YES, IT'S FOR US:
AN EXAMINATION OF OTHERMOTHERING AS A FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURAL BROKERING FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

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A Dissertation

by

Wicondra Stovall

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Student: Wicondra Stovall

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this dissertation is suitable for electronic submission to the library and credit is to be awarded for the dissertation.

_____, Graduate Coordinator
Lisa Romero, Ph.D.

_____
Date

PREFACE

Researcher: Wife, Mom, and Entrepreneur

I grew up with an engaged mother who nurtured my sister and me at home and advocated for us at school. My mom was my shero, and for quite some time ,I believed that her attention to my academic progress was the sole key for my achievement. I attended private schools from preschool to 10th grade and grew up equating success in African American students with parent visibility either at school and/or at home. My mother worked long hours with a near 2-hour commute to work one way, so I seldom saw her at school, but she was very much present in my academic pursuits and otherwise. When I transitioned to public school in 11th grade, my mother was not so trusting of the system and would occasionally drop by unannounced just to see how I was being treated or how my day was going. If she had a concern and could not be present in person, she initiated contact by phone. This was pre-texting or Class Dojo apps. By all accounts, she was an "engaged parent," yet I was struggling to make it through high school.

Despite my personal experience, when I became a mother 14 years ago, I was still convinced that parental engagement was the silver bullet: the solution to virtually every issue concerning Black students. That simple. I sat on the School Site Council, served as President of the Parent Teacher Organization at my children's school for a number of years, volunteered my time and resources, making every attempt to ensure my presence was felt in theory and in truth on behalf of my kids. I was proud of this and at times, without consideration to the plethora of reasons why or the fact that it was none of my

business, silently made judgement on other Black/African American parents who were not as visible.

It was not until I served as principal of a private school in my town that I realized that Black student success was beyond parental engagement. Here, a school where a vast majority of the students were Black/African American, parents were visibly "engaged." They contributed their time and money; sometimes multiple generations (i.e., parents, grandparents and great grandparents) from one family could be seen on campus on any given day, yet many Black/African American students were still underperforming. Additionally, parents/guardians were required to volunteer their time and/or donate additional school supplies as well or risk being fined for lack of participation at the end of the school year. Therefore, parental engagement was a part of the school culture and for the most part, well-received with many parents exceeding the expectations of the school, yet this did not preclude the struggle for African American students.

This forced me to look *Beyond the Bake Sale* as Henderson et al. (2007) put it, to examine systemic and historical nuances that have failed to meet the needs of Black/African American students and families. It also empowered me to take a closer examination of my own experience as a K-12 student and implicit biases I may have developed as an adult. Having attended mostly private schools densely populated by White students and families, I had to ask myself if even as a Black woman, was I promulgating Whiteness by assuming that a lack of parental engagement was in fact the cause for Black students failing the system? Was I placing unmerited blame on

Black/African American parents? And, how had "parental engagement" been defined in the first place? Of the data that validate parental engagement as a major contributing factor to student success in African American students, why do Black parents have to be more engaged for their students to succeed, but other races do not?

In the summer of 2019, my pursuit for answers to these questions and more resulted in the development of Ara's Education Consulting, LLC (Ara's), a business inspired by my children and one that sought to exclusively examine and meet the needs of Black/African American students and families. Initially, parental engagement was the focal point; however, through this dissertation process, my once monolithic, deficit-based lens was challenged and the organic, day-to-day, motherly innerworkings of a community were realized in theory and praxis. This research examines the impact of the work.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my three children, my light and my inspiration: Ashari Sanai-Arralyn Stovall; Rodney Bernard Stovall, III; and Ashyah Rae Stovall. May your passions lead you in crazy, amazing ways. And in your own unique approach, may you have the courage to stand for justice, even if you are standing alone. Love, Mommy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take a moment to first acknowledge God, who knew that one day and somehow, I would become a wife, mother of three, small business owner, *and* doctor of education. I remain in complete awe of my journey and God's grace, mercy, and providence over my life, and I am eternally grateful for the community He provided throughout this journey.

To my dear husband, Rodney, this would not be possible without your love, selflessness, and commitment you made to support my academic endeavors when you asked for my hand in marriage 17 years ago. I loved you then, I love you still, I love you always. I admire your courage, your faith in God, and dedication to family. I cannot wait to start this next chapter with you and our babies! #Deuceanddub4life.

To my mother, Cassandra Howard, thank you for being my advocate. I will never forget the many years you slept on a couch to ensure my sister and I had the best education your income could afford; the times you remained up until the wee hours of the morning to assist me with homework even as a senior in high school; or the times you hustled to put food on the table by doing hair after a 12-hour day. Your sacrifice is unprecedented and contributed to my personal fight to give my babies more, just as you did for us. "Can't" was never an option.

To my father, William Mapp, Jr., despite you and my mom divorcing 30 plus years ago, you remained a part of my life. Your presence made a difference and I am grateful. You have always had my heart, this you know, and I know I have yours.

To my little sister, Candace Brock, my #1 fan, my ace, my 1st baby, thank you for being you. My love and appreciation for you is otherworldly and difficult to articulate. Thank you for your love, support, comedic relief, and sisterhood through this journey and beyond. Thank you for caring for my babies when I needed to study or when Rod and I needed a moment to reset. You are a jewel to say the least. Thank you.

This dissertation would not be possible without my father- and mother-in-law Rodney and Rosalyn Stovall who have loved me as their own from the start. I will never forget receiving a key to your home nearly 20 years ago when I was dating Rod, commuting to school, and working on my undergraduate studies, because you did not want me on the road while tired. It is all finally done! Thank you for caring for our children when I needed to study or for Rod and me to have an impromptu date night. To my sister-in-law Robyn Stovall, thank you as well for your love and support with our babies. I love and appreciate you!

To my dissertation chair Dr. Sarah Jouganatous, thank you for believing in me, seeing my vision and coaching me through my journey on personal and professional levels. You are forever an extension of my family, and I am so grateful God saw fit for you to be my chair! To Dr. Malika Hollinside, thank you for sitting on my committee, for being the first to share my parent survey with the parents from your organization and for your overall vibe and energy. You are a beautiful soul. To Dr. Vajra Watson, thank you for sitting on my committee and for challenging my scholarship while also inspiring me to stop holding back, to be me fully, and allow my passions to lead my work. To Dr. Lisa

Romero, while you did not chair my dissertation nor did you sit on my committee, as I have shared several times in the past, you left an imprint on my life when I first met you in the fall of 2018. You were there when I took a break to deal with the sudden loss of my dear aunt and there when I returned. Along the way, you would challenge me to find the time to get it done, but also expressed your belief in me. Thank you for not losing hope.

To my friends, extended relatives, and colleagues, thank you for your support during this life-changing journey. I could not have done this without you.

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Adult Training and Development

Abstract

of

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The present study investigated how advocacy, relatedness, and care and concern, three of the five tenets of Black othermothering, served as a structure to engage African American/Black students and families through cultural brokering. Othermothering is critical to the pedagogy of Black teaching and contributed to the success of African American students prior to the 1954 ruling of *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. Following desegregation, Black students began performing disproportionately lower than their White counterparts. Additionally, 40,000 Black teachers and administrators lost their jobs and, to date, have not been able to rebound from this travesty in education, as Black teachers only make up 7% of the teaching population (Farinde et al., 2016). To combat the Black teacher deficit gap, this study examined the impact of Black othermothers (BOMs) at one Sacramento-based junior high school and one Sacramento-based elementary school from the perspectives of four White teachers. In addition, this study sought to examine how Black/African American parents/guardians ($N = 54$) felt about the idea of Black othermothering at their child's school. An anonymous survey was

administered on social media for Black parents to complete. From the perspectives of the teachers, the results showed that Black othermothering improves their connection to Black students and families through advocacy, relatedness, and care and concern, and Black parents/guardians equally desire said support with a greater desire in elementary and junior high school. These findings suggest the need for increased cultural representation and understanding of Black students and their families for holistic and equitable methods of inclusion.

Keywords: othermothering, African American/Black students, African American/Black parents, cultural brokering, Black teacher deficit gap, education debt

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INTRODUCTION

Background

"You almost didn't get this." These were the words uttered from my White, U.S. History Honors teacher as I proceeded to cross the stage of my high school graduation on Friday, June 13, 2003. Astonished, I looked off in the distance for comfort as I quickly spotted my mother and family in the bleachers, approached the stage, and shook the hands of my principal and vice principal. While my teacher's words were offensive and certainly caused me to pause, she was correct; had it not been for my mother's advocacy, nurturance and attention, I would not have completed high school.

Despite barely graduating high school, I would complete an Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Studies just 2 years following high school. Later, I obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Human Development with a concentration in Adult Development and Gerontology, a Masters of Arts in Learning Technologies, and have been blessed with an opportunity to complete this dissertation on my heart's work; all because of a mother's dedication to her child. Unintended but by God's providence, in July of 2018, I was presented with an opportunity to work as a principal of a PK-12 private school in Solano County. This experience, coupled with my mother's advocacy for my sister and me as children, developed a framework for my business, my research, and my desire to love on other Black students in particular, just as I would my own children, in their parent's absence. Through this dissertation process, I would be formally introduced to literature

that reflected my calling to “mother” on Black students by utilizing evidence-based methods amongst other things.

According to Collins (2000) and Mawhinney (2012), othermothering or motherwork is often seen in the pedagogy of Black teachers and comprises a commitment to learning and the ability to relate to students while also tending to their emotional and physical needs. This may include providing financial support and displaying affection by way of a hug or “physical expression” (Mawhinney, 2012, p. 216) when needed. If you can imagine being a part of a race that could be punished, killed even for having the audacity to become educated, “a dangerous undertaking” (Givens, 2021, p. 12), as a group of Yale professors commented in response to the idea of Black students attending college, then it should not come as a surprise that Black teachers almost instinctually connect with their Black students uniquely.

Due to a lack of understanding of Black culture, Black students have performed disproportionately lower than any other race since the 1954 ruling of *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (Fairclough, 2004; Givens, 2021). The Black teaching population has yet to rebound from this, as Black teachers make up all but 7% of the teaching population with many leaving the education system do to a continued lack of upward mobility (Farinde et al., 2016). Placing othermothers within K-12 schools and in partnership with White teachers, for Black students and families, could serve as a viable solution to give Black families what they need.

In education, cultural brokers have been utilized to better understand unique elements misunderstood by the dominant culture and to connect with parents and families (Ishimaru et al., 2016; Rissanen, 2020). In this study, Black othermothering is utilized as a method of cultural brokering to better understand and connect with African American families for the betterment of African American students. Pop artist Solange said it best as she sang about the daily micro aggressions Black people experience in her 2016 hit song, "F.U.B.U.," "Oh, it's for us." Black othermothering is uniquely yet organically designed for Black students and families.

As the primary framework for this study, this chapter examines how "othermothering" can serve as a framework for engaging African American students. Othermothering has been defined as taking responsibility for someone else's child in non-formal or unstructured ways and has been utilized as a framework for engaging African American students at predominately White institutions (PWIs; Edwards, 2000). However, a gap exists in the research on how this framework has engaged African American parents. This gap is particularly important because following *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and the desegregation of public schools, African American students have performed disproportionately lower than any other race in English and math (Ford & Moore, 2013; Rönkä et al., 2017; Vanneman et al., 2009). Even when controlled for socio-economic status, African American students still perform disproportionately lower (Obgu, 2003). While it is known that family engagement increases academic achievement in students, African American parents often report feeling unwelcomed, view the

institution as an authority figure, much like they view the police, and disengage (Dow, 2016; Latunde, 2018; Miller et al., 2000). Other factors that inhibit parental involvement in African American families include the parents' education level and the parents' experience with the education system as students themselves (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). While desegregation resulted in more resources for African American students, the aforementioned leads one to question what all was lost following the ruling. Exploring othermothering within K-12 schools can provide an additional method for engagement and support, with long-term implications that may improve academic outcomes in African American students.

African American women have historically served in the crusade for justice for Black people, and were integral to freedom from slavery, education reform, and the civil rights movement (Lott, 2017; Marshall, 2006; Murtadha & Watts, 2005). The nature of African American women, and specifically, African American mothering, is fundamental to this research. This chapter begins by examining how "community mothering," a similar concept to othermothering, has undergirded the formation of formalized groups of Black women and women with influence, power, and resources to meet the needs of African American people.

In an effort to substantiate the ever-pressing need for cultural understanding and collaboration within the schoolhouse, this chapter then examines the current racial, social, and political climate and the lived experiences of Black people as illustrated in four separate instances of police brutality and/or White supremacy. While African American

people are no longer overtly enslaved, shackled, and auctioned off to prospective plantation owners, in the 21st century, the question of whether or not a Black life is as important as a White life still remains as evidenced in the proceeding arguments.

In this study, I examine how othermothering has supported the African American community in the past and how it could serve as a solution today. This section concludes by examining the literature on how othermothering has supported African American students and how it might serve as a valuable method of supporting and engaging African American parents and families moving forward.

Women, Mothers, and Advocacy for Black Children

In the wake of an influx of public slayings of Black men, women, boys, and girls across the nation, school districts and employers alike have been more recently promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion as a means of making more concerted efforts to combat marginalization, anti-racist teaching. This has been manifested by way of Black Lives Matter (BLM) hashtags; posters and mantras being seen on vehicles, businesses, homes; and paraphernalia prompting White, privileged men and women to use their voices for justice.

In response to the killings of Oscar Grant, an unarmed Black teen killed by BART police on New Year's Day 2010, and Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black boy killed by nightwatchman George Zimmerman while walking to his father's home located in a gated, middle-class neighborhood, Dow (2016) interviewed 60 middle- and upper-class mothers to assess how Black mothers prepare their children to interact with authority

figures and the public, while minimizing the "thug image" (Dow, 2016, p. 163) on their lives as Black boys. When compared with White boys and both Black and White girls, administrators and teachers perceive Black boys as violent and aggressive (Dow, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

As a means of survival Street et al. (2009) found that Black mothers equip their children to interact with police officers and teachers in one of two ways: through understanding racism in lower class families or through separating themselves from Blackness or "racelessness" (Street et al., 2009; p. 440) in Black, higher-income homes. Malone Gonzalez (2019) examined how Black parents use "double consciousness" (p. 365), a term originally coined by W.E.B. Dubois, to describe how Black people view themselves from their oppressors' perspective in educating their children about interacting with police authority and teachers.

"Motherwork" (Collins, 2000, p. 375), work that is predicated upon the advocacy and care for one's own child and other ethnic children, is integral to the survival of Black children. It has served as a framework for the formation of BLM and also provided agency, as when 2016 presidential candidate Hillary Clinton used her platform to empower the "Mothers of the Movement," the mothers who lost children to police brutality, at 2016 Democratic National Convention. It is through further integration of Black women advocating for the people that Black students will obtain the voice, direction, and advocacy needed within K-12 schools.

Slavery and Black Women

According to Tatum (2017), Black women have been at the helm of advocacy for Black people for decades. Harriet Tubman, who is briefly mentioned in America's history books, not only escaped slavery and led enslaved Black people to freedom, but returned to guide many more to safety risking her life every time (Hudson, 2003). Despite the death sentence on her life if caught, Tubman was described by Crewe (2006) as both a "peacemaker and statewoman" (p. 229). In reference to Gilkes' (1998) findings on Black women and community, Edwards (2000) stated, "Black female political activists had become involved in politics as a result of their earlier agitation on behalf of the children in their community" (pp. 88-89).

Clubwomen

Dated as far back as 1896 at the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church in Washington, DC, the "Club movement," officially the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and later the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC), was founded by Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Harriet Tubman, and Frances Harper in support of African American mothers (O'Reilly, 2004). The Clubwomen were educated Black professionals or women who were married to Black professional men, which gave them access to resources to address the needs of the community (Edwards, 2000). "Community" or "other mothering" was done in the formation of clubs where middle-class status was used as a means of service and access to upward mobility for African American people as a whole (Lerner, 1974).

Black Lives Matter Formation and Othermothering

In recent years, other mothers in action have been depicted in the formation of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, as co-founders Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi expressed outrage following the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the night watchman accused of gunning down 17-year-old Treyvon Martin. “The Mothers of Movement” defined as the mothers of the Black children killed by police gathered on the 2016 convention stage in support of Hillary Clinton’s campaign for presidency as they rallied for democratic candidate Clinton to boldly proclaim their deceased children’s names in the name of Black Lives Matter.

The Independent Black Mother

In a community where motherhood is unrestricted to the confines of one’s home and circumstantially promotes independence, rather than dependence on men, this must be considered when seeking to support and engage African American students and families. The African American social and cultural deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) cannot be separated when students enter the classroom, which was an unanticipated consequence of the 1954 ruling of *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (Milner & Howard, 2004). According to the National Center of Education Statistics (Hussar et al., 2020), the teaching population is 80% White, which necessitates cultural representation, advocacy, and partnership on behalf of African American students and families and has been associated with academic achievement in African American students (Ishimaru, 2019; Ishimaru et al., 2016; Marcucci, 2020). The lived-experiences of African American students and

families, what they experience as a people every day, their values, cultural influences, attributions, what is deemed important and by whom, must be considered by educators. Yosso (2005) would refer to such values, relationships, and shared resources as "cultural wealth," as it is just as powerful as economic capital and must be considered if educators are committed to African American students succeeding. Ishimaru (2019) and Ishimaru et al. (2016) found that when educators were able to relate to the individual cultural needs of their students and families, academic achievement improved. Marcucci (2020) observed that when the nondominant culture of African American parents in all its forms increased, the discipline, including in-school suspensions, decreased as well. African American students are suspended at the highest rate (Powell & Coles, 2018). Novak (2019) found that students who are suspended by the age of 12 have a greater chance of entering the criminal justice system by the age of 18. This is known as a phenomenon referred to as the school-to- prison pipeline or school-to-prison track and has correlated suspensions and disciplinary action during K-12 to prison sentences as adults (Barnes, 2018). Should African American students survive the educational system, they are still at risk of extinction with countless acts of modern-day lynchings of Black people.

Problem Statement

Too few (7%) African American teachers are employed within the K-12 system (Hussar et al., 2020), which has negatively impacted academic achievement in African American students and the connection families of color once had with their child's school. Such connections are in dire need of being rekindled. Although the education

system has specified funding and initiatives for equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts, these efforts fail to meet the unique needs of the African American community.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-method sequential exploratory study was to discover the presence and practices, two othermothers, myself and one other, had on K-12 teachers, administrators, and parents at one junior high school and two elementary schools. This study is an effort to better understand the way othermothering framework Black teachers have historically included within their pedagogy could be manufactured within a separate role, to work alongside teachers and/or administrators who would like to enhance their connection with African American students and families. While there is some research on othermothering and education (Collins, 2000), to date, none have assessed the impact an independent othermother may have on African American students.

African American parents have been vying for their children to receive an equitable education well before the formation of the public K-12 system in the early 19th century (Fields-Smith, 2005). When enslaved, African American parents would risk their lives as some sought literacy for their families, continuing in the fight proceeding the abolishment of slavery in 1865 (Edwards, 2000). Prior to segregated schools, African American parents believed in the education system and trusted their African American principals and teachers to educate their children (Comer, 1988; Trotman, 2001). African American parents believed that education would grant their children deliverance from

inhumanity, oppression, and constraint and release them; such beliefs faltered following the 1954 ruling to desegregate schools (Anderson, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2004).

Parental engagement was at the forefront of freedom, inclusion, and dismantling segregated schools; however, 60 years removed, the antiquated, privileged, and unequitable structures that systematically silence and exclude the voices of African American parents still exists today (Casanova, 1996; Fields-Smith, 2005; Gavin & Greenfield, 1998). African American parents often view their child's teacher and principal as authority figures and with consideration of their own experiences as students in K-12 and hesitate to engage because they too feel the system has failed them (Harper & Davis, 2012). Parental engagement models such as Epstein's framework of six types of involvement fall short of meeting the needs of low-income minority students (Bower & Griffin, 2011), yet parental engagement remains critical to the academic achievement in these students. Some African American parents will remain disengaged, but many engage in their own unique way and with 46% of African American students residing in a home with a single-mother (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), the impact of having another mother looking out for their child at school is worth exploration.

Research Questions and Objectives

A mixed-method sequential exploratory design was suitable, as it first acquired and examined feedback from parents, teachers, and administrators by way of interviews, followed by the distribution of a quantitative survey to ensure validity and reliability of this work and an assessment of whether African American parents/guardians desire

othermothering work at their child's school. Since I, the researcher, was also a participant of this study, to increase the reliability and validity of this study, another othermother who was a Black, female, social work intern from a local university that is supporting an elementary school with Black othermothering work was included.

The primary research question and subquestions this study sought to answer are: In what ways has Black othermothering impacted school connectedness to African American families?

1. How has Black othermothering impacted advocacy for African American families?
2. How has Black othermothering impacted relatedness to African American families?
3. How has Black othermothering impacted expression of care to African American families?

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

The frameworks utilized in this study are othermothering (Collins, 2000; Mawhinney, 2012), ethics of care/moral development of women (Gilligan, 1982), community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), and critical race theory (CRT; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The othermothering framework is the foundation of this study and indicates five elements African American teachers utilize in their pedagogy, including: a commitment to learning, advocacy, relatedness, expression of care, emotional support, and financial support (Mawhinney, 2012). With consideration to the ethics of care

framework (Gilligan, 1982) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), this study examined three of the six othermothering elements: advocacy, relatedness, and expression of care.

Gilligan (1982) suggested that women are socialized differently than men and develop through three stages of morality: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. During the pre-conventional stage, women are more concerned with their personal and basic needs before their own. During the conventional stage, women begin to see the good in self-sacrificing and feel rewarded when the needs of others are placed before their own. During the final stage, decision-making is contingent upon the woman's values and the product of the pre-conventional and conventional stages of moral development. It is at this time that women find homeostasis as they tend to their own needs while also caring for others in non-violent ways. The socialization process of women informs this study on othermothering and African American families because it is specific to how women express care for others and can be utilized to improve school connectedness to African American families.

