within the mothers' narratives were distinctive, all-encompassing practices that were used to protect their children. These practices display the interconnectedness between concepts of intensive mothering and motherwork, specifically the overlap between the consuming efforts to ensure the success of one's child and racialized mothering practices to ensure the (emotional, mental, and physical) survival of one's child. Black women's mothering experiences produce an amalgamation of these two concepts, which I refer to as *intensive motherwork.* At the nexus of intensive mothering and Black women's motherwork, I posit that intensive motherwork exposes the ways that systems of inequality, such as race and anti-Black racism, permeate the lived experiences of Black families. Furthermore, intensive motherwork underlines, not only how race intersects with motherhood to reveal an aspect of mothering that is specifically impacting Black women, but also how the gender of their children influences this process. While the practices identified were reflective of the larger literature on racial socialization, additional themes highlighted the ways racism impacts the mothers and their mothering experience. The analysis reveals three primary, non-mutually exclusive aspects and effects of intensive motherwork: (1) *protective mothering* – participants discuss the practices deployed to assist their children in navigating and mitigating anticipated experiences of racism; (2) *resistance mothering* – participants use tools of motherwork, such as building a strong cultural identity, as well as educating their children utilizing positive images of Blackness, to both challenge racist notions of mothering and manage the potential racialized parenting stress experienced; and (3) *encumbered mothering* – participants discuss how they are unable to enjoy the full range of motherhood, including the achievements of their children, because of the reality of anti-Black racism in the lives of their families that produces the need for them to consistently be hyperaware.

Overall, intensive motherwork reflected mothers deploying both emotional and physical practices, using the tools of motherwork to empower themselves by attempting to regain control of their motherhood and familial experience in the face of structural barriers, and negotiating the necessity of these practices while recognizing the restrictions they place on their mothering experiences.

Protective Mothering

Within the narratives of the mothers was evidence of distinct practices deployed to assist their children in navigating experiences of racism in hope of protecting them and ensuring their welfare. Because all 35 mothers anticipated that their children would experience some form of racism over the life course, some mothers looked to be hypervigilant regarding protecting and preparing their children. The anticipatory practices mothers deployed included: delaying or restricting milestones/activities, as well

as teaching and encouraging agency. These efforts overlapped with traditional notions of intensive mothering; however, the difference lies in that these practices were founded in race, specifically the anticipation of racist experiences. For example, Claire, mother of son (17) and daughter (13) discusses how when it was time for her son to obtain his driver's license, a rite of passage for many teenagers, she deliberately delayed this process: "I procrastinated, like deliberately, because I was afraid of him driving; and he kept going, 'well, I thought we were going?' I was like, I'm not ready. I deliberately held that off... I was afraid, you know? I still am." Claire chose to delay her son getting his license because she knew that would lessen her ability to control his environment.

Claire's fear encapsulates a reality that many Black mothers experience when it is time for their children, especially sons, to begin driving. Although all of the mothers who discussed the desire to control their children's interactions while driving were not delaying, they all looked to restrict certain aspects via "the talk," which is colloquially known as a conversation between Black parents and their children regarding police interaction. Aria, mother of sons (ages 23 and 15) and daughters (19 and 17), detailed "the talk" she had with her sons in an effort to control their environment and appearance: "You're Black in America.... Do all of your tasks during the day, don't make any rash turns, take your hoodie off." Additionally, participants were not solely concerned with milestones, such as driving. For some mothers, the concerns lie in their children participating in *all* types of activities that may seem "typical" for those their age, which included walking in their neighborhood, playing outside with friends, going to parties, attending sleepovers, and playing with toys in public spaces. These concerns led to some activities being restricted or off-limits altogether because of their recognition that there is an adultification of Black children, which removes their innocence in childhood (Epstein, Blake, and González 2017). Ton, mother of daughters (26 and 22) and son (25) highlights this when reminiscing on a time her son wanted to play outside with his friends:

> When we moved to [our neighborhood] it was a predominantly white neighborhood. My son's friends, most of them ended up being white. Me and my husband were like, "Okay, this is going to be challenging." When him and his friends would do things, we'd always have to tell him, you can't do the cut-through people's yards like they do. And he didn't understand it at first because these are his friends.... That was different. Again, my white neighbors didn't have to do that.

