The Power of the Collective: How a Black Parent Group's Initiative Shaped Children's Educational Experiences and Excellence

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Abstract

The authors investigated cultural resourcefulness among seven Black middle-class families who proactively collaborated to ensure their children's academic excellence in a highly racialized suburban community in southern California. Their children achieved high grades and successfully entered and completed higher education at elite U.S. institutions, despite pervasive experiences of racial discrimination in their K–12 years. Parents and their children were interviewed to determine how the parent group contributed to the success of these students. The authors describe three major pathways the families used to maximize and safeguard their children's education: (1) psychologically preparing children to excel in school, (2) reforming schools through collective advocacy to successfully educate Black students, and (3) engaging and empowering other Black parents with key resources and knowledge to help their children succeed. This research presents an exemplary model of self-initiated collective action to strengthen Black youths' and families' educational experiences, particularly when in the extreme racial minority. Implications for theory and practice are addressed.

Key Words: Black students, parents, families, parent groups, collaboration, educational excellence, cultural resourcefulness, collective advocacy, minority youth development, family engagement in schools

When you have one body of people who have been sewn together by a common experience…and you plant this people in a highly pressurized situation and they survive, they're surviving with all of those motivations and with all of the basic ingenuity which any group develops in order to remain alive. Let's not play these kids cheap; let's find out what they have. What do they have that is a strength? What do they have that you can approach and build a bridge upon?

–Ralph Ellison, 1963

Whereas literature exists concerning cultural factors that inhibit Black[1] students' academic progress (Ford & Moore, 2013), there are relatively fewer examinations of what cultural factors contribute to Black students' high achievement in the U.S. (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Carter, 2007; Strayhorn, 2010). The knowledge that people of color possess has historically been suppressed, misrepresented, stereotyped, and rejected by the dominant culture (Carter et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Yosso, 2005). In particular, the knowledge and actions of Black parents have often been criticized as insufficient (or even nonexistent) in educational literature (Marchand et al., 2019). Black families have repeatedly been portrayed negatively in the research literature with respect to education and are often seen to conflict with schools (Powell & Coles, 2020). A dominant message within scholarship suggests that Black families tend to be disengaged from their children's schooling due to cultural dissonance between the family and school practitioners (Brown-Wright & Tyler, 2010; Jeynes, 2007). These misconceptions persist despite research demonstrating that the negative beliefs about Black families in schools are rooted in unfounded and untested assumptions (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015).

Though literature has historically overlooked the intentionality Black parents exert to help their students navigate the preschool-to-college pathway, recent scholarship has increasingly sought to counter this deficit narrative by describing the agency and advocacy Black parents demonstrate on behalf of their children, despite negative experiences with the educational system (Clark, 1984; Codjoe, 2010; Latunde, 2018; McCarthy Foubert, 2019; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021). The present study extends this focus on Black parents' agency by examining the *collective* support and initiative of Black parents as they draw on Black cultural strengths to promote students' educational achievement.

The primary purpose of this article is to present a paragon of academic excellence among Black families in highly racialized communities. We present data that illustrate how a self-initiated Black parent group, formed in an overwhelmingly White and Asian middle-class suburban neighborhood, set out to impact education within and outside of the walls of the schools through cultural, social, and academic tenets, and we detail the group's outstanding

outcomes. This study centers the educational experiences of Black students and parents, thereby challenging the predominantly negative constructions of Black families and highlighting the deliberate, culturally specific ways in which parents promote academic achievement. We examine the critical question: In what ways did this Black parent group utilize familial and cultural strengths to support its children's academic excellence within this racialized community?

Collaboration is a central tenet of Black culture (Nobles, 2006). African families and Black enslaved families were purposeful in relationship formation to fulfill various needs (Furstenberg, 2007; Johnson & Staples, 2004). Close community ties among Blacks have been enacted for many reasons, including low socioeconomic status, exclusion from White society, systematic and institutional oppression, and fear of discrimination and violence (Strmic-Pawl & Leffler, 2011). The present study highlights the benefits of this cooperation and collaboration in an educational context. We examine the pathways by which Black cultural strengths were nurtured and shared to promote student achievement. The findings of this research support assertions that Black parents play a key role in educational reform efforts (Posey-Maddox, 2017a, 2017b) and that policy initiatives and interventions ought to attend to the cultural strengths and collective knowledge of Black parents in efforts to promote students' educational excellence (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019).

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

As we highlight the strength of the Black family within the educational context, we must also acknowledge the various forms of racism impacting these communities (Strmic-Pawl & Leffler, 2011). Black students face numerous contextual stressors that adversely impact their psychological and behavioral outcomes (Carter, 2007; Nyborg & Curry, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995), including pervasive ideologies and actions of antiblackness and anti-Black racism in schools (Dumas, 2016; Dumas & ross, 2016; Posey-Maddox et al., 2021). Black students' experiences with institutional, interpersonal, and internalized racism within schools continue to be important topics of research (Grace & Nelson, 2019; Skiba et al., 2002). The impact of and response to these chronic racist experiences are inextricably linked to students' academic outcomes (Carter Andrews, 2012; Reynolds et al., 2010).

Some research, including the present study, suggests that strong, positive Black identities, coupled with nurturing environments, enhance students' academic resilience and achievement (Nasir, 2012; Sankofa Waters, 2016). Race necessarily plays an integral role in the education of Black students (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; McKinney de Royston et al., 2017; Posey-Maddox et al.,

2021). To examine the nuances of Black parents' collective efforts, we situate this study in the literature on racial identity development, racial socialization, family engagement in education, and the specific factors unique to Black parental involvement in schools to help inform our investigation of Black parents who united on their own accord to influence their children's academic success.

Racial Identity Development

Identity is an organized system of beliefs about the self that characterizes an individual's behavior in salient social settings (Murray & Mandara, 2002). Although many factors affect identity development, Bandura (1986) asserted that people first view themselves based on inferences from significant others, including family members, peers, and teachers. With maturation, people gain increased self-awareness of their true beliefs and attributes. In racial identity development, individuals progress in their understanding of race, membership in a racial/ethnic group, and the consequences of that membership (Murray & Mandara, 2002).