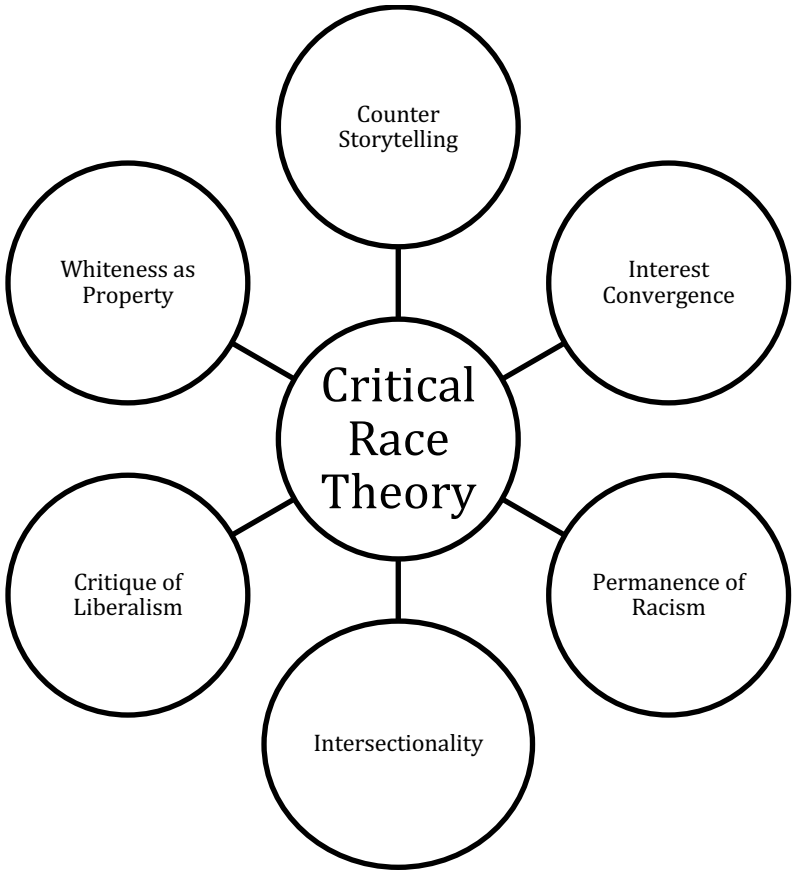
Community cultural wealth comprises six forms of capital nondominant cultures value and thrive from including: aspirational, linguistic, resistant, familial, social, and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). When viewed from a Eurocentric, patriarchy lens, the value placed on community cultural wealth is lessened and most commonly placed on economic capital. Embracing the cultural values of African American families may result in better connectedness with the school. In this study, the familial, social, and

navigational components of community, cultural wealth are referenced. Othermothers provide representation through familial “kinship” capital (Yosso, 2005, p. 79); social capital as defined as “emotional support” (Yosso, 2005,
p. 79); peer-to-peer, mother figure parent support; and community and navigational capital as othermothers utilize their positionality to provide direct guidance to African American families with maneuvering through the formal and hidden procedures and processes of the educational institution.

According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), CRT comprises six tenets and was utilized in this study, as it is an activist framework with a social justice lens, appropriate for the Black othermothering work examined in this study (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Six Tenets of Critical Race Theory



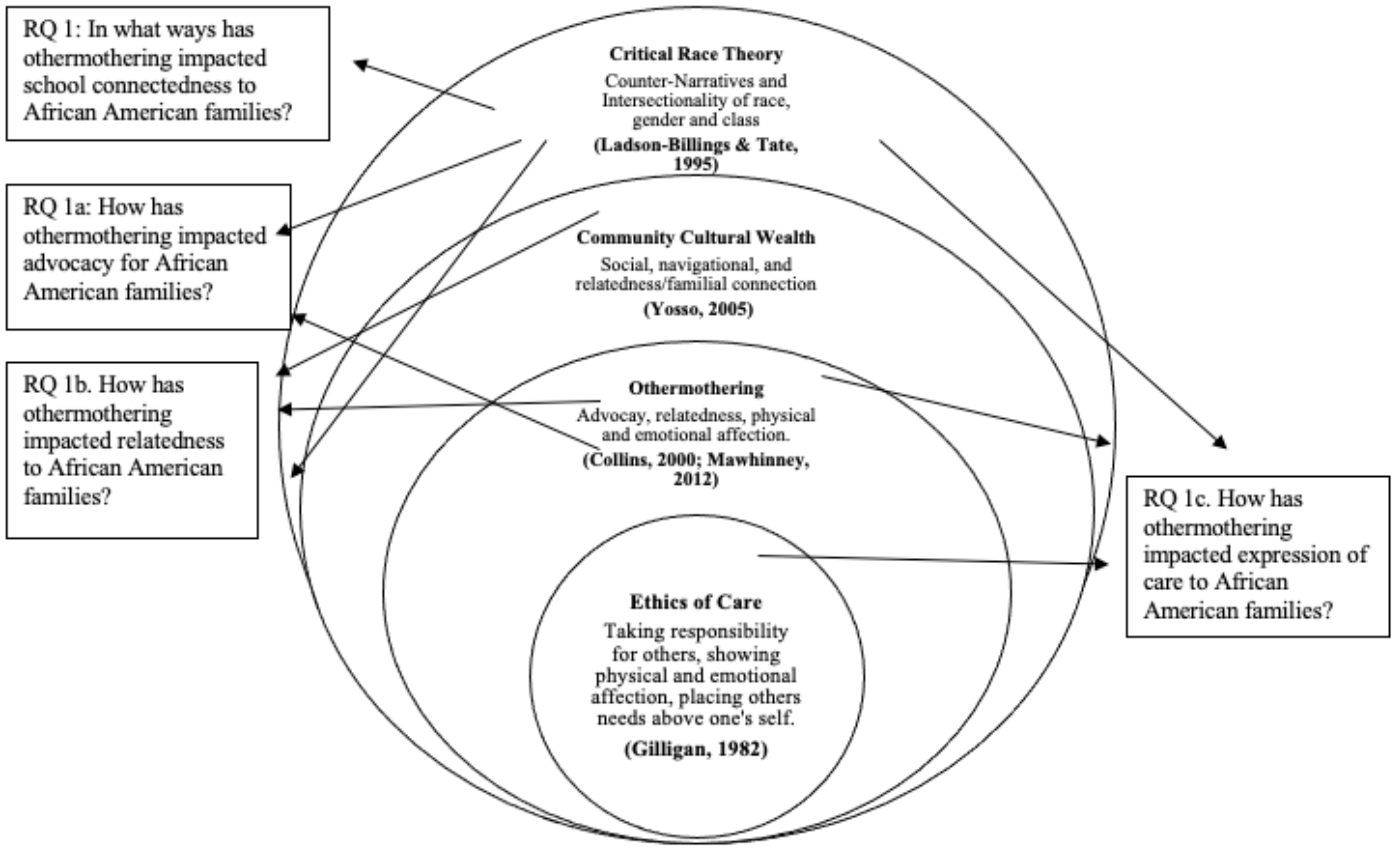
Note. Adapted from "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," by G. Ladson-Billings & W. F. Tate, 1995, *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68. (https://www.unco.edu/education-behavioral-sciences/pdf/TowardaCRTEduca.pdf).

As illustrated in Figure 2, othermothering is at the heart of the conceptual and theoretical framework of this study and is fundamental to how Black women have historically cared for their children and others (Collins, 2000; Mawhinney, 2012). It is often seen in the pedagogy of Black teachers within the classroom (Guiffrida, 2005; Roseboro & Ross, 2009): the missing link to advocacy, relatedness, and care of African

American families with only 7% of African American teachers who make up the teaching population (Hussar et al., 2020). In addition, according to Gilligan (1982) *all* women have been socialized to care for and take responsibility of the needs of others. As a result, othermothers, Black women, are most suitable to value and leverage the familial, social, and navigational wealth exhibited within the African American community to connect African American families to the school (Yosso, 2005).

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework and Research Question Alignment



Operational Definitions

Throughout this study, various words and phrases are used and are defined here.

Advocacy

The voice of the African American student or parent when necessary (Mawhinney, 2012).

African American/Black

A descendent from the African diaspora in the Americas (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

Cultural Broker

A person who serves as a cultural bridge into another person's culture (James Cook University, n.d.).

Cultural translator/cultural broker

A representative who represents a particular culture and serves to increase school connectedness within that specified culture (TuSmith, 1989).

Expression of care

Emotional and physical affection, giving hugs when needed (Mawhinney, 2012).

Family liaison/parent liaison

A school district employee who serves to increase school connectedness (Cambridge University Press, n.d.).

Othermothering

When a Black woman cares for a child she did not birth. The woman does not have to be a mother (Mawhinney, 2012).

The People

The community of descendants from the African diaspora in the Americas.

Relatedness

The ability to approach and establish a relationship with an African American student or family (Mawhinney, 2012).

School Connectedness

When non-academic and/or academic factors concerning African American families are made known to teachers and administrators and aid the interaction between the teacher and/or administrator and the student or family (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

Sista

A proud black woman. A woman who carries herself with pride (HarperCollins Publishers, n.d.).

Limitations and Scopes

Additional Time Spent at School Sites

Although participants were interviewed in the winter of 2022, Othermother A was placed at Site #1: Jolly Elementary School for the 2020-21 school year and the current 2021-22 school year. This is beneficial for an ethnography. Othermother A had limited

time at Site #2: Hart Junior High and had supported this site for 5 months at the time of this study, which is a limitation. At the time of this study, Othermother B had also only been supporting Diamond Elementary School for 5 months, which was another limitation. However, the social construct of the African American researchers may counter the time restraints, as it promoted quicker immersion into African American families and culture (Jefferey et al., 2004). Another limitation is that I am Othermother A and the owner of the agency being examined in this study and while participants were asked to be unbiased with their responses, some consideration must be given to the potentially biased responses obtained from the interviews.

Significance of Study

In an attempt to address the social and emotional needs of students of color since the public slaying of George Floyd by former Officer Derek Chauvin in May of 2020, there has been a push to defund, reallocate the funding of police, to other support resources in various urban and rural school districts. In California, 10 districts have successfully defunded the police including San Francisco Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, and Sacramento Unified School District (Riser-Kositsky et al., 2021). The reallocation of funding to services that meet the needs of students rather than strictly imposing law and order within California's K-12 schools is well overdue, but as with other efforts to aid students of color or to increase equity, diversity and inclusion, African American students may get lost in the ambiguity of yet another utopian quest. While work is being done, more work is needed.

If you design for all, you design for no one, and the education system was not designed with African American students in mind. Yet, following school integration, African American students and teachers were placed in a foreign place and expected to thrive. Throughout the history of Black women, those who have made it out have used their educational, social, and financial capital to give back to their community as seen in Harriet Tubman's shero work to free enslaved Black people and the NACWC of 1896 (Edwards, 2000). This level of responsibility to care for the people and the children of the people is known as othermothering and is specific to minority women and integral to the pedagogy of African American female teachers (Collins, 2000; Foster, 1993; Guiffida, 2005; Roseboro et al., 2009). Othermothering was critical to the pedagogy of Black teaching, which was greatly minimized following the 1954 ruling of *Brown* v. *Board of Education* which removed roughly 38,000 Black teachers from the profession.

Currently, African American teachers make up 7% of the teaching population (Hussar et al., 2020). This study is significant because it considers the emotional, physical, and financial contributions African American female teachers have traditionally given their African American students, along with advocacy when needed, and places these elements in a unique role of its own. While this does not combat the need to increase the number of African American teachers in the profession, the othermothering role may serve as a conduit to meet the needs of African American students and families. Othermothers partner with teachers and administrators desirous of culturally connecting with African American students and families to improve the learning experience and

overall classroom/school climate. This could be a model for parental engagement as othermothers also serve as other parents of African American students and/or othermothers serve as a liaison to African American parents/guardians.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

While this is not a dissertation on the educational history of African American students and families, this literature review first examines the evolution of the relationships African American parents had with K-12 teachers and administrators prior to the 1954 ruling of *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, as it is relevant to the discussion. In addition, this review illustrates the use of "othermothering," the pedagogical approach Black educators in higher education (Collins, 2000; Edwards, 2000; Flowers et al., 2015; Griffin, 2013; Guiffrida, 2005, Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010) and K-12 have integrated in their classrooms (Fairclough, 2004; Foster, 1993; Roseboro et al., 2009) and the impact this has made on African Americans students. Lived experiences cannot be separated when students enter the classroom, so the dominant, mother-led family structure of many African American homes is examined as a means of better understanding 46% of African American students who live in a single-mother home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) and how othermothering, also known as community mothering and Clubwomen, the first formalized group of othermothers, has historically served lower income African American women and children (Edwards, 2000). Additionally, while it is known that parental engagement is integral to student achievement, African American families have struggled to engage in traditionally defined ways. This literature review examines what has been done to directly engage African American families, including state and federal

aid designed to meet the unique needs of African American students who make up 45% of students in high-poverty schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018), deterrents to engagement, how Black women have functioned as conduits throughout history to push African American people forward and how Black women are pertinent to the future of African American students and families today.

Justification of Search Strategy

With a goal of conducting research on how to increase parental engagement in African American families through liaisons of some capacity, the "key" initially thought to combat the disproportionate amount of African American students failing the education system, the following terms and keywords were utilized: Parental involvement, parent liaisons, cultural capital, cultural brokers, family liaisons, institutional agents, cultural parental engagement, local liaison, parental involvement and African American or Black family liaisons and academic achievement in African American students + partnership + motivation, parental involvement and African American or Black family liaisons and academic achievement in African American students + partnership + cultural responsive parenting. It quickly became clear that parental engagement was not the only factor inhibiting the success of Black students. The issue is systemic, infused through the judicial system that deepened the issue. Additionally, with consideration to Black women, the primary parental figure of Black students, the research shifted to focus on mothers and other women who serve as caregivers of Black students. As a result, the following terms and key words were used: *Brown* v. *Board of Education* + Black or

African American teachers, Black activist mothering k-12 schools, Black or African American mothers + parental engagement or parental involvement, community mothering, motherwork, and othermothering.

Brown v. Board of Education

In an attempt to ensure African American students had equal access to resources, *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) was said to be a violation of the 14th Amendment in which no state could withhold "equal protection of the laws." Well-intended, the desegregation of schools was disastrous for the African American community and has contributed to the disproportionate number of African American students who have historically performed lower than White students (Milner & Howard, 2004). Prior to *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, African American teachers and administrators were connected with the very families they served, as they lived in the communities where their students resided, patronized the same businesses, and participated in the same community events such as local church services as their students. This connection enabled teachers and parents to casually encounter one another outside of school, which positively impacted to the classroom experience (Fields-Smith, 2005; Johnson, 2007).

Terms and concepts such as "culturally relevant pedagogy" and "critical race theory" (CRT) that now permeate America's schools and the media, respectively, were unheard of as the teachers and administrators emanated the culture of their students (Borrero et. al., 2018; Brown et al., 2019; Butcher & Gonzalez, 2020; Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 1995). Teachers and students with shared culture laid the foundation for wholesome, trusted relationships, connection, and academic achievement in African American students (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Milner & Howard, 2004). What began as a quest for comparable resources as White students resulted in the complete dismantling of an education system that understood African American culture so well, the "hidden curriculum" or unintended lessons (Milner & Howard, 2004, p. 294). Noticing how the presence of a Black teacher empowered students who may not have witnessed such authority outside of the classroom, was just as valuable as a well-taught math lesson. Today, this description would be referred to as "representation," and it is pertinent to the achievement of African American students (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Grissom et al., 2017).

Presently, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (Hussar et al., 2020), 79% of America's teachers are White compared to 7% who are African American: worth noting the African American teaching population continues to decline. Roseboro and Ross (2009) attributed the decline of the African American teaching population to their "theory of care-sickness" which acknowledges the stressors going above and beyond the call of duty may bring and has discouraged African American teachers from continuing in the profession or entering it at all. Furthermore, following *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, African American teachers were required to take Eurocentric teaching exams that obliterated African American teachers from the profession (Redding & Baker, 2017).

African American Teachers Pre-*Brown* v. *Board of Education*

According to Fields-Smith (2005) prior to the 1954 ruling of *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, African American "Parents knew their place in schools" (p. 131). They participated in formal roles that impacted policy and curriculum and volunteered for events as requested, an observation made by a Black teacher prior to the 1954 ruling of *Brown* v. *Board of Education*. Black educators were given the authority to educate Black children (Edwards, 1993), though some scholars have argued that African American students and families have benefited from desegregated schools, as it provided resources and opportunities they were previously denied (Horsford, 2009).

By the early 1900s, African American teachers were well-versed in pedagogy that met the needs of African American students and improved literacy by 50% (Anderson, 1988; Donner & Shockley, 2010). Subsequently, some have argued the academic decline of African American students started when African American teachers were demoted and/or entirely removed from positions of authority within the classroom and administration (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Though this does not mitigate the ability of White teachers to successfully teach Black students as nearly 79% of the teaching population consists of White teachers and all African American students are not failing the system (Hussar et al., 2020), it does highlight the lost cultural connection African American parents and students once had with their child's administrators and teachers.

Prior to *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, it was understood that African American teachers expected their African American students to do well in school; the negative

perceptions that many African American students received following desegregation in as early as Kindergarten did not exist (Milner, 2014). Yet, the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* ruling resulted in nearly 40,000 African American teachers and principals either losing their jobs completely or receiving a demotion (Brown, 2007; Johnson, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2004).

African American teachers have historically served as surrogate parents to their African American students (Brockenbourough, 2012; Maylor, 2009; Milner, 2014). This element of organic nurturance and homogeny were lessened with the decline in African American teachers when *Brown* v. *Board of Education* was enacted, yet it is precisely these types of trusted relationships that have the ability to move African American students forward (Griffin & Tackie, 2017; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021). Romero (2015) found that when high school students trust their teachers, academic achievement increased. Fourteen percent of the participants were African American students. Consistent with previous literature on trust, in this study "trust" is defined as being competent, practicing integrity, and benevolence. McKinney de Roytson et al. (2021) examined several African American student-dominated schools in Oakland, California and observed how African American teachers and administrators attended to the emotional and physical needs and maintained protection for their students or "institutional and impersonal care" (p. 74). Griffin and Tackie (2017) found that Black teachers feel obligated to engage the whole African American student; however, while their connection is often unquestioned, many African American teachers have expressed

feeling unvalued and "pigeonholed" (p. 40) by stakeholders to assume the same roles and responsibilities that inhibit their upward mobility.

The African American Family Structure and Single-Mother Homes

Black Mothering and the Care for the People

African American mothers not only look out for the children they have birthed, they care for the children of the people (Guiffrida, 2005). Historically, Black women, mothers or not, who have "made it out" by educational advances and/or marriage and have resources to give back to their African American communities have done so for the betterment of the people (Edwards, 2000). This sense of community mothering has dated back to slavery when mothers were auctioned off and children were left behind in the care of another mother (Edwards, 2000).

Black women feel a sense of obligation to serve the people and have supported African American families and students for centuries (Bailey-Fakoury, 2014; Edwards, 1993; Shaw, 1991). Though some literature on othermothering at predominately White institutions (PWIs) exists (Griffin, 2013; Guiffrida, 2005; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; McKinney de Royston, 2021), little is known about such practices within the K-12 environment (McKinney de Royston et al., 2021). Many college professors from historically Black colleges and universities (HCBUs) organically incorporate othermothering into their pedagogical practices; however, there has been no known research on how the role of independent othermothers in collaboration with the current, primarily White teaching population can improve achievement in African American

students. In doing so, this could provide the advocacy and support the education system has expected from the biological parent(s) or relatives of students and suggest new forms of "parental engagement" that equally improve achievement in African American students. Gilligan (1982), a pioneer in the field of moral development, attributed this othermothering nature of African American teachers to all women, as women are socialized as such.

Black Marriages and Employment of Women

In 1954, around the time of the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* ruling, the rate of Black marriages was beginning to decline (Dixon, 2009). Heiss (1996) found that African American students from single-mother homes were less likely to finish school. Today, nearly half of African American students, 46% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), are being raised in single-mother homes. According to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau, between 2019 and 2020, African American families had the highest poverty rate at 19.5%, and 23.4% of female-run households live below the poverty line. In the proceeding section, federal and state funding is explained in more detail, as such funding was developed to aid low-income students with the enactment of the Title I Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1956. However, funding and resources alone have not and will not combat the disproportionate number of African American students who continue to underperform in American's schools alone; the lived experiences, including family structure, must be considered. *Brown* v. *Board of Education* informed Heiss's (1996) findings that children from single-mother homes are at a greater risk of dropping out of school because the

ruling ameliorated Black teachers, the othermothers the African American community depends upon, from the profession. This not only impacted the connection African American teachers had with their African American students in the classroom, it contributed to poverty, as the livelihood of these teachers was negatively impacted as well. The "motherwork" or the "reproductive labor Black women of colour engage in to ensure the survival of the family, community and self" (Collins, 1994, p. 373) was done away with in the in-school environment following *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and is in great need of being re-found.

In addition, 10 years following *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, the infamous "Moynihan Report" was released in 1965 by sociologist, Daniel Patrick Moynihan (Rainwater & Yancey, 1965). This report linked poverty to the structure of the African American family unit; a structure that was arguably caused by those outside of the community with the placement of drugs, harsher sentences on African American people for the same crimes as others races and the mass incarceration of Black men (Griffith et al., 2018; Levy et al., 2021). This structure left many African American women without a counterpart to raise their children, which resulted in fewer resources than White, intact families and a dependance upon their respective communities primarily comprising othermothers to fend for their children (DeAnda et al., 2020; Guiffrida, 2005; Njoku et al., 2017; Park et al., 2019).

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, in 2010, 66% of African American children resided in a single-mother home. Nearly 10 years later, these numbers slightly

decreased with 64% of African American students who reportedly lived in a home with a single mother in 2019. Table 1 illustrates the living arrangements of children in 2020, arranged by race.

Table 1

Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 by Race and Hispanic Origin

Race	Two parents-married	Two parents-not married	Mother only	Father only	No parent
White, non-Hispanic	75.5%	3.1%	13.4%	4.7%	3.2%
Black alone	37.9%	3.4%	46.3%	4.5%	8.0%
Asian alone	87.4%	1.6%	7.8%	1.9%	1.4%
Hispanic	61.9%	6.0%	24.0%	4.1%	4.0%

Note. Adapted from *Current Population Survey, 2020 Annual Social and Economic Supplement,* by U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/stories/2021/04/number-of-children-living-only-with-their-mothers-has-doubled-in-past-50-years-figure-3.jpg).

Most significantly, the U.S. Census Bureau reported even lower numbers with 46% of African American students who resided in a single-mother home. When compared to White, Asian, and Hispanic families, African American single-mother homes had the highest reported rate. While not directly related to this research study, African American children also had the highest number of children who lived with no parent at all, at 8.0% in comparison with 3.2% of White families, 1.4% of Asian families, and 4.0% of Hispanic families.

Contrary to the infamous Moynihan report (1965), Besharov (2001) found that the family structure of African American families is diminishing and that White families are

generally constant and intact. However, other sources have indicated that from the 1960s and forward, marriage has been on the decline for both Black and White families (Wetzel, 1990). In summary, there is a need for stakeholders to consider the family structure of African American families and how to continue incorporating culturally relevant methods when seeking to support and understand African American students and families. African American students and families are on an unequal playing field, and this exceeds marital status and socioeconomic status (Ogbu, 2003).

