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Coloring Outside The Lines: An Intersectionality Approach To Understanding The Homeschooling Experiences of Black Families

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COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES: AN INTERSECTIONALITY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE
HOMESCHOOLING EXPERIENCES OF BLACK FAMILIES

by

TAURA TAYLOR

Under the Direction of Ralph LaRossa

ABSTRACT

Current data suggest that homeschooling is a diverse and growing social movement. Unfortunately, the homeschooling narrative reflected in research is often skewed by the socioeconomic status, political power, and cultural interests of White, two-parent, middle-class, homeschooling households, marginalizing the experiences of a growing population of Black homeschoolers. Considering that the plausibility of homeschooling is dependent upon access to social, economic, and temporal resources, this study examines the resources that Black families identified as substantive to sustain their homeschooling efforts. Relying on 20 in-depth interviews, I utilized the theoretical frames of symbolic interactionism, cognitive sociology, and intersectionality and the coding procedures of grounded theory methods to analyze the narratives of Black homeschooling parents. Ultimately, I found the metaphor of *coloring outside the lines* to be a fitting representation for Black families resourcefulness in homeschooling. In addition, I introduce *complicit privilege* and *rearticulated license*—the mechanisms through which Black families navigated stratifications.

INDEX WORDS: Homeschooling, Intersectionality, Black American Families, Rearticulation

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Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

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2013

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DEDICATION

In memory of my hero and my champion, my grandpa, David Stewart, my
Uncle Michael Taylor, my mentor, Richard D. Navies, and the thoroughly missed Joseph Baker
and Madeline Williams.

~Ashe

For my parents, Jeannie Weber Hughes, Joseph Hughes, and Gloria Woodard.

I live to make you proud.

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Of course there were sleepless nights, but there was prayer...lots, and lots of prayer.

This work is a testament of my faith.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Homeschooling is the parent-directed education of school-aged children at home rather than in private and public school environments (Basham, Merrifield, and Hepburn 2007; Ray 2000).¹ Customarily considered an unconventional school choice (Houston and Toma 2003), for a number of families concerned with the academic and social welfare of their children, homeschooling is an endearing undertaking and source of parental empowerment.

Homeschooling households sacrifice time, income, and occasionally parental sanity (Green and Hoover-Dempsey 2007; Lois 2006; Lois 2009) to provide school-aged children with an academic curriculum and environment consistent with family beliefs, morals, and standards. Though the American homeschooled population consists of a mere 2.9 percent of the entire student population, an estimated 1.2 to 1.7 million American children are homeschooled (Carper 2000; NCES 2010), with studies projecting the numbers to grow by as much as 15 to 20 percent per year (Newmer 2002). Current data suggest that the homeschooling community is in fact a diverse and growing social movement, varying demographically in terms of race, religion, socioeconomic status, and political beliefs (Cooper and Sureau 2007; McDowell, Sanchez, and Jones 2000).

¹ A primary homeschooling parent (the parent who assumes primary responsibility for instruction and supervision of the child's education) most often instructs homeschooled children. Some homeschool children are educated in settings outside the home and by other instructors besides their parents/guardians. For example, many homeschoolers form cooperatives in which parents share teaching responsibilities, often teaching specific subjects to one another's children. Some home school children utilize virtual academies and/or attend education facilities outside the home. Overall, homeschooling is often child-centered and parent-controlled.

Homeschooling Defining Moments

The modern day homeschooling movement grew out of two separate campaigns, the 1960's and 1970's libertarian political left's position that public schools were inadequate and beyond reform and the 1980's Christian fundamentalist right's crusade to infuse religious morality into education. These groups, referred to as pedagogues and ideologues respectively (Van Galen 1988), represent two alternate identifiers on the homeschooling continuum, with parental motivations fitting within either one or both paradigms, though most often overlapping (Newmer 2002). The public initially interpreted homeschoolers' exits as anecdotal expressions of individuality and random acts of civic agency. However, as the numbers increased, critics came to regard the exits as civil acts of disobedience (Lubienski 2000).

For the reportedly 10,000 to 20,000 homeschoolers of the 1970's and the 120,000 to 260,000 homeschoolers of the 1980's (Ray 2000), efforts to educate at home were met with a barrage of scrutiny. To overcome legal barriers and public criticism, homeschoolers mobilized politically and socially, utilizing grassroots lobbying strategies. Homeschoolers created social and political networks, filed lawsuits to eradicate truancy laws, and used the legislative process to obtain resources for their children (Houston and Toma 2003). Homeschoolers, initially described as bohemians and extremist, later emerged as "articulate," "active," and "interested in their children's education" (Lubienski 2000). Shifts in public perceptions were influenced by their ability to provide accounts that successfully defended their motives as acts of good parenting and contributed to increased scholastic interest in home educators' endeavors.

Several studies have applauded the grass-roots, "bottom-up" (Cooper and Sureau 2007:111) political reform efforts of homeschoolers (Tyler and Carper 2000), going so far as to

compare their accomplishments to the Civil Rights movement and other social movements in which groups “fought to have their rights embodied in law” (Cooper and Sureau 2007:111). However, with over 77 percent of the homeschooling population being non-Hispanic White (Cooper and Sureau 2007; NCES 2010), a group not characteristically “accustomed to marginalization nor oppression” (Princiotta and Bielick 2006), the homeschooling narrative reflected in research is often skewed by the socioeconomic status, political power, and cultural interests of White, two-parent, middle-class, homeschooling households.

A Rise in Black Homeschoolers

Recent media reports have drawn attention to the increased participation of Black homeschoolers and the outgrowth of nation wide support groups organized on their behalf (Gaither 2009).² Researchers have advanced that homeschooling mitigates educational disparities found in public school settings, many of which disproportionately affect Black children (Collom 2005; Ensign 2000; Ray 2000). Consequently, amidst increasingly amiable responses towards homeschooling, Black families of varying socioeconomic backgrounds have shown interest in becoming home educators (Gaither 2009). Unfortunately, for the small but growing population of Black homeschoolers, little is known about the social dynamics that impact their abilities to accomplish their educational goals. Whereas Black families’ struggles with public schools are well documented (Allen 1995; Cohen 2000; Darling-Hammond 2000), the voices, accomplishments, and struggles of Black homeschoolers remain underrepresented within empirical research. For the exceptionally few studies that have chronicled the homeschooling experiences of Black families, none has utilized an intersectional framework to

² I use the term *Black* instead of *African American* to include individuals who racially identify as Black and/or are of African descent but may not ethnically identify as *African American*.

examine the ways in which intersecting systems of oppression have impacted their experiences (Fields-Smith and Williams 2009; Mazama and Lundy 2012). Thus, in spite of the growing interests in the homeschooling movement and the proliferation of research on education and race, the tangential and often one-dimensional inclusions of Black homeschoolers' experiences distort the breadth of sociopolitical and cultural interests within education and family research, while concurrently perpetuating homogeneous characterizations of Black family life.

Study Objective

The objective of this study is to broaden the discourse on homeschoolers, particularly by examining the role of intersectionality upon Black families' abilities to achieve their homeschooling goals. My study takes into consideration that overlooking the concerns of marginally represented homeschooling families such as Black homeschoolers can haphazardly reproduce historical social stratifications and/or fracture the homeschooling movement along racial and ethnic categories. Furthermore, by using an intersectionality framework and emic approach as opposed to a comparative research approach to examine the needs of Black homeschoolers, my study (1) highlights the narratives of multiple Black families at various social locations without attenuating unique details in efforts to compare aggregated differences between their experiences and those of White homeschoolers; and (2) endeavors to minimize overstating group similarities and understating heterogeneity of Black homeschooling families (Azibo 1992; Bediako and Griffith 2012). Intersectionality helps us understand various forms of disparity and privilege—particularly by emphasizing the historical, cultural, and political social locations of individuals. Considering the intersectionality of various social positions proves most useful in examining the commonalities and differences among Black homeschoolers'

resourcefulness and perspectives about their homeschooling needs

1.2 Literature Review

The Makings of a Social Movement

Previous studies acknowledged homeschooling as the ultimate autonomous choice in education (Collom and Mitchell 2009; Basham et al. 2007) and yet researchers emphasized that the collective action and networking resourcefulness of homeschooling coalitions have been pivotal to its widespread success (Collom and Mitchell 2009; Gaither 2008; Green and Hoover-Dempsey 2007). As noted by Apple (2000:258), “long-lasting educational transformations often come not from the work of educators and researchers, but from larger social movements that tend to push our major political, economic, and cultural institutions in specific directions.”

Apple (2000) is quick to assert that America’s historical educational reforms have been situated within the sociopolitical campaigns of “multiple communities of Color” and the women’s movement to ascertain economic redistributions and cultural considerations. As such homeschooling has demonstrated that the power of grass roots activism can leave lasting impressions upon the economic and social structures of our society.

Historically, social movements have been the collective political struggle of stigmatized and/or marginalized groups to overcome hegemonic social attitudes, behaviors, or denial of rights and/or misappropriation of resources (Derks, van Laar, and Ellemers 2009; Peters, Gabel, and Symeonidou 2009). Parties who have had their rights encroached upon have unified and engaged the political process to contest dominant ideologies and cultural norms that have

restricted their freedom to obtain resources and/or redefine who they are.³ To date, scholars distinguish between collective mobilization centered around rights and the redistribution of power and resources (*old social movements/politics of redistribution*), and collective mobilization centered around issues of values, lifestyles, and identity construction (*new social movements/politics of recognition*), (Apple 2000; Fraser 1997; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Peters, Gabel, and Symeonidou 2009).

Characteristically, all social movements have both a unifying principle, namely a belief in the rights of citizens to engage politically, and a sense of solidarity around a group identity or mission regardless of community, social locations, and various practices and coalitions (Derks et al. 2009; Peters et al. 2009). However, the strategies and/or tactics that the movement employ may or may not initially serve the interests of all participants or parties of interest (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Yet in the best interest of creating a more inclusive and comprehensive social movement, the voices of even the most marginalized of participants are substantial to a social movements' overall success. The reproductive rights movement of the 1970's clearly illustrates how interests vary across social locations. Before the inclusion of poor women and women of color, the reproductive rights movement was initially centered around the interests of middle-class White women. Though White feminists challenged the dominant culture's definitions of womanhood and claimed to represent the interests of all women, their protests were initially focused on abortion rights only (Nelson 2003). For poor women and women of color, reproductive rights involved issues such as health care and anti-sterilization practices, issues that were invisible to middle class activists. The interests and political involvement of poor

³ Examples include but are not limited to: disabled people's movements, feminism, gay/lesbian movements, and world peace movements.

women and women of color dimensionalized the political issues of the reproductive rights movement and their numbers and solidarity propelled the movement forward.

Furthermore, social movements often take an either/or position by seeking redistributive claims for social justice or recognition claims for social justice (Fraser 1997; Apple 2000). According to Fraser (1997), social movements often polarize between the two paradigms with some movements seeking justice through the redistribution of resources (class politics) or seeking social justice in the form of honor, recognition, and respect (identity politics). It is worth noting that recognition claims are affiliated with “social patterns of representation and interpretation” and are best thought of as struggles over domination of culture and symbols (Apple 2000; Fraser 1997). The early homeschooling social movement is characterized as such, with homeschoolers struggling against mainstream society and political forces to impugn stigma and lobby for socio-political representation. Fraser (1997) proposed that social movements seek a two-dimensional conceptualization of justice that combine the two paradigms and thus seek social equality and recognition of differences. If a social movement were to adopt Fraser’s two-dimensional conceptualization of justice, in essence the movement could address intersecting inequalities related to class, race, gender, and various other marginalizing social statuses. Such a paradigm could prevent Apple’s (2000) predilection of a conservative alliance in which a new emerging educational market would be most advantageous for affluent homeschoolers and reproduce disparity for economically disadvantaged families as well as parents and students of color (ultimately restoring traditional stratifications). Thus far, research has attributed the success of homeschooling parents to the political alliances between the Christian right and other movements comprised of families who

have experienced “trouble” within public schools, particularly families of students who were “gifted,” had special needs, and/or were children of color (Apple 2000; Cooper and Sureau 2007).

Studies have found that the extreme dedication required to homeschool often lead homeschoolers to form coalitions and “political lobbying communities” in order to meet their educational commitments (Cooper and Sureau 2007; Tyler and Carper 2000). Parental involvement as well as household and instructive resources are a matter of necessity to homeschool, thus underlying most families’ ability to optimize their homeschooling aspirations are their social location and access to resources (Newmer 2002). Websites and homeschooling conferences offer families a multiplicity of workshops, study programs, camps, and various instructional resources and supplies. Via homeschooling websites and online support groups parents share information about the latest curriculum, science projects, and local events (Cooper and Sureau 2007). Cooper and Sureau (2007) hypothesized that homeschoolers intense lobbying for resources and rights may have been byproducts of being home alone and desiring to connect via the Internet and phone. Nonetheless, families that opted to homeschool were responsible for supplying the instruction, resources, and activities associated with teaching their children and thus their lobbying efforts often helped to offset costs and/or legislation that would have otherwise restricted their progress. For example, homeschoolers’ lobbying efforts ensured that homeschooled children were excluded from the requirements set forth by President George. W. Bush’s administration’s No Child Left Behind laws (NCLB) (Cooper and Sureau 2007). Overall, through political activism, homeschoolers have successfully formed national and regional networks, lobbied for public school outreach in certain states, influenced

prominent colleges to “relax” their admissions requirements for homeschooled children, and gained mainstream popularity (Cooper and Sureau 2007; Tyler and Carper 2000).

Not all homeschooling families considered their participation or lack of participation in networks as an indicator of their involvement in a larger social movement. Within homeschooling it is not uncommon for families to join homeschooling groups or networking organizations in order to connect to other families for resources and activities. A study by Collom and Mitchell (2005) identified collective action, feelings of efficacy, social network ties, and homeschooling motivations as determinants of whether or not homeschoolers perceived homeschooling as a social movement. They determined that motivation was the most salient determinant, whereas network ties was the least determinant factor in whether or not families saw themselves as participants in social movement. In addition they found that families who were not affiliated with any form of homeschooling organizations or had little involvement/integration in their support organizations were less likely to see themselves as part of a social movement, whereas homeschoolers who were well integrated into an organization demonstrated an affinity toward their own children and were less focused on other’s children (Collom and Mitchell 2009).

New Perspectives in Contemporary Homeschooling

Recent findings suggest that parental motivation for homeschooling is influenced less by what public schools are not doing and more by what parents expect from themselves (Green and Hoover-Dempsey 2007; Lois 2009; Ray 2000). Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) presented parents of 136 homeschooled children in an unidentified southeastern state with questionnaires to determine parents’ reasons for homeschooling. For the parents in their

study, the main reason for homeschooling was a predominant sense of self-efficacy to help their children learn. The majority of participating parents expressed a belief in being actively involved in teaching their children. According to a study by Ray (2000), 70 percent of homeschool educators utilized curriculums designed specifically for their children. They claimed that by focusing on the child, parents move beyond their own personal educational experiences and the meanings they have internally associated with school and instead learn from the child what he or she needs. Though the child's education is clearly parent-controlled and/or parent-directed, by being "child-focused" their actions were embedded in "concerted cultivation," the contemporary middle and upper class parental emphasis on adult-organized but child-centered activities (Lareau 2003).⁴

In Lois' (2006) study, veteran homeschoolers explained that beginning homeschool parents often approach the homeschooling process by attempting to simulate school-at-home and typically rely upon too much structure during the homeschooling process. New homeschoolers often ignored veteran homeschoolers advice to use less structure and inevitably burned out. Participants in her study explained that teaching one's own child is met with a host of problems rarely seen in the classroom, such as emotional work, duality of family roles, and sometimes age-mixed settings. Regardless of whether a parent begins teaching for pedagogical reasons or ideological reasons, most parents experience the strain of relying upon old notions

⁴ *Concerted cultivation*: Middle-class child-rearing approach in which children are enrolled in numerous age-specific organized activities that often dominate family life. Concerted cultivation places an emphasis on developing children's reasoning skills through talking which often promotes a culture of individualism within the household. *Accomplishment of natural growth*: Child rearing approach employed by working-class and lower-class families in which parents focus on providing basic provisions such as "love, food, and safety" with less parental involvement in children's after-school activities. Accomplishment of natural growth places an emphasis on children following directives, which develops constraint in children rather than a sense of entitlement (Lareau 2002:748-749).

about schooling. Lois (2006) found that many homeschooling mothers, who were balancing their roles as parent-teachers and homemakers, often experienced emotional burnout from their integrated roles. To overcome the burnout that was associated with “insecurity, anxiety, and stress” related to their integrated roles, homeschooling mothers in Lois’ study integrated some of their roles, prioritized others, and received support from their spouses (2006).