In a study of how ethnic discrimination and ethnic identification relate to African American adolescents' adjustment, Wong et al. (2003) found that, among a sample of 629 students, "connection to one's ethnic group acts as a promotive and protective factor by compensating for and buffering against the impact of perceived discrimination" (Wong et al., 2003, p. 1223). Nasir's (2012) examination of the learning and identity processes of Black students illustrated how racialized identities impact students' academic engagement and how various learning settings supported certain racialized and academic identities. As Black children navigate the complexities of identity development in racialized schools, they require explicit and implicit guidance to respond to negative stereotypes and racial discrimination (McAdoo, 2002).

Racial Socialization

Black parents raising children in a discriminatory and racist society often include conversations about race as a regular part of parenting (Peters, 2002; Threlfall, 2018). Racial socialization describes the messages parents share and experiences parents make available to their children to help inform children's racial identities (Hughes et al., 2016; Strmic-Pawl & Leffler, 2011). Wilson et al. (2009) define racial socialization as "the process of transmitting rules, regulations, skills, values, history, and knowledge about culture and race relations from one generation to another" (p. 104). The foundation of such teachings includes a discussion of the negative implications of racialization and an affirmation of positive Black cultural strengths (Hughes et al., 2016). Both pieces are integral to successfully navigate society as a racial minority (Martin & McAdoo, 2007).

Parents' racial socialization practices are most often intended to prepare children for encounters with racial bias and to enable them to maintain positive self-beliefs despite prejudice (Dunbar et al., 2017; Hughes et al., 2006). Black parents face the challenging task of socializing their children to be competent and self-assured despite demeaning stereotypes and low expectations (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Thomas & King, 2007). Parents' racial socialization efforts help children grasp a sense of humanity and racial pride while recognizing the realities of racism (Hughes et al., 2006). Rather than being overwhelmed by the insidious, oppressive forces designed to debilitate Black people, Black children are better prepared to excel in racialized schools when equipped with knowledge about the culture that oppresses them and knowledge of their own culture that has the potential to liberate them. The racial socialization efforts of parents are crucial for children's maintenance of mental health and academic engagement in racialized school environments (Holman, 2012).

Family Engagement in Education

As the research on racial identity development and racial socialization among Black families makes clear, the historical experiences of Black families in America have unique implications for educational engagement. In order to better understand Black parents' distinctive experiences of school engagement, it is useful to take a broader look at how researchers have conceptualized family engagement.

The established research highlighting "home funds of knowledge" contributes to our understanding of how schools benefit from learning about and building upon families' intellectual and social resources and historically developed strategies, toward the goal of supporting children's academic excellence (see Greenberg, 1989). For example, researchers engaged teachers to conduct research visits to the homes of their students' predominantly Mexican working-class families to better understand students' home funds of knowledge (González et al., 1995). These visits were found to directly influence teachers' attitudes about the families and the wealth of resources they possess to support the work teachers are doing in the classroom. The study resulted in the teacher–researchers developing a counternarrative to the pervasive, deficit framing of working-class students of color being disadvantaged and lacking the skills needed to be academically successful (González et al., 1995).

A study examining family engagement among Mexican, Mexican American, and Asian/Pacific Islander families in a Catholic school setting found that students and parents were highly satisfied with their partnership with the school because of several key features of the school community: nonjudgmental attitudes, consistent communication, and shared values between home and

school, including high expectations of students' behavior and achievement (Anguiano et al., 2020). As this study shows, how teachers and school staff show respect and care for families greatly influences students' and parents' feelings toward the school and their quality of engagement. Yet, when interpersonal and systemic racism goes unrecognized and unchecked in schools, it obstructs family–school communication and partnership among families of color.

A community-based participatory action research project led by Yull and colleagues (2018) highlighted the crucial importance of prioritizing a race-conscious perspective when working toward sincere parental involvement and advocacy in children's education. The authors note that schools often only value family engagement that is based on behavioral norms of White, middle-class families, thereby undervaluing or even denigrating the ways in which families of color contribute to their children's academic progress (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013; Yull et al., 2018). Related to research on home funds of knowledge, this race-conscious parent engagement program positioned Black parents as "cultural mentors" for the school, honoring the expertise and cultural strengths that parents of color have to contribute to help teachers successfully and fairly educate their children (Yull et al., 2018).

Research on home funds of knowledge also helps inform the framing of the present study based on findings of how households connect to share intellectual resources through the development of long-term, trusting, social relationships (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). A study of a small group of Latino immigrant parents revealed how they connected, mobilized, and catalyzed change within their school communities to better their children's fair treatment and educational opportunities (Jasis, 2013). Similar to the present study, Jasis (2013) examined how this group of parents collectively advocated for their children's educational equity and excellence by making themselves increasingly visible at the school. Therefore, rather than the common conceptualization of family engagement as actions initiated by schools to bring families into the fold, Jasis (2013) demonstrated that family engagement is a process that can be successfully spearheaded by families themselves.

The research literature includes several examples of parents engaging in their children's educational experiences and the subsequent benefits to students' outcomes (e.g., González et al., 1995; Yull et al., 2018). While some research focuses on how schools can best connect with families (e.g., Anguiano et al., 2020; Brown & Beckett, 2007), other studies examine how parents proactively advocate to have a seat at the table for educational decision-making (e.g., Jasis, 2013). These findings are important to understanding how schools can better welcome and appreciate Black families' efforts to be engaged in their children's education. What the aforementioned literature does not do, however, is focus

on the history and nuance of Black parental involvement in education and showcase how Black families play an integral role in their children's educational success both within and outside the walls of the school despite exclusionary practices. With an understanding of how researchers have conceptualized family engagement more broadly, it is important to take a closer look at literature specific to how Black parents navigate engagement in largely anti-Black school environments where their contributions are often disregarded and devalued.

Black Parental Involvement in Schooling

Black parents have a long history of serving, often without an invitation, to help their children's schools improve their ability to fairly educate their children despite enduring racism (McCarthy Foubert, 2019; Vincent et al., 2012). Researchers have highlighted the multitude of ways that African American parent involvement, both in and outside of schools, positively contributes to their children's intellectual growth and academic achievement (e.g., Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2016; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Jackson & Remillard, 2005). The current study adds to this body of research by examining the collective action of Black parents in education to influence not only their own children's academic success but also systematically influence schools' policies and procedures so that schools are better prepared to serve all children. Aligned with Yull et al.'s (2018) concept of "cultural mentors," we assert that Black families have a primary role in educating their children's schools about the strengths and values of being Black.