Resources Provided by Federal and State Departments

As a means of ensuring *all* students receive a free and equitable education, national and state policy initiatives have been enacted throughout history. This includes Title I and the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act of 1965, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that was initially enacted in 2002 and later revised in 2007, and more recently the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. At the state level, California's local control funding formula (LCFF) was developed to provide more funding for low-income students and English language learners and empowers school districts to determine how they allocate government funding. The local control accountability plan (LCAP) works in tandem with LCFF as a mechanism to itemize the programs, services, and activities each school district will support for 3 years (California Department of Education [CDE], 2021b). These measures are discussed in more detail.

Title I Funding and the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act

Title I Funding and the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act was signed by President Johnson on April 12, 1965 and provided federal financial support to ensure students from urban, inner cities were given the same access to the same resources suburban, affluent communities and schools would have access to without such funding. Some have argued that access and resources alone, the purpose of Title I, are not enough to ensure the success for all students (Young et al., 2017), while others argue that money matters and is indicative of academic achievement in students (Jackson, 2020).

Title I, Part A of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) provided socioeconomic means for the most underserved communities. As defined by 34 USC § 12291(a)(39), "underserved" means:

> Populations who face barriers in accessing and using victim services, and includes populations underserved because of geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, underserved racial and ethnic populations, populations underserved because of special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, alienage status, or age), and any other population determined to be underserved by the Attorney General or by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, as appropriate. (p. 294)

Underserved communities often comprise African American students and Hispanic students and are defined as "urban" or "rural," yet despite resources, African American

students continue to perform disproportionately lower than those of any other race (Avendano et al., 2019).

In 1965, Title I, Part A of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) was established 9 years following *Brown* v. *Board of Education* to promote and develop academic achievement in all students and to partner with parents and families to ensure their voice in their children's education was included. However, there is some debate about whether underserved students, including African American students, actually benefit from Title I (Brown, 2007; Chingos & Blagg, 2017). Additionally, it has been found that an increase in funding does not necessarily translate to increased performance in African American students alone; trust, relationship-building, and cultural relevancy also contribute to academic achievement in African American students (Beard & Brown, 2008; King et al., 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ogbu, 2003).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2002) was the first policy to mandate federal accountability regarding the academic performance of students. It also increased the federal government's role over the nation's schools and was developed to specifically address the achievement gap in African American students, English language learners, low-income students, and students with disabilities (Lee, 2020). The bill was unanimously passed by congress and was signed by President George Bush at Hamilton High School in Hamilton, Ohio January 8, 2002, but after much controversy, it was later replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) by President Barak Obama in 2015

(Klein, 2015). While the two acts are similar, there were some significant differences that will be explained in the proceeding section.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

President Barak Obama signed the ESSA on December 15, 2015 (Klein, 2015). In addition to granting access to resources, ESSA empowered states to select their own academic standards and it also required multiple measures such as the school's quality, high school graduation rates, and evidence-based methods of improving schools and students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). ESSA required schools to inform parents if the school was underperforming, and parent input was a must (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Overall, ESSA has empowered the state and school districts to meet the educational needs of students, rather than federal, country-wide provisions that were nearly impossible to meet under NCLB (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). ESSA has enabled local control and authority over site-specific programs and initiatives that are reflective of the student, family, teacher, and leadership needs (Young et al., 2017).

Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP)

Due to the mandates of ESSA, California developed the LCAP (CDE, 2021a ; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). School districts are required to utilize the LCAP in their use of ESSA funding as they allocate evidence-based resources that specifically aid underserved students (CDE, 2021a). To illustrate this, Ocean Unified School District, the district where this research was conducted, has been referenced in Table 2.

Table 2

Total Number of Expenditures from Ocean Unified School District for the 2021-22 School Year

LCFF Funds	Other State Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Funding
$268,368,346.00	$26,930,557.00	$13,583,422.00	$308,882,345.00	$322,802.00

As noted, the district has $308,882,345.00 total funding with $322,802.00 specifically designated to equity, diversity, and inclusion for students who fall under the category English learners, foster youth, and/or low income. In addition, $10,000.00 came from the LCFF.

Despite generous amounts of funding, there are still gaps in how best to administer resources in a way that is most advantageous to African American students. This idea is supported by the disproportionate number of African American students who perform lower than any other race or student group in English (1,551) and math (1,557) in the district examined in this study (California School Dashboard, 2018). The gap is further supported by national data that have identified African American students as the lowest performing group (Hussar et al., 2020) along with research on whether the LCFF is truly supporting educators and families with meeting the needs of underserved students (Greer et al., 2018), the very purpose of the funding.

One of the greatest ways the achievement gap has been countered is through parent/guardian advocacy (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Bartz et al., 2017; Ginther & Pollak, 2004; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Moneva et al., 2020; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Most LCAPs write this in, but it is not inclusive of various cultures or families as in the case of African American families or phrases like "equity, diversity and inclusion" are used but to what extent is this actually manifested within schools? When African American parents are involved, African American students have excelled, which makes sense: the educational system was not designed for African American students, so having an advocate by way of a parent, guardian, or othermother is imperative for many African American students to succeed. Furthermore, with consideration to the Eurocentric education system, advocates who understand both Black and White culture are at times necessary, which is what the Clubwomen brought to the African American community as they leveraged their educational attainment, and social and economic capital to act as othermothers or other parents of African American students as a method towards guiding them to upward mobility where parents were unable either due to ignorance or absence (Edwards, 2000).

Parental Engagement

Parents play such a valuable role in academic achievement (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Ginther & Pollak, 2004; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Moneva et al., 2020; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005), but how are "parents" defined in the African American community? In high-minority communities, parental responsibility can

be unofficially assumed by grandparents, an older sibling, an aunt, uncle, or community member. In the late 1800s, Clubwomen or African American women who were married and/or educated were afforded more resources and took on the responsibility of caring for the mothers and children within their respective communities (Edwards, 2000). This group of Clubwomen eventually formed the National Association of Colored Women, founded by Ida B. Wells, Harriet Tubman, Mary Church Terrell, and Frances Harper in 1896.

In the education system, "parents" have been generally defined as mother and father. Likewise, "parental engagement" has been defined as participating in school events, volunteering in the classroom, and supporting students with homework, as a means of improving academic achievement in students. Epstein's (1986) highly esteemed involvement framework consists of six types of engagement as the foundation to successful partnership including: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. Though there has been some critique of the model being successfully implemented in high-poverty schools, this perspective is not widely shared (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

In addition, according to the CDE, family involvement was incorporated to "ensure all parents and families of students in preschool through grade 12 are assured culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible supports and resources needed to take advantage of opportunities to provide input and participate in school planning and decision-making" (CDE, 2021b, para. 1), yet parental engagement initiatives are

predominately Eurocentric, school-based and formal as in the case of parent teacher organizations (PTOs), parent teacher associations (PTAs), and school site council (SSC). Henderson et al. (2007) have encouraged educators to move *Beyond the Bake Sale* with parent engagement initiatives that consider efforts "beyond" the aforementioned formal events, but sustainable implementation of support of such unconventional forms of engagement has been a challenge.

African American Parental Engagement

Collectively, African American parents once believed that education would grant their children deliverance from inhumanity, oppression, and constraint and release them (Anderson, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Desirous of their children receiving an equitable education, enslaved African American parents risked their lives as some sought literacy for their families, continuing in the fight proceeding the abolishment of slavery in 1865 (Comer, 1988; Edwards, 1993; Fields-Smith, 2005). Continuing in the fight to ensure equal access for their children, it was by way of African American parents and a court of law that segregated schools were dismantled (*Belton* v. *Gebhart*; *Bolling* v. *Sharpe*; *Briggs* v. *Elliott*; *Davis* v. *County School Board*; *Brown* v. *Board of Education*); however, 60 years removed, systemic structures that silence the voices of African American people still exist within America's schools today (Casanova, 1996; Fields-Smith, 2005; Gavin & Greenfield, 1998). Even still, when in comparison with White parents, African American parents' care and concern for their children's education has

been questioned (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Hill, 2018; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Marchand et al., 2019).

In a system unintended for Black students, African American families often have differing needs, ideas of what "engagement" is, how it is manifested and who are considered "parents" which all influence why and how African American parents engage in the first place (Grice, 2020; Mapp, 2003).

Some have questioned why students from Hispanic and African American communities, two equally marginalized communities, differ in academic performance and family engagement. Ogbu (2003) argued that the difference lies in two communities with two different historical references and desires to be in America: one taken by force, the other *drawn* to "the land of opportunity" as a determining factor. African American people entered this country as slaves, subjected to the will, desire, and needs of White people. While the education system was being designed for White, Christian males to develop the necessary skills to provide for their families by way of apprenticeships, African American families were picking cotton. It was through parental advocacy that African American students were given the opportunity to read, write and learn free from fear of their lives in 1863, and it would take nearly 100 years after the emancipation for African American students to at least appear to receive an equitable education as White students when Ruby Bridges became the first African American student to attend a desegregated school in November 1960.

Methods of Parental Engagement for African American Parents

Communication

Mayo (2015) and Siraj (2015) utilized data from The Effective Provision of Pre-School, Primary & Secondary Education (EPPSE 3-16) research to examine parenting styles in parents from low-socioeconomic status to identify specific actions parents took to ensure their children were well-supported outside the classroom to perform within the classroom. The study found that the parents of the students who were progressing spoke with their children daily about the importance of school and their future and emphasized the importance of schooling "without pressuring children" (Mayo, 2015; Siraj, 2015, p. 52).

Volunteering

Epstein (2019) defined volunteering as "recruit[ing] and organiz[ing] parent help" and support, which has been traditionally manifested by physically volunteering within the classroom or parent/family centers at applicable schools, surveying parents to identify gifts (i.e., arts and crafts, baking, etc.), interests, talents, developing telephone trees or serving as a safety support to school personnel (p. 16). For African American families, volunteering within the classroom may not be their choice of engagement, but it does not mean they care any less. One study examined African American parental involvement and middle school activities where one African American dad reported that while he did not participate in formal PTA meetings, he volunteered at basketball games and chorus (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008). Additionally, another study found a

correlation with adolescent sports and parental engagement because findings included that some African American parents viewed sports as the vehicle for upward mobility for not only their children, but for the family. Consequently, when their students were participating in sports, parents were more participatory in activities surrounding the sport rather than the classroom (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; O'Bryan et al., 2008).

Tutoring

Other African American parents have reported that their level of "engagement" is to find tutoring for their children when additional supports are needed (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008). Obtaining tutoring for students was also identified as a method of engagement by *Parent Champion* author and educator Tovi Scruggs-Hussein (2014).

Collaboration with Community

To improve parental engagement in African American families, K-12 schools have collaborated with community-based organizations, specifically churches, to partner in balancing the social-emotional needs of students and families (McIntosh et al., 2020). In this study, the authors found that the commitment church members had to the student's individual needs and mentorship increased academic achievement.

African American Parent and Student Groups

Many African American parents often view their child's teacher and principal as authority figures, and with consideration to their own experiences as students in the K-12 system, they hesitate to engage because they too feel the system has failed them (Harper

& Davis, 2012). One way schools have engaged African American parents is by developing African American parent and student groups to ensure a place of belonging, but the literature has revealed that African American parents have the lowest level of participation (Ishimaru et al., 2016; Johnson, 2007). Venzant Chambers and McCready (2011) found that African American students made a place for themselves at school, congregating before school, during lunch, and during passing periods at a centralized location at school until being interrupted by the administrator.

Parent/Family Liaisons

Parent liaisons (López et al., 2018; Sanders, 2008), family liaisons as cultural brokers (Ishimaru, 2020; Ishimaru et al., 2016), have been utilized more recently to represent nondominant cultures and bridge the gap between home and school, but to date, there is no known literature on African American cultural brokers and African American students. Such roles have been primarily filled by the Hispanic population and with an emphasis on bridging language gaps and building community.

Cultural Wealth

African American parents have utilized cultural brokering and cultural wealth to maximize their engagement and to ensure their children's academic success. Allen and White-Smith (2018) examined one mother's use of cultural wealth by way of a trusted and educated friend who better understood the language outlined within documents regarding her son's expulsion from school. While the mother did not completely

understand the document, she relied upon her community support which ultimately resulted in her son not being expelled.

Allen (2012) examined how middle-class African American fathers resisted the microaggressions their sons experienced and how one well-educated father utilized his connections with friends within the K-12 system to better understand how to support his son, despite living in a 600,000 home and his son attending an affluent school. Though studies attribute the lack of academic performance in African American students to socioeconomic status (Hossler et al., 1989; McDonough, 1994, 1997; McDonough & Calderone, 2006; Smith, 2008), it is clear that the issue is much deeper than financial mobility.

Theoretical Framework

Othermothering/Community Mothering, and Motherwork

Community mothering (Edwards, 2000) or othermothering (Collins, 2000; Flowers et al., 2015; Griffin, 2013; Guiffrida, 2005; Guiffrida et al., 2010; Mawhinney, 2012) has served as a framework for engaging and improving outcomes of African American students at PWIs (Griffin, 2013). African American teachers have utilized this framework in their everyday work often requiring them to incorporate support including financial support, mentorship, and the ability for students to have access to them after hours, exceeding their teaching requirements to ensure student achievement (Flowers et al., 2015; Roseboro et al., 2009).

In her personal narrative on othermothering, Mawhinney (2012), a Black faculty member, referenced Vogt (2002) because it was the closest she could get to an othermothering framework. Vogt (2002) examined 32 teachers in England and Switzerland and how they expressed care in the classroom. Mawhinney (2012) then added to the othermothering framework by incorporating five methods of caring into her pedagogy or "expectations" (p. 216), as she put it, that she keeps for herself as the teacher. These methods include a commitment to ensuring the student succeeds by maintaining high expectations, the ability to relate to students in which she found that her race contributed to being able to relate to the student, acting on behalf of the student as an advocate when necessary, and a physical display of affection as well as being emotionally available to students and contributing to the student's financial needs and resources.

Clubwomen were African American woman and another group of othermothers that later formed the National Association of Colored Women Clubs (NACWC) in 1896. Clubwomen leveraged their social and economic capital obtained through marriage or academic attainment as they sought to give back to their communities. Perhaps unknowingly, Clubwomen laid the foundation for othermothering work, which has been exhibited within the classrooms of Black teachers throughout the world and has organically informed their pedagogy and contributed to higher performance in Black students (Vogt, 2002). Today, the NACWC continue to give back to the African American community through scholarship programs and various development programs designed for African American girls, adolescents, and college-aged students. They have

extended their work to African American male-based initiatives and organizations whose mission statements parallel that of the NACWC that are then able to become affiliate organizations to the club (National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, n.d.).

Ethics of Care/ Moral Development of Women

The Ethics of care/moral development of women theory (Gilligan, 1982) is germane to the tenets of the work of the Clubwomen, the African American community, and othermothering and was unavoidably relevant to this study. Ethics of care is a feminist theory and was birthed in response to Gilligan's mentor, Lawrence Kohlberg's egalitarian theory of moral development that exclusively included men (Carmichael et al., 2018; Choudhury & Petrin, 2019). Contrary to Kohlberg's (1958) findings that moral development is starkly based upon law, justice, and order, Gilligan's theory found that girls are socialized differently and that their moral development is cemented in relationship-building, caring, and nurturing others and being responsible for others (Gilligan, 1982). As a result, women are more likely to make decisions based upon how it will affect others. The ability to acknowledge and act upon one's emotions is not any less important, as implied in Kohlberg's work; it is *different* however. In *A Different Voice*, Gilligan (1982) challenged readers to contemplate non-gender-based thinking that considers the best choice given the situation, requiring care and emotion at times, rather than a right or wrong answer that Kholberg's (1958) justice-based theory suggested.

Similar to Kohlberg's theory, Gilligan's theory (1982) comprises three stages: the pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional stage and one stage must be

completed before moving to the next. During the pre-conventional stage, women are more concerned with identifying their basic needs and self-preservation. During the conventional stage, women begin to realize that there is some good in self-sacrifice, it actually feels good to place one's needs above their own, and during the post-conventional stage, women begin to acknowledge non-violent ways for everyone's needs to be fulfilled. During each transition, there is a shift in disposition and attitude. As women shift from the pre-conventional to conventional stage, women begin to adapt from being exclusively concerned with fulfilling their own basic needs to the needs of others and from the conventional stage to the post-conventional stage, women begin to realize the good in being true to themselves and their personal moral beliefs. The theory works in tandem to othermothering and how Black teachers have incorporated such in their classrooms, as it begs one to question the why a student might be acting-out and considers how one can meet the student's needs whether through academic support, financial or otherwise, a relationship-based response (Gilligan, 1982), rather than viewing the same scenario as defiance and cause for punishment, a male-dominated and justice-led response that may perpetuate achievement for Black students (Kolhberg, 1958).

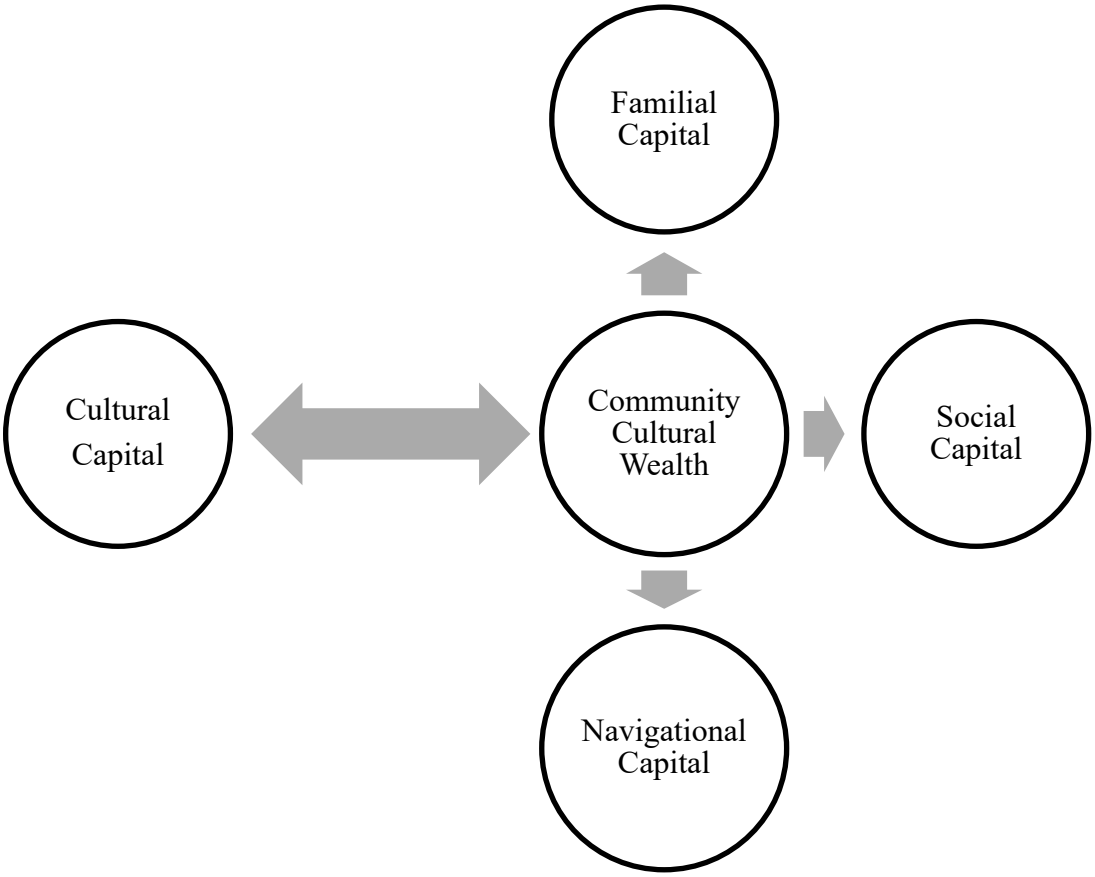
Community Cultural Wealth

The African American community may have the greatest rate of poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) or the greatest number of students who qualify for "free and reduced lunch" at 46% (McFarland et al., 2018), but they are rich in culture and have leveraged their culture as a means of upward mobility (Allen & White-Smith, 2018).

From a CRT lens, Yosso (2005) examined how community cultural wealth could serve as a means of understanding and meeting the needs of communities of color. Contrary to deficit-based thinking surrounding communities of color, Yosso (2005) found that students of color often expressed themselves through symbolism and nuances specific to their culture. For the purposes of this study, three components of the community cultural wealth model are referenced—navigational capital, familial capital, and social capital—as adapted from Oliver et al. (1995) and illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Community Cultural Wealth Model



Navigational wealth is when strategies to maneuver through social institutions that were not intended for people of color are utilized. In this case, the educated othermother would serve as a guide for the African American students and/or families she is supporting. Though the education system was not intended for Black students, having successfully gone through the institution herself, she could provide guidance to her community. *Familial capital,* not restricted to biological connection, has been defined as "kin" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79) or extended relatives along with the community and can

take place within school, church, or sports gatherings. The emphasis is on knowing that one is not alone. Othermothers give this to African American families, but as Black teachers only make up 7% of the teaching population (Hussar et al., 2020), minimizing the chances of developing such cultural connections with African American families. Lastly, social capital is the ability to identify and provide resources to families, which has undergirded the NACWC's "lifting as we climb" mission since its inception in 1896 and is fundamental to the othermothering work.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical race theory (CRT) is the final theoretical framework utilized in this study, as it is appropriate for the analysis of understanding how Black othermothering can be used as cultural brokering to better understand and connect with Black families (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As subsequently outlined, there are six general tenets of CRT, and it was originally introduced to the field of education by Gloria Ladson-Billings in 1995. For the purposes of this study, I focused on two tenets of CRT: counter-storytelling and the intersectionality between race and class.