To Ton, the worry and pressure she feels to protect her son led to her restricting his behavior and activities, such as playing with friends. She continued to recall how these worries were heightened after the murder of Trayvon Martin because her son was close to his age during that time. Ton recalled her son preparing to walk to a friend's house: "I'm looking at my 17-year-old son in his navy-blue hoodie, and I was like, 'no, you can't... I'll take you over there.'" In addition to illustrating how racial stereotyping and vicarious experiences of racism evoked a desire to restrict her son, she also acknowledged the unique challenges this creates for Black mothers. Ton stressed that these are concerns and conversations her "white neighbors" were not having. Ton's account mirrored many of the mothers' narratives regarding how their fears and concerns around perceptions of their sons led them to employing restrictive practices.

Intensive mothering is often discussed as an all-encompassing type of child-rearing, where mothers use privilege and sacrifice resources, such as time, to ensure the betterment and success of their children. Intensive mothering practices often find mothers being selective or controlling of social activities for their children in an effort to gain social capital and opportunities that can be used in the future, particularly around gaining certain collegial opportunities (Hays 1996; Lareau 2011). However, the risk of not being restrictive is vastly different for Black mothers. Black women in this study are delaying and restricting activities in an attempt to shield their children from racism and its potentially dire consequences.

In addition to controlling activities, mothers also planned to teach their children agency in an effort to help them navigate racism. Even though intensive mothering practices also involve the encouragement of *agency*, defined as the ability to advocate for oneself and maintain control of their own outcomes in the midst of anti-Black racism, among children (Bucchia, Molander, and Peñaloza 2019). However, although the majority of mothers delaying or restricting activities were focusing on sons, most mothers who focused on teaching agency found this a necessary tool for their daughters. When

asked how she believes mothering differs by race, Wonder W., mother of son (23) and daughters (19, 13, and 10) expressed how she desires that her daughters be able to speak up for themselves. She stated: "I want to teach them how to be independent.... I'm trying to teach my girls that you've got to stand up for yourself and speak, instead of having your parent do it for you; and I'll say, 'I will support you on this.'"

Wonder's emphasis on teaching her daughters to speak up for themselves in the wake of experiences of racism reflected the mothering practices of several participants. For example, Candace, mother of two daughters (23 and 16), stated: "I just tell them to be resilient. I raise them to be resilient." Additionally, Candace expressed that when her daughters experience times of adversity, she always reminds them that "they are strong Black women." By teaching their daughters the importance of agency, mothers are hoping to mitigate their daughters feeling a lack of control when they are in racially hostile environments. This is further illustrated by Autumn, mother of daughter (10), expressing her fears and concerns surrounding her daughter's experiences in school.

> *Author*: How do you think race will shape your daughter's life?
> *Autumn*: There's gonna be false narratives. There are going to be people who tell her she is not smart.... Anybody who looks at her as a young Black girl is going to weaponize her. [They'll say], "Well, who are you? Whose jezebel are you?" I try to protect her as much as possible because, you know, I have to. I'm giving her a lot of the verbalization to deal with it... before she gets to be a teenager so [she] knows how to handle these situations.

Autumn recognizes the gendered stereotypes placed on many Black girls and women, such as the controlling image of the "jezebel," a trope stemming from the historical hyper-sexualization of Black girls and women (Collins 2002; Roberts 2014b).

Taking a Black feminist theoretical approach emphasizes the importance of recognizing Black women's responses to oppression, particularly in the wake of controlling images or stereotypes (Collins 2002; Dow 2015). Mothers in this study were hoping to protect their children from anti-Black racism based in gendered stereotyping of their children. Mothers who were delaying and restricting activities revealed the need for hyperawareness to assess unsafe environments or activities that could physically damage their sons. Moreover, concerns of mothers who are teaching their daughters agency highlights the hyperawareness that Black mothers possess regarding the gendered racism that their daughters will face, where teaching becomes a necessary tool of emotional survival.