To achieve the goal of developing intellectually and emotionally healthy children, schools and families must work together (Jeynes, 2005). Accomplishing such unity requires schools to responsibly engage parents in their children's educational process and relinquish some agency and control of resources to families (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). This study highlights the importance of explicit, collective forms of parental involvement in successful outcomes for Black students. It informs strategies for propelling more Black students to higher levels of academic attainment through the partnership of parents, policy developers, and educational leaders who respect and utilize the invaluable strengths of Black culture and identities as academic and social/emotional resources.

Context and Methodology

Council of African American Parents (CAAP)

Study participants were recruited from a Black parent organization called the Council of African American Parents (CAAP), located in a southern California community where African Americans comprise less than 5% of the population. We examined this group in a suburban context, an environment that is seldom examined, to better understand the role of Black parents (Posey-Maddox, 2017a, 2017b). The Council of African American Parents (CAAP) is a nonprofit parent- and community-driven organization that centers academics, social activities, and cultural awareness as a triadic approach to improving educational experiences and outcomes of Black students (CAAP, n.d.).

The authors elected to study this cultural group for four reasons. First, this group was established and is currently maintained by collective parent initiative and actions. This acknowledgment is important because, as noted in the literature review, there is limited information on Black parental involvement in the education of their children, especially information on collective Black parental group involvement in the academic lives of students. Second, the group has been in operation for almost three decades, which allowed for a rich case study of a self-sustained, effective organization. Third, because this organization is based in a highly racialized suburb and school community, yet touts the success of having nearly 100% of affiliated Black students attending a four-year college or university, the findings of this study have the potential to inform best practices for the education of Black students. Lastly, because the first author was as a student who benefited from CAAP in the past when it was in its infancy, it was essential to go back, with "an ethnographer's eye" (Jacobs-Huey, 2006) and try to elucidate the interworkings and aspects that do or do not influence student academic trajectories and success within this community. The time away from the group granted a fresh perspective, while knowledge of and prior personal involvement with CAAP facilitated access to the group.

Program Development and History

The group was formed in 1992 by five Black families in response to racial tension and injustice in the school district. The education of Black students and future leaders is at the top of CAAP's organizational agenda. CAAP's goal is to support and empower parents to identify, push for, and utilize tools and resources that will help maximize their children's academic experience. CAAP emphasizes the roles of parents in preparing students to be academically competitive leaders who make intentional and necessary contributions to their families, communities, and society (CAAP, n.d.).

Initially, CAAP focused solely on supporting high school students. Over the years, the group has expanded its work to include students ("scholars") as early as preschool age. There are currently several programs included under the CAAP umbrella. The Reading Circle Program is for preschool to third grade students, the Personal Academic Learning System (PALS) is for students in Grades 4–10, and the Junior/Senior Workshop is for those in Grades 11–12. Depending on the student's grade level, families meet Sunday afternoons either monthly, biweekly, or weekly at a local college campus. CAAP is not a drop-off and pick-up program; while some parents participate in workshops down the hall, others lead the programs for the K–12 scholars. Others volunteer to distribute snacks or staff the registration table. Once they arrive on the third floor of the building, they move to their respective rooms to have a class session, guest presenter, or workshop. CAAP demonstrates distinct approaches of including parents and students in program activities and establishing a self-sustaining structure by bringing alumni back and keeping parents involved even after their children have matriculated out of secondary school.

Participants

Intentional sampling emphasizes information-rich cases that illuminate a comprehensive understanding of the area of interest (Jones et al., 2006). We addressed the sampling dimensions of context, people, and time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2003) through participant selection. Study participants (see Table 1) were recruited from CAAP, which is composed of primarily middle-income African American parents. Initially, when CAAP was founded, it just focused on the experiences of Black families in one relatively small suburban community, all of which were middle income. As the program has grown, it has expanded to include families in neighboring communities who include affluent and low-income families. However, this study is focused just on those early families involved in the inception of the program to investigate the foundational components of the organization. These early families each identified as middle-class Black families, a group for which there has been a dearth of research (Lacy, 2007).

All interview participants self-identified as African American/Black, confirmed their current or prior membership in CAAP, and lived within the community that this organization serves. The 15 interview participants represented seven families (parents and students) who had one or more of their children matriculate to a top tier, four-year university (e.g., Princeton, Stanford, University of Southern California, University of California–Berkeley, etc.). The focus on families with students who have already gone to an institution of higher education is important because these students have experienced

the complete influence of CAAP, which aims to empower parents to equip their children with the tools they need to succeed academically. In order to understand why Black students whose parents unite with other Black parents successfully complete and compete in high school and postsecondary education despite community circumstances, it is necessary to understand the past experiences and actions of this group and how it aids Black students to achieve academically.

Table 1. Participant Overview

	Parent/ Student	When the Student First Joined CAAP	# of Children in CAAP Per Home	Postsecondary Institution Attended (student)	Highest Degree (student)/ Attended College? (parent)	Single Parent Household? (student)
Adu	Parent of Pele	Middle school	2	--	Yes	
Mia	Parent of Pele	Middle School	2	--	Yes	
Flo	Parent of Michael	High School	1	--	Yes	
Louise	Parent	Middle School	2	--	Yes	
George	Parent	Middle School	2	--	Yes	
Claire	Parent of Theo	Elementary School	3	--	Yes	
Michelle	Parent of Sasha	High School	2	--	Yes	
Ruth	Parent of Ray	Elementary	3		Yes	
Lionel	Student	Middle School	2	UC Berkeley	B.S.	No
Robert	Student	Elementary School	3	UC Berkeley	B.A.	No
Pele	Student	Middle school	2	Princeton	MPH M.D.	No
Michael	Student	High School	1	Arizona State University	B.S.	Yes
Theo	Student	Elementary School	3	University of Southern California	M.S.	No
Sasha	Student	High School	2	UC Berkeley	M.Ed.	Yes
Ray	Student	Elementary School	3	UC Berkeley	M.Ed.	No

We wanted participants such that we could interview both the parent(s) and the student. Both parents and students demonstrated active involvement with CAAP when the student was in K–12 education and once the student had obtained a bachelor's degree. We also desired to speak with students that matriculated to college after the 1996 passage of California's Proposition 209 because studies have indicated a precipitous drop in applications and attendance of Black students since that legislation (Pusser, 2001; Robinson et al., 2003; Santos et al., 2010). This drop impacted Black male students most of all, so we also intentionally pursued Black male students' families. The intersection of all the requirements we sought made the pool necessarily smaller.