Utilizing multivariate analysis, Collom (2005) advanced that religious and libertarian biases of the 1960’s and 1970’s were subsiding and parental motivations for homeschooling were no longer predictable based upon extreme left-wing or right-wing socio-political statuses. Many of the motivating factors driving homeschooling households included: desires to avoid negative cultural influences, immigrant populations wishing to protect their children from foreign stigma, unique circumstances personal to individual families, and a few claims that some parents held racist beliefs and did not want their children attending schools with children of color. In *The American Dream and the Power of Wealth*, Johnson (2006) documented working-, middle- and upper-class parents’ frequent association of school quality with racial composition. Schools that had higher populations of White children or were in densely populated White neighborhoods were assumed to be better in comparison to schools that were more racially heterogeneous and/or located in predominately Black or Latino neighborhoods. Such assertions were based upon perceptions that children of color lacked the academic acumen to be positive and influential peers (Johnson 2006; Lewis 2003) and the reality that schools in “Blacker” areas were predisposed to inferior resources (Johnson 2006; Kozol 1991) as well as a higher susceptibility to violence and crime (Elliot, Menard, Rankin, Elliott, Wilson, and Huizinga 2006). Although recent studies (Green and Hoover-Dempsey 2007; Lois 2009; Ray

2000) advance that feelings of parental efficacy rather than disappointments in public school efficacy are driving motivations to homeschool among most homeschooling parents, researchers who exclusively examined the motivations of Black homeschoolers have asserted that widespread perceptions about racial academic disparities and the deteriorating quality of American public schools are contributing to increased interest in homeschooling among Black American families (Fields-Smith and Williams 2009; Mazama and Lundy 2012).

Academic Disparities in Public Schools

Through education, families and schools transmit cultural values, socially accepted implicit rules of appropriateness, and expected behavior, typically with an emphasis on positive and negative sanctions for adherence and/or disobedience. In home and school settings, American children are encouraged to do well academically, with the hopes that they will develop a propensity towards good citizenship and aspire to constructive career goals that will guarantee them a life of prestige and financial freedom. Research has consistently shown that educational attainment is associated with economic success and social mobility (Cohen and Nee 2000; Johnson 2006; Rothstein 2004). In the interest of national progression and civility, all American citizens are entitled to free and public education for their school-age children. According to Yorke (2006: 565), "Economic success is an aim of governments around the world. Their 'human capital' stance towards higher education implies the need to develop graduates' capabilities to the full." Thus, in accordance with democratic principals and American educational values, federal, state, and local agencies mandate the allocation of educational resources and per pupil educational spending to schools "irrespective" of students' race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and/or physical disabilities (Roscigno, Tomaskovic-Devey, and

Crowley 2006). In spite of national mandates and purported egalitarian values, multiple studies and national reports have found that public schools that serve predominately Black student populations are substandard and tend to reproduce intergenerational socioeconomic inequalities (Darling-Hammond 2000; Ainsworth 2002; Condron 2007; Massey 2001; Kozol 1991).

To the disappointment of Black families, within public school environments Black children are routinely labeled academically inferior, learning disabled, and underrepresented in college preparatory and advanced placement classes (Darling-Hammond 2000; Delpit 2006; Ferguson 2001). Worse yet, young Black males experience high suspension and expulsion rates from the very public schools that are meant to serve as positive contributors to their social and intellectual development (Ferguson 2001; Noguera 2001; Rothstein 2004). Such dismal prospects contribute to academic disparities between Black children and their White peers. Commonly referred to as the Black–White achievement gap, racial inequality in academic performance was once believed to be the indubitable reflections of class differences between Black children from lower-earning households compared to White children from middle-class households (Hallinan 2001; Dumais 2002). However, current studies reveal that the academic achievement gap persists even between middle-class Black children and middle-class White children (Noguera 2001; NCES 2012; Rothstein 2004). In attempts to absolve institutional responsibility for wide scale academic underachievement of many Black students, some politicians and theorists have placed blame on students, parents, and the local communities in which Black children reside, often citing deficiency theories such as oppositional culture and

culture of poverty as substantiation.⁵ Nonetheless, there is overwhelming evidence confirming that racial academic disparities are in fact outcomes of persistent structural inequalities and even gatekeeper biases (Darling-Hammond 2000; Downey and Pribesh 2004; Noguera 2001). Whereas private and charter schools represent alternative choices, they are not without their own vulnerabilities to race, gender, and class inequalities (Cooper et al. 2007; Figlio 2004).

Kozol's 1991 *Savage Inequalities*, exposed the gaping disparities between the facilities, resources, instruction, and overall funding of schools that served Black students compared to White students. Vivid details of dilapidated classrooms with leaking roofs, insufficient books, outdated materials and equipment, along with unqualified educators who served Black and Latino children, compared to schools that boasted advanced placement classes, teacher salaries upward to 70,000 dollars, multiple dance rooms, tennis courts, indoor tracks, and other lavish amenities of predominately White public schools, brought to light America's failed promise of equal education for all. Decades later, the disparities persist, with the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reporting that in 2007-2008, 25 percent of the secondary mathematics teachers who taught in schools with at least 50 percent Black student enrollment failed to either have a mathematics certification or have majored in mathematics in college, compared to only eight percent of secondary mathematics educators who taught in schools with predominately White student populations (NCES 2012). Because family background determines which neighborhoods and schools parents can afford, the objective capital parents

⁵ *Oppositional Culture Theory* argues that subcultures will sometimes reject mainstream norms and values. John Ogbu advanced a version of oppositional culture theory in which he stated students who are marginalized and receive diminutive returns for their efforts reject schooling as a means to social mobility. *Culture of Poverty Theory* advances that the economically disadvantaged remain impoverished because they have adapted to their conditions (Ogbu 1992:5-14).

can provide, and the embodied capital they have access to, parental socioeconomic status is imperative to a student's academic success. Unfortunately, a disproportionate number of Black-American families are socially and economically disadvantaged, compared to White families, increasing the likelihood of academic underachievement by Black children (Dumais 2002; Hallinan 2001).

Black-American families typically earn depressed wages, compared to White-American families, and live in or around central urban areas that are routinely segregated and disadvantaged (Johnson 2006; Omi and Winant 1994; Shapiro 2004). Such areas are vehemently overwhelmed with inadequate housing, meager resources, deficient social services, and are typically the bottom rung on the socioeconomic ladder (Massey 2001). According to 2012 reports from NCES, 37 percent of Black children were living in households that were below the poverty level, which was the highest percentage for children of any other racial category (2012). Some advance that students living in such distressed conditions are more likely to recognize their marginalized status and bleak opportunities for social mobility, and unanimously reject schooling (Roscigno et al. 2006). However, multiple studies and history alone have demonstrated that such is not the case. Academic achievement as a means to social advancement has been a consistent child rearing theme within the Black community, as underscored by infamous legal battles over desegregation (*Brown v. Board of Education*) and nationwide lobbying for access to equal resources (i.e., affirmative action lawsuits). Evidence suggests that racial segregation is not a reflection of Black Americans personal preferences but consequences of housing discrimination based upon systemic racism (Feagin 2010; Shapiro

2004).⁶

Unfortunately, multiple efforts to redistribute resources across schools have customarily been met with resistance (Hallinan 2001; Noguera 2000). According to Lareau and Horvat (1999:49) “although middle-class Black families still benefit from their class position, they still face an institutional setting that implicitly and (invisibly) privileges White families.” Whereas Lareau and Horvat (1999) advanced that being White is a cultural resource that White parents “unwittingly” draw on in negotiating advantages for their children, other studies have asserted that reform efforts are often “politicized” and circumvented by wealthy White parents who exercise their socio-political power and White privilege to reinforce tracking systems and resist redistributions of resources to poorer school districts (Hallinan 2001; Noguera 2001). However, to the contrary, Delpit asserts that it is not uncommon for individuals to consider themselves liberal and/or radical, yet refuse to acknowledge their direct participation in perpetuating social inequalities ([1995] 2006). Thus, in spite of Black parent’s expectations and Black student’s academic aspirations, research indicates that schools, teachers and even antipathetic parents have the manipulative ability to reinforce pre-existing group advantages and disadvantages (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999).

Alternative Education Options

In attempts to circumvent the false promises of school reform and interminable inadequacies of public schools, some parents have been known to choose alternative education options such as private, charter, and even virtual E-schools (Cooper et al. 2007). Whereas private and charter schools are the prevailing alternate choices to public schools, none of the

⁶ *Systemic Racism* is the persisting system of racial discrimination and oppression that is dimensionalized and embedded within the ideologies, habits, behaviors and institutions of America (Feagin 2006).

three choices are firewalls against socioeconomic encumbrances or discrimination. Foremost, tuition costs for private schools prohibit these schools as an option for most families. For the households that can afford tuition, the enrollment of a smaller proportion of students of color can provoke parental concerns for alienation among Black parents (Datnow and Cooper 1997). Racial prejudice and discriminatory alienation (Lewis 2003) are problematic even within diverse school environments. Some students of color may find themselves either trying to prove that they are not like many other Blacks or having to explain Black culture to Whites who have limited experiences with people of color. Racial marginalization can interfere with students' personal development and can sacrifice their self-esteem (Ladson-Billings: 1994). Charter schools are often promoted as viable options for lower and working-class Black-American parents who cannot afford private schools. According to the Black Alliance for Educational Options (www.baeo.org), charter schools are categorized as being non-traditional in that they incorporate experimental curriculums to teach inner-city youth. However, a study by West, Ingram, and Hind (2006) suggests that some charter schools engage in selectivity practices that are potentially discriminatory. Although charter schools are publicly funded, within autonomous charter schools the parent communities wield authority to solicit and admit students whom they deem a good fit into their school community, while rejecting others. As a consequence, fewer students with special education needs were found to attend autonomous charter schools, indicating the selective practice of making provisions for certain groups of students.

Virtual schools are the relatively new educational arenas created by technology that are becoming popular amongst parents interested in supplementing their children's education

outside of the classroom. According to The Center for Education Reform (www.edreform.org), some parents are choosing E-schools (as they are commonly called), as an alternative to brick and mortar schools. A criticism of E-schools is that they are not fail proof against discrimination. Foremost, virtual schools are not accessible to all students. Unequal access to computers or different levels of access to computers is often based on income. Thus, like brick and mortar schools, virtual schools can reproduce social inequalities based upon class and intersecting race/class statuses (Russell 2004). Virtual schools are characterized as anonymous because the students interact online and without face-to-face contact. However, virtual teachers are aware of students' names and zip codes, which raises concerns that children with identifiably Black names and who live in zip codes within predominately Black neighborhoods will still be victims of prejudice. According to David Figlio (2004), there is increasing proof that educators respond negatively to students who have names that are associated with lower socioeconomic status. Research shows that teachers may not give adequate attention or expect less from students who have names that "sound" as if their parents may be undereducated. The position is that stereotypical "Black" names are usually given by undereducated parents, whereas educated middle-class Black parents are more likely to give their children "mainstream" (i.e., White) names. In the virtual realm, a non-mainstream name can identify a student as being non-White and possibly marked as unteachable.

Ferguson (2001) has argued that it is through culturalism—the ideological conceptualization of culture as an unchanging and organic determinant in an individuals' behaviors, worldviews, and disposition—that both Black boys and Black girls' educability are differentiated from White children. Attributing superior and inferior aptitude to cultural

expressions that are linked to race, gender, and class privileges present socioeconomic and cultural challenges for many Black students—especially for those who place a strong value on their ethnic/racial identities. Such structural encumbrances and teacher biases make the difference between Black students being perceived as studious and receiving the academic support they need to reach their goals, or their being marginalized and labeled by peers and educators. Considering that educational attainment is a critical determinant for social status and life trajectory, greater parental control over students' learning environment and curriculum can be academically and socially advantageous for Black children who face multiple forms of discrimination in traditional school environments.

Homeschooling, the Great Ameliorator

Homeschooling is routinely heralded for its effectiveness in ameliorating the negative influences that produce academic achievement gaps within public schools (Collom 2005; Ray 2000). Parental socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and gender (among other background characteristics) are linked to student performance and educational inequities in the public school environment, and yet have been found to lack statistical significance in homeschooling studies (Collom 2005; Ray 2000). Utilizing cross-sectional descriptive, multivariate, and longitudinal design elements, Ray (2000) conducted a study on whether or not homeschooling ameliorated the negative effects associated with background characteristics that routinely result in lower academic achievement in public school settings. He found that homeschooling resulted in leveling effects that allowed many homeschool students to perform well academically in spite of parents' socioeconomic status, education attainment, race, gender of student, and access to educational resources such as computers and libraries.

Social reproduction theorists assert that schools perpetuate intergenerational social statuses by preparing students to occupy similar careers as their parents (Ainsworth and Roscigno 2005; Bourdieu 1977; Hallinan 2001). School sorting practices have a tendency to disproportionately “track” students with less valued cultural resources into vocational and lower level academic trajectories. Through tracking, some students are academically prepared to attend college whereas others are prepared to work in low status careers. Although tracking is supposed to mirror a student’s perceived potential, there is evidence that students from advantaged households are most likely to occupy advanced tracking courses (Ainsworth and Roscigno 2005; Condrón 2007). Several national and international studies have found that academic tracking reinforces preexisting social inequalities among students who have varying socioeconomic statuses. By tracking students into upper or lower division classes, schools create hierarchies, which are often aggregated along racial and socioeconomic statuses. Oakes (1994) has found that the curriculums for students vary drastically in the quality of lessons as opposed to the pace at which they are taught. Even when Black students are middle-class and/or attend affluent integrated schools, they are more likely to be systematically placed in lower tracked classes and underperform academically compared to White students (Lareau and Horvat 1999; Noguera 2001).

Ensign (2000) analyzed cases from her nine year longitudinal research of 100 home school students to find that students who were diagnosed with special education needs performed better academically in the homeschool setting than would be expected if they were in a traditional academic setting. Ensign’s study also found that for the cases of students who were labeled gifted in public school settings yet not challenged academically, in the

homeschool setting parents as educators were able to provide a curriculum that stimulated their interests as well as continued their advanced learning process. Ensign confirmed that the homeschooling environment provided many children with an equitable learning opportunity not always guaranteed in public school settings. Unfortunately, a shortcoming of Collom (2000), Ray (2000), and Ensign (2000) studies were their limited inclusion of Black homeschoolers. Collom (2005) had a sample of 235 participants, of which approximately 24 were Black Americans, whereas neither Ray (2000) nor Ensign (2000) included the racial demographics of their sample.

Black Homeschoolers

To date there are two autobiographical narratives of Black homeschoolers, *Morning by Morning* (Penn-Nabrit 2003), which is the story of one family's accomplishments in homeschooling three sons who were eventually admitted to Ivy League universities, and *Freedom Challengers* (Llewellyn 1996), a collection of multiple Black homeschooling families' experiences. Both books offer descriptive and valuable insight into the daily and personal experiences of Black homeschooling families. From the few studies that have focused on Black homeschooling populations, we have learned that Black homeschoolers often teach at home for pedagogical and ideological reasons, yet they were more likely to be motivated and challenged by circumstances that White homeschooling family were less likely to face, particularly experiences related to their marginalized social statuses as Black Americans.

In an exploratory study, McDowell, Sanchez, and Jones (2000) attempted to study the underrepresentation of ethnic groups within the homeschool movement by "presenting current statistical data"; exploring participation through the existent literature; and examining

perceptions of homeschooling among non-homeschooling multi-ethnic groups by interviewing college students on two Tennessee college campuses. Their research and analysis disclosed that ethnic non-homeschoolers were more likely to have positive perceptions about the efficacy of homeschooling and more likely to consider homeschooling as an option, whereas White non-homeschoolers were less likely. They also found that, overall, non-homeschoolers exhibited a mix of informed and misinformed perceptions about homeschooling. Their review and analysis of the existent literature found that Black homeschoolers often grappled with “unhappy paradoxes” in their attempts to educate their children at home and that some Black families opted to homeschool in response to dissatisfaction with public-school pedagogy. They found that initially, Black homeschoolers often duplicated public-school curriculum only to later abandon the format for a less rigid and more personalized and innovative teaching program. Overall, their findings offered a content analysis of previously published descriptive accounts by Black homeschoolers and a glimpse into college students’ perceptions of homeschooling. However, the obvious shortcoming is that their interview participants were students who were not apart of the homeschooling community and not yet parents.

Whereas McDowell, Sanchez, and Jones (2000) attempted to address the obvious omission of multicultural experiences within the homeschooling literature, one shortcoming of their research is that they failed to interview Black homeschoolers. Two recent studies actually included the experiences and perspectives of Black homeschooling families—a study by Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) and a study by Mazama and Lundy (2012). Both studies were designed to study Black families’ motivations for homeschooling, with the Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) study including the challenges Black families faced while homeschooling and

the Mazama and Lundy (2012) study utilizing an Afrocentric perspective to examine the role of race upon families' experiences. Findings from Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) revealed that Black homeschoolers shared similar and divergent motives, family values, and educational approaches as most White homeschooling families—most often with the differences centering around negative racialized experiences from public and private schools, desires for culturally sensitive materials, and thwarting skepticism from family members. The participants in their study confirmed findings within the broader homeschooling literature that homeschoolers were motivated by expectations of themselves as parents. In addition, their findings highlighted the role of ethnicity, religion, financial and career sacrifices, and self-reported challenges that were not previously ascertained in other studies. The parents endeavored to circumvent “monocultural” approaches to teaching; discriminatory institutional and structural norms perpetuated within school environments; lack of integration between students of different social backgrounds; and the routinization to label Black boys learning disabled.