Resistance Mothering

Motherwork is perceived as a necessity to ensure the emotional, mental, and physical survival of Black children, while also coming at a cost to the mothers deploying these practices. However, an aspect of intensive motherwork is attributing tools of motherwork and racial socialization, such as building a positive racial- and cultural-identity, as a way to contend with the burden of racism on their mothering. Mothers build this positive identity through a number of different methods, including providing a positive education on Black American culture to their children. The majority of mothers discussed building their children's identity and positive self-esteem rooted in race and culture. However, building a positive self- and cultural-identity is not only a protective tool for Black children, but it is also a site of empowerment that brings a sense of fulfillment to their motherhood. Black mothers expressed building a positive self-identity as a necessary tool for combatting the negative effects of racism on their mothering. Asia, mother of a son (17) and a daughter (13), stated: "My children are very much aware as to the role that they play within society, as well as how they're viewed. This comes specifically from my mothering. I have always preached self-love, self-promotion, Black excellence, things of that nature here within *my* home because I am aware of how they will be perceived in the public."

Mothers recognize the benefits that building identity has on their children, particularly in the face of the racism they will encounter outside of the home. However, it is important to note that the mothers are not assuming that their efforts completely remove them from the reality of anti-Black racism. Rather, the mothers view their homes as a place to challenge the narratives and racism that their children experience outside of their home. These efforts at building their children's sense of self

are areas in which they are able to regain control, as with Asia's saying, "in *my* home." While prior research has focused on the home being a site of oppression for mothers (Damaske 2013; Hays 1996; Hochschild and Machung 2012; Johnston and Swanson 2006), Black mothers use the home as an area of empowerment.

The home serves as a space to offer a counter-narrative, not only to their children, but also to themselves. Mothers discussed contending with several stereotypes surrounding Black motherhood, such as being "loud," "ratchet," or "ghetto." While they are unable to control how others perceive them, mothers empower themselves through cultural socialization tools that allow them to define who they are as mothers and the images they instill. Denise, mother of daughter (19), shared:

> For me as a Black woman, from toys to books to pictures in her room to dolls, I was very intentional about creating these spaces where she would look around and everywhere she looked, at least at home, there were going to be all of these beautiful Black faces. Different hues, sizes, hair textures, whatever, and this whole notion that Black is beautiful.... And to resist any attempt for anybody or anything to kind of shape a different narrative about that.

Denise explicitly expressed how she used her motherwork, particularly within her home, as an area for resisting systems of oppression that would attempt to devalue her and her daughter's Blackness by holding them to Eurocentric beauty standards. Similarly, Zoe, mother of sons (19 and 10), also explained how, as a Black mother, she offers counternarratives to the images of Blackness she is bombarded with outside of her home: "There are a lot of options of expression, whether it's Black hair, especially to express Black culture, that are available to them. I think that affects the environment without even saying anything. They can see African art and the way we decorate our home." Zoe's desire to make positive images of Blackness "normal" through cultural expressions, such as hair and art within the home, is another example of Black mothers taking hold of their children and motherhood in the face of racism.

Black mothers are actively fighting against the hold that racism seeks to have on their families. Veronica expresses how she discusses with her daughter (10) the importance of seeing herself as capable of achievement and success at her predominantly white school. For example, when her daughter was considering running for a position in student council, she chose to encourage her, even though her daughter was reluctant because "nobody else runs that looks like me." Veronica responded to her daughter by saying, "So, why don't you be the first?" Veronica continued by emphasizing, "We encourage her. Everything she wants to do. [We tell her] don't fear it, just do it. And when she came home, she said, 'Mommy, I'm a student council representative.'" This became a proud and fulfilling moment for Veronica because, through her teachings at home, Veronica was able to ensure that her daughter's confidence and self-esteem remain intact when in the presence of institutional anti-Blackness, which was also empowering for Veronica.