Figure 4

Six Tenets of Critical Race Theory

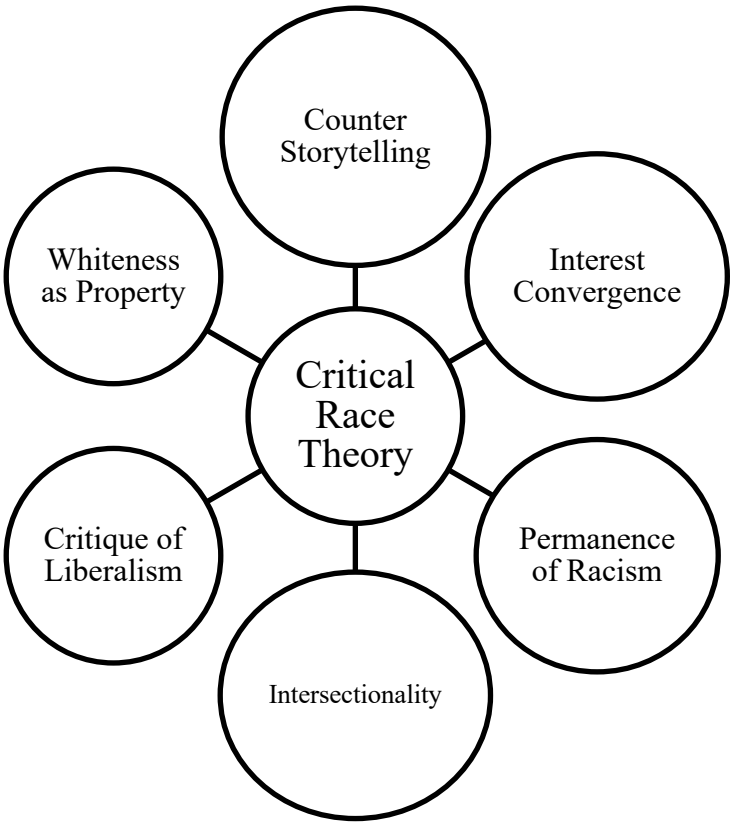
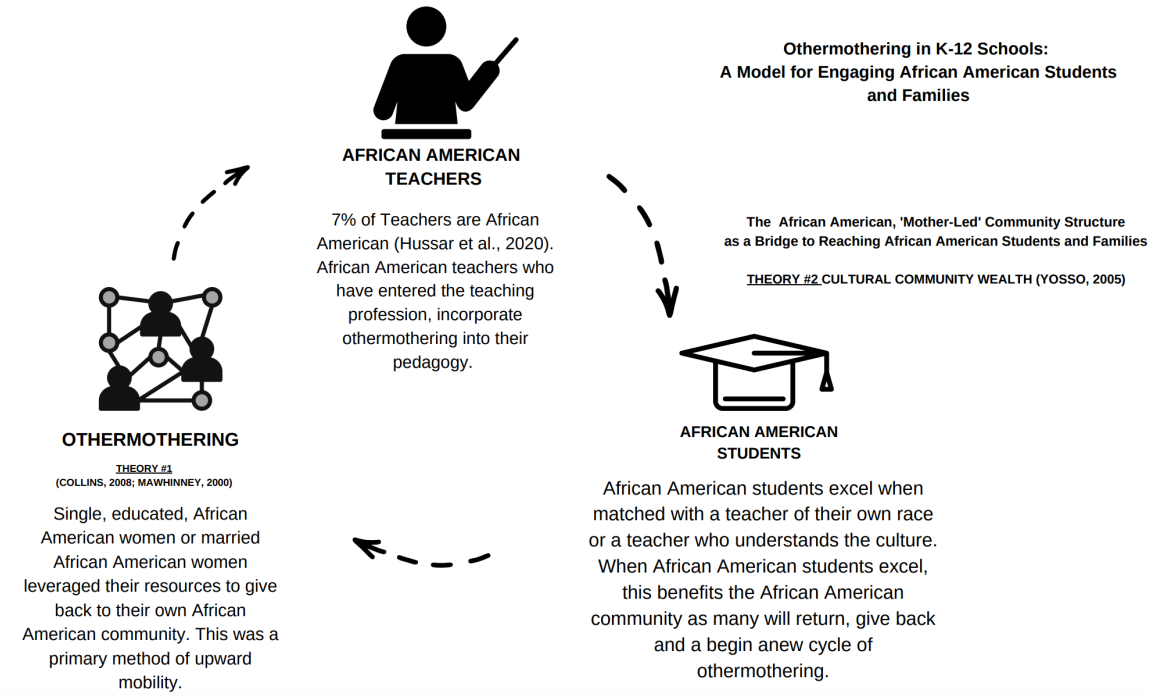


Figure 5 illustrates how the three theoretical frameworks: othermothering, ethics of care, and cultural community wealth converge to create a model for "parental engagement" for African American families.

Figure 5

Model for Parental Engagement for African American Families



Placing an othermother at the school site to partner with teachers who struggle with connecting with African American students and families serves as a tool to maximize cultural community wealth to provide families with a sense of community within the institution, guidance, support, and resources. Committed to the academic achievement of African American students yet uncredentialed, in partnership with the credentialed teacher, othermothers advocate on behalf of the African American student as they would their own child and seek to develop a deeper relationship with the student that would enable the othermother to provide emotional, physical, or financial support to the student while the teacher provides the academic support and guidance. Whatever the

cause, in instances where parents are not present or available, othermothers assume the role of the parent, in loco parentis, as much as possible.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, the research design and approach are outlined along with justification for the selected method. As explained in more detail below, this mixed-methods sequential exploratory study assessed how Black othermothering can potentially serve as a method of engagement for African American students and families. The study acquired meaningful data to transform the educational experience for African American students and perhaps develop a cultural model that other communities of color may replicate for increased cultural connection with student and ultimately academic progress.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study included one primary and three subquestions. In what ways has Black othermothering impacted school connectedness to African American families?

1. How has Black othermothering impacted advocacy for African American families?
2. How has Black othermothering impacted relatedness to African American families?
3. How has Black othermothering impacted expression of care to African American families?

Research Design and Approach

In self-reflection and examination of the othermothering practices (Collins, 2000; Mawhinney, 2012) personally exhibited to African American students and families and in partnership with teachers and administrators, a mixed-method sequential exploratory research design was most appropriate. This approach provided an analysis of the qualitative data first then an analysis of the quantitative data for a possible triangulation and increased validity and reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

With consideration to othermothering theory (Collins, 2000; Mawhinney, 2012), ethics of care theory (Gilligan, 1982), and community cultural wealth theory (CCW; Yosso, 2005), this study was designed to explore the social patterns, language, and behavior of othermothers and the impact on African American students and families. Critical race theory (CRT) is another critical frame utilized to examine this issue of equity through a social justice lens (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). African American teachers often include the tenets of othermothering—commitment to learning, advocacy, affection, emotional support, and financial support (Mawhinney, 2012; Roseboro & Ross, 2009)—in their pedagogy which has improved educational outcomes for African American students (Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). Unfortunately, African American teachers only make up 7% of the teaching population (Hussar et al., 2020), so this study sought to understand the impact othermothers may have on African American students, families, and school sites, as this may possibly fulfill the partnership needed to combat the achievement gap.

Role of the Researcher

I am the researcher and owner of Ara's Education Consulting, LLC, the agency being assessed in this study. My business was designed to partner with K-12 schools with a mission of ensuring African American families feel loved, welcomed, and supported when they enter their child's school through advocacy, partnership, and community. This mixed-methods sequential exploratory design explored the work performed at two of five schools contracted with my agency. I am an African American woman and serve as a Black othermother (BOM) at a Sacramento-based junior high school 3 times a week. I also included another BOM, an African American, female, social work intern who serves at an elementary school within the same school district twice a week. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers, administrators, and parents who interacted most with myself and the other BOM at each school site to determine if and how our efforts affect African American students, families, and/or the classroom. In addition, a quantitative, Likert-type scale survey was sent to Black parents to assess and activate the voices of African American parents/guardians within and beyond the three school sites.

Sample and Data Collection Procedure

Qualitative Data Collection: Interviews

Interview participants included four school-based personnel, including two teachers and two administrators, and four Black parents who interacted with an othermother. Interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes and were recorded and coded for themes.

Quantitative Data Collection: Black Parent Surveys

To determine if Black parents and guardians would desire Black othermothering at their child's school, a Black parent survey was administered on Facebook and LinkedIn, and purposefully sampling was administered at the three schools included in this study. To determine if there was a statistical significance in whether Black parents (independent variable) influenced the desire for othermothering work at their child's school (dependent variable), a parent survey was administered on social media along with a video explaining the research objectives and purpose. The survey was administered on social media targeting parents and guardians with a goal of capturing at least 100 responses. Sixty-five African American/Black parents responded, and 54 surveys were completed. The survey captured two elements of othermothering and participants were asked the questions to determine if there is a triangulation of data between teacher, parent, administrator interviews and African American parent/guardian desire acquired through the surveys for othermothering as a means of increasing connectedness with their child's school (see Appendix A).

Setting Population & Sample

The qualitative data were obtained by interviewing teachers and administrators from three schools. Table 3 indicates the setting, population, and participants.

Table 3

Site and Population Characteristics

School	Number of Administrators Interviewed	Number of Teachers Interviewed	Current Percentage of African American Students Enrolled (California School Dashboard, 2021)	Black Othermother (BOM) A or B
Jolly Elementary	2	4	13.8%	BOM- A
Hart Junior High	3	7	15.9%	BOM - A
Diamond Elementary	3	1	15.4%	BOM - B

Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews include voices of Black parents, teachers, and administrators; the quantitative data obtained from the surveys exclusively include Black parents and guardians; the interviews were conducted, then the surveys were administered.

Coding

Deductive coding was utilized and codes consist of: advocacy, relatedness, and care and concern. Support of themes, subthemes, or emerging themes unveiled during the coding process are indicated in the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) referred to this process as "fostering relationships" (p. 191) wherein the data are "winnowed" (p. 190) into smaller categories then assigned a marker for a code.

Interviews

Parents, teachers, and administrators were asked a series of questions (see Appendix B) and the interviews took place via Zoom®. An interview protocol was followed, and the interviews were recorded for analysis.

Qualtrics

The survey was created in Qualtrics and the data were exported to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To determine the level of interest in this work, crosstabs were used to account for the number of parent responses to each question and to determine how the grade of the student influenced parent responses.

Protection of Participants

Participants were protected from personally identifiable data and were assured that their responses would not be disclosed. During the research study, participant data were kept on the researcher's laptop which requires the researcher's fingerprint for access and anonymity of all participants was maintained. Participants consented to being over the age of 18 and self-identified as Black, African American, or both.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine if three of the five tenets of Black othermothering—relatedness, advocacy and care and concern—improved the connection between White teachers and Black students and families. This improved connection was assessed by conducting interviews with four White teachers who experienced Black othermothering through Ara's Education Consulting, LLC at their school or in their classroom. Additionally, to determine the likelihood Black/African American parents would desire Black othermothers (BOMs) as cultural brokers for their students and families if given the opportunity, an anonymous survey was promoted to Black/African American families on the Facebook, LinkedIn, and to the 966 email addresses Ara's Education Consulting, LLC acquired since July 2019. The emails consisted of African/Black parents as well as former or current clients (i.e., teachers, administrators, and district office employees). The following research questions were directly asked to the four, White teacher participants.

Primary Question: In what ways has Black othermothering impacted school connectedness to African American families?

Research Question 1: How has Black othermothering impacted advocacy for African American families?

Research Question 2: How has Black othermothering impacted relatedness to African American families?

Research Question 3: How has Black othermothering impacted expression of care to African American families?

This chapter begins with the qualitative analysis with an overview of the survey participants and themes. The qualitative analysis answers all research questions as well, and this section concludes with a summary of the key findings.

Qualitative Analysis

To determine how Black othermothering impacted the teachers' and/or administrators' connectedness with their Black students, a request for participation was sent by email to the three prospective research site principals on Thursday, December 2, 2021. Four separate emails were sent to each prospective school site. Within the emails was a request to interview the principal and teachers who collaborated most closely with the BOM assigned to their school site. By December 3, 2021, two of the three administrators gave permission to include their site in the research. I did not receive confirmation from the third school site until early January, following the winter break. With a goal of at least four interviews by teachers or administrators, once the principal provided their consent, individual emails petitioning participation were sent to prospective teachers or administrators.

In March 2020, schools closed down in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that has killed nearly 1 million people in the United States to date (Education Week, 2020). Students, teachers, and administrators spent nearly 2 years on distance-learning, where they completed their teaching and learning at home then transitioned to hybrid models,

where their time was split online and in-person, to finally 100% in person this school year. With this in mind, it has been a unique year, and I anticipated it would be a struggle obtaining the four teacher interviews, so I requested much more than needed. I had a pool of 21 teachers and was able to obtain the four desired interviews. Unfortunately, due to heavy work demands, I was unable to obtain a participant from the third school site where my colleague, Black Othermother B has been reporting this school year.

Table 4

Interview Data Sources

School Site	Teacher/Admin Pool	Number Successfully Interviewed	Black Othermother	# of Days per Week at Site
Jolly Elementary	7	2	Black Othermother A	2 Days
Hart Elementary	10	2	Black Othermother A	3 Days
Diamond Elementary	4	0	Black Othermother B	2 Days

Sample Size

In conjunction with the quantitative data, the initial goal was to conduct a total of eight interviews: four teacher/administrator interviews and four Black/African American parent/guardian interviews to examine the impact of Ara's Education Consulting, LLC at the two school sites. Unfortunately, of the three Black/African American

parents/guardians who initially agreed to participate, two never confirmed the interview date and one did not follow up at all. Thus, the qualitative data exclusively consisted of White teacher feedback of the Black othermothering support. The lack of execution in the formal participation in this research project did not come as a surprise and spoke to the skepticism African American people, not just parents, have towards research and using them as test subjects as well as their view, once again, of the school system. This did not invalidate the research and was precisely why a mixed-method approach was selected. Black/African American parent voice was heard by way of the anonymous Black parent surveys, which I examine in the proceeding sections.

Additionally, the sequential transformative approach was designed to triangulate the outcome from a combination of the quantitative and qualitative results, or the interpretation phase; thus, emphasis is placed on a theoretical perspective for this particular design (Creswell, 2003). A sequential exploratory design was originally proposed, which would have required the completion of the qualitative interviews before releasing the quantitative survey (Creswell, 2003). Since the quantitative data were not contingent upon the qualitative data, the design approach was adjusted. Table 5 lists the interview participant demographics.

Table 5

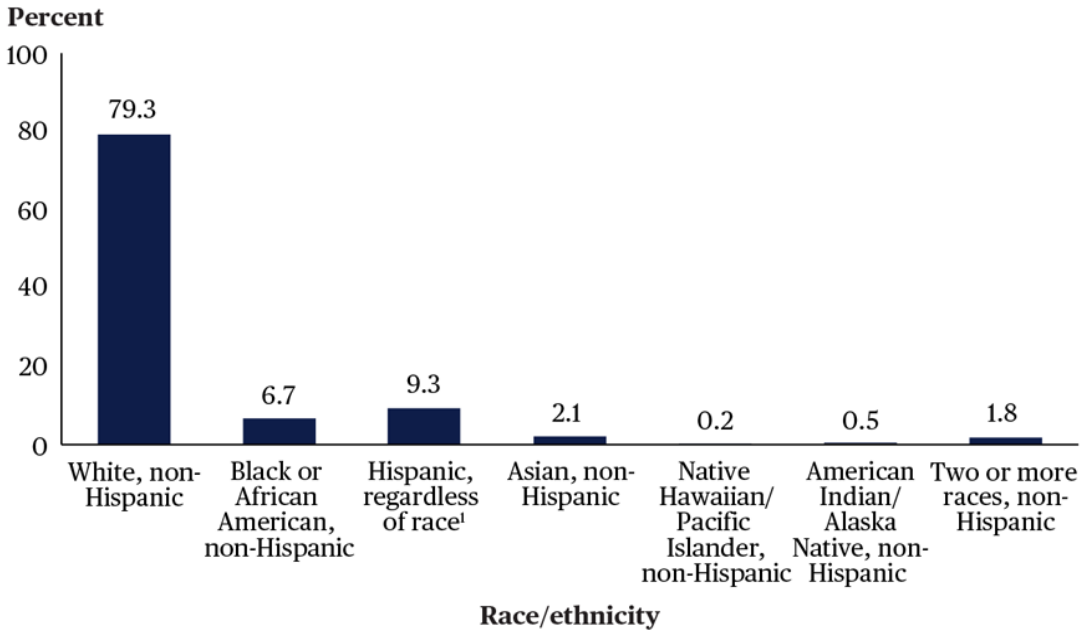
Participant Demographic and Number of Years Teaching

Teacher	Gender	Race	# of Years Teaching	Role
1 (T1)	Female	White	5	3rd Grade Teacher
2 (T2)	Female	White	11	7th and 8th Grade Resource Specialist
3 (T3)	Male	White	20	7th and 8th Grade English Language Arts (ELA) and English Language Development (ELD) Teacher
4 (T4)	Female	White	37	6th Grade Teacher

According to the NCES (2018), White teachers make up 79% of the teaching population as indicated in Figure 6. Thus, the White-teacher saturated sample was by design, as it is reflective of many of America's schools that have very little, if any at all, representation for children of color and, specifically, African American students and families. To protect participants, I kept their names and school locations anonymous.

Figure 6

Percentage of Teachers by Race/Ethnicity



Note. From *Race and Ethnicity of Public School Teachers and Their Students,* NCES 2020-103, by U.S. Department of Education, 2020, (https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020103/index.asp).

Themes, Subthemes, and Emerging Themes

With a goal of triangulating the qualitative and quantitative data during the interpretation phase of the process, I posed the same questions to each participant and utilized deductive coding or preset codes of "relatedness," "advocacy," and "care and concern," the three tenets I examined when searching for statements that described each category. With limited participants and to avoid cherry picking (when researchers only include data that validate their hypothesis), the quantitative analysis from Black/African American parents/guardians was specifically conducted to validate or counter

teacher/administrative feedback (Morse, 2010). The next sections highlight the themes and support for the themes from the teacher interviews along with the responses to the research questions respectively.

Advocacy

As related to othermothering, Mawhinney (2012) defined advocacy as, "The teacher being the voice for the student" (p. 216). At Ara's, advocacy is manifested similarly, but also includes the family. By serving as an unofficial on-site cultural coach for teachers, which has invertedly proctored how best to approach African American students and families, teachers felt more connected to their students. On an as-needed basis, when teachers were aware of known out-of-class dynamics that may have contributed to the student's demeanor and/or performance within the classroom, this lens provided teachers with the insight needed to better support their students. Figure 7 outlines these findings.

Figure 7

Teacher Responses: Support for Theme One

Theme 1	Support of Advocacy
ADVOCACY	**Cultural Coach for Teacher**: T2, T3, T4
	Bridge to Home: T1, T2, T3

RQ 1: How has Black Othermothering impacted Advocacy to African American students and families?
Cultural Coach for Teachers (T2): "You know where not to push too much. You know, you know, like where to and where to nudge and when to kind of step back." **(T3):** "That gave me an end, because after that, after hearing the way that you phrased it, I was able to hear it, you know, and repeat your questions to him. Which one like, I never thought of approaching it that way and then two, because I don't look like him. I'm very conscious. You do more than just cultivate positivity, but you also stand up to some of the latent biases that I think a lot of adults have." **(T4):** "Like, we talk every single day and I feel like what you've taught me has helped me with that, like, I don't think of it as like, I'm talking to a Black boy's mom, I am talking to a concerned mom."
Bridge to Home (T1): "Meeting the family where they're at and knowing the best ways to communicate and how they will receive communication. I would not have known that. And I would have been on Dojo just waiting. And you know, who would have known?" **(T2):** "I'm thinking about Malachi, his situation and like who he's living with. Sort of the dynamic between people who are in his family circle who work here and the people that he's living with and sort of realizing that that was a barrier, right? Being aware, hey, there's kind of like a protective wear, don't get into business, that's not necessarily your business. That was informative to me so that I know if I contact them, that's something I need to be aware of and also that I could talk to the person who works here almost as like a satellite family member. That is going to have more of an impact than just someone, someone who works here who's in a position of authority." **(T3):** "Learning that Malachi is parented by grandma, that she offers the greatest stability, let's say. And so, being able to find ways to integrate. You know, I remember like going through articles at the beginning of the school year, and I was finding like I was searching for things that were going to explicitly mention, you know, the relationship between a grandmother and their grandson. I was trying to find the most meaningful and relevant reading material to hopefully capture his attention.

Relatedness

Relatedness was defined as, "The approachability of the teacher and providing time to build the relationship" (Mawhinney, 2012; p. 216). In this case, relatedness included the ability to validate the teacher and parent as well, where accountability, humor, and approach contributed to the approachability of the teacher and decreased the amount of time required to build relationships with African American students and families.

The teachers included in the study leveraged the rapport I was able to establish with them as well as students to develop their own relationship with their African American students. As I highlight later in this chapter, these teachers felt confident that at some point, they could have established a good working relationship with their African American students, but also acknowledged their Whiteness as a barrier to relatability with many of their African American students and families.

The innate, motherly workings at Ara's contributed to a nearly instinctual ability to approach students whom, at the time, I had never met before as, "I happen[ed] to be walking by" as T3 put it. A shared cultural connection with African American students enabled me to utilize cultural nuances, to have a general idea of when I could apply pressure to the student and/or parent and when to give them time to respond. Two of the teachers interviewed spoke about how my presence for Black students served as a means of empowerment and identity sharing on campus, which contributed to my ability to

relate to the student and overall, improve the connection with African American students and families. Figure 8 illustrates the findings for the relatedness theme.

Figure 8

Teacher Responses: Support for Theme Two

Theme 2	Support of Relatedness
Relatedness	**Teacher and Parent Validation**: T3, T4
	Organic Connection: T3, T4
	Student and Teacher Accountability: T1, T2, T3
	Cultural Humor/Sarcasm: T2, T3
	Tone of Voice: T2
	Empowerment of Blackness at School: T2, T4

RQ 2: How has Black othermothering impacted relatedness to African American students and families?
Teacher and Parent Validation (T3): "She [female student] and I started to hit it off when you started coming into my class. We would be speaking then she would talk to you and I had an opportunity to jump in and connect with her on a personal level." **(T4):** "You've helped me personally understand Black culture better. I don't feel so, what's the right word, timid about things like I used to be. Like I always had to walk a little bit on eggshells not to offend. And I am not that type of person. But I do feel like I'm always a little abrasive towards African-American women for some reason. You let me be comfortable asking you questions that I would think would be silly or obvious as a White woman. That's helped me a lot and I have like, I have a really strong relationship with mom."