Delpit explains that ([1995] 2006) there exists a culture of power which positions educators in the role of gatekeepers—those who are able and willing to positively or negatively determine Black children's academic trajectory and thus life chances. Not surprisingly, educators' personal biases and racist attitudes towards children of color negatively influence Black children's academic performance (Dumais: 2002; Roscigno and Ainsworth: 1999). Educators can practice disproportionate sanctioning by rewarding students who demonstrate knowledge of mainstream culture with more “attention, assistance, and expectations” (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999:161). Educators' reportedly show positive disposition towards students who display behaviors prevalent in the dominant social class and regard many

ethnic and/or “non-White” cultural expressions as anti-academic (Dumais 2002). The cultural capital theory asserts that though many Black American children may acquire the skills needed to succeed academically, they typically do not display behavior, characteristics, and familiarity with cultural experiences valorized by White culture (Carter 2005; Dumais 2002). Attending museums and participating in extracurricular activities such as dance, music, and art usually result in a familiarity with experiences that are deemed intelligence identifiers and are indirectly rewarded by teachers. Thus, Lareau (2002:748) asserted that, “Middle-class parents both White and Black tend to conform to “concerted cultivation.” However, for Black parents who prefer to expose their children to cultural experiences that reinforce Black culture, such experiences remain outside of the cultural capital of the dominant class (Delpit [1995] 2006) and is often of no reward for the child in the classroom.

Along with circumventing potentially negative incidences associated with public and private schools, some participants in the Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) study gravitated toward homeschooling because it allowed them the freedom to incorporate their religious beliefs into their children’s curriculum. Nonetheless, for most of their participants, religion played a “supporting role” in empowering families to homeschool as opposed to being a direct fulfillment of their divine duty as reported by many “ideologues” in other studies. Many of the challenges that participants reported were related to socio-cultural dynamics specific to Black American’s history of overcoming marginalization in the United States. Primary homeschooling parents discussed having to contend with the concerns from their elders that they were abandoning career and educational privileges granted to them by the Civil Rights Movement. For example, many primary homeschooling parents were mothers who left professional careers

and found themselves having to justify staying at home to teach their children instead of exercising the “rewards” from long battles for workplace equality. Additional challenges were related to the logistics of homeschooling, including balancing finances, navigating logistics related to accessing public school services, and curriculum challenges associated with teaching.

Like Fields-Smith and Williams, Mazama and Lundy (2012) found that Black homeschooling families were affected by race-related social dynamics. Utilizing an Afrocentric approach to analyzing the experiences of Black homeschoolers, Mazama and Lundy described the racially influenced motivations and behaviors of Black homeschooling parents as a form of *racial protectionism* (2012).⁷ According to Mazama and Lundy (2012), Black parents homeschooled to shield their children from covert and overt racial discrimination and inequalities prevalent in the institutional learning experiences of Black children. Their study also highlighted parents’ desires to affirm African and African-American culture in their children’s curriculum and the ability to create “liberated” and “protected spaces” that were free from negative messages of racial inferiority. Both studies found that homeschooling offered Black parents opportunities to exercise their socio-cultural awareness and agency to provide their children educational opportunities that did not compromise their identities, academic interests, or family values.

Shortcomings in the Literature

As it stands, the literature on homeschoolers has maintained that the homeschooling population is diverse and growing. According to J. Michael Smith, the president and cofounder

⁷ *Afrocentricism* is a philosophical and theoretical perspective that emphasizes African subjectivity and agency and essentializes an African centered interpretation of the socio-historical lived experiences of African people instead of assimilating to Eurocentric interpretations.

of the nation's preeminent advocacy organization, the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) "the Black homeschooling movement is growing at a faster rate than the general homeschool population" (Gaither 2009:13). If true, then a burgeoning population of Black homeschooling families has the potential to redirect social and political perspectives and policies as they relate to education. Likewise, considering that the plausibility of homeschooling for most families is dependent upon access to social, economic and temporal resources (Newmer 2002), a growing population indicates a probable need for resources and supportive services. However, as homeschooling becomes increasingly mainstream the potential for its institutionalization also increases—and with it the potential to aggregate homeschoolers concerns and needs.

Previous research on homeschooling populations has substantially contributed to what we know about American families, education, and socio-political reform. From parental involvement and emotional role strain, to time management and political activism, homeschooling research has magnified the ways in which social actors assert their agency in determining their children's educational experiences. Though multiple studies have reiterated that homeschoolers are not a homogenous group and that homeschooling is not a monolithic movement, Black homeschoolers' identities, interests, and experiences are routinely overlooked or minimized within the homeschooling literature. For the exceptionally few studies that have chronicled Black homeschoolers' experiences, they are the critical foundations to which this study will expand upon. As with most preliminary endeavors, these works accentuate the need to broaden the homeschooling discourse with additional inquiries, critical dialogue, and analysis. Researching the needs of Black homeschoolers utilizing an intersectionality

framework will yield information about the effects of race, gender, and class status upon families' ability to achieve their educational goals. Furthermore, homeschooling among Black households represents an opportunity to examine how the families situate themselves within a growing social movement, if at all.

Principal Research Question

By asking "*what types of support do Black families need to homeschool their children?*" this study set out to examine the tangible and intangible resources and interactions that homeschooling families either explicitly or implicitly identified as substantive to their abilities to sustain their homeschooling efforts. There are three premises from which I based my research question: (1) *It is customary for homeschoolers to require resources and/or support to homeschool;* (2) *There is variation in the types of support families need;* and (3) *Intersecting social locations are associated with the types of support families require.* Consistent with the literature, the homeschooling families in my study were most often two-parent, middle-class households, who cited pedagogical, ideological, and cultural reasons as their motives for homeschooling. In addition, participants' accounts substantiated findings from Fields-Smith and Williams (2009), and Mazama and Lundy (2012) who advanced that Black families often homeschooled as an assertion of their parental empowerment to avoid adverse experiences associated with "school-related racism" (2012:723). In the interest of broadening what we know about homeschoolers and Black families, the focus of this study is on the types of support Black families need to homeschool. Whereas prevailing literature has a proclivity to focus on homeschooler's motivations for choosing homeschooling, my study takes into account that the social situations in which people are embedded affect their motivations, beliefs, and actions

and contribute to group similarities and dissimilarities. For example, whereas Fields-Smith and Williams (2009) reported that Black homeschoolers faced financial and social challenges that White homeschoolers did not, they failed to elaborate on social dispositions and demographics associated with in-group variations. My study addresses the aperture by adopting an emic approach to investigate the needs of Black homeschooling families. As such, this study was predominately exploratory. The overall intent of my study was to emphasize the role of intersectionality upon Black homeschooling families' abilities to meet their homeschooling goals.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Intersectionality

Intersectionality explores how conventionally assigned social positions such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and political affiliation, influence social actors' worldviews and life-chances. The intersectionality approach emphasizes that individuals live in a stratified society in which their social status and access to resources are linked to their positions in the *matrix of domination* (Collins 2000). The matrix of domination represents the interconnected systems of social power in which individuals occupy ranked positions. In a society that normalizes identities, perspectives, and behaviors based upon polarized and stratified borders, stratification is often examined, based upon main effects as opposed to interacting effects. For example, when we consider racism we understand that American society privileges the social, political, and economic interests of Whites of "all backgrounds" as well as their families above persons of color. However, American society has multiple systems of oppression and stratification, in which women are subordinate to men, homosexuals are subordinate to heterosexuals, the poor are subordinate to the rich, and the non-religious are subordinate to the religious. Scholars have since argued against "primary" effects of oppression and have advanced an intersectionality approach to underscore multiple systems of stratification intersecting with one another (Choo and Ferree 2010). As opposed to emphasizing a central oppression, within the matrix of domination, there are intersecting hierarchies of privilege and domination impacting the socially situated individual.

2.2 Symbolic Interactionism and Cognitive Sociology

Contemporary social scientists have asserted that all meanings stem from social

interactions, and that people interact with one another under the assumption that they share a related perception and understanding about reality (LaRossa and Reitzes 1993). Symbolic interactionism maintains that (1) humans act towards people and objects based upon the meanings that they have given those people and objects; (2) meanings are derived from or arise out of social interaction that one has with others and society; and (3) these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters (Blumer 1969). By focusing on the socially situated individual, symbolic interactionism functions as a framework for understanding and evaluating how commonalities and differences in people's behaviors and worldviews are the result of group memberships. Thus people think and act not only as individuals with personal idiosyncrasies, or as humans with universal attributes and abilities, but as social actors influenced by social constructs associated with their various roles and group memberships.

According to Eviatar Zerubavel (1997), asserts that human beings are members of "thought communities" and are "products of particular social environments" and that through cognitive socialization, people learn how to socially perceive, focus, classify, signify, reckon time, and remember.⁸ Human membership in various "thought communities" provokes both social norms among members who have shared experiences and socio-cultural differences between people with separate community affiliations (Zerubavel 1997:9).

It is well worth noting that our social memberships are formal, informal, explicit, and implicit—from the professional, generational, religious, gendered, classed, raced, abled, and

⁸ *Thought-communities* is a cognitive sociological concept. Cognitive sociology focuses on meaning making processes and, like the Symbolic Interactionism framework, is classified as an interpretive sociological perspective.

differently abled to the political, birth ordered, national, infirmed. Thus individuals occupy a multiplicity of social roles and affiliations that often overlap but sometimes contradict each other. As Zerubavel acknowledged, we are all “socially situated at unique intersections of separate thought communities” (1997, p.18). As individuals increase their network of social affiliations they also increase their uniqueness in social dispositions. When we consider social stratification and the ways in which some individuals are restricted and constrained by social norms and stereotypical perspectives, we can see how occupying subaltern positions and positions of privilege can influence how we assign meaning and ultimately think.

Synthesis of Symbolic Interactionism and Cognitive Sociology with Intersectionality

By synthesizing symbolic interactionism and cognitive sociology with intersectionality, we can examine how social location and group affiliation are influenced by social constructs and are not entirely personal and/or universal but conventional and politically prescribed. Thus individuals can occupy both subaltern positions as well as positions of privilege in which the boundaries and meanings people assign to the world around them are adapted from their specific social position in society. In addition, comparing and contrasting the narratives of homeschoolers who differ in socioeconomic status, family composition, spiritual beliefs, help to deconstruct conventions and political arrangements that are taken for granted—thus highlighting how arbitrarily we normalize phenomena and stratify our world.

Of particular importance to my analysis of the types of support that Black families required to homeschool was an understanding of how families negotiated social boundaries related to hegemonic social conventions. In relationships of oppression (marginalization) and domination (privilege), *hegemony* describes the process in which domination is established

through a commonsense worldview that incorporates the consent of the oppressed in their own oppression (Chen 1999; Freire 1970; Collins 2000). By accepting the ruling group's multitude of socially constructed definitions and meanings—which are designed to protect the interest of the ruling class—oppressed groups consent to subordinate statuses in which they interact in a world defined for them. Thus the parameters of the social construction of reality, which define social norms and influence social actors' actions and worldviews, form boundaries that individuals are often reify as natural and static through acquiescence. The ideal family is one such construct that can have marginalizing consequences for Black homeschooling families.

Because American society is stratified and hegemonic—privileging middle-class, middle aged, heterosexual, White males as the dominant group—White male privilege/patriarchy is asserted as natural and ideal. A byproduct of White male privilege is the normalization of the traditional “ideal family” as a White, heterosexual, middle-class, Christian couple, with two biological children (Collins 2000; Smith 1993). Although the ideal image of family often positions the wife as a stay-at-home mother, children are expected to attend traditional forms of schools—such as public or private schools. Homeschooling, shading the family brown, adding extended family members, and/or depicting two mommies or two daddies immediately distort the “recognizable” and normalized image of family. Intertwined with the privileges of the ideal family are complex interconnecting stratifications of multiple social institutions. The dynamic nature of stratification and hegemony not only privileges White males but also perpetuates privilege and marginalization within the intersecting institutions of family, labor force, and education (amongst other social institutions). Furthermore, Black families are expected to shade with the outlines of *controlling images*—racist constructed stereotypes that project

socially marginalizing, derogatory, and objectifying race, gender, and class specific depictions of Black men and Black women as well as their children. A synthesis of symbolic interactionism and cognitive sociology with intersectionality, can provide an expansive framework to analyze the symbolic, cognitive, and economic effects of stratification upon the types of support required for Black families to homeschool.

2.3 Research Design and Methodology

French sociologist, Georges Gurvitch, advanced the view that “in order to integrate the various aspects of social reality, sociological theory must provide a systematic account of the dialectical interrelations of micro-social processes, groups, classes and societies and their interpenetration at different levels of social reality” (Allen 1995:581). Narrative scholarship allows sociologists the use of shared personal stories to reveal truths about social phenomena that are silenced by traditional methods insistently used in the social sciences (Ewick and Silbey 1995). Sociologically, narratives are “contextualized” accounts—“sequences of statements connected by both a temporal and moral ordering” (Ewick and Silbey 1995:198)—that reveal personal interpretations of social events. Through descriptive tales, social actors classify the world into vignettes of socially constructed meaning. The experiences that people remember and report offer social scientists revelatory glimpses into the cognitive spaces of pluralistic social beings. Therefore, as much as a narrative is a personal story, it is as much a collective account (Ewick and Silbey 1995)—a transcript of shared ideologies. The purpose of this study was to investigate and analyze the narratives of Black homeschooling households in an effort to understand how they accomplish their educational goals. Of particular interest were their self reported needs/provisions. For the socially marginalized and underrepresented, opportunities

to tell one's story is often limited if present at all. Narrative scholarship presents itself as a useful resource for studying Black homeschooler's accounts. Inclusion of their narratives not only will expand the current homeschooling discussion but also contextualize Black American's experiences as heterogeneous.

Sample

I utilized a non-probability, purposive sampling to access participants. I solicited participants through word of mouth and from various sources, including networking websites for homeschoolers and the general public (Facebook), and I distributed flyers (see Appendix A) at local cultural events as well as posted several flyers on community/grocery message boards. Participants were most helpful, with many sharing my flyer with homeschoolers they knew personally and with their online homeschooling communities and support groups. I selected 20 households to participate in a single tape-recorded interview. Half of the interviews were face-to-face and the other half was via telephone. The interviews typically lasted at least one hour, with the shortest lasting about 30 minutes and the longest lasting an hour and a half. Although I began each interview with demographic questions, it was my intent to avoid interrogating participants. Therefore, I used open-ended question (see Appendix B) to facilitate a "natural" discussion about families' homeschooling experiences. Overall, I avoided rapid-fire questioning during the interview phase and instead used probes to encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences.

Though my sample is not representative of the Black homeschooling population, in the interest of diversity and heterogeneity, I selected my 20 interview participants from three "general" regions and their greater surrounding areas: Atlanta GA, Washington DC/Maryland,

and Raleigh NC. I selected the three locales primarily for their convenience in terms of travel, diversity, and renowned Black homeschooling populations. I interviewed participants in locations that were convenient for both interviewer and participant. I personally covered all travel expenses related to my travel. In the interest of time, participants in the Washington DC/Maryland and Raleigh NC areas were interviewed via phone. After obtaining approval from my university's Internal Review Board, I began my research collection with a pilot interview of a homeschooling parent who was not included in the final study. The pilot interview helped me gauge the efficiency of my questions and interviewing skills.

I requested that all participants sign an informed consent form (see Appendix C), which detailed confidentiality and the right to end an interview or withdraw from the study at any time. To ensure confidentiality, I assigned all participants pseudonyms and I used numbers (such as L1, L2, A1) on interview files to avoid using participants' names as identification. I secured all identifying information including consent forms, digital recorder, and additional contact information in my personal home safe, of which only I have access. I personally transcribed each of the 20 interviews.