Since its inception, CAAP has hovered between a 97–100% four-year college going rate each year. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the immediate college enrollment rate for Black students in 2019 was 57% (2020). Therefore, the former CAAP students who participated in this study exemplify the large majority of CAAP students with regards to their well-above-average academic achievement. Although CAAP students may have excelled academically without CAAP's influence, the findings make clear that CAAP had a significant impact on students' academic experiences and pursuits.

Procedure

A qualitative methodological approach was best suited for this study, given our interest in uncovering meanings Black parents and students ascribe to their experiences within this group and within schools. Researchers who aim to critically examine why racial inequities persist in educational policy and practices must learn from the realities of minoritized populations (Harper, 2012).

Data Collection

Based on information gleaned from the research literature, a pilot interview with the current CAAP president, and informal conversations with CAAP members, a semistructured interview protocol was generated to use for in-depth interviews with parents and students to understand what, if any, aspects of CAAP contribute to better outcomes for Black students. All interviews were conducted individually, except two interviews in which both parents of a student were present at once. The first author served as the interviewer in each interview in order to maintain an environment conducive to participants sharing personal information. Participants were asked whether and how CAAP has shaped the educational trajectory of high achieving African American students. Questions focused on parent/student involvement with CAAP, level of support provided by CAAP, the benefits/challenges of CAAP, and the impact CAAP has had on students. For example, we asked, "How does CAAP establish a support

system for Black parents?" and "Can you provide me with a summary statement of what CAAP has done for you and your child?" The authors identified participants with the help of the co-founder and current president of the organization and obtained informed consent from all participants.

The participants were voluntary, assured of confidentiality, and allowed to select their own pseudonyms and to review information before publication (Creswell, 2007). Whichever participant we confirmed to participate first (parent or student), we then pursued the missing link (e.g., the student's parent if the student confirmed first, or vice versa if the parent confirmed first) to have both perspectives of the experience. This was an integral component of our study as typical research of this type focuses either on the student perspective or the parent perspective, but not both. Interviews were 60–90 minutes in length and were conducted in the homes of the participants. In-depth follow-up was done with six interviewees (three parents and three students) to gain further insight into the themes that came out of the first round of interviews.

In addition to interviews, the first author conducted observations that spanned Sunday meetings and special event programming such as celebrations for Kwanzaa, Career Fair, and Stand and Deliver (an annual event when students offer creative presentations on a theme, e.g., "Why do Black lives matter?" and are judged by higher education stakeholders on content, delivery, and creativity). While Sunday meetings took place at a local Cal State University (CSU) campus, other events span community college, University of California, and other CSU campuses. CAAP intentionally exposed students and families to different institution types to make sure that students interacted with higher education professionals well before college applications started.

All audiotapes from interviews were transcribed verbatim by the first author. Over 250 pages of transcriptions and observation notes were analyzed. The data presented here represents over 30 hours of interviews with participants and 55 hours of observations over a period of approximately 13 months.

Data Analysis

We utilized grounded theory methodology to generate, mine, and make sense of the data we collected (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory is designed to assist in systematically gathering and analyzing data (Creswell, 2007). This methodology was appropriate as we wanted to emphasize the analysis of action and process (Creswell, 2007; Glaser, 1978). Furthermore, grounded theory is particularly useful in studying settings and social relations that have yet to receive considerable attention (Kushner & Morrow, 2003), as is the case for collective Black parental involvement in schools in racialized communities. We desired to understand the circumstances that formed the basis of the parents'

collaboration, their strategic responses to issues within the school and community setting, and the outcomes of these responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To advance the field in this area, the methodology of grounded theory was ideal because it is a user-friendly and clearly defined (Oliver, 2012) way to increase the possibilities for the transformation of knowledge (Charmaz, 2006).

We qualitatively assessed Black parents' and students' beliefs, attitudes, and reported practices based on transcriptions of semistructured, in-depth interviews (Patton, 2002). This mode of inquiry allowed us to understand how Black parents incorporated their knowledge of Black cultural values and history as a part of their socialization efforts to impact their children's educational success. Grounded theory commonly employs the data collection techniques of document collection, participant observation, and interviews (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). We sought first-order narratives in which individuals shared about themselves and the experiences that contributed to students' academic success (Creswell, 2007). We emphasized understanding the various layers of meanings of participant actions. That is, we analyzed the verbalized explanations, unstated assumptions, intentions, effects, and consequences of their actions (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2007).

Data collection and analysis were concurrent (Birks & Mills, 2015). We engaged in multiple stages of collecting, refining, and categorizing the data utilizing open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We moved from concepts to categories, opting for a paragraph-by-paragraph analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Once saturation was reached, and no additional codes or categories emerged, we concluded our analysis. Because qualitative educational researchers have had to work hard to legitimate their methods (Anderson, 1989), the provision of thick description (Geertz, 1973) and establishment of an audit trail was a necessary foundational piece to the dependability of this study (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993).

Triangulation (Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003) of data was integral to the validity and fidelity of the study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The authors converged three methods of data collection to not only enhance understanding of CAAP but to also establish trustworthiness of the study. The authors also used the aforementioned constant comparison method as a way to enhance validity (Parry, 1998).

Researchers' Positionality

As Black women, scholars, and mothers who are profoundly committed to the study of Black education, the authors returned to one author's childhood community to conduct fieldwork. The first author benefitted from the parent group under study as a child. Both authors were educated in public schools in middle-class environments where there was stark within-school segregation

based at least partially on biased expectations of Black students' academic potential. Ladson-Billings (2000) posits that "scholars of color who have experienced racism and ethnic discrimination (yet survived the rigors of the degree credentialing process) have a perspective advantage" (p. 271).

Both authors have firsthand experience with negotiating the lurking hostility associated with being Black and successful in academic environments in which they were "the only one." They strategically and purposefully include themselves in this research and acknowledge the multiple consciousnesses in which they operate (Ladson-Billings, 2000). For example, the first author approaches this work as an education scholar and as a former member of this community. To that end, the acknowledgment and articulation of this bias is required (Reason, 1994). The authors consulted closely throughout the study in the process of bracketing biases (Morrow, 2005). Throughout data collection and analysis, the authors engaged in frequent discussions about potential influences of their biases and focused on accurately capturing and reflecting the participants' responses.