Additionally, Cynthia, mother of sons (14 and 12), stated that, although "our larger public systems are in fact racist," she does not center these systems or their violence within her home. Cynthia discussed how the most fulfilling times with her sons are when they are able to be joyful and find laughter in the day-to-day, which Cynthia encouraged for other Black mothers. When asked what advice she would offer to other Black mothers she said: "Find ways to celebrate Black joy. Constantly. Consistently. And center Black joy in your family as much as you can." Cynthia recognized the harms of racism and institutions that perpetuate it, but she also recognizes that racism removes control of her family from her. Seen through the "intensive motherwork" framework, encouraging and celebrating Black joy is an aspect of building a positive cultural identity that is a tool of resistance and empowerment for Black mothers in an effort to center Blackness within their households and fight to maintain control over their family life.

Through a Black feminist lens, the efforts of resistance in the home are viewed from the standpoint of the mothers in this study. Because Black feminist theory emphasizes the importance of Black women being seen as the experts regarding their own experiences (Collins 2002; Evans-Winters 2019), resistance mothering is a particularly important aspect of intensive motherwork. Contrary to generalized discussions of family life that label Black families as desolate, Black women are suggesting that their home is a space of joy and empowerment in the midst of multiple forms of racism and racialized violence.

Encumbered Mothering

All mothers in this study discussed engaging in some form of the aforementioned mothering strategies, but the need for these practices were always discussed within the context of race and racism. Although mothers expressed that core aspects of motherhood consisted of characteristics such as caretaking, nurturing, etc., they also discussed how their experience of motherhood was restricted due to their racialized realities that consisted of additional parenting efforts, which reveals a new aspect of mothering through the intensive motherwork framework.

Claire, a mother of a son (17) and daughter (13), discussed that mothers are generally thought to take on multiple roles. She began by stating, "a mom is so many things" and she followed up with an exhaustive list of roles and expectations of mothers, such as: "caretaker," "disciplinarian," and "friend." However, when asked how being a mother differs based on race, Claire clarified that as a Black mother she has to "be a bit more involved... more stern about things. We make sure we are teaching things at home, so when we are out, our kids know what to do." The "stern" parenting Claire emphasized is based in her fears of her children experiencing racism. More specifically, Claire expressed that these fears stem from the numerous publicized events of racialized violence against Black children. When asked what events has caused her to hold the fear she expressed, she explained:

> It is the numerous murders of the young Black kids. It has been all over the news. It's now in movies, like the Trayvons and just these different people, and they're in different places. So, what that told me is that it's not like this happens in one area or one place. This could be anywhere.

Black mothers are acutely aware of the racism that their children will face, and they expressed how this reality consistently loomed over them. While intensive mothering suggests that mothers are consumed by time-exhaustive strategies to ensure their children's futures – e.g., enrolling in extracurricular activities and helping with homework (Hays 1996; Johnston and Swanson 2006; Lareau 2011), mothers in this study also identified that at the intersection of race and mothering, they are consumed by concerns surrounding their children experiencing racism. Shannon, mother of two sons (24 and 17) and a daughter (10), stated, "I always felt like I had to be responsible. I always felt like I had to educate them. Besides the superficial things: food, clothing, and shelter." She discussed how race adds an additional layer to her mothering because "for African American mothers, it's pressure and worry."

When asked how often they think about their child(ren) experiencing racism, 20 out of the 35 mothers said that they think about their children experiencing racism often, if not every day. Mothers who expressed consistently thinking about their children experiencing racism would respond to this question, often without hesitation, while also revealing how these concerns are burdens that they expect to carry. Ton, a mother of daughters (26 and 22) and son (25), stated: "The question is, when do I not think about it? Because that's the lens that I have to look through." Here, Ton is not only highlighting the weight she constantly carries regarding her children experiencing racism, but she is also revealing how race/racism are embedded into her mothering in such a way that these thoughts and concerns become a part of parenting. This is a notion expressed by several other mothers. Additionally, even mothers who expressed not thinking about their children's experiences of racism often or only when a major event occurs, recognized how this was expected due to them raising Black children. This reality extended beyond expectations of mothering and shaped how mothers experienced motherhood.