Sample Demographics

I relied upon the narratives of the primary homeschooling parent, all of whom were Black women and the biological mother of at least one homeschooled child (see Table 1). The 20 mothers interviewed all identified as either African American or Black, with one mother identifying ethnically as Nigerian American. Average age for the primary caretaker/homeschooling parent was 42 years, with ages ranging from 31 years to 48 years of age. The average age of the secondary caretaker, when present, was 41 years old, with a range

from 29 years of age to 53 years of age. The average number of children in the family was three, ranging from pre-kindergarten age to high school/college age. Sixteen of the 20 participants were married, whereas two participants were divorced, one participant was legally married but separated from her spouse, and another was married in a spiritual tradition, however legally considered domestic partners. Thus, from participant accounts, I categorized households in to five types—*married-single-earner, married-dual-earner, retired, single female head of household, and extended family*. Four of the 20 mothers reported having graduate degrees, two mothers held bachelor's degrees, one mother held an associate's degree, and the remaining four mothers obtained their high school diplomas (with two of the four working on college degrees at the time of the interview). The biological father was often the secondary caretaker and most often provided the sole financial support. Four of the fathers had graduate and/or professional degrees which included Ph.D.s, M.B.A.s, M.A.s, and M.D.s. Two fathers held bachelor's degrees and one father held a high school diploma only. Most often fathers did not contribute substantially to the direct teaching of children. The average income was 73,000 dollars, with one family reporting an income in the lowest range of 0-20,000 dollars. Most households reported an income of 120,000 dollars and higher. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, two-parent households make up 89 percent of the homeschooling population; 54 percent of homeschooling households include two parents with one parent in the labor force (NCES 2012). In 2007, families earning between 25,001 and 75,000 dollars homeschooled at higher rates than families earning 25,000 dollars or less.

Interviewer Effect

I believe my being Black American provided me with a somewhat insider status and

created a level of comfort for most of my participants. It was not uncommon for participants to “include me” as they discussed “our community,” “our men,” and “our children,” which, implied that I was part of an “us” that negated an objective position as a researcher and stranger. However, I cannot guarantee that perceptions of my own socio-political and/or religious views did not influence the accounts participants shared. Several participants asked me why I was interested in homeschoolers, whether I had children of my own, or if I planned to homeschool upon having children. I typically would share that when I initially applied to my graduate program I knew I was interested in researching the academic achievement gap between Black children and White children and the role of education on individual’s life trajectory. Several of my participants had graduate degrees or were in college working towards either an undergraduate or graduate degree, which would provoke questions about my research process and preliminary findings.

There were several exchanges that made me aware that I was also perceived by some as an outsider and as a researcher with a motive in particular. One participant’s defensiveness during our interview made me realize that asking certain direct questions about race and support groups came across as me “leading” the participant and/or gave the impression that I expected a particular answer. Responses such as “*What do you mean? What are you looking for? What does that question mean? Is that what you were looking for?*” led me to change the way I asked questions. Luckily for me this adjustment was made earlier in the data collection process. As a result, before beginning subsequent interviews I explained to participants that I did not expect them to have answers to all of my questions and that I was not looking for particular answers. I shared that I simply wanted to hear their stories and invited them to share

additional information if they felt inclined. I also modified my probes, adding, “if this applies to you” before and after asking certain questions. Also, the fact that I was a sociologist researching homeschoolers gave the impression that I was researching whether their children were receiving adequate socialization. Participants would ask me what was my position on homeschooling and if I were going to share that they were not crazy and that they did have normal lives. I was very purposeful in disclosing that I was interested in their story and explained that I was doing a qualitative-study—using grounded theory methods with the intent to let the participants’ narratives direct my research as opposed to testing a theory. Overall, participants seemed eager to share their stories and most often discussions about my research and personal endeavors came toward the end of the interview.

Grounded Theory Methods

To perform my analysis, I used a constructivist approach to grounded theory methods (GTM). The constructivist perspective acknowledges the “shared experiences” of participants and researchers in generating data (Charmaz 2003). Within grounded theory methods, the researcher is an engaged analytical instrument that utilizes her/his experiences and knowledge to interpret the constructed meanings that participants have applied to their world. The researcher fuses her/his knowledge (experiential data) with details from the participant to conceptualize implicit meanings to evaluate or expand existing theory or advance new theories (Charmaz 2003; Snow 2004). My personal knowledge and acquaintances with several homeschoolers allowed me to think about some of their characteristics and day-to-day experiences when analyzing participant accounts. In addition I relied upon a synthesis of symbolic interactionism, cognitive sociology, and intersectionality to guide my interpretations.

During three phases of coding *open, axial, and selective coding*, the researcher is encouraged to create think conceptually and develop various hypotheses. As such, the principal story I have created while coding transcripts is only one of a multitude of interpretive, yet informative possibilities.

Grounded theory methods (GTM) were originally created by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967, and were designed to be guidelines, not hard and fast rules, for conducting qualitative research (LaRossa 2005; see also Charmaz 2006). Though Glaser and Strauss later splintered off to produce alternate versions of GTM, they laid the foundation for GTM with the introduction of coding procedures for constant comparison and the explicit request that future users of GTM “codify their own methods for generating theory” (Glaser and Strauss 1967).⁹ Of the many approaches available, the coding schemes of Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), which outline three phases of coding (open, axial, and selective), are the more readily used and my method of choice.

Open Coding

The initial phase of the triadic coding scheme, as laid out by Strauss (1987), is open coding. During the open coding stage, the researcher must “scrutinize” the research documents “line by line,” and even “word by word” (p. 28). With each examination, the researcher engages in the process of conceptualization, identifying indicators (behavioral actions and events) that will be compared one to another in order to create concepts. Employing a concept-indicator model, the researcher considers a myriad of indicators that will be linked to concepts, which in

⁹ Before Glaser and Strauss published their groundbreaking work on GTM in 1967, Barney Glaser authored “The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis” in 1965. This article became a chapter in the book.

turn will be arrayed to construct variables.¹⁰ Throughout all three phases of coding, the researcher should strive for achieving theoretical saturation, in which additional analysis yield little to no new information (Strauss 1987).

I began my open coding process reading through the first transcribed interview slowly without making notations in order to reacquaint myself with the interview and to familiarize myself with the language and subject matter discussed. To identify as many indicators and concepts as possible, I open coded my first ten interviews one by one before comparing all of the documents one to another. This strategy was difficult to execute because each interview had an underlining theme and tone that influenced what I expected to find in the next interview.

As I reread each document, I circled words and phrases that I found sociologically or thematically noteworthy. Examples include: “my husband will help,” “he works a lot,” there’s so many options today,” “purchase curriculum,” “we’re doing school,” “my mother’s generation,” “my responsibility,” “I’m losing a salary,” “they taught me how to think about homeschooling,” “he’s a typical boy.” I considered words and phrases that were centered on race, gender, class, social inequalities, resources, culture, self-evaluation, parenting efficacy, motivations, and the six acts of cognition (perceiving, focusing, classifying, signifying, timing, remembering). The interviews usually involved the participants discussing their homeschooling styles and curriculum preferences, their sense of accomplishments with homeschooling, the responses of their family and friends, their trials and errors selecting curriculum, and their learning how to schedule their homeschool day. Because I asked direct questions about resource needs and

¹⁰ The concept-indicator model was introduced by Glaser (1978), but also used by Strauss (1987).

support, there were multiple indicators, and without hesitancy I was able to identify the concepts, *financial, morale, cultural, social/recreational, and informational/educational* to create the variable *types of support*. After much pondering, I later changed the five concepts to *financial, motivational, instructional, recreational, temporal, and domestic*, which I later collapsed into *instructional, financial, and emotional support*. Initially I was proud of my ability to identify a multitude of indicators to support my concepts and the variable that was the main focus of my study, *types of support*. However, my interests in my participants' needs were deeper than just knowing if they needed school supplies or not, so I started to ask additional questions.

Axial Coding

To further the analytical process, the GTM researcher asks, how variables related to one another (LaRossa 2005). In axial coding the researcher temporarily places each variable, one at a time, at the center of the analysis, temporarily making it the focal variable, and engages in a series of analytical questioning to interrogate the variable. During axial coding the researcher tries to identify the six 'C's' "the causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances, and conditions" that will lead to the development of hypotheses (LaRossa 2005:847, following Strauss 1987). Strauss advised novice researchers to pay close attention for cues such as "because," "since," "the result of," and "on account of" (Strauss 1987:28).

To employ Strauss' tactic, I used a highlighter to underline these cues. This strategy allowed me to identify multiple causes, consequences, contingencies, possible covariances, as well as narrative contexts. This strategy directed me to instances in which participants self-diagnosed their needs and actions. For example, one parent explained why she decided to seek

homeschooling support from a formal organization: “...because I was like ‘Oh god, I’m really doing this’, and they are going to hold me accountable for what I’m doing and they’re going to expect me to know what I’m doing and I’m really just doing.”

Whereas a few of my participants discussed legitimating their teaching responsibilities, many more discussed their homeschooling needs in reference to their marital and income generating status. This was the most distinguishing factor about the support they needed. For example, several married participants shared that their spouses earned more than 60,000 dollars and yet they often did not mention how his salary contributed to their abilities to homeschool. It was as if his contributions were unmarked or taken for granted. By asking myself questions about the data, such as “when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequence (LaRossa, 2005, pg. 847) I was able to pose other concrete questions such as, “*Who required more emotional support? Why did some participants mention their spouses support and others did not? When did participants mention motivations in reference to their marital status?*” From the questions asked, the new concepts that were significant to my emerging story were: *Black American middle class, marital status, stay-at-home moms, multiple children, concerted cultivation, instructional support, encouragement, recreational support, generational accountability, veteran homeschoolers, empowerment, and transcending norms.* Also it appeared to me that participants’ reasons for homeschooling could be grouped under six concepts: *natural trajectory, spiritual, academic advantage, academic intervention, self-thinkers, and unique circumstances.*

Selective Coding

Selective coding is the stage where the researcher ultimately decides what the main

narrative is of her/his research. At this stage of the coding process, the researcher engages in a concerted coding process in which a core variable takes precedent over all other codes. The core variable acts a guide for additional theoretical sampling and data collection (Strauss 1987). The researcher should select one variable that is “theoretically saturated and centrally relevant” to the main story being told (LaRossa 2005:851). Overall, the core variable is the one variable that links the other variables into a single narrative.¹¹ Although I executed the three phases of coding, I did not develop a new theory but generally applied existing theory (e.g., intersectionality) to my data. As advised by Glaser and Strauss (1967), I kept asking myself what was happening between my variables. I found myself posing questions while looking at my data and revisiting the literature on some of my concepts, such as *social support*, *extended family*, *middle-class Black households*, which helped me to make inferences about variable relationships. While performing axial and selective coding, I realized that participants engaged in processes of affirming or rearticulating many social conventions as they sought support while transitioning into homeschooling. Thus the core variable that emerged from my analysis was *coloring outside the lines*. Whereas my research was designed to examine the types of support Black families required to homeschool their children, coloring outside the lines emerged as my main narrative to describe participants’ overall resourcefulness in accomplishing their homeschooling objectives.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the exploratory nature of my study, I believe my findings are relevant to contributing to what we know about Black homeschooling families. However, my study is

¹¹ Glaser (1978) first identified the criteria for nominating a core variable, but Strauss (1987) also used the criteria.

limited by a small sample size and reliance on interviews alone instead of a triangulation of data, which could include interviews, archival data, and participant observations. A common criticism of narrative scholarship is that the stories that people tell are not necessarily true or representative of group perceptions. However, the Thomas Axiom (Thomas and Thomas 1928) helps us to understand the value of stories in and of themselves. People's definitions of situations have legitimate and lasting effects on their decisions and actions.

I believe another limitation of my study is that I missed the opportunity to use intersectionality methodologically and not just theoretically. I could have asked open-ended questions related to race, gender, and class that would have allowed participants to elaborate on how their various statuses affected their homeschooling experiences. There were follow up questions that I missed that would have propelled my analysis a bit further. For example, researchers are advised that intrusive questions could be off-putting, and thus I was especially nervous about asking participants about their family income. Some families reported similar incomes and yet their experiences reflected different middle-class status. However, I realized that several of my participants were able to accommodate their families educational experiences whereas others were often dependent upon extended family and various social support networks to supplement the resources they could not obtain from their family income. Questions about accumulated wealth would have helped me to discern between varying socioeconomic dynamics. Many of my participants were proud to assert their agency—believing they were overcoming structural inequalities by homeschooling. Yet my findings suggests that although the context had changed and the families believed they were able to provide their children with better educational experiences than what their public schools could provide, they

still faced the same structural inequalities based upon the wealth gap. Most Black families in my study, therefore, were not in a position to demonstrate American values such as individualism and meritocracy because they often were dependent upon outside sources for many basic resources. The few who appeared to have accumulated wealth were able to meet their educational goals by purchasing many of the educational resources that others looked for from their family, friends, and community.

In addition, I realized later that I did not ask questions that would have allowed participants to elaborate on how their households decided who would be the primary homeschooling parent. Gender division of labor dynamics cannot be taken for granted and yet I accepted the mother as primary homeschooling parent matter-of-factly, missing an opportunity to ask how the decision was made and why. Whereas several participants offered this information within their accounts, it was not a question that I asked of all participants. Overall, I learned that a qualitative study can yield valuable data, but it also can be difficult to anticipate every question one should ask to enrich one's study. In the end, I believe this study is a building block, that hopefully will inspire additional studies.

Table 1: Demographics of Characteristics of Respondents

	Household Type	#Children	Respondent's Age	Marital Status	Respondent's Educ.	Income	Children's Ages
Cassandra	MSE	3	38	M	M.B.A	120+	5-13
Ruby	MSE	3	38	M	M.A.	20-40	4-8
Yvonne	MSE	2	46	M	M.A.	120+	7/7
Marie	MSE	2	31	M	B.S.	0-20	5-6
Nora	MSE	4	42	M	B.A.	120+	1-10
Ife	MSE	3	31	M	High School	20-40	3-8
Odessa	MSE	4	47	M	M.A.	120+	7-19
Sonia	MSE	2	41	M	M.A.	120+	6-9
Jackie	MSE	3	45	M	B.A.	120+	8-14
Abiona	MSE	3	34	M	B.S.	90-120	3-8
Fatima	MSE	3	34	M	B.A.	60-90	5-12
Phylicia	MSE	5	44	M	B.S.	40-60	3-18
Amaya	MSE	3	37	M	B.A.	90-120	10-14
Dina	Ret	2	45	M	M.A.	120+	14-19
Simone	DE	2	44	M	B.S.	60-90	4-10
Miriam	DE	2	39	M	High School	60-90	10-18
Beah	SF	2	47	D	M.A.	90-120	7-9
Kitt	SF	3	48	D	High School	0-20	8
Ella	SF	2	31	D	B.A.	20-40	9-13
LaDonna	SF	3	43	S	High School	20-40	8-17

Household Type= MSE:Married Single Earner RET: Married Retired DE: Married Dual Earner SF: Single Female

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the principal findings to my research question: *What types of support do Black families need to homeschool their children?* Described as the ultimate privatization of education, homeschooling parents in my study forfeited their entitlement to public schools and assumed all costs, commitments, and responsibilities associated with educating their children. One might assume that teaching at home would require similar if not the same materials and resources that are required in traditional school settings—paper, pens, maps, desk, etc. However, not all families desired to recreate the conventional school environment and many were focused on providing their children with unique educational opportunities they believed were either unavailable to them in public school environments or too costly from private school settings. Whereas very few parents admitted to modeling their homeschools after conventional school, at least a third of the participants were once educators who were familiar with the formalities of teaching and had surplus supplies available to teach at home. The majority of participants shared that operating a homeschool and teaching one's own child was met with a host of dynamics rarely required of a conventional teacher in a conventional classroom. Simone explained:

You would need support on just a trustworthy curriculum on what to do. Support on how to set up your day for your children, how to understand what type of learner your child is. How to balance your household with your schooling and your children and your life. How to balance your finances, because usually what happens is you typically have a one family income. One primary income and so that is something that you almost have to create your own science based on all the needs that still remain. Even [if] there are two people working, you consider that something [has] to balance out.

To sustain their homeschooling commitments, families depended upon three broad

types of assistance: *emotional*, *instructional*, and *financial support*. From participant accounts I characterized *emotional support* as encouragements, approvals, endorsements and reassurances of efficacy homeschooling families received from family, friends, strangers, establishments, and institutions. Positive feedback confirmed that the behaviors, attitudes, and experiences associated with homeschooling were either “normal” or relatively acceptable. *Instructional support* was curriculum and information based resources. Invaluable to many families was the sharing of education related information, advice, and insights. Parent-to-parent curriculum evaluations were the most common form of instructional support along with recreational and socializing interactions. In the interest of cultivating their children’s social lives, families sought organized and informal recreational/social activities. Recreational/social activities for children often fostered social interactions for the primary homeschooling parent which were similar to engagements and casual encounters parents would have incurred if they were working (had co-workers) or participated in conventional child related social organizations such as PTA (Parent Teacher Association). Of primary importance to homeschooling families was *financial support*—monetary assistance that included discounts, tangible materials, and bartered services and supplies.