The authors leveraged the theoretical sensitivity established by their personal, professional, and analytic experiences to recognize important aspects of the data and elucidate meaning (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The theoretical sensitivity allowed the authors to maintain an attitude of skepticism (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), so despite prior familiarity with the research group and common experiences of isolation as Black students, the authors were able to pose questions and maintain relative objectivity in their analysis. Moreover, our prior affiliation pushed us to intentionally probe and extend questioning to get beyond "taken-for-granted" meanings (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2007).

Findings

Our analyses indicated that this Black parent group overcame educational barriers by equipping their Black students and families with a cultural, community-grounded foundation. This study expands our current understanding of actions that foster Black student success and Black parental support. Parents were adapting and responding to a racially hostile educational environment. The environmental conditions led to three deliberate goals of the group: (1) psychologically prepare children to excel academically and emotionally, (2) proactively reform schools through advocacy, and (3) empower other Black parents. Before we describe the major findings, we offer an example to illustrate the educational climate and challenges that spurred the group's actions.

Throughout the interviews, both parents and students noted the racist educational environment in which they lived. These families experienced racial

isolation, low teacher expectations, and other racist and discriminatory events that spurred their resistance and intervention. Reflecting on how Black students were unjustly stigmatized, one former student, Sasha, specified:

> When you go to these high schools where a lot of Black students are the minority, you're grouped very easily, and if one student is doing bad, then you're all doing bad. And I think that's one of the things that the Black students in these suburban schools suffer from...it's hard to create distinction even amongst the small Black population.

A consequence of Black students not being seen as individuals by their school staff and being wholly stereotyped as academically weak was that students were misdirected into undermatched postgraduate opportunities (Black et al., 2015). As Sasha recalled:

> My counselor told me I should go to community college. I was a 4.0 student mind you...and I told my mom, and she was like, "Oh-kay [sarcastically], you don't ever need to talk to her again." So that was the messaging that was happening to a lot of the Black students.

Immediately after she graduated from high school, Sasha matriculated at UC Berkeley, and she now holds a master's degree in education. As elucidated in the description of findings that follow, experiences of low academic expectations, stereotyping, and other forms of racial discrimination in schools prompted Black parents to come together and advocate for their children's educational excellence.

Psychologically Preparing Children to Excel in School

The psychological preparation CAAP provided its students spanned from counterprogramming against the schools' negative stereotyping, setting high expectations for students and assuring them that they were capable of high achievement, and offering the material support (e.g., college preparation activities, study groups, academic mentoring) to enable students to meet those expectations. Of equal priority, CAAP celebrated students' racial identities by educating them on the history of Black excellence, making it clear that they are a part of the legacy and instilling them with confidence and pride as Black people.

Collective Correction of Schools' Miseducation

Sasha, the student who was encouraged by her guidance counselor to pursue community college despite her 4.0 GPA, reflected on CAAP's role in showing her that she could and was expected to reach for other educational opportunities. She shared:

> So, going into CAAP and making that distinction, like ok, this [counselor] absolutely does not know what she is doing, and she is grouping me. But in [CAAP], I'm being told something else that makes sense and… that's a very powerful thing, because if you don't have the parent thing, if you don't have the CAAP unit, what do you have? You just have this one counselor telling you to go to community college, and I am a 4.0 student, and I should be going to a four-year, top school, but I could be listening to her. But I'm not, because I already have this structure established that I know that you're not telling me the truth. And I think that's one of the powerful things that CAAP does.

Sasha's mother, Michelle, further specified that, "We've had to break down a lot of the stereotypes...the school systems place on our students...that African American students are academically and intellectually inferior. We know that that is a lie, and we tell our children that's a lie."

Another student, Pele, shared his experience of CAAP as a collective source of support, encouragement, and counterprogramming against the negative, limiting messages he received in school. He detailed, "If CAAP wasn't there, if there weren't other African American families that I felt I could latch onto, then I definitely don't think I would have succeeded." He believes that he would have struggled to motivate himself had he not had CAAP's support "by my side helping me to get through" and the role modeling provided by other CAAP students who were determined to succeed.

Pele noted, "Without something like CAAP that teaches you, or instills in you the fact that you can achieve greatness, you sort of are left with what the counselors or what the teachers tell you." Pele recalled excelling in elementary school and yet being told by his teachers that he should not be in advanced classes. He explained, "So without having that reaffirmation, that yes, I can achieve, yes, I should be achieving, it's a lot easier to be a product of what the public system [tells you about yourself]…CAAP sort of filled in that aspect." As the above reflections illustrate, CAAP provided students with counterprogramming against schools' deficit-oriented expectations through collective support and encouragement.

Holding Students to High Academic Expectations

CAAP did not stop at merely countering the negative expectations families received from schools. It also actively and intentionally insisted on greatness from the students. A major collective focus of the group was on setting high academic expectations for its children. Theo's mother Claire remarked on the great importance of collectively holding children to high expectations and giving them the material and emotional resources they needed to accomplish the high standards set for them. She said:

> I really, truly believe that you have to prepare your kids for greatness and prepare them for a set of expectations to perform at that higher level... because they knew what my expectations were, and they knew that I had confidence in them. That no matter what the consequences were, no matter who the competition was at school, they knew they could perform at a high level because they knew that they came from greatness, and they knew that they were great.

Adu, Pele's father, discussed how the group supported students' internalization of believing themselves to be academically efficacious and to "not limit your sights." He explicated:

> We pushed them, we pushed the students to go ahead and seek those opportunities. It was common within all of us, you know, like, "Hey, it's not unusual to apply to these schools, the UC schools, it's just a normal thing that we expect from all of CAAP….You can do it, and we can help. We'll help provide whatever help we could do to make you succeed.

These parents made targeted efforts to normalize high expectations—parents were expected to push their students to maximize their education, and students were expected to use the organization's social, emotional, and academic support to reinforce their own expectations of their abilities and potential.