Figure 8 continued

RQ 2: How has Black Othermothering impacted Relatedness to African American students and families?
Organic Connection (T3): "You happen to be walking by and you were able to connect with Chris and Malachi, and Malachi especially because Chris is a little more receptive to encouragement, to that positive support. And so, Malachi has a habit of like laughing, you know, like you can say something and he will just dismiss you with a smile and you were able to kind of pierce that concrete barrier that I put it." **(T4):** "I heard you ran on the blacktop against Mariah. I didn't know you were a runner. You had a choice not to race, but that wasn't a choice. It was like I am going to run. So just that spirit of like, hey let's just go for it. Let's just have joy."
Student and Teacher Accountability (T1): "Your presence here being on campus is a mental check for me to ensure that I'm doing my job to connect with all of my students. You have been that role model, at least subconsciously for me." **(T2):** "You asked clarifying questions to know what was needed from the parents, and I could go back and find those emails. I know that you asked about what exactly do you want from her [the parent]?" **(T3):** "And you were able to call him out in ways that I felt I wasn't comfortable doing, you know, so you said, you know, like not everything is a joke, Malachi, you know? And you asked them, you know, like, what? Why are you out here? Like, you know, Oh, we're out here to talk. You said, "Why are you out here to talk? And he was like, Oh, because Mr. Smith told us that we could come outside to talk and think. You said, well why aren't you in there learning? You didn't let him off the hook and moments after that, he came back inside."
Cultural Humor/Sarcasm (T2): "The way that you use humor, for example, as just that sort of hitting kind of nuts from roasting. It's just like, you know, it's just like you're kidding around with him. Yeah, it's not. It's just like it's good-natured ribbing. **(T3)** "You laughed and said, I wasn't being funny. He had to stop and think, and you didn't let him off the hook."
Tone of Voice (T2): "We were able to get the assessments then we were able to do the testing. I do not think that we would have been able to do that without your reaching out to the family because I might have said something the way I sound. The tone of voice is something you hear in Europe and there are voices that they are used to hearing. **You're able to establish trust because you have shared cultural background.** **Empowerment of Blackness at School (T2):** "You have a warm approach and you are accepting. You listen and you make it clear that that person has your full attention. **(T4)** "I think it is good for children to see that there's this group of people that are here for you and that you help bridge the gap."

Care and Concern

The third othermothering tenet examined in the research was care and concern. Mawhinney (2012) defined care and concern as a "Care of the student and relationship through emotional and physical expression. Emotional expression is through providing genuine praise. Physical expression is through giving hugs when needed" (p. 216). In this inquiry, care and concern included a commitment to learning, expeditiously attending to the needs of African American students and families and mothering students, much like I would my own children. According to Mawhinney (2012), a commitment to learning or "pedagogical commitment" (p. 216) is a category of its own in the othermothering framework for Black teachers, so it was a pleasant surprise to find that a commitment to learning was identified as a byproduct of the care and concern displayed towards African American students as outlined in Figure 9.

Figure 9

Teacher Responses: Support for Theme Three

Theme 3:	Support of Care and Concern
CARE AND CONCERN	**COMMITMENT TO LEARNING**: T3 **SWIFT ATTENTION TO STUDENT NEEDS**: T1, T3, T4 **WARM/MOTHERLY DISPOSITION**: T1, T2, T3

RQ 3: How has Black Othermothering impacted Care and Concern to African American students and families?
Commitment to Learning (T3): "He has to stop and think, and you didn't let him off the hook."
Swift Attention to Student Needs (T1): "Sienna was not being cared for in the way that her adult figure should be caring for her. You stepped in. And with that level of care, it wasn't a second thought. It was within she mentioned [a fellow teacher] that you showed up with what she . . . yeah, and that's care. That gives me chills thinking about it because that's the epitome of and it's not even extending yourself further than basic needs. Yeah. She did not have much. So, there's no favoritism. It's not doing it because you feel obligated to be instinctually that level of care, it's just here and it shows." **(T3):** "You were just walking by and you saw a moment where you could help, you know, like you saw a moment where your expertise and your ability to, I don't know, aid an eighth-grade US classroom teacher and then you leapt at the chance." **(T4):** "I really appreciate that you try to find people resources. Yeah, like you did for Jordan. Yeah. You know, trying to make them feel comfortable with the school setting and that I think that's some of your harder work."

Figure 9 continued

RQ 3: How has Black Othermothering impacted Care and Concern to African American students and families?
Warm/Motherly Disposition: (T1): "Whether you feel it or not, some students find more comfort in coming to you than they do to me. You have that sense of comfort, whereas they see me more. I'm a professional educator that kind of separates that boundary and creates a disconnect because of that." **(T2):** "Parents feel safe with you. You're warm, I mean, have a warm approach. I feel like you being here makes the hug really strong, you know, and that whole approach of **othermothering is like so refreshing because so much of school, I feel is about boundaries, and you have to respect people's boundaries, but also, there's been a lot written about how that's like a traditional, you know, White cultural structure, just be like, come in, do your work, learn so you can be a productive member of society and compete against the other people around you. And so that concept of othermothering take that away and says you're allowed to love your students, right?** You're allowed to care about your students, right? It's very powerful. I appreciate you bringing that in and modeling that and making space for other people to be able to do. **(T3):** "One just that you, the way that you can mother a lot of students in the way that like when, excuse me if I get emotional with it, students are having a hard time. The first person they typically ask for is you. Not our school counselor. They go like, Hey, can I go see Mrs. Stovall? And I go, sure. And they come back a couple of minutes later and they go, she wasn't in her classroom. Can I go to Ms. Barros? It's powerful that when they are looking for someone to help them and identify with them, they're looking for an adult that they know cares about them on campus, that they know will have their back that day. I mean, it's a beautiful relationship. You mother everybody. I think just when you saw me running out of school again, you just make sure like you, you just have these maternal instincts that I think naturally take off everybody's armor, you know, like you're the genuine nurturing that you put out there. Like, it doesn't like I've never gotten the sense that, you know, you are duplicitous, I've never gotten the sense that you might not be the genuine article, like it's just like you present yourself as like, you know you, you do the things you say you're going to do and then you model the way for everybody. And it's wonderful."

Emerging Themes

During the coding process, three additional noteworthy themes were exposed. One was an outlier and could not be labeled "emerging," but it was a strong outlier and an implication of future work. When conversing about students in general, three of the

four teachers specifically mentioned how Ara's expedited the bonding process with students and/or families. By being present in their classrooms, available to contact parents, and/or to be a sounding board for culturally sensitive questions, Ara's minimized the amount of time it would generally take for teachers to establish a rapport with African American students and/or their families (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Teacher Responses: Expedited Connection Time

T2: "It can take a lot of time to establish trust and rightfully so, because people have had bad experiences. And so it's going to take a while, they're going to need to see. So, I don't expect people to trust me right away. However, this was a time-sensitive case. You know, I often say, like, I have students who won't trust me until January. I don't have until January with this family. So knowing you were available, I reached out and asked if you could help make contact with the parents. And you were able to establish contact with the parents."
T3: "And this is all like it kind of traces back to this, you know spiral of positivity, the locus of control that focal point was you being in the classroom and just giving me the opportunity to connect with students who again were very distant from me at the beginning of the year. Wow. Do I feel confident that I could eventually get to this point on my own? Yeah, it's sped up by months, you know, like it's like January or February, and students are just kind of understanding that I'm not the enemy, right? But this just sped it up so that you know, it was positive and successful in like October as opposed to February."
T4: "You've helped me personally understand Black culture better, so I don't feel so timid about things. I used to walk on egg shells not to offend. And I am not that type of person, but I do feel like I have always been abrasive towards African American women for some reason. You let me be comfortable asking my questions that I would think would be silly or obvious as a White woman. We talk everyday (Malik's mom) and I feel like what you taught me has helped me with that. I don't think of it as I'm talking to a Black boy's mom, I am talking to a concerned mom."

Acknowledgement of Whiteness

Additionally, each teacher included in this study acknowledged their Whiteness as a possible limitation to their connection with their African American students and families. While this was not a pre-requisite for participation, it did emerge when coding the interviews. This contributed to their positive partnership with Ara's as co-laborers to increase their connection to African American students and families. The teacher comments in Figure 11 illustrate each teacher's concession of their privilege.

Figure 11

Teacher Responses: Acknowledgment of Whiteness

Teacher Responses: Acknowledgement of Whiteness
T1: In reference to witnessing a student interact with his grandmother and other African American students at school, the teacher said, "Observing how she would interact with other children was a dynamic that kind of opened my eyes to what othermothering is. Yeah. With language and authority that I don't have. Not only because I am a White woman, but because I'm an educator, and there's boundaries."
T2: "But we were able to get the assessments then we were able to do the testing. I do not think that we would have been able to do that without your reaching out to the family, honestly because I might have said something the way I sound, because sometimes I know the kids are like that I sound very White. It's not like it's so rude, though, I appreciate the honesty.
T3: "I mean, I've had students this year, call me White boy, you know, and it's like, I get that. Then there's a barrier when students look at me and they don't see themselves, yeah, they don't see themselves reflected in me, then that creates a greater distance between me and my students."

Figure 11 continued

T4: "I've always kind of felt like I have to be really careful that what I say is going to be offensive or what I am saying is going to be hurtful. I just don't feel that way as much with you helping me like, I just feel like, you know, I try to approach people where like, I try, you know. It's been more of a defense mechanism that I don't want to offend anybody or be accused of being racist. And maybe because racism is dropped so much lately. Yeah, that maybe I've just kind of gotten more comfortable. But year before I used to always have to be super like, I was very aware that I don't want to offend."

Notable Outlier: Academic Achievement

This study specifically examined the impact of Black othermothering on connectedness to African American students and families. However, ultimately, the overall purpose for connection to students and families and the mission and vision of Ara's is to improve academic achievement in African American students. T3 identified a bit of a ripple effect of academic achievement with a group of African American students as a result of the work being done at Ara's. Ara's created an avenue for the T3 to establish rapport with one student that ultimately enabled T3 access to multiple students. One student's grade improved from an "F" to an "A," and the teacher attributed the student's progress to his partnership with Ara's. T2's comments are displayed in Figure 12.

Figure 12

Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement

Question: In your experience, how have my interactions with your students increased your connection as a teacher to some of your African American students and families?

T3: "I was able to leverage your rapport with Malachi to create my own rapport with Malachi. And I remember shortly thereafter being so excited because he finally accomplished an assignment. You know, this was like what? Like, late September, early October, we had gone like 8 weeks already in school, and he had done nothing in my class. He sat there, he ate his snacks, he got up, he moved around, he talked with his friends, he listened to music. But it was that moment and that opportunity that served as my ingress into, you know, Malachi's world. So yes, in a very roundabout way, your practice in my classroom was able to help me connect with a student that I was feeling very challenged connecting with in any meaningful or impactful way. And once, because he is a leader in the classroom, I mean, like, charismatic. Yeah, very likable. Yeah. So, so many students had their behavior dictated by him because Malachi and I started to forge a better record. I started having a much better rapport with students like Mariah and like Jasmine. And I saw that so long as I could coax Malachi into producing a little work for me. Then every other student in that room, they were a little more willing to product work."

"Because she [Mariah] and I connect so well, then Jasmine and I connect well and now her seventh grade boyfriend, right, is like, I connect well with him. Then I connect well with his friend, Joel. As I started showing up to the basketball games to cheer for us, now I am in with all of the basketball and they see me at their home games. And that's like suddenly they're producing significantly more work at significantly higher quality. And it's all like if you kind of trace back this, you know, spiral of positivity, the locus of control that focal point was you being in the classroom and just giving me the opportunity to connect with students who again were very distant from me at the beginning of the school year."

Figure 12 continued

Question: Do you think that these interactions with students wanting to be with me, my mothering as you put it, towards them has impacted them academically or their connection back to school?

"Yes, because working with you and hitting, you know, catapulting myself into their good favor, students' good favor early like then it was just me leveraging that rapport, leveraging that relationship so that I could go walk by Jamal Jefferson, who's failed my class all year long and has an A-plus currently because, you know, I could come up to him and I'm like, Dude, that was an amazing game. That was your court. And now, instead of coming into class and putting his stuff down and laying his head on his desk, he comes in and he picks up the book that we're reading and he goes, hey are you going to come to the game on Tuesday? And I'm like, yes. He goes, cool. He's like Oh good. He starts flipping to the page as he walks to the back of the class. And it's such a transformation over where we were in, like early January. Yeah, it's barely been a month. And that's awesome."

Quantitative Analysis

To examine the interest level of Black othermothering from African American/Black parents/guardians, an anonymous survey was distributed on Facebook and LinkedIn and successfully emailed to the 966 email addresses Ara's Education Consulting, LLC acquired from July 2019 to present. These emails included current and previous clients (i.e., teachers and administrators) as well as African American parents and guardians who were previously or currently attending one of the schools Ara's was supporting at the time of this study. Of the 966 emails sent, 156 emails were opened. The survey was also shared with a Sacramento-based non-profit agency targeting African American/Black parents and guardians.

Participant Demographics

Of the 65 participants who consented to the survey, 54 respondents actually completed the survey as outlined in Table 6. Nearly 41% (40.7%) of participants identified as Black, 16.7% identified as African American, 40.7% identified as Black and African American, and 1.9% identified as something else and stated “Melaninated” in the other field of the survey. The survey ran from January 14, 2022 to March 4, 2022, and was created in Qualtrics, an online survey tool. The data were exported from Qualtrics then uploaded and analyzed in he Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Table 6

Total Participants

How would you describe yourself?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Black	22	40.7	40.7	40.7
	African American	9	16.7	16.7	57.4
	Black and African American	22	40.7	40.7	98.1
	Something Else	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Rationale for Approach

As a means of assessing the need for Black othermothers to enhance the connection with African American students and families, and from the Black parent or guardian’s perspective, the anonymous Black parent survey was administered. At this juncture in my research, the sole purpose of the quantitative analysis was to identify the

interest level of Black parents. In other words, if Black parents knew such a cultural brokering service was available for their child, grandchild, niece or nephew, would they "speak" confidently about the need for Black othermothering support? Or, would their responses contradict the teachers' experiences with Ara's? The answers to these questions are outlined in the subsequent sections.

Consent was required before parents or guardians were able to proceed to the survey. Respondents were asked to self-identify as Black, African American, Black and African American, or Something Else. Then, participants were asked to indicate if they had children in elementary school, middle school, high school, all of these or none of these. Participants were then asked to rate their agreement from 1 – I Do Not Agree at All to 5 – I Agree Fully on a series of questions related to discrimination towards their student or family, advocacy and othermothering, relatedness and othermothering, and care and concern and othermothering. The survey was then distributed on Facebook and LinkedIn and to the 966 emails I had on file through Ara's Education Consulting, LLC.

Results and Organization

The African American parents and guardians who completed the survey generally agreed that Black othermothers as cultural brokers could improve their connection to their child's school. There were more elementary school parents and guardians ($N = 16$) than middle school parents ($N = 11$), high school parents ($N = 10$), or parents with students in all grades ($N = 3$). An additional group of parents ($N = 14$) with students

outside of K-12 also partook in this study; parents were able to indicate multiple answers for this question.

As I examine in more detail, grade was a determining factor in the level of advocacy parents felt their student needed at school and impacted the value parents placed on accessibility to individuals of like culture and ethnicity at their child's school. The receptibility to the attention BOMs could provide their children in their parent's absence was also influenced by grade.

This section is organized by advocacy, relatedness, and care and concern, the three tenets of Black othermothering examined in this study. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of these findings, the reliability and validity measures taken to ensure credibility of the research and the limitations of this study.

Advocacy

As related to Black parents and their thoughts about the need for advocacy for either themselves or their children, Black parents expressed a greater need for advocacy for parents at 74% (see Figure 13) than students at 64% (see Figure 14).

Figure 13

I Believe Advocacy is Needed for Parents

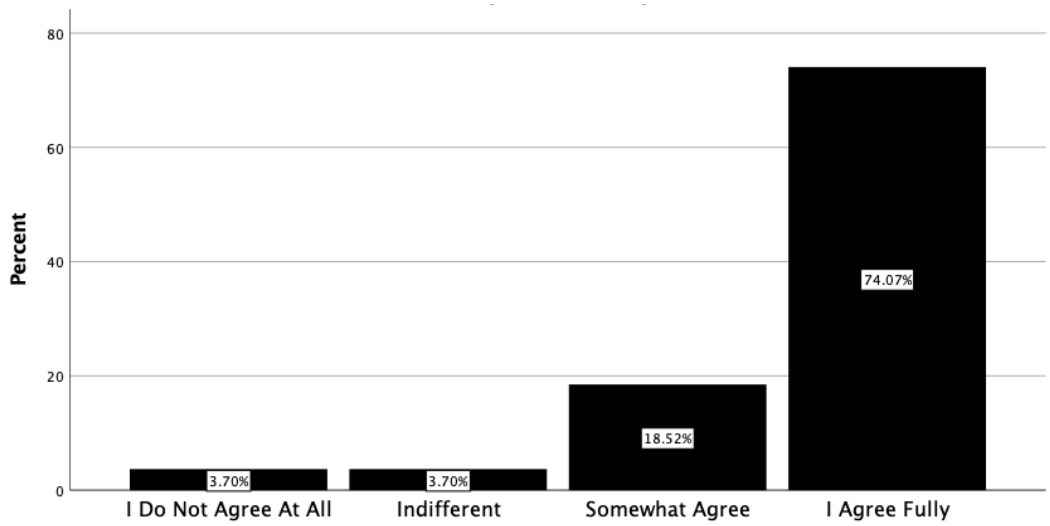
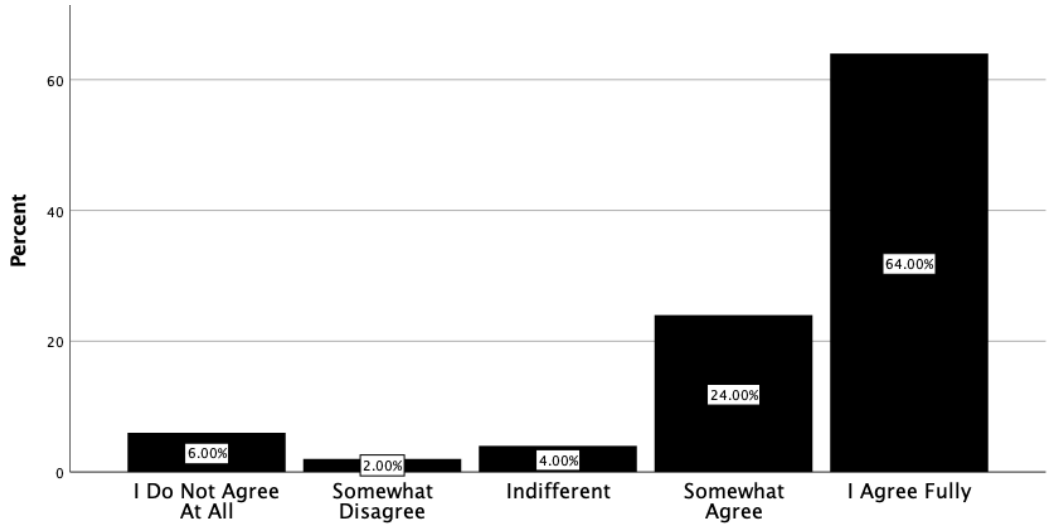


Figure 14

I Believe Advocacy is Needed for My Student



When examined by grade level, elementary school parents were more likely to indicate that advocacy was needed for their students as compared with middle and high

school parents, while 14 respondents self-identified as parents, but did not currently have children in elementary school, middle school, or high school as indicated in Table 7. Of the three parents who indicated “All grades," it is unknown as to what grades (i.e., elementary, middle or high school) in which their students fell.

Table 7

Number of Black Parents Who Believe Advocacy is Needed for Students by Grade

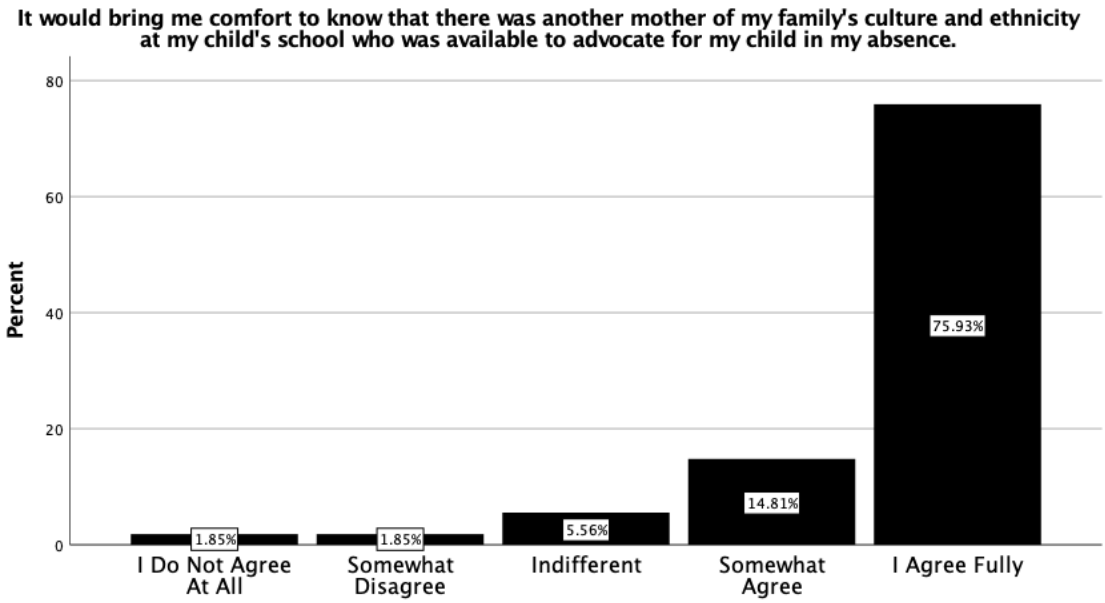
	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Elementary School * I believe advocacy is needed for my student	16	29.6	38	70.4	54	100.0
Middle School * I believe advocacy is needed for my student	11	20.4	43	79.6	54	100.0
High School * I believe advocacy is needed for my student	10	18.5	44	81.5	54	100.0
All Grades: Elementary, Middle, High School * I believe advocacy is needed for my student	3	5.6	51	94.4	54	100.0
None of These * I believe advocacy is needed for my student	14	25.9	40	74.1	54	100.0

Participants were asked a series of questions about advocacy and othermothering, the first tenet of othermothering examined during the qualitative analysis as well. I was curious about how Black parents would embrace accessibility to someone who reflected

their family's culture and ethnicity at school to advocate for their child while they were away. Many African American parents are working-class and are unable to participate in school-based events, so it is assumed they do not care when in actuality they do care and engage in other, home-based ways (Allen & White-Smith, 2018). For this cause, it was important to assess the number of Black parents who would find comfort in knowing someone was present, on-site, and available to advocate for their children in their absence. Nearly 76% agreed fully that this would provide a sense of comfort in Figure 15.