Not surprisingly, for the families in my study, socio-economic status and interpersonal relationships were the most significant determinants upon which tangible and intangible resources were either readily available from within the home and/or sought outside of the home. Whereas some families shared that they were able to meet all their material and emotional needs within their nuclear household—relying upon others simply for organized recreation and casual social interactions—others relied upon extended family, friends, and

formal support groups to supplement their lack of financial, instructional, and recreational resources, and/or to provide empathy and encouragements. Amaya, a married mother of three, who had experiences homeschooling her children abroad and in the United States, shared this perspective about the significance of having adequate resources and/or support:

I feel, obviously, not everyone can homeschool and there are different circumstances that make that [homeschooling] not a reality or viable or even healthy because obviously...it [homeschooling] cannot be a positive experience. By that I mean...if you have a lack of resources or the person who is giving the instruction or facilitating the learning is not doing what they need to be doing then the child is obviously at a disservice. It has the potential, just like anything, to be a really great way to learn but it has its own downfalls...I think a large part of it is about resources and being able to plug in and get help in the things that you're weak in or being able to just provide what you're not able to personally provide.

Outside of rudimentary competence, I attribute the “different circumstances” mentioned by Amaya to matters of location in the matrix of domination and abilities and inabilities to emulate the traditional family ideal. As participants elaborated on the rewards and encumbrances associated with the responsibility of homeschooling, their perceptions of their access to “resources” and ability “to plug in” were most often discussed in reference to constraints or privileges related to race, gender, marital, and income generating statuses. Differences and similarities in participants’ accounts highlighted that their resourcefulness in sustaining instructional, financial, temporal, and emotional commitments associated with homeschooling were often the result of redefined perspectives, socio-economic stability, and supportive social ties. In an effort to explain the mechanisms through which families negotiated conventional and stratified social boundaries, I introduce two concepts, *complicit privilege* and *rearticulated license*.

Complicit privilege refers to social advantages associated with ascribed and achieved

statuses that are grounded in structural inequalities that emanate from the traditional family ideal. The degree to which homeschooling households mirrored the gender, class, religion, sexuality, family composition and marital status of the hegemonic family idea afforded their households social privileges such as *sense of accomplishment* (interpretation of agency) and vast access to resources.

Rearticulated license refers to social allowances such as *sense of empowerment* (interpretation of agency) and access to resources incurred by homeschooling households in spite of structural constraints and differential power determinants related to intersecting social statuses. Rearticulation is a process in which social actors create new socio-political perspectives and identities by rearranging and reassigning meaning from existent knowledge, information, and social phenomena—most often through the infusion of their own culture (Omi and Winant 1994; Collins 2005). Both sense of accomplishment and sense of empowerment are contingent upon whether households perceived homeschooling as a disruption to their standard of living, improving their standard of living, or as a positive indicator of their standard of living.

To explore coloring outside the lines, I divide the chapter into four sections. I begin my analysis with—*Natural Trajectory*—an examination of the occurrences in which participants constructed and deconstructed social meanings related to motherhood and teaching conventions. In the second section—*It Starts at Home*—I analyze the role of interpersonal relationships such as spousal support and extended family relationships upon participants' homeschooling abilities. In the third section—*I Didn't Care if They Were Black, Khaki, or Green*—I examine the instrumental relationships participants formed with individuals and

support groups to further their homeschooling goals and enhance their experiences. In the final section—*All You Need to Be is a Concerned Parent*—I reexamine how access to resources are distributed based upon the ideal family model.

Not losing sight of homeschooling as occurring within the context of a growing social movement, I took a cue from Apple (2000) and Fraser (1997), and examined participant's abilities and inabilities to access resources as emanating from social claims of unequal distribution of materials and resources as well as unequal recognition of subaltern and marginalized identities. Often referred to as distributive politics and identity politics, the paradigms of redistribution and recognition were critical to understanding that homeschooling boundaries were social injustices related to broader intersecting social stratifications and unequal power differentials (Apple 2000; Fraser 1997; Richardson 1988). Overall, I use the analogy *coloring outside the lines* as a representation for the multiple occurrences in which homeschooling families in my study demonstrated their resourcefulness by negotiating conventional and stratified social boundaries.

3.2 Natural Trajectory

Seven of the 20 mothers in the study recited narratives that described homeschooling as a part of the natural trajectory of child rearing, the impetus often being maternity leave. Yet, in spite of imparting that homeschooling evolved casually as a natural expression of motherhood, participants often relied upon the social approval and corroborations of their spouses and individuals within their immediate social circles to help them integrate the mutually exclusive social categories of mother, teacher, home, school and work in their transition into homeschooling. Furthermore, many of their accounts demonstrated that their decisions were

in fact less perfunctory and far more political, particularly because the normalized image of a stay-at-home mother was not a part of the historical and cultural representations of Black motherhood that they were familiar with. Multiple participants shared that the decision to become a stay-at-home mother was based upon an acute awareness of Black women's historical disenfranchisement from the private realm of their own homes and own children. As noted by Collins (2000), Black women were historically confined to working in the capacity of domestic workers and were often legally forbidden and/or ostracized for "aspiring to a model of womanhood that was inappropriate to them," particularly the image of a non-working mother which is based upon the ideal family model reserved for White women (p. 61). In this section, I examine how participants exercised rearticulated license to resist social conventions related to motherhood, teaching, and work.

Ruby and her husband, both 38-years-old, were trained teachers, she in elementary education and he in secondary education. Their three children—ages four, six, and eight—were always homeschooled. While dating, Ruby and her husband made the arrangement that, upon starting their family, he would continue working and she would stay at home. She and her husband always assumed they would start a school of their own, but not necessarily teach their children at home. Ruby reminisced about their initial vision: "Oh, we'll have our school and our kids will be a part of it and we'll have like six kids total." True to their plan, upon the birth of their first child, Ruby discontinued working and became a stay-at-home mother. Like many mothers in the study, Ruby shared that one of the reasons why she was so "adamant" about being a stay-at-home mother was because it had not always been an option for Black mothers:

...traditionally in America from our history, we always took care of someone else's children, so I think, being able to take care of your own, that's unique

about it [the Black homeschooling experiences]. Being able to pour directly into your children...I was always pouring into other children. Now they were other Black children, so I saw the value in that. I don't want my children to miss out on anything that I can give, that I bring as their mother.

Having worked as a social worker, Marie, like Ruby, chose to homeschool because she witnessed how the value of her labor served others' children. She decided to homeschool in an effort to invest her attention and presence back into to her own children:

When I was working...I had no time for them. They were always saying "Mom can we do this, can you come do this with me?" I was always saying no...I was looking at kids that I was suppose to be helping and they were so messed up because they didn't have anybody to teach them, their parents were home but they weren't teaching and guiding them. No, I need to be at home to make sure mines [sic] are straight so no one has to come out to my house or to my kids school to try to keep them out of trouble.

In the process of being home with her children, Ruby found herself casually making use of the educational materials she and her husband had accumulated as teachers. Ruby described homeschooling evolving "naturally." She further shared that she realized that she was homeschooling only after it was brought to her attention by another stay-at-home mom:

Someone just said, "You know you're already homeschooling, right?"... I think I had gone to a Mocha Moms kind of meeting.¹² Someone who was homeschooling was talking about all of the stuff that they were doing and I was like I'm doing that too. I just thought that was apart of being a mommy, not necessarily, you know [homeschooling]...I guess my husband and I talked more about it at that point, and we labeled it homeschooling.

Having been an educator and envisioning her family's transition as starting their own "school," it took Ruby by surprise to realize that the activities that she was engaged in with her children at home were indeed "teaching." As Ruby put it, "You're homeschooling by teaching

¹² Mocha Moms, Inc. is a national support group for mothers of color who have chosen not to work full-time outside of the home in order to devote more time to their families and communities. According to its website, as an organization, the group does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, socio-economic level, education, or religion. Retrieved August 15, 2012 (<http://www.mochamoms.org/>).

your child how to hang their stuff up, clean the kitchen, and pick up behind themselves...it wasn't a cut and dry thing anymore." Although she was well acquainted with teaching children, in her new role as mother, she found herself readjusting her perspectives about education as it related to her burgeoning perspectives about parenting. She recalled thinking "I hadn't thought of it like that."

Beah, a 47-year-old divorced mother of two reported a similar experience:

It wasn't ever really a conscious decision. Once my husband and I had kids, I mean, when you have kids and they're one and two-years-old, you're constantly teaching them. You're teaching them how to walk, teaching them how to talk...I was just in the habit of teaching my children. I kind of fell into teaching them and at that time I was married. I was working from home and it was something I was able to do. My husband at the time agreed we should teach our kids, so it was just something we just, I'm not sure started, we continued homeschooling. I don't even remember how I became aware, it just dawned on me that he was kindergarten age and I probably needed to tell someone I was teaching him at home (chuckle).

Ruby further shared that she later was asked by the organizer of one of her mom groups to facilitate several workshops on homeschooling to assist other families transitioning into homeschooling:

I got into that group and met just a lot of other moms at home and a lot of people were talking about homeschooling. I started doing workshops just showing people that just what you're doing is homeschooling and that you don't have to change what you're doing to homeschool. Eventually I started my own homeschool group.

According to Elliot, Gunaratnam, Holloway, and Phoenix (2009), it cannot be presumed that as women become mothers, their new identities are simply bequeathed to them from the external environment. In becoming a primary caretaker and engaging in what LaRossa and LaRossa (1981), building on Zerubavel (1979), called "continuous coverage," which is characterized as the constant care of a newborn infant, mothers must simultaneously perform

their new responsibilities while making sense of their new identities. As other researchers have explained, “new motherhood identities should not be understood simply as pre-given and externally produced, but as developed and creatively made by mothers themselves out of the social, material, and psychic resources available in their external settings, their relationships, their life histories, and current experiences” (Elliot et. al., 2009:19). Indeed, new mothers like Beah and Ruby, were influenced by the socio-historical meanings of motherhood. However, it was an interactive and interpretive process also influenced by their varying and intersecting social locations as stay-at-home moms, Black women, spouses, or in Ruby’s case, professional educator.

Phylicia shared that her family’s decision to homeschool actually originated with her husband, prior to their having had children. She recalled her initial reaction to her husband’s overture that they should homeschool as, “Who’s going to do that?” Phylicia explained that her children were initially homeschooled by veteran homeschoolers in a cooperative homeschooling environment. As her family grew, it became more practical for Phylicia to assume primary homeschooling responsibilities. In spite of Phylicia’s initial reluctance, at the time of our interview, Phylicia had been homeschooling for 18 years and considered herself a veteran homeschooler. Like Ruby, Phylicia became an advisor to other homeschooling mothers. Her family and friends were initially unsupportive of her decision. Phylicia shared that she refused to be deterred, taking their doubt as a challenge to prove the benefits of homeschooling. In establishing support groups, the women were establishing not only supportive social networks but also communities of like-minded individuals, commonly referred to as thought communities.

Phylcia was not the only participant who expressed an initial resistance to the idea of being directly responsible for teaching her children. Whereas some parents shared that they were initially intimidated by the responsibilities associated with homeschooling, others shared that they were apprehensive about leaving established careers to homeschool. Sonia was one such participant who candidly shared her initial inability to reconcile her career identity with her role as primary educator. Having designed software for a living, she found herself burned out from her job yet not completely comfortable at home: "I was like I don't know what I want to do next, I don't know what I want to do next." At the time she was home with her children, constantly researching new curriculum and educational resources for her children. Her husband pointed out that she was "already doing what you want to do next." Sonia shared her honest reaction:

Wow, I'm not a teacher, that's beneath me! He was like "No, no, no, you're also a technologist. So you can combine education and technology together." So I started feeling really excited about that.

Sonia's perception of teaching being "beneath her" can be attributed to her perception that assuming a teacher role disrupted her standard of living. Sonia's previous position as software designer was associated with a level of income and prestige that outranked the social value of a teacher. Research has demonstrated that job segregation and the persisting wage-gap based upon sex are the primary reason for differences in the labor market differences (Bielby and Baron 1986; Reskin 1988). Reskin (1988) highlighted that hegemony is sustained in the workplace because women's work is defined as inferior to the work of men. Positions such as software designer are commonly occupied by men and perceived to require more skill and deserving of ample remuneration. Comparatively, teachers as an occupation is commonly

occupied by women and perceived as requiring less skill and utilizing the natural “nurturing” tendencies of women (Williams 1991). As such, although teachers perform a fundamental role in our society in terms of ensuring the development of new citizens, their work is often undervalued compared to other positions, particularly occupations dominated by males (Bielby and Baron 1986). Furthermore, through differentiation and devaluation, job segregation and wage-gaps exist along racial lines. As such, prestigious and well paying positions such as Sonia’s are rarely occupied by Black women, thus shaping her perspectives that teaching was beneath her.

At her husband’s urgings, Sonia started a software design company catering to the needs of homeschoolers. Sonia’s husband used rearticulated license to encourage her to homeschool, which contributed to her adopting an innovative approach to teaching and starting a business producing homeschooling products. Consequently, homeschooling became a positive indicator of her families’ standard of living. Sonia shared that her husband’s co-workers expressed admiration for their homeschooling endeavors. Sonia recalled the turning point for her and her husband’s perspective about homeschooling: “His reaction was, *‘Wow, we’re actually empowering our children to be independent thinkers and leaders.’*” In resolving socio-historical perspectives about motherhood, school, work, and home, participants’ perspectives illustrated that many developed a sense of empowerment as they assumed more responsibility and influence for their children’s character and academic success—particularly as they exercised their rearticulated license to provide their children with educational experiences that were innovative and non-traditional.

Parents who occupied mainstream positionality and adopted ideological and pedagogical educational approaches that closely resembled mainstream ideals typically had access to more resources than parents who adopted less traditional framings and ideal. However, non-traditional approaches to homeschooling also had their rewards, such as broader access to “free” resources and innovative resources.

Yvonne was a married mother of seven-year-old twins. Her children had been home with her since birth and had never enrolled in any other form of schooling. Like other parents in my study, she applauded homeschooling, declaring a preference for homeschooling over private and public education. She and her husband were considered middle class, reporting a single-earner income of 120,000 dollars and above. Yvonne held a master’s degree and her husband was matriculating towards a graduate degree while financially providing for their family. She perceived herself as “being blessed” that her husband “makes a good income” that kept her from being “in the counting pennies group.” Yvonne’s desire to provide her children with a “normal” lifestyle obliged her to seek out social support to create what she considered pertinent childhood experiences. She assumed sole responsibility for her children’s formal education by using her family’s financial resources to obtain elite curriculum. However, she relied upon the relationships she formed with other homeschoolers and parents to provide the concerted cultivation she valued for her twins. When asked whether or not she could homeschool without formal or informal support networks, Yvonne had this to say:

...do I think I can homeschool isolated by myself? No, I don’t think so. I want my kids to not feel different...I want them to be as normal as possible and oh yeah, I homeschool...they do vacation, they do parties, they do play-dates, they do school, they do swim classes. They do all of those things, but their school day, instead of getting up and catching a bus, is here at home.

Yvonne shared that she didn't homeschool with other families because her children were too young for coops and online classes. She provided their core courses, reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, and utilized organized groups for activities such as science club and play dates. Her children were accustomed to traveling for vacation sometimes three or four times a year. Yvonne shared a story to illustrate how homeschooling afforded their children to "think outside the box" and yet, at the same time, contributed to what she half-heartedly considered her daughter's "warped view of the world" that contributed to her being "bratty":

A funny story for you. We were in Maui in December and we got back and we were doing school...They had a comparative paragraph about these characters...One little girl was a good swimmer and she's like "Ah, I haven't been swimming for a long time." I'm like "Giovanni, what are you talking about, you just got back from Maui last month?" "Well, I haven't been on a vacation in a long time." I'm like (laughter) "Oh my goodness, (laughter) your world is different!" I'm like "Kiddo, out of your friends, who is going to Maui, Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, Myrtle Beach, all in six months?"

In all earnest, Yvonne was quite proud that she and her husband could provide their children such opportunities. Her family emulated many of the attributes of the traditional family ideal. Yvonne perceived homeschooling as a positive indicator of her family's standard of living and thus it contributed to her sense of accomplishment.

Ife, a 31-year-old "married" mother of three, was first introduced to homeschooling by her foster mother who made the decision to homeschool Ife's son along with her own school-aged children once the family could no longer afford the private school the young children were initially attending.¹³ Ife continued homeschooling her son until he reached his high school years and decided he wanted to attend public school. After her son entered high school, she

¹³ Legally, Ife's relationship would be described as a domestic partnership. Ife explained: "Under the laws of Georgia we would not be legally married, but when my husband and I first met, we decided to have an Islamic wedding. But we are married. It's been eight years."

continued homeschooling her two youngest daughters (ages three and eight), per her husband's request. She offered to go back to work to alleviate her husband from the financial strain of their single income, which was between 20,000 to 40,000 dollars. Ife shared that she and her husband's social life suffered because he worked so much; however, her husband was resolute in working so she could homeschool their daughters:

I am the primary. My husband works, it feels like 24 hours, it's a sacrifice, but he does it. He does it. (laughter) Money is not an issue in our household, but my husband and I know that if both of us were working, it would be so much easier....my husband is like "I do this because I want you to homeschool our children," but I see the stress on him.