The mothers in this study expressed the desire for their children to have traditionally successful futures – for example, attending college, having a sustainable career, etc. More specifically, when mothers were asked to discuss a time when being a mother was most fulfilling for them, the majority identified academic achievements or children meeting milestones as their most fulfilling moments as mothers. For example, when asked to discuss a time being a mom was fulfilling, Dominique, mother of sons (29 and 23) said: "Every time I saw my children make accomplishments. You know, college graduations, swearing into the military. I became most proud when I knew I had raised productive citizens who could land on their feet." The intensive efforts deployed by many of these mothers to ensure they were doing "everything they could possibly do" to make certain their children reached specific goals and achievements resulted in mothers experiencing fulfillment and gratitude when these

goals were met. However, mothers also discussed that, while these successes added to their fulfillment as mothers, they also were not able to fully enjoy these aspects of motherhood due to their continual need to be hyperaware of their children's racialized reality. This was best illustrated when Asia, mother of son (17) and daughter (13), expressed how the threat of racism against her children impacts her experience of motherhood.

> *Author:* How do expectations of Black children being treated differently impact Black moms?
> *Asia:* Honestly, I think it makes our mothering [long pause] our motherhood experience to be less fulfilling. Because you are always trying to disprove something.... You just met this person, and this person comes [in] with a preconceived notion about you [as a mom] that's negative....You are automatically at a disservice.... You automatically come into it stressed out.

Asia's discussion of the additional practices she has to contend with as a Black mother is indicative of the effects of Black mothers' intensive motherwork. While the mothers in this study identified several fulfilling aspects of motherhood, there was a simultaneous understanding that their enjoyment would always be limited. Additionally, this intensive motherwork does not end once children reach young adulthood or are no longer in the home like some aspects of intensive mothering (Hays 1996; Lareau 2011). Dominique discussed restricting several activities for her sons as teenagers; however, now that they are in young adulthood and adulthood, she still regularly talks with them about the realities and consequences of racism in their lives. When asked what evokes this concern, Dominique states: "[They're] Black in a white man's society, that's why.... [They] need to check in still today." Racism, and the subsequent motherwork they must deploy to protect their children, places limits on their ability to experience the full range of motherhood.

Drawing on a Black feminist theoretical approach, I examine how the mothers describe navigating the threat of racism in their children's lives as an expected aspect of parenting. Through the development of "encumbered mothering," I highlight how, when centering the experiences of Black women in discussions of motherhood, mothering should not be considered universal. Additionally, the burden of Black mothers having little room for error is reinforced through popular discourse surrounding "good" mothering, which often finds Black mothers and families under higher levels of scrutiny than their white counterparts (Bailey-Fakhoury 2017; Dow 2016). This assumed aspect of Black mothering may create additional pressures on mothers to be "strong" and place others above themselves without little consideration for their own well-being (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007). The majority of the mothers expressed the importance of being "strong" as an important aspect of their mothering. As Reign, a mother of a daughter (10) stated: "I think society in general allows white women to be fragile and gives them grace and forgives. I want to say [society] treats them like a human. Meanwhile, we're supposed to be superheroes. And if we're not, we're weak."

DISCUSSION

Motherwork is a racialized form of mothering labor and practices that centers Black mothers' efforts to protect the mental, emotional, and physical survival of their children within a racist society (Bailey-Fakhoury 2017; Collins 1996; Edwards and Few-Demo 2016; Gurusami 2019). In this study, I explore how mothers understand and deploy practices around their children's experiences of racism, as well as the impact of this motherwork on *themselves*. Through analyzing the narratives of 35 Black mothers, I develop a conceptual framework of *intensive motherwork*, which I argue consists of three aspects of Black women's motherhood: (1) protective mothering, (2) resistance mothering, and (3) encumbered mothering.