Figure 15

Level of Comfort for Black Parents with BOM



When this same question was examined by grade level, more parents than not from each grade level fully agreed that BOMs as Black student advocates would provide

a sense of comfort while parents were away. Per Figure 16, 71% of elementary school parents agreed with this statement, 72% of middle school parents agreed with this statement, and 60% of high school parents agreed with this statement.

Figure 16

Level of Comfort for Black Parents with BOM, by Grade Level

Elementary School * It would bring me comfort to know that there was another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity at my child's school who was available to advocate for my child in my absence. Crosstabulation

Count

		It would bring me comfort to know that there was another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity at my child's school who was available to advocate for my child in my absence.			
		Indifferent	Somewhat Agree	I Agree Fully	Total
Elementary School	Elementary	1	4	12	17
Total		1	4	12	17

Middle School * It would bring me comfort to know that there was another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity at my child's school who was available to advocate for my child in my absence. Crosstabulation

Count

		It would bring me comfort to know that there was another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity at my child's school who was available to advocate for my child in my absence.			
		Indifferent	Somewhat Agree	I Agree Fully	Total
Middle School	Middle School	1	2	8	11
Total		1	2	8	11

High School * It would bring me comfort to know that there was another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity at my child's school who was available to advocate for my child in my absence. Crosstabulation

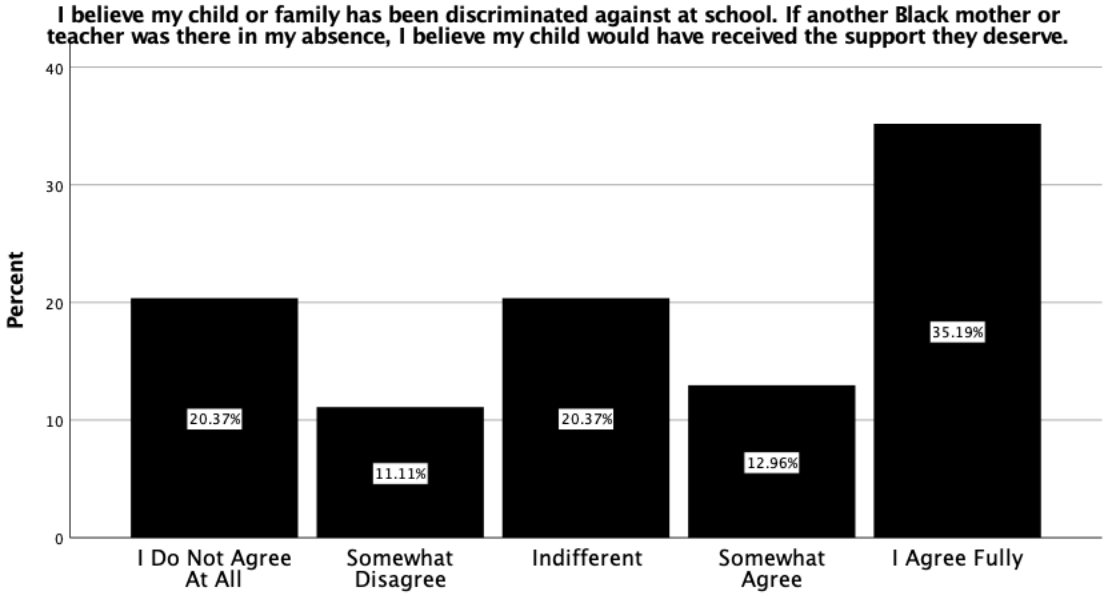
Count

		It would bring me comfort to know that there was another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity at my child's school who was available to advocate for my child in my absence.			
		Indifferent	Somewhat Agree	I Agree Fully	Total
High School	High School	1	3	6	10
Total		1	3	6	10

The level of comfort advocacy at school would bring Black parents seemed to lessen as students matriculated through K-12. When asked if parents felt their student or family had been discriminated against and whether they felt the presence of a BOM or Black teacher would have prevented such treatment, parents found little confidence in either an othermother or Black teacher having the ability to prevent such treatment, with only 35% of Black parents who believed Black othermothering would have avoided the discriminatory act (see Figure 17).

Figure 17

Black Parent or Teacher Presence Assists with Discrimination at School



While Black parents were not extraordinarily confident that the presence of a BOM or a Black teacher could eradicate discrimination towards their children, the presence of BOMs as advocates for Black children would bring parents a sense of

comfort. Cultural brokering is a method of engaging and empowering non-dominant cultures (Ishimaru, 2019, 2020) and BOMs as advocates counter the narrative of Black students and parents. Counter-storytelling is one tenet of CRT, as it creates an alternate voice and culturally attuned perspective on behalf of Black families and in this case, at the school-site level (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Therefore, these findings regarding Black othermothering and advocacy are consistent with the literature and can serve as a viable means of increasing school connectedness with African American families. However, with consideration to the very real, recent, and relevant killings of Black men, women, boys, and girls, it also makes sense why parents would not be so confident that the presence of BOMs or Black teachers alone would ameliorate discriminatory acts towards their children. Additionally, some scholars have suggested that the cause for such out-of-school slayings of Black people would decrease if racial inequities were first addressed within school contexts (Givens, 2021).

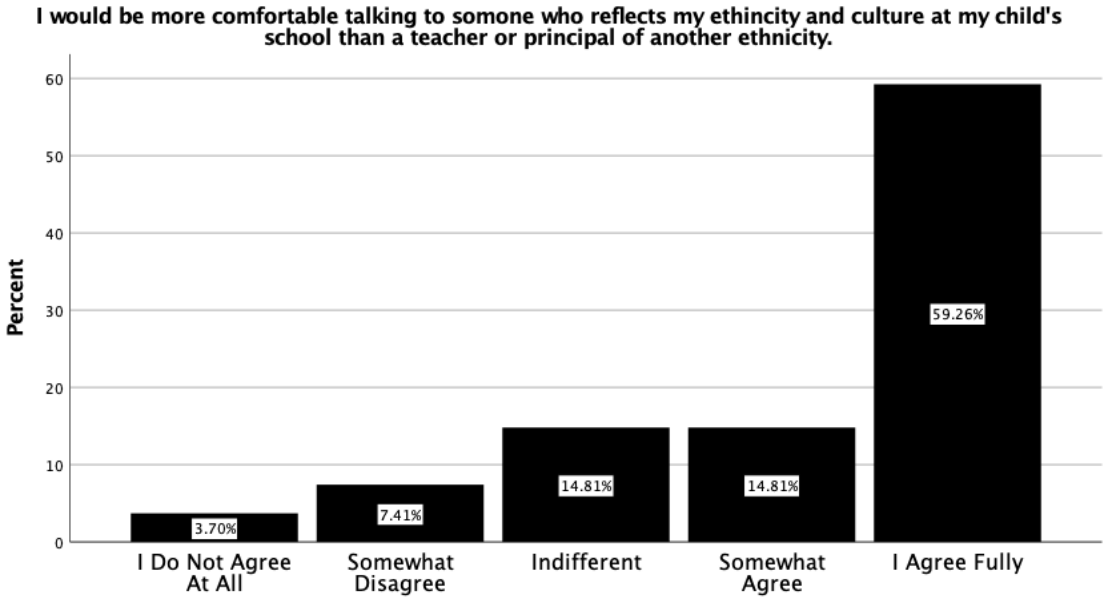
Relatedness

In an effort to understand how culture and ethnicity influenced Black parents' engagement, making contact with their child's teachers and administrators who do not reflect their ethnicity and culture, Black parents were then asked to rate their agreement with a series of four questions regarding Black othermothering and relatedness. When inquiring about the comfortability of Black parents conversing with school personnel who reflected their cultural and ethnic background, even over their child's principal or

teacher, 59.3% (see Figure 18) agreed that they would feel more comfortable speaking with someone who looks like them.

Figure 18

Comfort of Black Parents Talking with Those Reflecting Ethnicity and Culture

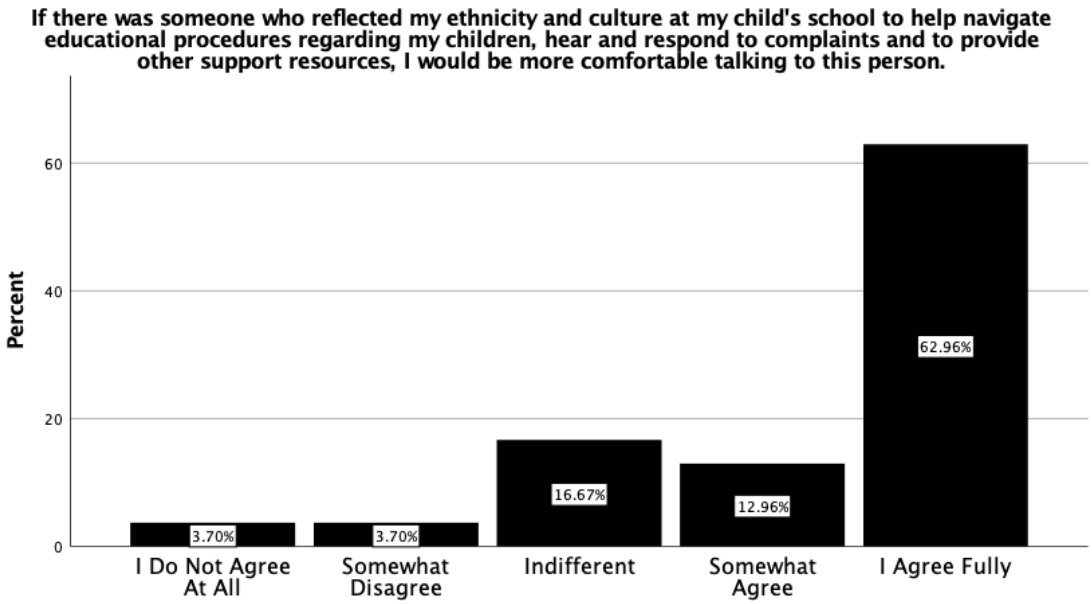


As related to responding to complaints and assistance with navigating the education system, 63% (see Figure 19) of Black parents indicated they fully agreed with feeling more comfortable receiving such support from someone who reflected their culture and ethnicity at their child's school. An additional 13% somewhat agreed with this statement, and 16% were indifferent or could go either way. When Black parents have questioned the education system, but did not have answers or know how best to matriculate through the system, many have relied upon trusted, fellow African American friends and relatives to assist with guiding them through the proper channels to ultimately

support their children (Allen, 2012; Allen & White, 2018). Yosso (2005) referred to this as community cultural wealth (CCW), and BOMs minimize the barrier race often plays in engaging African American students and families. Some scholars have found that Black representation also improves connectedness with students and families of other ethnicities as well (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019).

Figure 19

Black Parents' Greater Comfort Discussing Issues with Those of Their Ethnicity

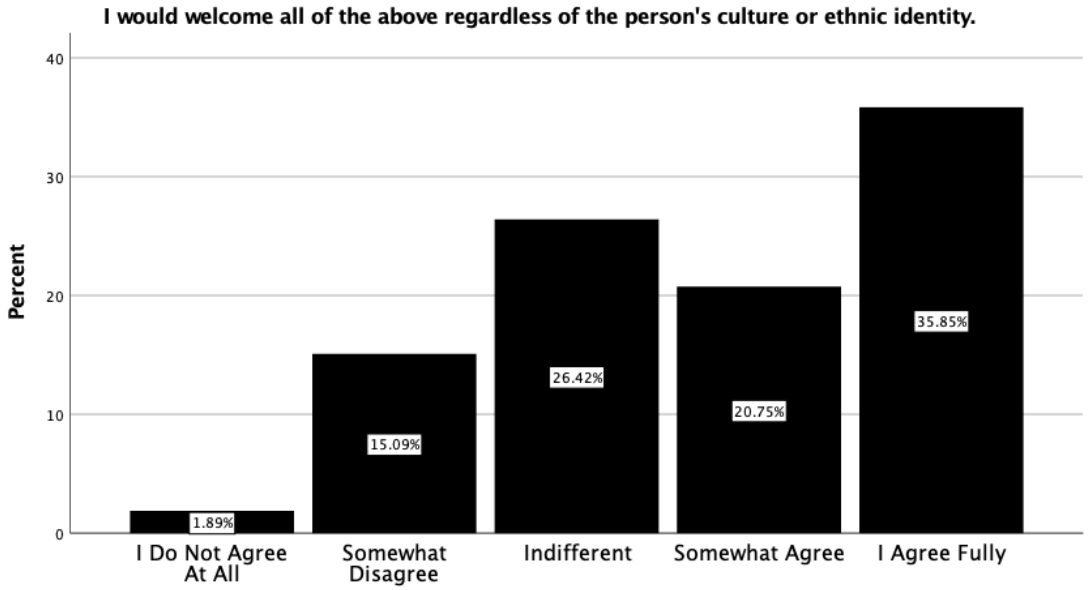


Despite the 59% (see Figure 18) of parents who agreed fully that they would feel more comfortable conversing with school personnel of their same culture and ethnicity over their child's teacher or administrator and the nearly 63% (see Figure 19) of Black parents who agreed fully that they would feel more comfortable sharing complaints and

acquiring resources from someone of the same cultural and ethnic descent, overall Black parents seem to just want to be heard and attended to. This finding is attributed to the varying parent responses in Figure 20 with only 16% of Black parents who were reluctant to welcome conversation, resources, and guidance from their child's principal and teachers regardless of ethnicity and culture. The majority and remaining 84% of Black parents varied in their responses from being open to full agreement of support from their child's teachers or principals. Contrary to popular belief, Black parents care about their children, many want them to succeed, and historically, Black parents have fought and risked death even, to ensure their children were educated (Givens, 2021; Ogbu, 2003). However, based upon their personal, negative experiences with the system, how educators often view our Black male students as uneducable and our Black female students as loud and promiscuous, some Black parents might be concerned about how they are perceived and may avoid *initiating* support requests from their child's school, but may be more willing to welcome attempts from the school (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Figure 20

Parents Who Want to Be Heard Despite Ethnicity



BOMs as cultural brokers increase school connectedness to Black students and families by serving as conduits for teachers, administrators, and parents to build trust with parents. While trust extends beyond culture and includes competence, reliability, honesty, and care (Beard & Brown, 2008; Hoy, 2002; Romero, 2015), when given an option, Black parents in this study were more comfortable with speaking with an individual of shared culture. The ability to relate to Black students and families expedites the trust-building process, so Black families feel more connected to the school and, ultimately, Black students get what they need expeditiously. As outlined in Figure 10, expedited connection time was an emergent theme from the teacher interviews.

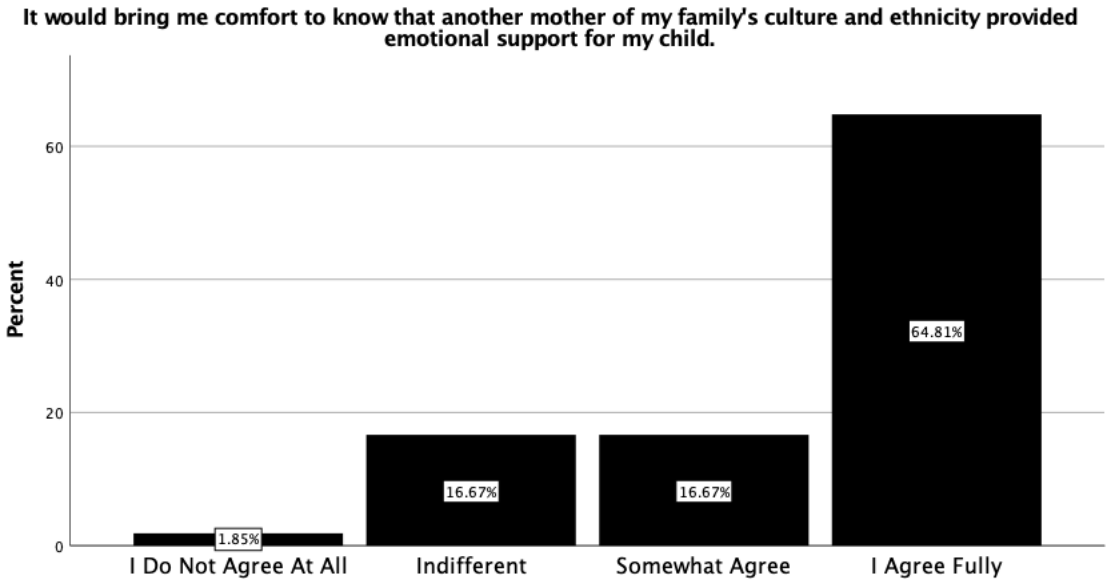
Lastly, as related to Black othermothering and relatedness, T4 spoke about her tone of voice. She is White and female and said, “The tone of voice is something that kids hear in Europe. And there’s voices that they are used to hearing and you’re around voices that sound the same. Then this voice calls you on the phone and it doesn’t sound like the voice, the kind of voice that you trust. You are able to establish trust because you have shared cultural background.”

Care and Concern

The final series of questions that were included in the Black parent survey were related to care and concern for students. Where there was some indifference with Black othermothering and relatedness, there were more concrete indicators for this tenet of othermothering. As related to the level of comfort it would bring Black parents to know that another Black mother was available for their child at school, 64.8% indicated that this would bring them a great deal of comfort, another 16.6% somewhat agreed with this statement (see Figure 21).

Figure 21

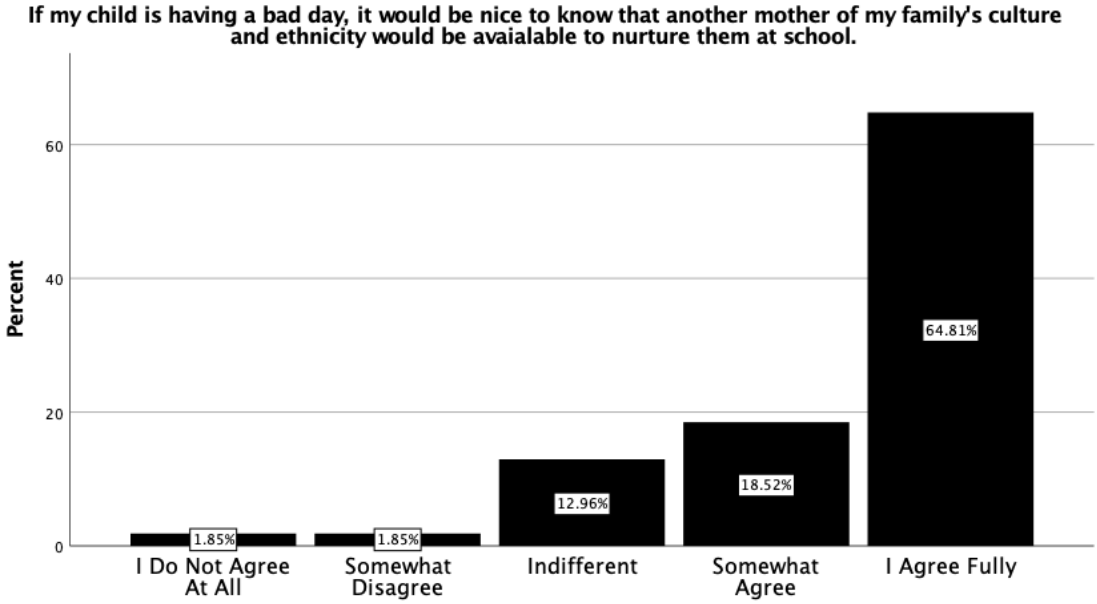
Another Mother of My Ethnicity Offers Comfort



In terms of providing comfort if an African American student was just having a bad day, 64.8% of Black parents agreed they would like this support, with 18.5% somewhat agreeing that this would be a great support (see Figure 22).

Figure 22

Desire for Support of Another Mother



When grade was accounted for, much like the first series of questions related to advocacy, the older the student, the less likely parents indicated that this level of care and concern was desired (see Figure 23).

Figure 23

Desire for Support of Another Mother, by Grade Level

If my child is having a bad day, it would be nice to know that another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity would be avaialable to nurture them at school. * Elementary School Crosstabulation

Count

		Elementary School: Elementary	Total
If my child is having a bad day, it would be nice to know that another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity would be avaialable to nurture them at school.	Somewhat Disagree	1	1
	Indifferent	3	3
	Somewhat Agree	2	2
	I Agree Fully	11	11
Total		17	17

If my child is having a bad day, it would be nice to know that another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity would be avaialable to nurture them at school. * Middle School Crosstabulation

Count

		Middle School: Middle School	Total
If my child is having a bad day, it would be nice to know that another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity would be avaialable to nurture them at school.	Indifferent	1	1
	Somewhat Agree	3	3
	I Agree Fully	7	7
Total		11	11

If my child is having a bad day, it would be nice to know that another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity would be avaialable to nurture them at school. * High School Crosstabulation

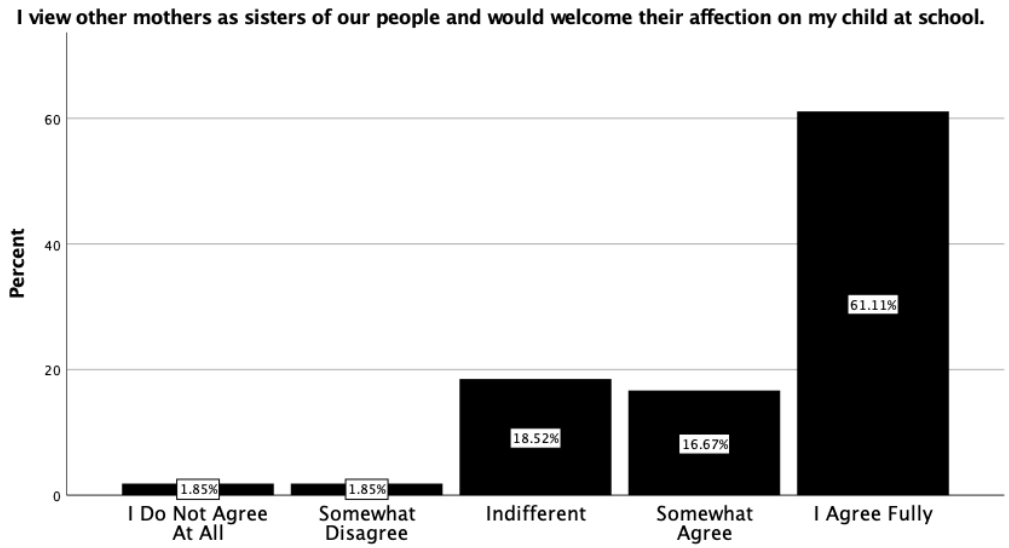
Count

		High School: High School	Total
If my child is having a bad day, it would be nice to know that another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity would be avaialable to nurture them at school.	Indifferent	3	3
	Somewhat Agree	2	2
	I Agree Fully	5	5
Total		10	10

As related to the cultural connection of Black women, I was curious how the Black parents completing this survey viewed Black women as a whole and, specifically, how this may correspond to their receptibility of other Black mothers showing affection to their children at school. Affection is an "expression of care" (Mawhinney, 2012; p. 216) and critical to this research. As displayed in Figure 24, 61.1% of participants fully agreed that they viewed other Black women as sisters and would welcome their affection on their child at school. Sixteen percent somewhat agreed with this statement while 18.5% were indifferent.