Ife used what she described as "eclectic" and innovative learning practices, such as yoga, mantras, and even baby sign language. She engaged in many middle-class child-rearing practices, particularly taking a child centered approach to teaching her children and avoiding directives (Lareau 2003). She explained that she often engaged her daughters, asking if they liked how a lesson was taught and if they preferred other techniques, assignments, and lessons. Ife also took special care to infuse her daughters' experiences with African and Black American history and traditions. She was among the very few participants to state that she taught in direct objection to dominant culture and hegemonic ideologies:

I believe there is a people who call themselves running this country. They have indeed lied to the mass of their people to get their point across. I don't want them teaching my children. I can't depend on these people to teach my children. They taught me and here I am 31-years-old just finding out pieces. There is a lot of truth other people teach us, but there is so much under the rock and around the moon and across the sea to put the pieces together. I would rather not take their information and give that to my children. So I would take what I thought was useful and the rest, I would move on.

It was important to Ife that her daughters develop a sense of community and know the children within their immediate neighborhood. Ife was resourceful in making connections with other

homeschoolers for recreational activities and asking the teachers in her local public schools for their leftover year-end materials. Ife's daughters interacted with the public school children in her neighborhood, other homeschoolers, and family members. Ife's kin-centered and eclectic approach to homeschooling underscored Ife's rearticulated license. Ife's account was interesting because she demonstrated both a sense of accomplishment and sense of empowerment based upon her complicit privilege and rearticulated license. Being a stay-at-home mother afforded her the allowances to explore culturally affirming and innovative approaches to instructing her daughters. Ife incorporated the informal support of family, friends, and her local community not simply as a supplement to her lack of resources but as her instruction of choice. Whereas some aspects of homeschooling disrupted her family's standard of living (her husband having to work overtime), her husband's role as the head of household and single wage earner was perceived as a positive indicator of their standard of living, because it allowed their household to assert rearticulated license in their parenting endeavors.

Both Yvonne and Ife responded similarly when asked whether or not they could homeschool without formal or informal support. Whereas both demonstrated a committed interest to ensure that their children experienced concerted cultivation, variations in their approaches reflected contrasting perspectives and social locations. Although Yvonne could afford to pay for experiences and resources that Ife could not, Yvonne shared that if her children were to attend the private school of her choice, she would have to "go back to work" to afford the 40,000 dollar a year tuition costs.

3.3 It Starts at Home

Most participants recited narratives that emphasized that spousal support and extended

family relationships were factors that impacted their homeschooling abilities. Of the four participants residing in single-family households, Ella, Kitt, and Beah were divorced, whereas LaDonna was separated. As learned from Miriam's narrative, not all domestic partners were homeschooling advocates. However, more often than not, having a domestic partner alleviated financial burdens and emotional hardships brought upon by self-doubt and the multiplicative responsibilities associated with parenting and teaching. As Fatima shared: "My husband was supportive because I asked him before and I was thinking about it and he was like 'Yeah, I think you should go for it.' Once I knew I had his support, I was like 'Ok, good,' I was alright..."

Odessa, a 47-year-old married mother of four, left her career as an educator and was very vocal about the impact of her husband's support. Odessa's sphere of influence was very intimate and yet she regarded her husband's emotional support and encouragement as most significant in her ability to homeschool:

...like anything, [it is] kind of hard to do when you're married and your husband is not in agreement with it. If my mother or something said something about it, it wouldn't have a bad effect on me if my husband was in more agreement with it. If everybody wasn't in agreement, or if my friends, probably, but if he's not in agreement, his is the main thing, because those are his kids too. If he didn't support me more so than anybody else, then no, that wouldn't work.

Both Dina (age 45) and her husband (age 50) were retired. Dina was the only participant who reported that she and her husband shared equal homeschooling responsibilities, proudly announcing that her husband went so far as to build their children a classroom:

...he said, "I'm going to change the greenhouse into a classroom." I was like, "Really?" He actually did it. The hardwood floors and the drop ceilings and the dry erase boards and we put posters up and maps. Just decorated the classroom and desks for them...encyclopedias, bookshelves, file cabinets, everything you needed in a classroom, they had it.

As outstanding as Dina's husband's participation was, secondary caretaker instructional

participation was rare among most participants. Phylicia, a married mother of five, who homeschooled all of her children (starting with her eldest who was 18-years-old at the time of the interview to her second youngest who was less than five-years-old), shared this perspective about the “typical” division of labor found in Black homeschooling households: “The husband considers himself ‘the Principal’ even though they do not have a Principal role in the homeschooling role...I have found very few Black homeschooling families where the father actually teaches a subject.” Odessa elaborated on her husband’s financial contributions to their household but, like Phylicia, she too referred to her husband as “the Principal”:

[He supports my efforts] Financially. (laughter). I’m losing a salary in the sense. Yeah, financially and he’s kind of like that Principal. He does ask “What are they learning?” They’ll actually tell him, what we’re learning and what we’re doing.

Although several participants reported feeling strained or encumbered by their roles as primary caretaker, sharing narratives that confirmed Phylicia’s observation about the unequal division of labor, it was customary for participants to “normalize” their husband’s limited instructional participation. Many of the mothers took light-hearted positions towards their spouse’s lack of participation, either expressing a preference for the division of labor or expecting their spouses to “stay out of their way” or to simply provide the financial resources they needed to “do school.” Sonia, 41-year-old married mother of three, shared: “My husband is the kind of person, he’ll do it as long as he’s reminded. So I have to. Either, I’m so busy with everything I’m doing, I don’t remember to remind him, so just to keep peace, I try to gently say, ‘You haven’t done geography in over a month.’” Ife, our 31-year-old married mother of three: “I want to say [he contributes to the homeschooling education] once a week. That’s me making sure he gets in there and does something (laughter).” Fatima, 34-year-old married mother of

three: "I guess he helps with gas money and stuff like that. Our memberships and stuff like that...Now, he stays out of my way. I was talking to some other homeschool moms [who say] 'I hate when my husband's home, he's kind of in our way.'" Respondents' reactions to their spouses' support were often reflective, with most participants perceiving their status as a stay-at-home mother and primary educator as a privilege. Several participants were conscientious of the "sacrifices" their spouses made to support their households with just one income. For example, Cassandra, a 38-year-old married mother of three who held an MBA, considered homeschooling a privilege:

...for my husband's family, his parents, there's probably the culture, there's just an expectation that you're going to keep working, send your children to daycare, and that sort of thing. It was a change in mindset for them...I am so very privileged to have the opportunity to be at home. I love my children. I like them. I really do believe the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. I really feel that very strongly in my role as a mother.

Nora's reflection captures the complex interconnection between complicit privilege, positive perception of homeschooling as a positive indicator of standard of living and sense of accomplishment:

I think it is unique for an African-American woman to be home with her child period. For me it was breaking a curse. All of the women in my family had to work. I am the first generation to go to college. The first generation to attend graduate school. I am the first generation to be married for almost 20 years in a viable relationship that did not end in some kind of separation or divorce. I am the first. I am the pioneer. I am the first to say that I can stay home with children and that God blessed me to be able to do that. For me, I broke a curse. Not saying that every woman has to stay at home. What I am saying is that every woman should have the option if she chooses to do so. A lot of times in our community, our men have not been able to afford to make that happen. Financially, if you're not making enough money to support a family and have a woman come home and be home with the kids, there are a lot of things that are not going to happen.

Like Nora, several participants interpreted their ability to homeschool as a symbol of their family's social progress. Their ability to aspire to the ideal family model also legitimated their decision to homeschool as a family corroboration and established credibility for the women as wives and not simply mothers—defying stereotypical and controlling images of Black women as unwed mothers and recipients of government assistance. Nora shared her thoughts about what she assumed were others' perception of her when she ventured out during conventional school hours with her children:

One of the first things people think is, "Here she comes with four kids, she's tore up from the floor up." Not exactly (laughter). I am doing what I want to do by choice. My kids are doing well. My kids are living in a very nice house. My kids are a part of a very loving family. They are provided for. This was a choice.

Collins (2000) and Smith (1993) offer descriptions of the socially constructed and normalized image of family as portrayed in American society. The standard North American Family (SNAF) is described by Smith (1993) as the conceptualization of family as a "legally married couple sharing a household" in which: "the adult male is in paid employment; his earnings provide the economic basis of the family household. The adult female may also earn an income, but her primary responsibility is to the care of the husband, household, and children." Collins specifies that the American normalized image of the ideal family is intersectional—meaning it is raced, gendered, classed, and sexed. Collins describes the ideal families as "heterosexual couples that produce their own biological children." The father is characterized as the head earner. Based upon Collins and Smith's characterization, family needs are provided for from within the family unit, based upon the assumption that the father earns an adequate salary that will allow the wife to withdraw from the public work sector and manage private domestic responsibilities. For some participants who either benefited from

complicit privileges and/or rearticulated license, homeschooling was a positive indicator of their standard of living transforming the homeschool environment into a site of resistance. However for participants who did not benefit from complicit privileges or who exercised limited rearticulated license, homeschooling disrupted their standard of living and created another site of inequality for Black women.

For four participants, the “onus was on them” to multitask as head of household and primary educator. LaDonna was a separated mother of two who was also raising her niece at the time of our interview. To hear her talk about her teenage daughter Zadie, whom she homeschooled to accommodate her exceptional commitments as an aspiring athlete, one could tell she absolutely adored her daughter. At the start of our interview, LaDonna sounded exhausted and I felt a surge of guilt for imposing upon her time. I offered to reschedule, but she refused, determined to share their homeschooling experience. She perked up, but could not evade talking about personal constraints that impeded her ability to provide the best opportunity for her daughter: “Her homeschooling we’re happy for. I really wish I had more as a single parent to give her, more because this kid, she is so smart and she wants more.”

LaDonna admitted that homeschooling came about as a logistical option for her daughter. Unable to afford the boarding school her daughter once attended and dissatisfied with the quality of their local public school and its inability to negotiate her course schedule to accommodate her intense athletic practices, LaDonna and her daughter decided to homeschool at the suggestion of her daughter’s coach. “Honestly, I’m a big believer in the private school system.” According to LaDonna, Zadie did not need new friends or organized activities as much as she needed daily interactions to compensate for the isolation she was experiencing from

homeschooling. Because LaDonna was employed and working towards her undergraduate degree at the time that they began homeschooling, she relied upon her family members to assist with homeschooling and supervision for her daughter.

Most of them are supportive because they realize that she has this whole different life and they're offering to help. My cousin...does phone appointments with her to help her prepare for the SAT's. My sister has volunteered to kind of meet with her and [do] mornings on a phone base, just to kind [of] keep her moving [through] the classes. Sometimes I don't always have the time...with her like I should. I really need time, an extra set of hands, so the family is starting to kick in to make those phone calls and work with her during the day. Her other aunt, who is local...she has her own business...so a couple of days out of the month, she'll go and they'll sit just from a social aspect of it.

Within Black communities, it is common for extended family to function as informal support networks (Taylor et al. 1990). Referred to as the *helping* tradition, studies have shown that married and single Black female headed households often benefit from the assistance of extended family members in child rearing, domestic assistance. It was LaDonna's opinion that her daughter's unique circumstances drew admiration and yielded support:

I live in a neighborhood where people are very supportive of their kids, so people are more interested in her story and what she's doing. It's actually an admiration for the fact that we're taking the risk and the extra effort to support her dream. Even if it's in an unorthodox way...it's very supportive.

LaDonna attended college, worked fulltime, and earned an income between 20,000 to 40,000 dollars. Considering her lack of time and financial resources, homeschooling would appear to disrupt her standard of living. However LaDonna was able to frame her homeschooling efforts as an empowering option, which would allow her daughter to circumvent the constraints of traditional brick and mortar schools and pursue her dreams of becoming a professional athlete. LaDonna did not feel accomplished in homeschooling. However, her efforts were recognized by her family and neighbors, which contributed to her

sense of empowerment in doing all that she could to help her daughter achieve her goals.

Being single, Beah contributed her perceived shortcomings and challenges with homeschooling to her non-married marital status and full time work status. She felt supported by her umbrella group, which she said made up for the lack of support she believed she would receive from a spouse. Most of her narratives were rendered from the perspective of a single woman:

If there were one thing I would like to have more of, it's more connection with other single homeschoolers, and it's just not that many...it would just be kind of a "Um are you as crazy as I am? Are you handling all the chaos in your life?" type questions. I don't know if they can offer me anymore support than I'm already given, but certainly I think whatever strategies they've learned that makes their lives work might be helpful for me to hear or just to share because its kind of like on the job training.

Beah appeared to be looking for emotional support that would help her normalize the homeschooling experience from a single mothers' perspective. She perceived the empowering benefits of homeschooling, however she required the corroboration of other single homeschoolers to gauge whether homeschooling compromised her standard of living. She was aware that the homeschooling experience varied for families based upon dynamics related to ideal normal family.

The onus is on me to see that the financial needs of the family are met. The onus is on me to make sure the home is taken care of, getting food, their clothes are getting washed, those typical wife duties are getting done. The onus is on me to teach everything or I won't say teach everything, but responsible for teaching everything. Other homeschool families, they have a husband a wife...our school doesn't have that.

However, as the interview continued, Beah reflected on her extended family's support:

I need support in school, being a mom, I'm working on my Ph.D. My family helps me when I have to study for an exam or write a paper. My family helps me by taking the kids overnight. They might spend the night at my cousin's house or my

mom's house. It's all connected for me, because its just me. There's no way I can homeschool without support, there's no way I can work on my Ph.D. without support. There's no way I can be a single parent without support. There's no way.

On average, homeschoolers resided in single earner households. However, they were most often two-parent households. Only two participants reported residing in an extended-family household—that is having additional family members beyond the nuclear father/mother residing in the same household.

Abiona was of Nigerian decent and shared that her family consisted of her spouse, their children, and her parents. From her account, she was the primary homeschooler and did not share homeschooling responsibilities with any of the other adults in her household. At the time of the interview, Marie's mother and sister resided with her, her husband, and their two children. Although both her mother and sister were working, according to Marie, they did not provide substantial financial contributions to the household or contribute to the children's homeschooling instruction. Homeschooling was often perceived as exceptional to older family members because it reflected shifts in parenting and child socialization practices. For the families that did discuss their extended family's support, it was typically external to the household and included emotional encouragements, academic feedback, and contributions to educational resources such as books, as well as discreet participation such as assistance with lessons and monitoring students. As such, the majority of participants' sought the support of formal support groups to accommodate some of their homeschooling needs.

3.4 I Didn't Care if They Were Black, Khaki, or Green

Many of the women expressed a sense of stability, which could be attributed to their education, financial position, and marital status. However, many still required the assistance of

social support groups, virtual academies, and regulatory organizations. Ella, our 31-year-old divorced mother of two and professional educator, reached out to a homeschooling support group when she found herself becoming frustrated when her homeschooled son began to show signs of disinterest and boredom. As she put it, he realized he was not “out of school and mom is teaching me” but “actually in school at home.” The support group helped Ella “cross the bridge of school and home” and in return the group benefitted from her resourcefulness:

I was a single parent with two children, four years apart and I was new to homeschooling but not new to education. The thing I brought to the group was the education background. I brought in a whole bunch of ideas and materials and field trip ideas. I learned from other parents just how to have school time, how to have mommy time, and how to have individual play-time for my children. I learned those things, and they learned from me how to broaden your horizons when it comes to educating your children. Don't just look at textbooks. I can show you how to make everything. Use the materials you have at home. Don't throw away that egg carton, don't throw away that cereal box, you can make a book out of it. Let me show you how to make puzzles out of a little bit of nothing. They got those things from me. We all supported each other.

Marie was a member of two homeschooling cooperatives, one she described as “predominately White and diverse” and the other she described as “predominately Black.” Coming from California where her children were accustomed to diversity, Marie shared that she enjoyed the benefits of both groups. She explained how she didn't experience racial diversity growing up, but after enrolling in college she learned that she “enjoyed interactions with White people.” Experiencing diversity for the first time during her college years helped her to dispel misconceptions she had about White people. She shared that she wanted the same experience for her sons. Marie believed her two groups gave her a well-rounded outlook on homeschooling: “I found that the support of other people who homeschool is helping my perspective of why I'm homeschooling versus ‘Oh we just have school at home’ ...I'm learning,

ok, what it really means to homeschool.”

Marie was not alone in seeking out racial diversity within her homeschooling support groups. Beah and Phylicia shared similar sentiments about integration and homeschooling support. Beah shared:

I have more in common with White homeschool families than I do with Black families that don't homeschool on a lot of levels. The race becomes less important or has become less important to me. If there is one thing that I would like to have more of, it's more connection with other single homeschoolers, and there's just not that many.

When Phylicia and her family relocated to another part of town, her first thought was to get connected:

When I came over here, ok, where are the homeschoolers? Let me find some. I didn't care if they were Black, Khaki, or Green...I did connect with groups that were predominately White. I connected with groups that did not share my same beliefs. I've even met a few that did not have any beliefs at all.