Previous research on American motherhood experiences has largely adopted notions that mothering is a universal process that is all-encompassing, one that removes all autonomy for women – that is, intensive mothering (Ennis 2014; Hays 1996; O'Reilly 2004). While some scholars have examined the racialized nature of intensive mothering (Elliott et al. 2015; Randles 2021), the overlap between Black women's motherwork and intensive mothering lends itself to a nuanced understanding of the role of systems of inequality, such as race and racism. Therefore, I merge the concepts of intensive mothering and motherwork to develop the concept *intensive motherwork*. This intensive motherwork emphasizes

the physically and emotionally overwhelming nature of Black women's mothering. Where intensive mothering and intensive motherwork diverge is that the concerns of Black mothers do not solely lie in academic and social achievements, but in focusing on the physical, mental, and emotional survival of their children in an anti-Black society. This leads to a continual awareness of the ways race and racism impacts their children's lives, thus the necessity to deploy practices that are unique to Black families. Intensive motherwork could potentially actualize as a form of racialized parenting stress that places a significant burden on Black mothers. Through an amalgamation of motherwork to safeguard the survival, identity, and collective power of their children and themselves as mothers, and intensive mothering practices, intensive motherwork has the ability to expand the discourse around racism, Black motherhood, and family.

Mothers are having to be cognizant of the influence of racism on the lives of their children. Within their awareness, Black women are deploying protective practices, such as delaying/restricting activities and they are teaching agency, practices that have long been associated with intensive mothering (Damaske 2013; Elliott et al. 2015; Hays 1996; Lareau 2011). However, mothers in this study are not using these practices as a means to broaden social networks, but instead, these practices are rooted in the survival of their children. Second, mothers are using motherwork tools, such as racial and cultural empowerment, to rebuild notions of Black motherhood and resist the control that racism has on them and their families. Third, the mothers in this study expressed how their experience of motherhood is encumbered by the realities of anti-Black racism. Specifically, they identified the need to navigate racism in the lives of their children as a specific limitation restricting their enjoyment of mothering. As a result, parenting stress experienced by Black mothers may be elevated due to their increased hyperawareness of racism in the lives of their children (Brantley 2023), which lends itself to additional expectations around their being "strong" (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2007; Dow 2015; Elliott and Reid 2016). The ideals tied to this controlling image, such as being self-sacrificial and resilient, may lead to Black mothers embodying these ideals to their own detriment.

Although a dimension of intensive motherwork frames the practices of Black mothers as founded in racialization and racism, these strategies remain a necessity for Black mothers to protect their children from, and help them navigate, anti-Black racism. The need for these efforts persists, even at the cost of limiting the mothers' experience of motherhood due to the intentionality that must be paid to the racialized existence of their families. Balancing the pressures of what is expected of them as mothers, as well as what is needed from them as Black mothers, speaks to the intersection of race and mothering that intensive motherwork highlights. As illustrated in Dow (2015), middle- and upper-middle-class Black mothers held a clear tension between desires to fulfill all that is expected of them and feelings of defeat when they were not able to meet those expectations. More specifically, Dow's work speaks to the saliency of the expectations of "good" mothers that extend beyond class barriers. Scholarship exploring how race, class, and gender influence parenting and motherhood suggests that Black mothers contend with race-specific barriers that impact their experiences as mothers across social class (Collins 1998; Dow 2015, 2019; Hill 2001; Malone Gonzalez 2020; Roberts 2009). Specifically, the concept of intensive motherwork further illuminates how it is not motherhood itself that is a detriment to Black women's well-being, but it is anti-Black racism which produces the need for motherwork that is shaping mothers' experiences. Due to controlling images of Black mothers (Collins 2002; Dow 2015; Elliott and Reid 2016) and the threat of racism and racialized violence against Black children (Brantley 2023; Edwards and Few-Demo 2016; Malone Gonzalez 2019; Smith 2016), mothers find themselves having to protect their children, families, and themselves from the active threat of racism in their daily lives.