Figure 24

Other Mothers are Sisters

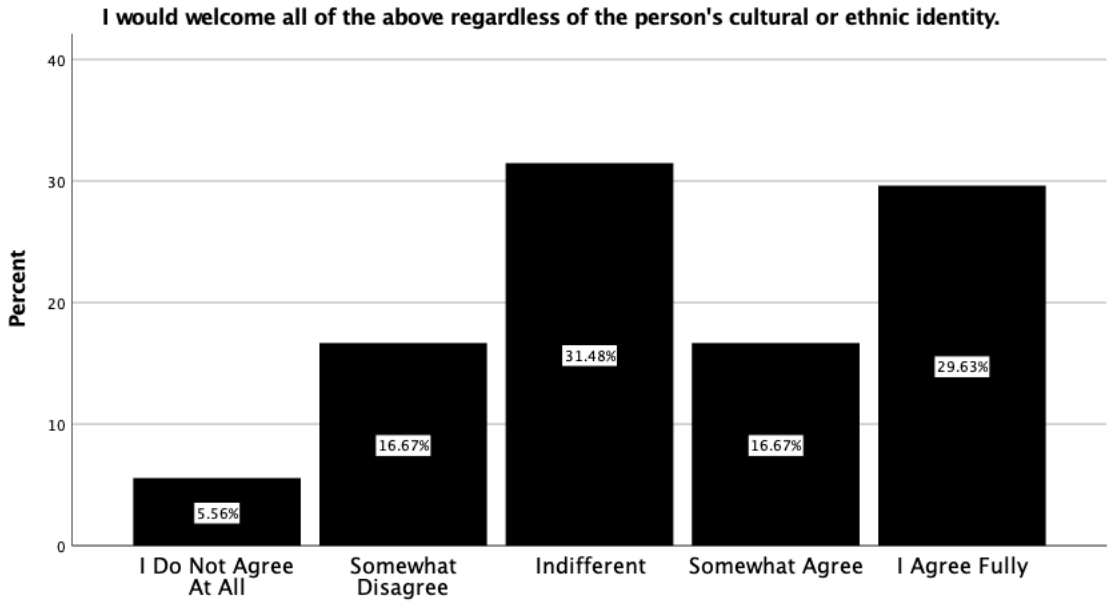


Finally, as to whether Black parents would welcome care and concern on their children independent of the person's ethnicity in their absence, 5.5% of participants

would not be open to this at all and an additional 16.6% would be more prone to reject the support if the school representative did not reflect their culture. Almost one third (31.4%) were indifferent or uncertain about if they would be receptive, with 29.6% of parents who fully agreed with and would welcome care and concern on their children independent of shared culture (see Figure 25).

Figure 25

Welcoming of Support Regardless of Ethnicity



Triangulation of Data and Results

The purpose of this sequential transformative analysis was to assess how Ara's Education Consulting, LLC has provided advocacy, relatedness, and care and concern, three of the five tenets of Black othermothering, to increase school connectedness to Black students and families. The day-to-day operations relative to advocacy, relatedness,

and care and concern were first examined from the perspective of four White teachers who have partnered with Ara's, then, further validated by anonymous parent participation. The proceeding figures and explanations triangulate the qualitative and quantitative data to illustrate how Black othermothering fulfill the desire of Black parents and guardians while also supporting teachers all for the purposes of increasing school connectedness for Black students.

Advocacy

RQ 1: How has Black othermothering impacted advocacy to African American students and families? The presence of Black othermothering, enabled teachers to observe first-hand how to engage their African American students. Whether the mission of Ara's is to obtain the best method of contact for a particular family or it was in the best interest of the student to share their home life for sensitivity and adjustment on the teacher's part, these actions ultimately led to an improved connection and understanding of their students. Unbeknownst to the survey participants, when asked if they felt advocacy was needed for them as parents and for their students, 74% (see Figure 13) agreed that Black parents needed advocacy, or a voice, while 64% (see Figure 14) of Black parents believed their student needed advocacy. The need for parent voice by way of othermothering was validated by the 76% (see Figure 15) of Black parents who indicated they agreed fully when asked if they would find comfort in knowing that an othermother of their child's ethnicity and culture was present to advocate for their child in their absence. Parents were not as confident that Black othermothering would

eliminate discrimination towards their child, with only 35% (see Figure 17) of parents who agreed, but their confidence in Black othermothering as a mechanism of support was clear.

In reference to the presence of Ara's at her school site and the indirect level of accountability this placed on her, T1, a third-grade teacher said:

> Your presence here has given me a mental check to ensure that I'm doing my job to connect with all my students. You have been a role model to make sure I am connecting with purpose and intention, no matter who the student is.

This was an indirect response to advocacy for her students. As it relates to advocacy and forgotten students, T2, a sixth-grade teacher, said:

> You were advocating for people who can fall in the cracks pretty easily. You were that extra set of eyes and ears to the kids I guess we tend to not pay as much attention to as the quiet, sad ones because we're too busy dealing with the you know, overt behaviors.

T3, seventh- and eighth-grade ELA and ELD teacher referred to his attention to the language choice and cadence used when conversing with students as an "in" to engagement on his part as a means of advocacy. He said:

> That gave me an in because after that, after hearing the way that you phrased it, I was able to hear it, and you know and repeat your questions to him. Which one, I like and two, I just never thought of approaching it that way. Then because I don't look like him. I'm very conscious. I was able to leverage your rapport with

> Malachi to create my own rapport with Malachi. And I remember shortly thereafter being so excited because he finally accomplished an assignment.

In reference to advocacy for students by way of holding teachers accountable later in the interview, T3 said:

> You do more than just cultivate positivity, but you also stand up to, you know, some of the latent biases that I think, you know, a lot of adults have. And they're not even aware of, you know, they get really defensive. It seems like your work is kind of chipping away at it slowly but surely.

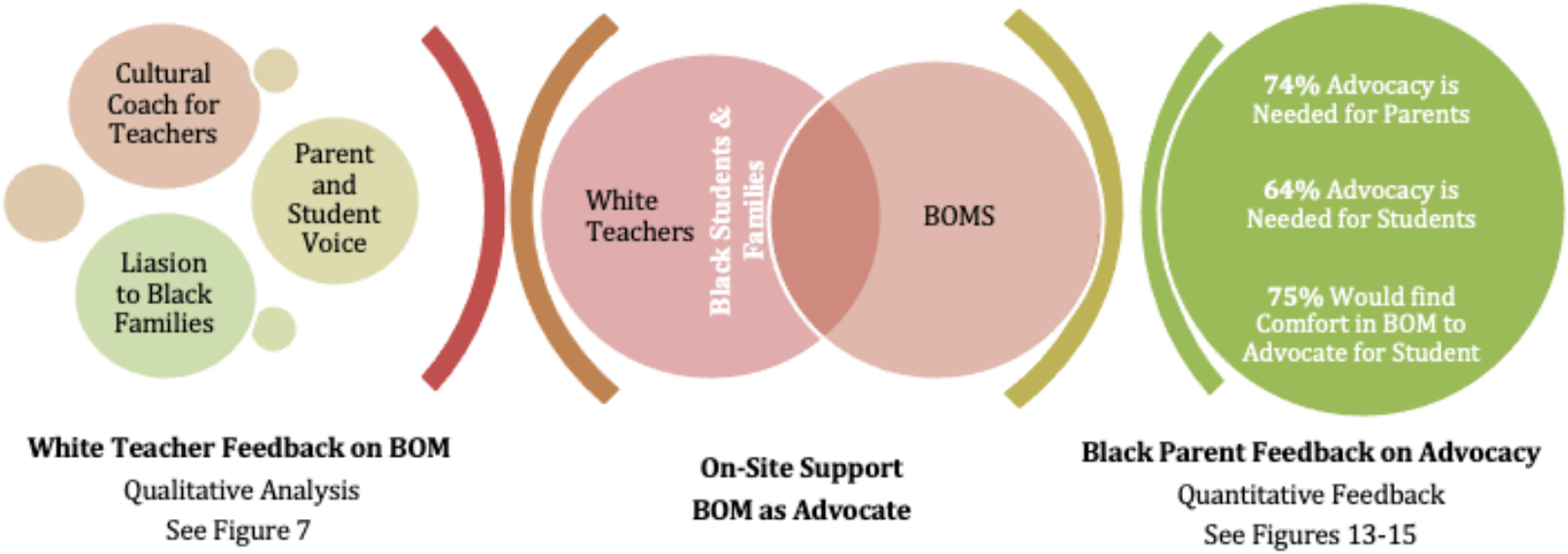
In reference to student and parent advocacy, this was reflected in the teacher interviews. T4, a resource specialist at Hart Junior High School said, "You ask clarifying questions to know what is needed from the parents, and I could go back and find those emails because you asked about what exactly do you want from her?" This was in reference to information needed from the parent and the teacher for an individual education plan (IEP) meeting for an African American student. As it relates to sharing information on a need-to-know basis and in a way that protects the student and parent, T4 said, "I am not saying you would give private information or anything, but I know that you would inform teachers and in a way that would activate people's compassion and understanding and know what the student's needs are."

Figure 25 illustrates how the qualitative data and quantitative data for advocacy triangulated to necessitate Black othermothering as a viable solution to increased connection with African American families through advocacy. As revealed in the

findings within the classroom, White teachers found that BOMs provided them with cultural coaching, created a voice for students and families, and served as a liaison home. On the school site as a whole, White teachers, BOMs, and Black students and families collaborated to create “a big hug around them [the students],” as T4 put it. The figure then illustrates the feedback from the anonymous, Black parent survey that acknowledged their voice for this work.

Figure 26

The BOM as an Advocate Model



Relatedness

RQ 2: How has Black othermothering impacted relatedness to African American students and families? On multiple occasions, it was shared that the presence of Ara's created a window of opportunity for the teacher to better engage their student. The organic, instinctive relationship Ara's was able to develop with students contributed to leveraging comedy and sarcasm to connect with students while holding them accountable and, unknowingly, the teacher as well. Allen (2012) found that when Black parents were visible on site, teachers interacted with their children differently. With consideration to the parents who are unable to be visible at their child's school, Black othermothering is designed to provide parental presence for African American students and on behalf of African American parents. Black teachers have incorporated othermothering into their praxis, so this parental interaction with Black students was once very common (Fields-Smith, 2005). However, with only 7% of teachers being Black, herein lies the need for this work (Hussar et al., 2020).

If Black parents knew a Black othermother was available to relate to their students in the way the teachers expressed, would they desire this service? A series of questions regarding culture and ethnicity were posed to test for congruence. When asked about comfortability with conversing with school personnel who reflected the student's ethnicity and culture over their child's principal or teacher, 59% agreed fully that they would prefer this arrangement (see Figure 18). Sixty-two percent (see Figure 19) of parents were more comfortable sharing challenges or seeking navigational support and

resources from someone of shared ethnicity, while only 35% (see Figure 20) of parents felt ethnicity and cultural connection were not a factor and welcomed support either way. Figure 26 illustrates how BOM supported the teachers included in this study and how this corresponds with the desires of the Black parent survey participants. Much like Black parents expressed that they were more comfortable engaging with someone from their own ethnic and cultural background, the teachers included in this research observed the same in their Black students and were able to leverage BOM to support their students optimally. Once the relationship was established between the student and teacher, in-class support was rendered on an as-needed basis. The BOM role then primarily transitioned to a support role outside of the class, but within the confines of school and school culture.

Concerning relatedness and the BOM role at Ara's, T1 said:

> For any human being, when they see something that's familiar. You know, you meet somebody and you're like, I don't know how I feel connected to you, but I just do. You remind me of an aunt in a way. Students might not be able to put their finger on it, but just have a sense of comfort, whereas they see me more as a professional. An educator which kind of separates that boundary and creates a disconnect. And no matter how hard I work towards building that bridge to some capacity, I'm unable to have full control over that.

She also spoke about how Ara's directly supports her student whom I refer to as Sean. She said:

> Your consistency with Sean and meeting that family where they're at. Knowing the best ways to communicate and how they will receive communication. I would not have known that. And I would have just been on Dojo waiting and you know, who would have known? So even getting them present into school has been extremely beneficial.

In reference to relatedness and Black othermothering, T2, said:

> I do not think we would be able to do that [the assessment or testing] without you reaching out to the family, honestly, because I might have said something just in the wrong tone. I may have said something the way I sound, honestly, because I know kids are like, that I sound very White. It's not like it's rude, though, I appreciate honesty.

The conversation then turned to fashion and culture when she made a comment on BOM's shoe: university blue Jordan 1's:

> Wearing good shoes [Jordan's]. Shoes are very important and kids notice your shoes for good or for bad. Yes, it's interesting but you're going to hear about it. Not all African American students care about shoes, but Jordan's the culture. And it's even beyond African American kids, right? So there's a shoe connection.

Lastly, T2 mentioned a time where she heard I ran barefoot on the blacktop to help motivate an African American student and probably the fastest runner in the school. T2 said, "Then I heard that you ran on the blacktop against Mariah. I didn't know you were a runner. I heard you took your shoes off and ran without socks."

In reference to relatedness and holding students accountable, T1 said:

> He [Black, male student] can say something and will just dismiss you with a smile . . . you were able to pierce that concrete barrier. You were able to call him out in ways I felt I wasn't comfortable doing. You said, not everything is a joke and you asked them why are they our here? They said, oh we are out here to talk and Mr. Beard told us we could come out here to talk and think. You said, why aren't you in there learning? He laughed and you said, I was not being funny.

As it relates to creating a window for teachers to connect with African American students, T3 said:

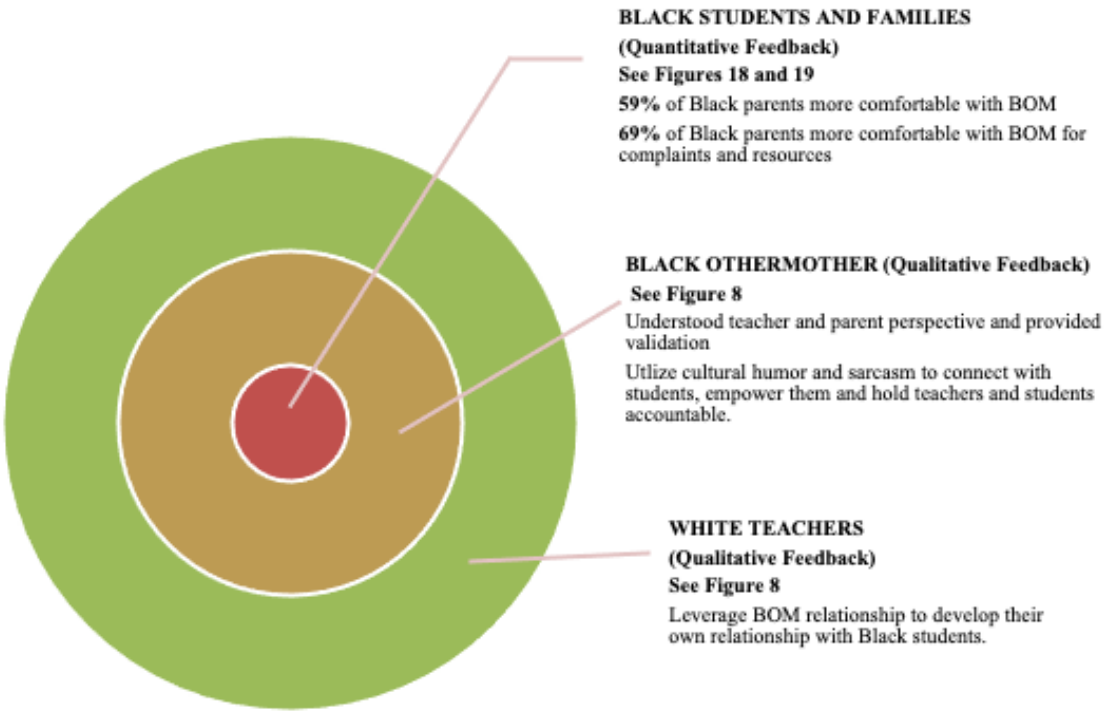
> We [a Black, female student] started to hit it off when you started coming to my class. We would be speaking and then she would talk to you. And I had an opportunity to jump in and connect with Mariah on a personal level. Once we started making inroads into her life, she and I hit it off and now, like, she's one of my favorite students. We connect so well.

Lastly, T4 stated, "Sometimes I think children of color might not be who they are. So to have someone on campus that notices them and wants to be there for them and give them that."

Figure 27 illustrates Black students and families as the focal point of this research along with the percentage of Black parents that expressed the desire for BOM work. BOMs then comprise the next layer and gap between Black students and families, and White teachers, the primary teaching population (Hussar et al., 2020).

Figure 27

The Gap Between Black Students and Families and White Teacher



Care and Concern

RQ 3: How has Black othermothering impacted care and concern to African American students and families? There is nothing like knowing that someone is available to care for your child in your absence, and BOM brings this level of care to schools. This desire and impact were validated by the Black parent survey and the four teachers who participated in this study.

When asked how BOM displayed care and concern towards African American students and families, T1 said in reference to a need concerning her teacher partner and *her* student:

> Sara Lue (another teacher) was sharing that when Aniyah had needs, she was not being cared for in the way that her adult figure should be caring for her. You stepped in. And with that level of care, it wasn't a second thought. It was within, she mentioned, like 24 hours that you showed up with what she needed. Yeah, and that's care. That gives me chills thinking about it because that's the epitome of and its not even extending yourself further than basic needs. It's not just doing it because you feel obligated to because instinctually that level of care, it's just there and it shows.

In response to the same question, the first thing T2 said was, “The fact that your business exists, that you know, that you identified a need for students of color, particularly Black students, to feel cared for within an environment where they may feel like they may feel not every day.” She then said:

> You are warm. You have a warm approach and are accepting. You listen and you make it clear that that person has your full attention and I believe that parents feel safe with you. You have to work to establish that, too. It's not like you just stop and say hi, listen to Mrs. Stovall. Yeah, you have to establish that. So I appreciate that you are present at our school.

Concerning the moment when I raced the student barefoot, T2 viewed this as an act of care and concern and said, “You had a choice to not race, but that wasn't a choice. It was like I am going to run, so just that spirit of like, hey let's just go for it. Let's just have joy. Let's enjoy is just there's no why not?”

T3 shared a story with me about two students I approached earlier in the school year. The students were hanging outside of his classroom and this served as an entry point into his class and resulted in the start of a wonderful working relationship between the teacher and me. I could not recall the details of this story and even as I write this dissertation, I still cannot recall this story. After T3 shared the story, I was astonished and merely thanked him for sharing. For this teacher, the fact that I had no recollection of such a memorable and class-changing moment for him equated to care and concern for not only students, but teachers as well. He said:

> It is more meaningful that you don't even recall that it was just something that's happening in the background, right? I mean, like it's just you throughout your day, you know, being you and having a positive impact. And you know, with not only the relationships that you have with students, but the relationships you have with other teachers and their students.

T3 then became a bit emotional as he reflected upon the relationships Ara's has established with students as being desired even over the site counselor.

> The way you can mother a lot of students in the way that like, excuse me if I get emotional (starts to cry), students who are having a hard time. The first person they typically ask for is you. Not our school counselor. They go like, "Hey, can I go see Mrs. Stovall?" And I go, "Sure." And then they come back a couple of minutes later and they, "She wasn't in her classroom. Can I go to Ms. Johnson?" It's powerful that when they are looking for that pillar of support, when they're

> looking for someone to help them identify with them, they're looking for you, they're looking for an adult that they know cares about them on campus, that they know will have their back that day. It's a beautiful relationship.

T4 expressed appreciation for clothing and shoes Ara's was able to find one of her students. She said, "I really appreciate that you try to find people resources. Yeah, like you did for Maxwell."

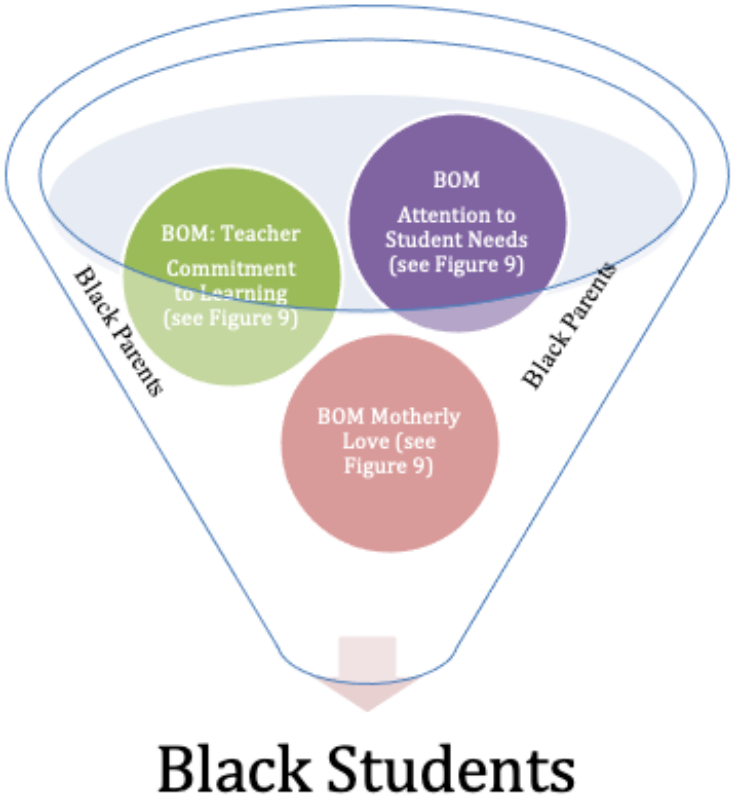
When Black parents were asked about the level of comfort it would bring to know that another Black mother was available to offer emotional support to their student at school, 64% (see Figure 21) agreed completely that this would provide some relief. Black parents were then asked if it would bring them comfort to know that a Black mother was available to nurture their child if they were having a bad day and 64% (see Figure 22) agreed with this statement completely as well. A majority, 61%, of the Black parent survey participants agreed completely that they viewed other Black women as sisters whom they would trust with providing physical affection to their child when needed at school (see Figure 24). Physical affection was defined as a hug when needed (Mawhinney, 2012). As it relates to care and concern and whether Black parents would welcome such care regardless of ethnicity and culture, 29% of parents indicated that they would welcome care and concern towards their children regardless of their culture and ethnicity, while 31% were indifferent (see Figure 25). Unlike advocacy and relatedness, BOM dominated the care and concern tenet, where the teacher served as a support to the

BOM rather than the alternative. The desire for this work was supported by the Black parents who participated in this survey.