Ife recalled an encounter she had with a young White homeschooling mother with whom she discussed race and homeschooling. When the young woman initially asked Ife her reasons for homeschooling, Ife was hesitant to share her honest critique of the education system and her opinions about its role in contributing to racial disparities:

[I] kind of fished around the question for a minute and decided to be honest. I don't believe that the education system that is out here today is to benefit me, my children, their children or any of our people. I believe it because these are institutions, they are no longer learning, they are literally institutions.

Ife explained that her disclosure led to her and the mother having an honest exchange about their contrasting backgrounds. Whereas the young White woman admitted to growing up in the suburbs where “everything was given to her” and Ife was raised not “even middle class” but believing she was middle class “like the Huxtables,” they found they shared similar perspectives

about race and the educational system, with many of the young woman's perspectives about race having changed while in college:

She said it was once she went to college and she was hanging around different people who she normally would not have hung around, had she not gone to college, when she started to get information about her own people, and other races, not just Black people, Chinese people. She said her first initial thought was that this was a Black thing, these kids come to school cussing. But I understood, because I have that stigma, that when you see that kind of stuff, it must be a Black school, when you hear certain things on the news, "Oh he must be Black, or he must be White." It was awesome to talk with her open and honest like that. I came home and I was "Ah babe, I was talking to this sistah. This sistah, we were talking." So what's the word, we were talking so candid, so freely with one another...I'm coming home to my parents and my husband, "Yeah this sistah, and this sistah, and this sistah." And it didn't hit me until after I said it a million times, I just called her "sistah," but it felt that way, it felt that way.

In spite of unique connections like Marie and Ife's, the majority of participants found themselves and their cultural interests underrepresented within the larger homeschooling community. Ruby, had homeschooled for eight years at the time of our interview and shared her initial difficulties: "I was very discouraged...Georgia, it's predominately White conservatives. I didn't want to be the only one, and I didn't want my children to be the ones in the situation where there's nobody else that looks like you." Ruby's struggles continued as she tried to navigate finding culturally relevant learning materials and support groups that could not relate to her cultural concerns. "I can't just get a book with everybody? We're a part of American history. Why do I have to find this book over here or write something?" Ruby expressed her frustration with the inability to find culturally inclusive educational material. She questioned why African Americans and other non-White groups were presented as an "afterthought" or "addendum" within U.S. History. To her it was an inconvenience to go online, search out specific books, or have to consider writing a book herself to incorporate the experiences of

Asian, Black, and Native Americans into her curriculum. Along with reflecting on the time, energy, and financial resources such an endeavor would require of her, she recalled a time in the early 1990's when she was reviewing new multicultural text books for the public school she was working for. She recalled looking at the pictures in the books and thinking progress was being made, and yet almost twenty years later, her children were still learning about "the same five Black people" that she herself learned about in elementary school. Ruby recounts the incident that provoked her departure from a predominately White conservative homeschooling group.

I attended a group for a couple [of] meetings, and it wasn't going to work. They had mom-only meetings and they would discuss different topics each month. So I went to the one on history, just to see what people were using and what people liked. [A lady shared] "It's my favorite book and I just love it!"...so I asked her why do you like it? She was like "It's easy how my middle-schooler...", ok, readability, so I'm writing down what she is saying..."It does have some vary disparaging remarks about other people in the very beginning, but if you overlook that, it's a really good book." Why do I have to overlook, why would your favorite book [be the one] that puts everyone else down? That was my last meeting.

Ruby was well aware of the impact of omitting or reciting marginalizing stories. She recalled two incidences:

My oldest is starting to see, she'll say things. I know it's observation and it always comes when I least expect it. "Mommy why are there only White people in this?" So I look for books that have [us]. She wanted to read the American Girl Series. I said ok, we'll start with Addy and then we'll read them all. I don't have a problem reading about everyone's story. She went through this big fit about why she didn't want to read Addy, I was like "Really, you don't? Why don't you want to read about Addy?" [Her daughter replied] "Well the story is sad mommy, the stories about us are always sad."

Ruby further explained how books that are exclusionary affected everyone, not just the groups that are marginalized in the story:

That's why people in general don't know. Was it Michele Bachmann who said the crazy thing that Black people were better off in slavery because they came from two-parent homes? They read the same history I grew up with, the same little chapters I read. Now I'm Black, so I know more of my history, but they have never had to know more of my history. So in those history books it did make us seem like we were happy during slavery, so why wouldn't she think, she's never taken Black Studies. We always have elective classes, we're never a part of the history you have to take...That's all they know and we have not demanded that people know anymore.

Books are society's cultural artifacts. They represent the established values and norms of the society. Accordingly, values represent beliefs of the society and norms are the rules that are established to ensure that the values are achieved. For schoolbooks to omit certain members of society or to marginalize them, particularly in history books, signals to their lack of value in society and promotes the social norm of representing certain groups as marginal members of the culture. Ruby was not alone in her feelings of marginalization. Dina shared a similar account: "When my daughter noticed that in the Bible most of the evil people were Black or Brown or the good righteous people were White...and not taking the contributions of any other ethnicity, she brought it to our attention. So we found another curriculum." Whereas Ruby considered exercising rearticulated license to "write a book," Dina was able to navigate a similar problem by purchasing another curriculum.

In *Blue Chip Black*, Lacy (2007) distinguished between two different types of middle class Black groups, one she described as "fragile," "lower-middle class" and essentially trailing their White middle class counterparts, whereas the other group she described as "stable" and "indistinguishable" from their White counterparts. Parents in the stable middle class were able to activate their social capital and middle class statuses to navigate social ranking and exclusionary educational experiences related to race and class. Shapiro (2004) found that

families with accumulated wealth were afforded more freedoms than those with less, and were less likely to invest in their communities. The ability to pay and privatize their needs offered wealthier households privileges at the expense of being vested in their communities.

Participants who earned annual salaries of 120,000 dollars and above were least dependent upon resources from outside their home to accommodate their children's educational needs and were less beholden to support groups for many of their needs. Dina shared another story in which she suspected that the predominately White homeschooling group she was a member of was excluding Black homeschoolers and girl from a robotics science project. Upon realizing the suspected racism and sexism, Dina and her husband responded by forming a separate and more inclusive robotics club. Dina consistently maintained throughout her interviews that she and her husband could homeschool without support. Her ability to purchase what she required for her children's homeschooling experiences can be interpreted as both complicit privilege and rearticulated license. She was one of several participants who colored outside the lines by utilizing her mainstream access to resources to navigate discrimination.

3.5 All You Need To Be Is A Concerned Parent

Several of my participants recited a common encounter. When sharing with someone that they homeschooled their child, the other person's reply was often "I could never do that!" Without solicitation, non-homeschooling individuals would promptly offer various reasons for why they could not assume direct responsibility for teaching their children: personal aptitude, time, income, tongue and cheek remarks about "killing their children," etcetera, etcetera. Homeschooler Yvonne shared that in spite of non-homeschooler outsized perceptions ("Oh my God you're a saint because you homeschool!"), they indeed faced self-doubts, challenges with

allocation of resources, and fluctuating temperaments. Although traditional education environments, such as public and private schools, were the norm and convenient, more than half of the study participants believed they risked potentially compromising their children's education, moral character, and lifelong success by not homeschooling. Whereas the majority of participants perceived homeschooling as a labor of love, their experiences were far from homogeneous. As they candidly discussed objectives, education ideologies, and social dispositions, variations in participant accounts were commensurate with differentiation in their complicit privilege and rearticulated license.

When responding to initial inquiries about homeschooling, participants in my study typically lit up, vibrant with enthusiasm as they shared testimonies about unyielding love and resolute beliefs in their children's abilities. Kitt, a 48-year-old divorced mother of three, who homeschooled her eight-year-old daughter shared: "I honestly feel it has been one of the joys of my life to homeschool her...I love it...all you need to be is a concerned parent." Jackie, a 45-year-old married mother of three felt similarly: "You love your children. You could do it. The relationship I have with my daughter and sons because of it, I would not trade that." Like most parents in my study, both Kitt and Jackie applauded homeschooling, refusing to pass the responsibility for their children's education to institutions and individuals outside their home. Both mothers initially minimized their personal sacrifices as well as their struggles with inadequate schools systems, but additional probing revealed that their access to financial resources and support networks had a resounding influence upon their positive appraisal of the homeschooling experience.

Although Kitt was divorced, and reported a personal income within the range of zero to

20,000 dollars per year, her daughter's father provided financial support that made provisions for her daughter's homeschooling expenditures. She estimated his income to be in the 120,000 dollars or more per year salary range. With his assistance and a well-managed schedule, Kitt was able to homeschool her daughter and cultivate her daughter's interests in piano and dance as well as pursue her own educational goals—matriculating toward two undergraduate degrees. Furthermore, Kitt's college provided daycare services. Kitt shared stories of her daughter receiving a "college" education, disclosing that some of her professors allowed her daughter to attend class with her. Although Kitt was not an active member of any homeschooling organizations, she said she was not completely isolated from other homeschooling families. Through church interactions and the homeschooling umbrella group she was required by state law to join, she made connections that provided her with valuable information about curriculums and about social activities she and her daughter would attend.¹⁴ Time was valuable to Kitt, and the instructional support she received from other homeschoolers helped to minimize the time she would have invested in researching curriculum and/or wasted through trial and error processes. Kitt assumed sole responsibility for her daughter's formal education and she plainly stated: "I haven't had nor felt like I needed anyone to come in from outside of the home to assist." She did share, however, that her daughter's father who would "help out" when she needed "extra support" or had "too much on her plate."

Jackie experienced redistricting and bussing issues with her daughter's school, which prompted her family to choose homeschooling. Whereas she homeschooled her oldest and

¹⁴ Some states require homeschooling households to join umbrella groups to monitor the academic progress of homeschooling children during the school year. In other states, umbrella group membership is voluntary.

youngest children, her middle child attended a charter school. She explained that her flexibility was often compromised, brought on by complications of preparing separate lessons and activities for her two homeschooled children (who were six years apart) and having to assist her middle child with his assignments as well as participate in structured activities with his charter school. Although Jackie reported a household income of 120,000 dollars or more per year, the “biggest support” she received was “encouragement that you can do it. It can be done.”

Veteran homeschoolers taught Jackie “how to think about homeschooling” and offered her the overall reassurance that “you’re not locked into doing school from eight in the morning to two in the afternoon” and that she could structure her lessons and school day according to her changing schedule. Jackie also received encouragements from extended family members, many of whom were educators. The emotional and financial support she received from her husband as well as the encouragements and alternative perspectives she adopted from other homeschoolers and extended family members contributed to Jackie’s sense of fulfillment in spite of her overwhelming commitments.

Like Kitt and Jackie, several parents in my study preferred to minimize tales of hardships, refusing to let experiences with poor school districts, labeling, and disengaged schoolteachers overshadow their accounts of academic success and esteemed character building. Not that adverse experiences were nonexistent; however, for some families such accounts were simply recited as abridged prologues to favored tales of accomplishment rather than defeat. For example, Miriam, a married mother of two who homeschooled her 10-year-old daughter, avoided taking an accusatory stance against public schools but acknowledged their ineptitude to adequately educate her daughter to the capacity she believed possible. Miriam

shared, "It's a full time job (laughter), but I have the ability to expand her mind in ways that public school just don't have either [the] budget, the time, whatever it is, it's just not there."

Surprisingly, in spite of Miriam's preference for homeschooling, at the time of our interview, she was doubtful about her ability to sustain her homeschooling efforts. Although Miriam was married and reported a family income ranging from 60,000 to 90,000 dollars, unlike most mothers, Miriam continued to work full time while assuming full homeschooling responsibilities. According to Miriam: "The other African-American families that I know that homeschool, the wife is a stay-at-home mom, so they have a very good income where she's a stay at home mom. Regular Joe Blows like myself, we work." Working from home afforded Miriam the flexibility to educate her daughter according to her work-schedule. However, her full-time work status did not afford her the flexibility to network in person with other homeschoolers. Furthermore, Miriam's husband expressed a preference for public schooling over homeschooling, which may have been attributed to the fact that both he and Miriam terminated their formal education after completing high school: "He's very much pro-public schools...because it's the norm. When I told him our daughter and I decided she was going to go back in the seventh grade, he said good." Although her husband was not in full support of her decision to homeschool, she did, however, receive encouragements from her sister, an educator, and her mother, a long time homeschooling advocate:

My sister was very supportive, who's a teacher...because as it turned out she [Miriam's daughter] would come home and have tons of homework and I would have to reteach what she would have learned in school anyways. My sister just pointed out to me, if I'm already spending hours with her after school teaching her so it really wouldn't be a big difference. Like I had mentioned my mom had always thought it was something I can do. My mom has thought about it off and on for me. She always thought it was something I can do...She just thought it would be the perfect fit for me and she wanted to do it with my older brother

but she was working full-time, so she couldn't. Because of how I am and because of what she wanted, she thought it would only be the right thing for me to do (laughter).

In spite of encouragements and a genuine appreciation for the possibilities homeschooling could yield, Miriam was critical of her own accomplishments, "Honestly, I don't think I've done the best job that I can do in these five months that I've been schooling her and I could possibly delay what she could learn in school." Miriam consistently reflected on her conflict between work and homeschooling: "With my work, I can have the best of intentions, it won't line up because I work full time. A lot of parents don't work, that's how they can homeschool." She shared that she and her daughter tried "a couple of homeschool groups" but they "just weren't right" for them: "Well, all of them are predominately White...I only met one other African-American family throughout all of this. Maybe the scheduling is bad because I work." For the most part, Miriam found herself dependent upon online social websites and homeschooling email groups for information, but admitted that she was not an "active participant":

I use the Internet, worksheets, things of that nature, but we really don't have any books. Well, her fifth grade teacher was really nice and gave me consumable workbooks, so I do have those. Other than those, I'm just making up my own curriculum...I learn something everyday. There is a plethora of information out there, you just have to know where to find it...I'm always on the Internet and I'm always finding out something new. I'll try something, maybe it doesn't work for us. There are a couple of things I have lined up that I haven't tried yet, its trial and error.

Miriam's inability to connect to other homeschoolers contributed to her spending additional money on curriculum. In assuming agency for her lack of connection to other families, Miriam opened up and shared that she "liked to stick to herself and was a loner," which also impacted her ability to form instrumental relationships with other homeschoolers. It

was her opinion that her daughter had more of a social life in public school whereas with homeschooling their family was “self-contained,” limiting their social interactions with individuals outside of their family unit. Her lack of satisfaction is consistent with research that has shown that employment status significantly lowers levels of family satisfaction among women who are employed, compared to women who are not (Broman 1991), and that in dual earner households mothers are more likely to experience increased stress, compared to their spouses, due to the working mothers performing at least 10 hours more multitasking responsibilities than do fathers (Offer and Schneider 2011). Nonetheless, Miriam remained an advocate of homeschooling, but attributed her setbacks to her family’s dependency upon her income and their isolation from other homeschoolers.

The obvious social differences between Jackie, Kitt, and Miriam are their marital status, household income, family composition, and work status. Although both Jackie and Miriam were married and reported a significantly larger income than Kitt, it was Jackie and Kitt who reported positive interpretations of their homeschooling experiences whereas Miriam perceived her homeschooling efforts as borderline negligent if not disruptive to her daughter’s overall academic success. The departures in homeschooling experiences between Jackie, Kitt, and Miriam, can be attributed to varying degrees in which their respective homeschooling households benefited from complicit privilege and rearticulated license.

Of the three women, Jackie’s two-parent, single-earner household most mirrored the traditional family ideal, granting her complicit privileges associated with being a married, stay-at-home mom with sufficient access to financial resources to homeschool. Furthermore, Jackie benefited from the rearticulated license of veteran homeschoolers who provided her with

emotional and instructional resources that helped her to defy conventional perspectives about education. Thus Jackie's narrative reflected her feeling a sense of accomplishment, which was connected to the positive feedback and emotional support she received from family and friends who respected and encouraged her decision to homeschool as well as her access to financial, social, and cultural capital afforded her from her middle-class status. Kitt, although divorced, benefited from the complicit privileges of being a stay-at-home mother who received financial contributions from her ex-husband's ample income. Likewise, Kitt received instructional support from the homeschooling groups she connected with and additional financial support and emotional support (day care) through her university. However, Miriam's challenges can be attributed to the degree to which she deviated from the ideal model by working full time, thus isolating her from homeschooling social networks and severing her access to a myriad of instructional resources. Miriam's belief in the empowering attributes of homeschooling can be attributed to the emotional support of her mother and sister. However, her husband's lack of enthusiasm for homeschooling contributed to her perception that homeschooling disrupted their standard of living and arrested her sense of accomplishment.