Centering Black women in mothering discourse helps us understand the gravity and insidiousness of racism within Black families. I illustrate how practices associated with intensive mothering, motherwork, and racial socialization, as well as the imminent threat of anti-Black racism, are merged in the concept of intensive motherwork. Because of this clear overlap, intensive motherwork has implications for understanding the mothering experience and overall well-being of Black mothers. As such, the use of family as a site of resistance for Black mothers must be examined by being contextualized within their overall racialized mothering experiences. These findings, and development of intensive motherwork, complicate our current understandings of the motherwork strategies deployed by Black mothers as they relate to the protection of their children and families in the wake of

anti-Blackness. While intensive motherwork comes at a cost to mothers, it also provides an area to regain autonomy over their families. Additionally, in line with Black feminist scholarship, a framework exploring the intersection of race, gender, and family is necessary for understanding the breadth of Black women's motherhood, as racism looks to minimize or make invisible their experiences altogether (Collins 1996, 2002; Crenshaw 1989; Evans-Winters 2019).

I introduce the concept of *intensive motherwork* as an alternative discourse around Black women and parenting that examines the role of Black mothers' racialized parenting on their own experiences of motherhood. Intensive motherwork underlines the exhaustive and overwhelming nature of Black women's mothering. However, what is distinct about intensive motherwork is that it illustrates an overlap between Black mothers protecting their children and the subsequent vulnerability this could place on the mothers themselves. Intensive motherwork could be a unique form of racialized parenting stress that may be a key factor in understanding the overall well-being of Black mothers. Additionally, little is known about the multiplicative effects this labor may have on Black mothers. I expound on the consequences of the necessity of motherwork on Black women's mothering experiences. This work applies a Black feminist approach and uses qualitative interviews to draw on the narratives of Black mothers in understanding the impact of intensive motherwork. By centering their voices in discourse around mothering, this research provides important insight into what motherhood means for Black women, and how they view racism placing barriers on their well-being and experience as mothers.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While this article makes significant contributions to our understandings of Black motherhood and how the insidiousness of racism results in several consequences surrounding Black women's mothering experience and identity, limitations must be acknowledged. Although I engaged in an extensive recruitment process in a number of demographically diverse spaces, mothers who participated in this study are disproportionately middle-class. A majority hold at least a bachelor's degree and have a household income greater than the median for Black families in the United States. An additional barrier that may have contributed to the limited diversity in social class is that the majority of interviews were conducted during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have created not only technological barriers – such as needing an electronic device to participate in virtual interviews, but mothers may have had limited time availability because working-class women of color disproportionately worked jobs that were considered "essential" (De Paz et al. 2020; Laster Pirtle 2020). These demographic factors contextualize data, so even though mothers did not often explicitly discuss their social class, particular class privileges may place mothers in social contexts that may lead to their being more hyperaware of their children experiencing racism (Dow 2019).

Additionally, the mothers who generously worked with me and shared their stories offered an abundance of data and knowledge that I look to continue exploring. Participants extensively discussed the role of their children's experiences on their own experiences of motherhood and overall well-being. In future work, I plan to continue exploring the perceived consequences of intensive motherwork on the health and well-being of Black mothers. Moreover, during interviews, mothers expressed the influence of social support systems, such as their own mothers and other Black mothers, as significant in managing the impact and stress that racism has on their mothering experience and their well-being. Due to the plethora of research on feelings of connectedness to other Black mothers and children, as well as the impact and influence of other Black women in their motherhood (Bailey-Fakhoury 2017; Edwards 2000; Story 2014), future research would benefit from examining how "other mothers," such as grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and others who assist in nurturing and teaching Black children, may also be experiencing intensive motherwork to gain additional insight into how this framing could shape differing familial formations and networks.