Provisions of Academic Preparation and Motivational Support

To support students with meeting CAAP's high expectations for them, the group provided the material support and soft skills training to actualize these goals. Through their programming, CAAP has helped over 1,000 Black students get to four-year institutions of higher learning across the nation. As Claire described:

> We lay a foundation. We have several educational programs. Our junior/senior workshops are 16-week comprehensive programs to teach parents and students about the whole path of college choice, college decisions, and college applications…[in] our PALS program—Grades 4 through 12—we teach kids how to stand and deliver. We teach kids how to speak in public, how to work in groups, how to network. Those are intangibles that you don't get in the day-to-day learning in a traditional school site. They know about cultural awareness. They get motivational speakers coming in. They see their parents putting forth an effort to make sure that they have an opportunity.

In addition to the programming made available to students, the organization also promoted informal connections among students who were often excluded from studying with their classmates due to racial isolation within

their individual schools. As Claire noted, "our students usually perform in isolation….[Yet,] studies have shown when you work in a group, when you tutor in a group, you have more power, and you have more impact than working alone." CAAP's support outside of the classroom made students feel supported even when they were "the only one" in their respective classes.

Former students praised the academic guidance, support, and community CAAP provided for them. As Pele recalled, his CAAP experiences not only showed him how to navigate the high school requirements and prepared him to be competitive at the nation's top universities, but they also motivated him to *want* to achieve at the highest levels. He said:

> With that sort of ambition and vision from CAAP, that made me want to achieve more because I wanted to be that sort of person that CAAP wanted me to be. Not only were they helping me, they also gave me some sort of personal motivation for myself….CAAP has given me the confidence, well first, it has given me the tools which led to confidence, but it has given me the tools and the confidence to know how to succeed…so CAAP has really kept that fire going. I don't think I would have been able to get that sort of internal motivation on my own.

Flo shared her son Michael's growth with CAAP:

> The academic part was the core of it, but there was a social part. He ended up meeting different peers. He ended up meeting different mentors. Different people in different organizations. His knowledge base was far greater than what it was when he came in…he knew what he wanted to do, what was available to him, what schools were available. I'm sure he never would have scored as well on his exams.

More than just the academic component, Claire highlighted the crucial importance of uplifting students and reminding them of their self-worth through the ideological principles imparted to students. She described:

> Every day we come in, we start with the scholar's creed that tells them that they are going to leave an indelible mark on the world. They are the ebony jewels….The creed is something that we have each student memorize so that they know that they are something to be valued, something to be in awe of, and that nothing can ever get them down.

While CAAP put a great deal of effort into students' academic motivation, preparation, and growth, equally important was the provision of cultural values and confidence. As Claire explained, "I think the cultural piece and the academics run hand in hand. You have to know who you are and where you came from and have confidence in yourself to try anything." It is this cultural component that we explore in the next section.

Instilling Cultural Pride, Values, and Confidence

CAAP understood cultural pride to be integral to students' abilities to be academically excellent. The cultural component was essential because the school environment was devoid of Black students, staff, administration, and Black cultural affirmation. If the students did not come to school confident in who they were, the potential for discouragement and/or miseducation was high. As Michelle, a CAAP parent, delineated:

> There's just a "rooting" that we give them. We root our students, and then we encourage the parents to do the same thing at home so that ultimately, no matter which way the wind is blowing, no matter what the cultural climate, there is a sense of knowing…and cultural pride and cultural esteem and confidence that's in place.

Part of the "rooting" process included ensuring that students were knowledgeable about Black history and the rich legacy that they are a part of as Black people. For example, as Claire explained, the mission of the organization included providing sociocultural knowledge:

> When our kids know whose shoulders they stand on and the expectation and the greatness and genius they have in them, then they have a lot more confidence, and they perform at a higher level. They stand on their parents' shoulders—their grandparents, and all their ancestors—all the greats who have paved the way for us to be great.

Parents and former students discussed the variety of social and cultural activities the group put on, including Kwanzaa celebrations, Black History Month events, and potlucks, which added to the educational experience. Michael, a former student, recalled that, "Overall, it's not just an educational group, but it's also a cultural and a social organization…the people that you're involved with at the same school or even at other schools, you know, you have a kind of separate bond outside the organization."

As the recollections of CAAP leadership, parents, and former students illustrate, the collective voices and actions of the group prepared children to meet the group's high academic expectations. By laying an impenetrable foundation of social connection, academic preparedness, and racial knowledge and pride, CAAP psychologically prepared its students to face and overcome the negative onslaught of low expectations and doubt they experienced at school. In addition to the efforts they put into preparing the students, the group also made it their mission to shape the school environment to be a more nurturing and effective academic space for students.

Reforming Schools Through Collective Advocacy

The advocacy efforts of CAAP changed policies and procedures related to academic courses, disciplinary practices, and extracurricular activities in the school district. The changes directly challenged practices that had been disadvantaging and excluding Black students. As Claire limned:

> Changes were made in response to [CAAP] being involved and exposing the district.…Our major accomplishments are that within the [district] when we started, African American students weren't allowed to take AP and honors classes unless they were recommended by a teacher. We took that whole process out through working with the superintendent. [Now], if your child gets an A or a B, they're able to take the next level of classes, no matter if they have a teacher recommendation. The other successful thing we did was [to address] the name-calling—a number of students were calling our students out of their names, "niggers," "monkeys,"…we started a rule where if you name call, that's the same as a suspension for hitting someone.

Another issue the group tackled was that school teachers and administration would oftentimes say they did not have time to meet with the Black parents. In response, the parents took time from their schedules, whether it was to make phone calls while they were at work, amending their workday (going in late or leaving early) in order to be present at the school, or having other parents intervene on their behalf. CAAP was integral in equipping parents with the knowledge of how to enact change in the school district. Michelle, a parent who has been involved with the group for over 20 years, highlighted the importance of the presence of these Black parents at the schools:

> These schools and these teachers bank on parents not knowing what their rights are, because once you know your rights, it makes their jobs more difficult 'cus they really got a whole 'nother layer of work that they don't want to be bothered with. That's their biggest fear, is a knowledgeable parent.

While CAAP worked to challenge systemic racist practices and equip parents to do the same, it also made sure to have a presence at the school that exposed the campus and its students and staff to the richness of Black culture. Ray, a former student, remembered: "We had our annual Kwanzaa events, and would set up for Black History Month, that was an annual event."