To illustrate some of the financial costs that are associated with educating a single child per year, it is helpful to consider the average per-pupil spending incurred by public schools as well as the expenditures associated with maintaining an environment conducive for teaching. In 2010 the United States Census Bureau reported that the average per pupil spending was 10,615 dollars, which was meant to cover such expenditures as instruction, pupil support, pupil transportation, construction, staff support, equipment, instructional equipment, land and structures, operation and maintenance, and additional administrative and infrastructure

related expenditures (Dixon 2012). Although some costs associated with running a traditional school are non-existent for homeschoolers (e.g., construction and staff support), or are expenditures families would incur regardless, (e.g., a mortgage), operating a homeschool during conventional school hours increases utilities and food costs families would not incur if their children were attending school.

When asked which support she wished she had access to that she currently did not have, Fatima, a married mother of three replied, “It would be better if homeschooling parents were able to get a portion of the budget that a school would normally get.” Ella, a professional educator and divorced mother of two, felt similarly: “The reason why so many communities want to downplay the benefits of homeschool is because they need the money. As a taxpayer in Langston County [pseudonym], my children don’t attend public school. I would like to have my money back.” As such, most participants in my study shared that they were not exempt from paying taxes, nor entitled to educational vouchers or access to their local public school amenities.¹⁵ According to homeschooling expert, Brian Ray, because homeschooling families were not dependent upon tax dollars to educate their children, homeschooling families saved the public an estimated 20.4 billion dollars in 2009 alone (Ray 2009). In addition to increasing household costs and amassing educational expenses, several families admitted that prior to homeschooling the primary homeschooling parent was working and thus the family lost an income upon taking on the endeavor. The families incurred all costs associated with purchasing curriculums, school supplies, recreational fees such as club and gym memberships, martial arts,

¹⁵ Education vouchers are government issued certificates that parents can use towards private school tuition or reimbursement for home schooling expenses. www.ncsl.org; www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0053/twps0053.html

dance and swim classes, as well transportation costs associated with field trips and excursions. And whereas some families discussed the benefits of group discounts on museum, park, and zoo fees, other families spared no costs and paid out of pocket for elite curriculums and travelling experiences to enhance their children's learning experiences. Ella had this perspective:

Homeschooling is not about just teaching your kids, it's about giving your children experiences. It's different between having a moment and a memory. School, we all know school is going to be for the moment. It's going to eventually end...My goal and I hope the goal of every homeschool parent is to not build moments, but to build memories, things that will last lifetimes.

Participants took pride in sharing not only their homeschooling endeavors, but also their spouse's ability to provide family vacations and education resources. Their ability to "return the value of their labor" to their own homes and families can be characterized as an "act of resilience" (Collins, 2000). Thus, for participants like Nora, asserting ones' desire to homeschool can be interpreted as a dialectical rearticulation of the "normalized" conceptualization of motherhood and parenting:

Being home doesn't mean you're subservient to someone. Not the relationship that my husband I have. I have always been independent, educated, and well traveled and he doesn't try to take anything away from me. He's trying to build me up as I'm trying to build him up. I think your relationship [has] to be in place. It has to be a certain kind of relationship where a woman is not being used as a doormat. I don't see myself like that. Never have been. It takes a visionary to do this

Interestingly enough, when asked if race placed a role in her decision to homeschool, Nora was one of several participants who said it did not. Whereas multiple participants expressed an awareness of how race mitigated various life choices available to Black families, based upon socio-historical norms and unequal distribution of resources, most shared the perspective that their homeschooling decision was foremost an endorsement of their children's

education and not necessarily a race-provoked decision. However, participants were often unable to disentangle their academic aspirations, challenges, and even privileges from their race, gender, class, and even marital statuses. For example, Dina and her husband were very familiar with the correlations between race and education and success in America:

Our experience is being Black in America. The real reason we want to homeschool is to give our children an advantage—an academic advantage—it had to deal with them as individuals and what we know as adults and this world and what you need to do to survive. And it's education for people like my husband and I. You do better through education in America.

Dina shared her husband's perspective:

If anybody should homeschool their children in America, it should be Black people. Because of the high percentage of African-American boys in special-ed and the high suspension rates and the expulsion that they go through. It's just the environment is not a healthy one for the Black student.

Like Nora, Dina stated that race was not the primary reason she and her husband chose homeschooling. Dina explained the decision was about her daughter's academic success. Up until her middle school years, Dina's daughter was excelling as an honor's student and then, as Dina put it, "We just kind of ran into a brick wall." According to Dina, "My husband looked at me and said, 'You know, we can empower ourselves and do this for our child.'" Phylicia had this perspective to share:

My husband has this thing he says. You know how people say "Some children should have a mind of their own" or something to that effect? And his thing is "I'll give them the mind I want them to have." In a sense, that's what the schools do. They give our child the minds that they have.

Simone, a 44-year-old married mother, shared her feelings:

I think it is a profound experience. I think it enlightens us as a culture of people. And just, as people, we can develop diverse children because of diverse parenting. Because you have to develop your parenting skills, because you're continuously kinda walking a line against a system. In our culture, you know,

we've been put into a system...It develops your child differently and develops your relationships with your children...that's part of the influence of who your child is shaped to be...I mean literally their thinking their mindset, you know how they move, their attitude, their response...you being the one that shapes that child's mindset.

Considering the structural inequities that prohibited Black Americans from realizing many of the mainstream standards associated with education, family, and work, several participants presented their ability to homeschool as a representation of their families' social progress—symbols of their progressive values and their behaviors and attitudes about education and parenting—and as an empowering option for their families.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Summary

Because of stratification and White normativity, many Black households experience marginalization within various contexts of everyday life. What is learned from the participant accounts in this study is that, through the interactive and interpretative processes of *complicit privilege* and *rearticulated license*, participants mobilized material and human resources to transcend stratified social boundaries that otherwise would have narrowed or restricted their educational progress. In a process I refer to as *coloring outside the lines*, Black homeschooling families were able to proclaim propriety over their definitions of family and education. From my analysis of participant accounts, I eventually hypothesized that the effectiveness of homeschooling was directly linked to homeschooling families' ability to negotiate cultural categories and mobilize on behalf of their interests.

Without considering the unique social and historical events of mothering and parenting among Black families, it could be presumed that homeschooling mothers who narrate their inclinations to homeschool as natural are engaged in affirming or assimilating gender scripts based upon the hegemonic notions of family. However, as Collins (2000:57) asserted, "motherhood as an institution occupies a special place in transmitting values to children about their proper place"; therefore, homeschooling mothers are in an instrumental and empowering position to either contribute to their child's oppression or liberation.

Teaching as a parenting responsibility may be socially differentiated from teaching professionally, but for participants such as Ruby and Beah homeschooling was perceived as evolving "naturally" because, in spite of social conventions, all aspects of education are

continuous impositions of habits and behaviors onto children (Handel, Cahill, and Elkin 2007). Although we learn and naturalize cultural categories—lumping and splitting the natural world into conventional boundaries such as home and school, and parent and teacher, to the point of internalizing their borders as essential—meanings and borders are not stagnant nor fixed and can be rearticulated through interaction (Zerubavel 1991). Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality theory (1966) is useful in understanding how the homeschooling mothers in my study experienced both an objective and subjective reality through their social interactions, habitualizations, and internalizations of themselves as products of their social and cultural worlds and as producers of socio-cultural experiences. However, due to stratification and power differentials (Richardson 1988), some individuals and even social groups must contend with their modifications being perceived as social deviations. Whereas some social actors occupy social positions that afford them the institutionalized power to redefine social conventions and social systems of powers, others occupy marginalized statuses in which they must contend with resistance and opposition to their rearticulated reality.

Perspectives about family and education are created in the larger society, reinforced, and sometimes reconstructed within intimate contexts. How reality is experienced and known is through interaction. Whereas multiple participants relied upon formal support groups for social and recreational activities, almost all participants expressed some dependency upon either their spouse and/or immediate family members for their financial, emotional, and instructional needs. Through daily interactions and conversations, attitudes and routines related to homeschooling were shaped, modified, and eventually internalized as subjective realities. As a result of the accounts shared by Jackie, Miriam, Ruby, Sonia, Nora, Dina, and

several other participants, I learned how their spouses, sisters, mothers, and veteran homeschoolers facilitated their changed perspectives about parenting, teaching, working, time management, and resource allocation. When we consider how habits, behaviors, and attitudes are institutionalized into our society, findings from study demonstrate how participants were engaged in interactive and interpretive processes that contributed to their ability to transform reality.

Homeschoolers reflect a growing collective of parents who must reconcile their child rearing responsibilities within the context of a deteriorating public school system and increasingly privatization of school. Perceptions of hegemonic pedagogy is also a reflection of membership and discontent within a stratified society, even for individuals who have experienced complicit privilege as a result of said stratification. Thus Ife and “White Sistah” were able to connect beyond their race and class statuses. It was interesting that White Sistah’s perspectives about race and privilege were made clearer to her upon traveling outside of the American context. She was able to see how her own perspectives were shaped by her privileged social position. Ife and White Sistah’s connection is reminiscent of Black Power struggles where Whites were given honorary brother/sister privileges because they shared similar socio-political perspectives.

In spite of growing research on homeschoolers and the proliferation of research on Black families, monolithic and stereotypical characterizations of Black family life continue to exist (Allen 1995; Collins 2000), eclipsing diversity within both communities. The prevalence of the presumed pathology of Black families often overshadows their adaptive fortitude and diverse internal dynamics (Allen 1995; Collins 2000; Davis-Sowers 2006; Mosley-Howard, and

Evans 2000). Concurrently, most homeschooling studies tangentially include the narratives of Black homeschoolers, often omitting their voices entirely (McDowell, Sanchez, and Jones 2000; Fields-Smith, and Williams 2009). Whether deliberate or not, generalizations, silence, and invisibility contribute to marginalization and subsequently imply participation in one's own subordination (Collins, 2000). Furthermore, not considering the social positionality of Black homeschoolers and/or omitting their experiences from homeschooling literature distort the motivations, status and breadth of the sociopolitical issues within the homeschooling movement. In the grand scheme of things, *coloring outside the lines* is the precursor to social change. It represents resistance to oppression and disparity. Through agency, rearticulation, and interactions with others, the families in my study changed their minds and the minds of others about the institutions of education and family and most importantly about the values, behaviors, and options available to Black families.

4.2 Suggestions for Future Research

I had two encounters during my study that inspired thoughts for two additional studies. The first encounter occurred once I concluded my interview with Phylcia. While wrapping up our interview, Phylcia's husband and children joined us in their family room. During this time her husband proceeded to share his thoughts about the homeschooling experience, off the record. Of course, because I did not obtain his consent, none of what he shared was included in the study. His insights were quite illuminating and drew attention to the fact that a follow up study should include the perspectives of the secondary homeschooling parent (sometimes thought of as "the Principal").

In another encounter, a homeschooling parent in Florida responded to my online research volunteer flyer. After explaining that I was unable to interview participants in her region, she shared that that was unfortunate because, unlike the regions that I did include in my study, (Washington DC, Maryland, Raleigh NC, and Atlanta GA), Black homeschoolers in other regions, such as Florida, experienced more isolation. Her comments made me realize that, in spite of homeschooling being legal in all 50 states, some states were not as “homeschooling” friendly as others, creating additional burdens for some homeschooling households. Whether homeschooling came at a greater financial burden to Black homeschoolers compared to White families is worth investigating further.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interviewer Opening Remarks:

Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. I will ask you a series of questions about your homeschooling experience. Some of the questions are broader than others so that you can interject ideas that I have not considered. Please feel free to introduce issues that are relevant to your particular experience.

I am interested in your experiences, attitudes, and your perception of things. I may ask you to elaborate on some of your comments, so that I fully understand what you mean. Our interview will be tape-recorded and I will take notes during our conversation. I may ask you to repeat some things that I wish to write as quotes.

You are free to not answer any question. In some cases, you may have to give your “best guess” about a situation. This is OK. I am not looking for a specific response. I am interested in what you have to share.

Do you have any questions before we get started? The first two series of questions concern how you came to homeschool your children and your reasons for selecting homeschooling as an educational option.

We will begin the interview with preliminary demographic information:

- a. Number of parents/caretakers in the household?
- b. What is the gender/ages of all children in your family?
- c. Is there a primary and secondary homeschooling parent/caretaker or do parents share equal homeschooling tasks?
- d. Can you please provide: Parent/caretakers’ gender, age, marital status, race/ethnicity and relationship to child(ren)

I. Tell me about your introduction to homeschooling

- a. How were you introduced to homeschooling?
- b. Who encouraged you to homeschool?

II. Share with me your initial experience

- a. How did you prepare to teach at home?

- i. Who helped you? How did they help?
- b. Did you have a formal orientation?
 - i. How was it helpful? How was it not helpful?

III. Tell me about the people and organizations you connect with as a result of homeschooling

- a. Are there other families that you homeschool with?
 - i. If yes, how many
 - ii. How are they similar or dissimilar to your family?
- b. Are you presently linked to some other form of school?
 - i. If yes, why?
- c. Have you influenced another family to homeschool?
- d. Will the relationships formed in these networks extend beyond the network setting? Why/why not?
- e. How has homeschooling broadened/limited your social networks?
- f. Have you connected w/people and families you may not have were it not for homeschooling?
Explain
 - i. What do you think of these relationships?
- g. Do you believe you could homeschool without formal/informal support networks?
- h. Which support groups were you connected to prior to homeschooling? Are you still connected these support groups? Why or why not?

IV. Tell me about how you stay informed

- a. Do you feel that you are well informed about the homeschooling culture/history/political struggles? In what ways?
- b. What resources would like access to that you presently do not have?
- c. How do you stay informed about homeschooling?
- d. How did you find your support networks?
- e. How do they address your specific needs?
- f. How do they not address your specific needs?

V. Share with me your overall homeschooling experience

- a. How do you deal with society's perceptions of homeschooling?
- b. How do you think of homeschooling as similar/dissimilar to what you did before?
- c. Would you prefer that public/private schools offer the same type of education as homeschool?
Why/why not?
- d. Were family/friends/school officials receptive to your decision to homeschool?

VI. Share with me your opinions about the Black homeschooling experience

- a. In your opinion, what encourages Black parents to homeschool?
- b. In your opinion, what discourages Black parents from homeschooling?
- c. Would you like to see more Black families homeschool? Why/Why not?
- d. What is unique about the Black homeschooling experience?
- e. What impact did race have on your decision to homeschool?

VII. Would you like to add any additional information about your homeschooling experience?

What do you think are other questions or concerns regarding homeschooling that I did not ask you or that we have not covered already?

At this moment I will ask you to provide information about the adult caretakers' education, income, and occupations. You are not obliged to answer if you prefer not to. What is/are your educational level(s)? Which best describes your family's income generating status: 1 full time income; 1 full time income/ 1 part time income; 2 full time incomes; 2 part time incomes; other. What is (are) your occupation(s)? Is your annual income between \$0-\$20,000; \$20,001-\$40,000; \$40,001-\$60,000; \$60,001-\$90,000; \$90,001-\$120,000; over \$120,000?

Thank you for sharing your time and experience!

Appendix B: Research Flyer

RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Are you a Black Homeschooler?

Looking for participants to share their perceptions and experiences as home educators.

To participate in the research study, respondents must be Black and/or of African decent, over the age of 18 years old and is currently homeschooling at least one child.

If you meet the requirements of this study, please contact

Taura Taylor at (404) 755-7065 or ttaylor23@student.gsu.edu

This study includes an interview that will last about 1 to 1 ½ hours. Participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form and a copy of the informed consent form will be given to each participant. All interviews will be confidential and held in locations convenient for participants.

APPROVED

Consent Form Approved by Georgia State University IRB March 18, 2011 - March 17, 2012

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Georgia State University
Department of Sociology
Informed Consent

Title: Coloring Outside the Lines: The Networking Experiences of Black Homeschooling Families

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ralph LaRossa

Student Principal Investigator: Taura Taylor

I. Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand the homeschooling experiences of Black families. You are invited to participate because you are a Black parent or guardian who has in the past or is now homeschooling a Black child. A total of 24 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require about one and a half hours of your time.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by student principal investigator, Taura Taylor. Taura will ask you questions about your homeschooling experiences. The interview will take place in the location of your choosing and will be audio recorded and later transcribed. You will only have contact with Taura Taylor. The agreed upon time and place of the interview will be decided between you and the student principal investigator. The interview is expected to last about one and a half hours.

III. Risks:

APPROVED

Consent Form Approved by Georgia State University IRB March 18, 2011 - March 17, 2012

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

IV. Benefits:

Participating in this research study may not benefit you personally. Overall, we hope to gain information about the homeschooling experiences of Black families.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VI. Confidentiality:

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Only the principal investigator Ralph LaRossa, and student principal investigator Taura Taylor will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)). We will use study numbers, initials, and/or fictitious names rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked safe and on a password and firewall-protected computer. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. You will not be identified personally.

VII. Contact Persons:



Call Dr. Ralph LaRossa at rlarossa@gsu.edu or 404-413-6507 or Taura Taylor at ttaylor23@student.gsu.edu or 404 755-7065 if you have questions about this study.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Compliance at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

IX. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this project, please sign below.

_____	_____
Participant	Date
_____	_____
Student Principal Investigator	Date