APPENDIX

Table A1. Participants' Pseudonyms, Demographics, and Child(Ren)'S Age and Gender; N=35 Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Geographical Region	Partnership Status	Highest Degree Attained	Household Income	Number of Children	Children's Gender and Age
Claire	48	South	Married	Bachelor's Degree	$65K to under $85K	2	Male (17) and Female (13)
Veronica	46	South	Married	Master's degree	$35K to under $50K	1	Female (11)
Harriet	50	South	Widowed	Master's degree	$50K to under $65K	1	Male (14)
Dominique	48	South	Divorced/ Separated	Bachelor's degree	$35K to under $50K	2	(Male 29) and Male (23)
Reign	37	South	Married	PhD or Professional Degree	$100K or more	1	Female (10)
Shannon	40	Northeast	Single/ Never married	Master's degree	$85K to under $100K	3	Male (24), Male (17), and Female (10)
Aria	45	South	Divorced/ Separated	Master's degree	$65K to under $85K	4	Male (23), Female (19), Female (17), and Male (15)
Camille	48	Midwest	Divorced/ Separated	Master's degree	$65K to under $85K	1	Male (19)
Peace	43	South	Single/ Never married	Some college	$35K to under $50K	3	Female (25), Female (21), and Female (10)
Elise	51	Northeast	Married	Bachelor's Degree	$65K to under $85K	3	Male (22), Male (20), and Female (17)
Anna	36	Northeast	Married	Master's degree	$100K or more	3	Female (17), Male (12), and Male (1)
Ton	54	South	Married	Bachelor's degree	$100K or more	3	Female (26), Male (25), and Female (22)
Vivian	44	Midwest	Married	Bachelor's degree	$100K or more	2	Male (25) and Male (17)
Asia	37	West	Single/ Never married	Some college	$35K to under $50K	2	Male (17) and Female (13)
Di'Ann	36	Northeast	Single/ Never married	Associate's degree	$50K to under $65K	2	Female (17) and Female (11)
Zoe	50	Northeast	Married	Master's degree	$100K or more	2	Male (19) and Male (10)

Table 1. Continued

Pseudonym	Age	Geographical Region	Partnership Status	Highest Degree Attained	Household Income	Number of Children	Children's Gender and Age
Tabby	46	Northeast	Married	PhD or Professional Degree	$100K or more	1	Female (20)
Sorrelle	47	West	Married	Master's degree	$100K or more	2	Male (17) and Female (14)
Bunny	48	Northeast	Married	Bachelor's degree	$100K or more	4	Female (18), Male (15), Female (13), and Female (10)
Ivy	53	West	Divorced/ Separated	Master's Degree	$100K or more	1	Male (21)
SupaVerne	41	South	Married	PhD or Professional Degree	$100K or more	2	Female (11) and Male (6)
Jane	50	South	Married	Masters	$100K or more	5	Male (32), Male (31), Male (30), Male (23), and Female (13)
Mama Doc	51	South	Married	PhD or Professional Degree	$100K or more	2	Female (19) and Male (17)
Cynthia	47	Midwest	Divorced	PhD or Professional Degree	$100K or more	2	Male (14) and Male (12)
Denise	57	Midwest	Divorced/ Separated	PhD or Professional	$65K to under $85K	1	Female (19)
Susan	47	South	Married	Masters	$100K or more	2	Female (16) and Male (3)
Dr.Mandy	37	South	Divorced/ Separated	PhD or Professional Degree	$65K to under $85K	2	Male (10) and Male (8)
Autumn	40	West	Single/ Never Married	Master's Degree	$35K to under $50K	1	Female (10)
Wonder Woman	45	South	Divorced/ Separated	Master's Degree	$35K to under $50K	4	Male (23), Female (19), Female (13), and Female (10)
Amanda	45	Midwest	Divorced/ Separated	Master's Degree	Under $15K	2	Male (21) and Female (13)
Marlo	53	Northeast	Divorced/ Separated	PhD or Professional Degree	$100K or more	1	Male (17)
Candace	46	South	Divorced/ Separated	Associates	$85K to under $100K	2	Female (23) and Female (16)
Savannah	52	South	Married	Bachelor's Degree	$35K to under $50K	1	Male (13)

Table 1. Continued

Pseudonym	Age	Geographical Region	Partnership Status	Highest Degree Attained	Household Income	Number of Children	Children's Gender and Age
Lori	46	Northeast	Married	Bachelor's Degree	$100K or more	2	Male (13) and Female (5)
Janet	38	South	Single/ Never Married	Master's Degree	$25K to under $35K	1	Male (10)

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