Speaking of the direct influence CAAP had at a new high school, one former student, Sasha, commented, "For instance, I was the first graduating class, and they wouldn't, for the first couple of years, they wouldn't let us have a Black

Student Union [BSU] because that wasn't how they wanted to portray their high school." With the support of the CAAP community, the BSU was eventually established and became a source of on-site collaboration with CAAP. To this day, CAAP continues to host events at schools in the district and works closely with district staff.

CAAP was able to respond to the individual needs and experiences of Black families and students by creating a lasting and collective call to action. CAAP's collective reformative advocacy in the district has led to a legacy of systemic changes that has been recognized (both informally and formally) in the district and beyond and has increased equity, access, and inclusion for all students.

CAAP's Lasting Legacy of Protecting Black Students in the School District

As Adu, a CAAP parent, described:

> CAAP was able to challenge that perception that [the district] had of African American students. And by having CAAP as a voice or as an organization as a whole, these schools, when they are hassling an African American student, they know that there's a support and an organization behind them. [Schools] would investigate a little bit more and find out the story before they take the actions. These systemic changes that CAAP introduced, demanded, and achieved continue to benefit the small number of Black students in the district.

As a result of the initiative, action, and programming on the part of CAAP, the organization continues to build credibility within the community and influence within the school district. Michelle, a CAAP parent, expounded:

> One of the things that CAAP has is a lot of power, so that when any of these schools in the inland empire or Office of the President or the UC System, they get a call from [the CAAP president], they take her calls; I'll put it like that. If one of these schools sees us coming…they want to be friends with CAAP. They don't want to be on the bad side of the Council of African American Parents.

Sasha describes the sense of protection she, as a Black student, felt with the support of the CAAP collective behind her. She outlined:

> I think that having parents together show that they're a unit and that they're protecting these students is important. You have to have some type of voice or else your kids are going to be victimized, and it happens every day, so to be that kind of unit to have a presence in your community is really important. I think there's power in numbers…these injustices that take place at these high schools are nipped in the bud because CAAP is there.

Through collaborative supportiveness and collective action, CAAP created a powerful movement of change within the school district. By making their concerns known and putting pressure on school leadership to address problem areas and fill in curricular gaps, CAAP facilitated school- and district-level changes that benefitted all students. Furthermore, CAAP established itself as a vigilant group that would not tolerate injustice, thereby holding the school and its actors to higher standards of performance. Individual parents working in isolation would likely not have been able to accomplish such changes, but the group cohesion brought forth a power that could not be extinguished.

Empowering Other Black Parents

The utility of CAAP is deeply rooted in the notion of unity and agency. As George, a CAAP parent, framed it, Black students require the support of out-of-school programs like CAAP "because their school doesn't care…we [the parents] have to do something about it." The organization was and is able to provide more for its families because parents share what they have learned and bring others into the fold. As Louise, another parent, conveyed: "A parent could come in and could be clueless [about navigating the school system]. They teach you how to have the courage and to do your homework and to do your research so that you can take on…that you can fight for your child and advocate for your child." Oftentimes parents do not know they can question schools' policies and decisions, and many are unsure of how to interact with the school when the need arises. CAAP was able to help fill this gap for the parents so that they could advocate on behalf of their children. Claire shared that CAAP has:

> …a very vital role, because we give information and support to parents who don't know how to navigate the educational system. There's a lot of things that go on in the educational system that the school district does not tell you, and you learn from other parents and people who have gone through it. You don't know to advocate for your kid to take AP and honors classes. No one puts a sign up to say, "Hey, get in AP and honors classes." You don't know what the relevance is. You don't know about rigor until you work with the Council of African American Parents, and they tell you what rigor is, and they explain to you the importance of rigor and how you maximize your opportunities by having rigor.

The participants of this study emphasized their commitment to empowering others within the community. All participants communicated a sense of being part of something greater, one part of a greater body. Pele, a former CAAP scholar who later served as a board member and instructor, characterized the empowerment piece thusly:

> CAAP helped empower those parents that weren't as energetic in their kids' academic lives…so CAAP did help teach these parents. This is what you need to be doing about getting your kids through school; these are the questions you need to be asking the counselors, and these are the questions you need to be asking the admissions officers. They were also able to empower those other parents who might not have had the strongest confidence in themselves. It is hard to become confident African American parents when you don't see other strong African American parents in the community. So CAAP, I felt, did an amazing job, and I saw that more as I became a lot older after high school, after I was in my 20s working a lot with the kids and the parents directly. I saw how CAAP changed these parents from going from just putting these kids through school to these parents now becoming the heads of their kids' academic vision. They don't know that they have these sorts of rights, but that's where the parents need to be at. They need to be the ones telling the school, these are the courses that my kids should be taking.… Fortunately for CAAP, there is somebody there who is telling these parents that this is what you are allowed to do because, me personally, I would not have known unless somebody told me that you have the right to do this for your kid if they're in a public school. I think CAAP does a great job with empowering parents.

Parents also discussed the value of CAAP for empowering them and other parents in the struggle to support their students. Louise, a mother of two sons, shared:

> CAAP gave us the knowledge that we had to fight for our kids. I think a lot of parents believe, without CAAP in their life, right, they believe that you can just drop your kid off at school, and they'll get educated, and then when they start failing and underperforming you blame the kids.… One lady said, "Oh you're so lucky, your kids are so great, mine are so lazy." I said, "Well girl, I have the laziest children on the planet…you have no idea. You know who the hard workers are? This man [pointing to her husband] and me. Really. They would sleep all day if we let them. Literally, all day." So, the parents can't get tired. The parents have to be the magic. They have to be the driver. They have to set the high expectations.…All work completed, no behavioral problems, and no grades less than a B, that was the criteria to live here.

As the participants' reflections make clear, CAAP provided parents with knowledge and power to hold their children to high expectations and to ensure that the schools were giving their children just opportunities to achieve

academic excellence. The interviews tell the tale of the importance of a community with deeply entrenched networks. The connections they made and unity they exhibited to empower the members individually and collectively fortified the adults with the tools to prime their children for success in this community.

Discussion

This study provides contextually situated findings of how parents optimally contributed to Black students' educational development and success. Using this parent group as a case study, we make clear how families can collectively support Black children's academic success by proactively introducing Black cultural strengths, values, and history to their children, their children's schools, and other Black parents. The findings of this study demonstrate that the cultural priming some Black families provide for their children prior to entering the American education system (e.g., racial socialization) and throughout their grade level progression is a crucial contributor to students' academic and emotional well-being. Furthermore, we found that this group of parents not only actively prepared their children to respond to racialized life, but also supported each other and their children's schools through education about race, Black culture, and equity.

The words shared by the parents and students involved in the Council of African American Parents demonstrated that this group provided a safe haven for this community who constantly felt like they were not heard, seen, or valued in their schools. CAAP took the initiative to counter the deficit-based messages and practices to which their children were subjected to within the school system. By supporting their children's racial and academic identities, intervening to correct the injustices perpetrated by school policies, and empowering other Black parents with knowledge and tools to advocate for their children, the group ultimately improved Black students' and families' educational experiences and ensured that they could thrive academically and culturally.

This study bolsters existing literature that has identified strong racial identities as promotive of Black students' achievement (e.g., Nasir, 2012). The findings of this examination of CAAP's influence highlight the crucial importance of psychologically preparing children to enter school with an awareness of racial bias and equipping them with the coping tools to maintain resilience in the face of discrimination. The racial socialization literature clarifies that parents' efforts to bolster children's resilience around issues of racial discrimination have significantly favorable effects on students' academic outcomes (e.g., Wong et al., 2003). Our study further illustrates the significant labor Black parents exert to nurture their children's positive racial and academic identities.

Furthermore, the study strengthens previous findings that families of color possess a multitude of intellectual and social strengths that support not only student achievement, but also support schools' ability to provide higher quality and more equitable educational services as a result of their stronger relationships with and appreciation of families (González et al., 1995). Examples taken from CAAP demonstrate the possibilities of student outcomes when schools listen to Black parents as they strive to establish fair procedures to respond to racist incidents, insert Black cultural values in the curriculum, and educate school staff about Black cultural strengths and how to utilize them for students' academic achievement and socal/emotional wellness. Aligned with research on home funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990), this study shows that schools benefit from learning from Black parents because, as evidenced by this group, parents can positively reform schools so that they better serve students, especially students of color. Our study calls for the reframing and reimagining of Black parental involvement to include the responsibility of schools to honor and incorporate Black parents' contributions. Not only should parents be considered partners of the schools, but schools should also consider themselves partners of the parents.

Moreover, this study demonstrates that Black parents put forth this effort on behalf of other children and parents, as well as for the benefit of their own children. In each area that the group pursued and excelled in, including supporting students, parents, and schools, one of the most important factors was the value and power of the collective. The caring that these parents exhibited on behalf of their fictive kin was powerful and impacted students and parents alike. Adding to evidence from previous studies (e.g., Jasis, 2013; Yull et al., 2018), this examination of CAAP's activities and influences provided concrete examples of Black parents' collective agency and advocacy, as well as the long-lasting impact such work has had on student success and racially equitable school policies and practices.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for families, schools, policymakers, and child and family practitioners regarding how to support the use of cultural protective factors as a valuable contributor to Black students' educational success. Because Black students and parents often feel excluded within educational spaces like the ones our participants experienced, organizations such as CAAP can serve as a necessary network of support for families. Schools can leverage such organizations and partner with them to disseminate information, fortify communication pathways, and access cultural and social resources

not readily available in schools. Tertiary organizations such as CAAP may also be maximized in the summers when communication between schools and students is sparse, particularly the summer between high school and college when students and families are neither fully under the tutelage of K–12 or higher education (Rall, 2016). As the nation continues to diversify across various characteristics, there is a large burden placed on schools. Schools regularly utilize "outside" resources such as speech pathologists, hearing specialists, and enrichment assemblies to meet the needs of their students; the cultural needs of students should be no exception. Collaboration with cultural groups may be a way to address equity gaps across racial, ethnic, and cultural lines.

We must acknowledge that this group had a relative privilege that other groups of Black parents, with different educational and socioeconomic capital, may not have access to. More research is needed to identify how collective Black parental efforts are similar or different among groups who differ in socioeconomic status. Nevertheless, among this study's participants, it was not just the individual capital of the parents, but the amalgamation of these resources that provided the force needed to challenge individual bad actors and change discriminatory system-level practices within schools.

Limitations

Study limitations are inevitable regardless of precautions taken; therefore, researchers have a responsibility to acknowledge these challenges (Collet-Klingenberg & Kolb, 2011). Qualitative researchers value uniqueness (Stake, 1995). Often with qualitative research, analytic results are unique to the specific investigators, participants, and context (Morrow & Smith, 1995). Qualitative research relies on the researchers who carry it out, as our preconceptions permeate our thinking and writing (Charmaz, 2006). This sample was one of convenience where each participant was a member of the nonprofit organization and volunteered to participate. Additionally, as noted in the methodology section, the first author had prior knowledge of and relationship with the Black parent group highlighted in this article. This may have caused participants to answer in socially desirable ways or limit their explanations if they assumed the researcher was already familiar with the organization and what the members did.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of explicit forms of collective parental involvement in successful outcomes for Black students. The effort, commitment, unity, and follow-through of the parents and students affiliated with this group were remarkable. The network of Black families simultaneously acted as a safe haven and a preemptive architect of a much needed academic

and cultural foundation for the students and parents in this community. The data we gathered from parents and students themselves contribute to practical knowledge that can be shared with families who would benefit from more explicit guidance on how to support their children's academic excellence. This study informs strategies for helping to successfully propel more Black students (regardless of their minority status in a community) to higher levels of academic attainment. More investigation is needed to understand the discourse and actions of collective groups of Black parents (not just parents within a single household) in highly racialized communities as they mobilize to promote their children's abilities to excel academically.

Race continues to be a constant determinant of various educational outcomes (Harper, 2012). The pervasiveness of race, racialization, and racism insists that many Black students and parents need to take an active part in a process of cultural, social, and educational preparation for educational excellence. In order to develop a successful foundation for Black students, parents, policy developers, and educational leaders must utilize the invaluable resources present in Black culture, Black identity, and the Black family. By gaining knowledge of how Black families pool and tap into cultural strengths to support individual students and school and community functioning, educators and families can better serve Black students' learning needs.

Endnote

[1]For the purposes of this article and based on our personal use of the terms, "Black" and "African American" will be used interchangeably in this article to include people of African descent in the U.S. We understand that these terms have been used differently by a variety of scholars; our interchangeable use of them is not meant to "homogenize cultural and ethnic differences among African Americans and other people of African descent" (Tillman, 2002, p. 10).

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