Figure 28 illustrates the Black student: BOM focused relationship that supersedes yet supports the teacher's relationship with Black students. BOM care and concern comprises a commitment to learning, swift attention to student needs, and motherly love onto Black students. In this illustration, teachers are exclusively included in the commitment to learning ingredient as the BOM "may not let [the student] run" as T3 put it, but the teacher is still needed for BOM to understand the academic task at hand. This is funneled and approved by 64% of Black parents who fully agreed they would find comfort in knowing a BOM was available for their child at school, and an additional 18% who somewhat agreed with this statement.

Figure 28

Black Students:BOM Relationship Focus

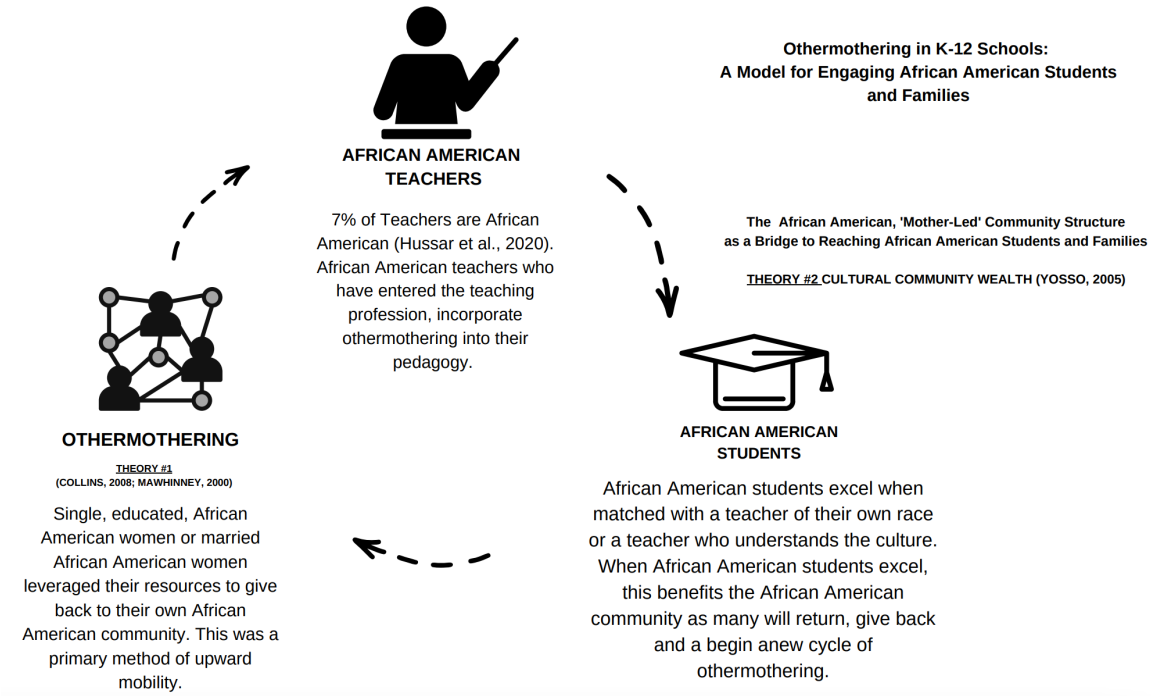


Revised Conceptual Framework

The original conceptual framework (see Figure 29) depicted a cyclic relationship between African American students, African American teachers, and BOMs. Though it acknowledged the othermothering construct Black teachers have historically brought to the profession, it failed to include the primarily White teaching staff who co-labor with BOMs to support African American students in the classroom. It also excluded parent input acquired by way of the anonymous survey.

Figure 29

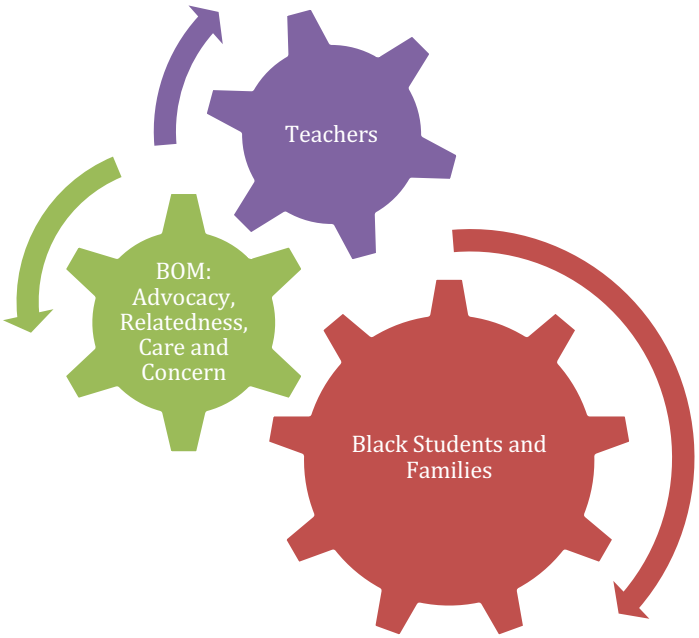
Model for Parental Engagement for African American Families



As illustrated in the revised conceptual framework (see Figure 30) in some capacity, BOM is required for the overall education system to function optimally. As indicated in the Black parent survey results, a majority of Black parents and guardians desire BOM at their student's school in their absence (64% agreed fully; 18% somewhat agreed). BOM provides a safety net for Black students while also serving as partners with teachers that are primarily White teachers (Hussar et al., 2020) who at times and for no fault of their own, fail to connect with Black students and families. As revealed in the study, when BOM and teachers united, it resulted in an improved connection to African American students and families like a well-oiled machine.

Figure 30

The BOM as Nurturer Model



Validity and Reliability

The determination that I would research the impact of my own consulting agency necessitated a mixed-method approach and triangulation of the data for increased validity and reliability of the research. Researcher bias had the propensity of being doubly rendered, so it was critical that I incorporated measures that would mitigate these biases. Prolonged exposure to the field served as a means of increased validation and reliability along with the anonymous Black parent surveys distributed on social media and emailed to 966 emails, my entire client base (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ara's Education Consulting, LLC was designed to function behind the scenes and in collaboration with teachers in support of African American students and families.

Thus, if one were not a teacher who participated in this study, the innerworkings of the agency would be unknown. Another measure I took to ensure the data were valid and reliable was targeting Black parents who had never experienced my work. With a goal of 100 participants, the survey remained opened from January 14 to March 4, 2022, nearly 2 months because it was a challenge meeting this goal. A total of 65 people started the survey; however, 54 actually completed the survey. These results were then triangulated with the teacher interviews as an additional measure of validity and reliability.

Limitations

This research did not include any interviews from the African American students or parents and guardians who were said to benefit from the presence of BOMs. Also, the original research design included another BOM from another site to assess the impact of her engagement on students and teachers. Unfortunately, the teacher that most closely worked with the other BOM did not reply to my invitation to participate in the research; therefore, the research was relegated to one Sacramento-based elementary school and one Sacramento-based junior high school instead of two Sacramento-based elementary schools and on a Sacramento-based junior high school.

I was in contract with Jolly Elementary School for the 2020-2021 school year along with the 2021-2022 school year, 2 days a week. Though I had only been in contract with Hart Junior High for the 2021-2022 school year, I spent more time at this site at 3 days a week. Half of the time spent at Jolly Elementary School was during the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic that closed school doors Friday, March 13, 2020. During this

time, the work shifted to in-home support and resources for African American students and families, with limited interaction with teachers.

The purpose of the quantitative analysis was to assess Black parent interest levels of BOM at their child's school. For this cause, descriptive statistics answered my research questions and revealed the pulse I was seeking for BOM work. While the data acquired can be used in future research, no additional analysis was conducted for the purpose of this research.

Teachers who were not supportive of BOM were unknown and not included in this research; this was another limitation to the research. Also, while otherfathering is a relatively newly researched phenomenon, this inquiry did not examine the impact of Black otherfathers (Clark, 2019).

Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As a means of combating the Black teacher deficit gap, this study examined how Ara's Education Consulting, LLC (Ara's) utilized Black othermothering as a cultural brokering framework to increase school connectedness with African American students and families at one Sacramento-based junior high school and one Sacramento-based elementary school. Othermothering (Mawhinney, 2012) has also been referred to as motherwork (Collins, 2000) and consists of five tenets including: a pedagogical commitment to learning, a financial commitment, care and concern or "expression of care" (Mawhinney, 2012; p. 216), relatedness, and advocacy (Mawhinney, 2012).

Othermothering has been associated with the historical, pedagogical practices of Black teaching, which has often required Black educators to go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure their students were not only educated, but cared for as their own children would be (Fields-Smith, 2005; Givens, 2021). Today, African American teachers only make up 7% of the teaching population however, which has substantially minimized the likelihood of othermothering practices on Black students and families being played out within America's classrooms (Hussar et al., 2020).

Black students were not underperforming until schools were desegregated and 38,000 Black teachers and administrators were released from their jobs following the 1954 ruling of *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (Hussar et al., 2020); thus, the gap and proposed link to Black othermothering within the classroom. The decline of Black

student performance has persisted as has Black teachers in the profession (Milner & Howard, 2004; Hussar et al., 2020). Black teachers and administrators have not been able to rebound from the massive layoffs some 60 years ago, with more recent literature that implicates a lack of upward mobility as a reason more Black teachers have not joined the teaching force or have decided to leave the force, further contributing to the decline (Farinde et al., 2016; Milner, 2006).

This notion of essentially looking out for a child whom you did not bear is unique to marginalized groups (Collins, 2000) and has served as a method of survival for African American women since enslavement (Guiffrida, 2005; Hirt et al., 2008). Utilizing three of the five tenets of othermothering, this study examined advocacy, relatedness, and care and concern in this mixed-methods, sequential transformative analysis (Mawhinney, 2012). Three additional theories, including critical race theory (CRT; Ladson-Billings, 1995), community cultural wealth (CCW; Yosso, 2005), and ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982), were utilized to guide the following research questions. The findings are indicated thereafter.

Research Questions

In what ways has Black othermothering impacted school connectedness to African American families?

1. How has Black othermothering impacted advocacy for African American families?

2. How has Black othermothering impacted relatedness to African American families?
3. How has Black othermothering impacted expression of care to African American families?

Summary of Findings

Black Othermother (BOM) as a Cultural Broker

Ninety-two percent of Black parents and guardians who participated in this study somewhat or fully agreed believed advocacy was needed for Black parents. Eighty-eight percent somewhat or fully agreed, and Black parents of elementary school students (N = 16) outnumbered parents of middle school (N = 11) and high school parents (N = 10). When asked if a Black othermother (BOM) would provide comfort to parents, 75% agreed fully and another 14% somewhat agreed (see Figure 18) that this would provide some comfort to families. With only 7% of the teaching population comprising Black teachers (Hussar et al., 2020), the purpose of Black othermothering within schools is to serve as a bridge to Black students, Black parents, and the majority teaching population: White teachers. School districts have utilized family liaisons or parent liaisons (López et al., 2018; Sanders, 2008) and cultural brokers (Ishimaru, 2020; Ishimaru et al., 2016) to serve as bridges back to home for nondominant cultures, while middle- to high-class Black parents utilize their cultural capital to best navigate the system (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Yosso, 2005). Black othermothering calls on the work of club women (Lerner, 1974; Shaw, 1991) who utilized the knowledge and

resources acquired through marriage and/or education to give back to their communities as a framework specifically designed to ensure that Black students and families receive the advocacy they need and desire from within the education system.

The Black parents included in this research had not personally experienced the othermothering work at Ara's, so the questions were posed hypothetically. With consideration to the history of African American people and research abuse (Freimuth et al., 2001), I understood that despite my attempts to support African American people, my own people, it would be a challenge obtaining parents who had indirectly received support from Ara's in the past to then participate in an interview. To ensure Black parent voice, the anonymous survey was created and shared on multiple web-based platforms.

Fifty-four Black parents were included in this study and attested to the need for advocacy, relatedness, and care and concern for their children while at school. This desire was paralleled by the four White teachers included in this study who had partnered with Ara's to provide specialized support for their Black students and families. Through advocacy, relatedness and care and concern, the presence of Ara's on campus and within the teacher's classrooms increased the teachers' connection to their Black students. Two emergent themes developed during the coding process as well. All teachers included in this study agreed that the presence of a BOM expedited the time it would normally take to connect with their Black students. Each teacher also acknowledged their Whiteness as a barrier to connecting with some of their Black students and families and welcomed the cultural framing Ara's brought to their classrooms. Additionally, though a link to

academic improvement in Black students was an outlier and not considered “emergent” (Creswell & Poth, 2018; p. 187) the ultimate goal of the Black othermothering work at Ara’s is to increase academic achievement in African American students. T3 shared that Ara’s successfully contributed to the academic achievement of several of his students. Though there was an academic link with multiple students in his class, since this connection was only found with one teacher, this finding was an outlier.

The proceeding section is organized by advocacy, relatedness, and care and concern, three of the five tenets of Black othermothering included in this study and the three deductive themes utilized when coding the teacher interview responses. Within each section, I interpret the findings, provide recommendations for stakeholders, and share my personal biases and transformation throughout this research process.

Interpretation of Findings

Black Othermothering Expanded View

Figure 31 provides an expanded view of the BOM component of my revised theoretical framework and the corresponding theories that informed my research questions. These three elements embody BOM upon which I elaborate in this section.

Figure 31

The Black Student Engagement Model

Advocacy

Black othermothering calls on the counter storytelling element of CRT, as it creates a voice and alternate perspective for Black students and their families (Ladson et al., 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Black parents care about their children's success, but at times struggle with connecting with the dominant, Eurocentric culture represented at their child's school. To be Black and literate was once a crime and viewed as a "dangerous undertaking" (Givens, 2021, p. 12). Black education was also viewed as a

community effort that would ensure a future for African American people. Translating in the classroom as Black teachers risked their credentials to teach Black students about historical Black figures prior to desegregation (Givens, 2021) and more recently as well (Assaf et al., 2010). The struggle for cultural representation is not a new fight, and in the absence of Black teachers who have advocated for their students from within the institution, Black othermothering is of value to students, parents, and teachers as found in this study.

While the majority of Black parents believed advocacy was needed for Black parents and Black students, when asked if their family or student had been discriminated against and, if so, if they felt advocacy from a Black teacher or BOM would have prevented the inequitable treatment, only 35% (see Figure 19) fully agreed that a BOM or Black teacher would have countered the treatment. Black parents may find comfort in the possibilities of Black othermothering to provide more advocacy than not, but of the parents who completed this survey, many were not very confident that presence alone would mitigate prejudices from teachers and administrators. Despite these findings, the teachers who worked with Ara's responded differently, with T1 who shared, "Your presence here has given me a mental check to ensure that I'm doing my job to connect with all my students." This is a teacher whom Ara's had minimal support, at only 2 days a week. T2 said, "You were advocating for people who can fall through the cracks pretty easily." Finally, T4 spoke about how Ara's addressed the "latent biases" from teachers on campus and Ara's is "slowly chipping away at it." These findings countered the varying

perceptions of the Black parent participants with over 50% (20% did not agree at all, 11% strongly disagreed, 20% were indifferent) who questioned if Black othermothering would have resulted in their child receiving the support he or she deserved at school. The presence of Ara's alone created a sense of accountability for teachers. It also created a voice for Black students in the absence of parents.

Black student and parent voice by way of the Black othermothering work at Ara's resulted in a bridge to Black students and families (74% somewhat or fully agreed with being more comfortable speaking with someone who reflects their culture at their child's school). Parental engagement models such as the Epstein model is highly effective for middle- to upper-class parents, but fails to meet needs of underserved communities or working-class families (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Thus, from a Eurocentric lens, it is assumed that a lack of parent visibility equates to a presumed lack of care and concern or misunderstanding of Black parents. Specialized approaches to understanding Black culture are needed.

T1 illustrated this when she spoke about Ara's being able to identify the best method of communication for one of her students. She said, "I would have been on Dojo just waiting." Class "Dojo" is the primary method teachers at Jolly Elementary communicate with their parents. When the teacher could not reach this parent, she never thought that there may have been another method of communication for him until Ara's entered the scenario. By learning the parent's best method of communication, this served as a bridge to this student, his two siblings, and two additional teachers. The father was a

single-dad of three and unresponsive to school communications, yet he loved his children and would promptly respond to my text messages and answered the door each time Ara's visited with him. What dad needed was navigational support for maneuvering through the educational system, a tenet of CCW (Yosso, 2005).

In reference to serving as a point of contact for T4 to ask what she referred to as "silly or obvious questions as a White woman" her perspective on Black mothers shifted as a result of her partnership with Ara's. During our interview for this research, the teacher proudly spoke about how she conversed with one of her student's mother daily, and how she no longer viewed the parent as "I am talking to a Black boy's mom, [rather] I am talking to a concerned mom." Ara's advocacy for Black parents created a paradigm shift, a voice, for this teacher who empowered her to have a more a positive approach to interacting and embracing her Black parents.

The Black parents included in this study desired advocacy for themselves and their students, and the White teachers embraced how either directly or indirectly Ara's held them accountable when advocating for Black students and families, a "voice" that would not have been heard if not for the presence of a BOM. Generalized family liaisons and cultural brokers are insufficient to meet the specific needs of African American students and families, and though Black families and teachers might be willing to unite, BOMs serve as "street level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, 1980, 2010, p. 3) to fight for justice on the front line and within an institution never designed for them to enter, let alone thrive. Much like Black parent-presence influences how teachers interact with students (Allen &

White-Smith, 2018), BOMs provide this same level of accountability and interaction with Black students. Rather than continuing to question why Black parents are not "engaged," indirectly blaming the marginalized for not thriving in an unwelcomed system, new methods of engagement that include representation from the non-biological Black community ought to be considered as another method of family engagement. As illustrated in this study, the impact on Black students in the classroom was the same: teachers were held accountable and Black students flourished.

Relatedness

To determine the value Black parents placed on access to school personnel of shared ethnicity and culture, parents were then asked a series of questions regarding their preferred interactions with a BOM as compared to their child's presumed White teacher or administrator. Fifty-nine percent of parents fully agreed that they would be more comfortable conversing with someone of shared culture over their child's teacher or principal. An additional 14% somewhat agreed with this statement. In terms of navigational support, resources, and complaints, 62% of parents fully agreed that they would be more comfortable conversing with someone from their shared culture, with an additional 16% of parents who somewhat agreed with this statement. When asked about receiving support regardless of one's culture, the responses varied, with only 35% of parents fully agreeing to welcoming support independent of ethnicity; 20% somewhat agreed and an additional 40% were indifferent (26%) or disagreed (15%; see Figure 20).

The teachers interviewed in this study leveraged the presence of BOM within their classrooms and like the majority of Black parent survey participants, found this connection valuable. The connection with BOM ultimately expedited the teacher's connection time to their Black students. In their own unique way, each teacher spoke to the organic interactions Ara's was able to have with Black students. T4 said, "You happened to be walking by and were able to connect." T2 spoke about the comfortability having someone on campus who "notices them and wants to be there for them" makes Black students feel, and T3 spoke about how my tone of voice was familiar for Black families, "a voice you can trust."

While I am confident all teachers desire a connection with their students, many struggle with making the connection with families of color (Hyland, 2005; Sleeter, 2008). Black teachers desire similar connections with their students; however, race adds another layer of relatability and lessens the barrier (Mawhinney, 2012). In the absence of Black representation in the teaching profession, Black othermothering intentionally fulfills this gap and provides students, families, and teachers with cultural representation that not only benefits Black students, but all ethnicities (Wells et al., 2016).

Care and Concern

According to Gilligan (1982) women have been socialized to care and nurture others uniquely, which parallels the care and concern element that makes up BOM and the final tenet assessed in this study. Eighty percent of parents somewhat or fully agreed that having another mother of their family's culture and ethnicity to provide emotional

support for their child would bring a level of comfort (see Figure 21). Eighty-two percent of parents also agreed that if their child was having a bad day, it would provide them with some comfort if another mother of their family's culture were available to nurture their child (see Figure 22).

In terms of Black othermothering support, I was curious about how Black women viewed one another in relationship to their children. Did they view one another as sisters or "sistas" and would welcome love and attention to children at school or not? Seventy-seven percent of Black parents somewhat or fully agreed that they viewed other Black women as sisters and would welcome their affection to their child while at school. Due to the Black, female underpinnings of othermothering, club women, and the formation of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), this question was posed to Black parents to examine current perceptions of community, women, and unity for the greater good of Black people. In terms of giving back to the Black community, club women had a similar function of Black teachers in that through upward mobility and resources, they gave back albeit one through an educational lens and a commitment to learning, the other more community-based. While paying homage to the Black women who have served our people throughout history, Black othermothering intentionally infuses this degree of nurturance within the walls of K-12 schools and specifically for Black students and families.

Implications and Recommendations for Leadership

Black Parent Voice

If leaders want to support African American students and families, they must first identify the needs and desires of Black parents. Black parents may not feel comfortable participating in an interview, but an anonymous survey may serve as a means of acquiring their feedback. Additionally, rather than assuming that Black parents or guardians have access to various communication applications such as ClassDojo or Remind, ask if this is the best method of communication for the family. If parents are unresponsive on your choice of communication application, do not assume negligence. Give parents the benefit of the doubt and follow up. Oftentimes parents just want to be heard.

Parent Engagement Reimagined

In terms of parental engagement, leaders ought to examine alternate ways of defining engagement for African American families and consider including cultural brokers to enhance their connection with African American families. Cultural brokering provides insight into the nondominant culture (Ishimaru, 2019; Ishimaru et al., 2016) and in the case of this study, othermothering as a framework for cultural brokering paralleled the support and advocacy biological parents bring when on campus. Also, in terms of cultural brokers, if there are district employees who understand the cultural nuances of that particular community, it would behoove leaders to utilize the wealth embodied in this cultural connection for the benefit of students and families. Much like the work at Ara's,

in some instances this may improve the connection to African American students and families. In other instances, cultural brokers may serve as surrogate parents.

Future Research

Teachers, Leaders and Community Impact

Black othermothering lessens the cultural barrier some teachers have with their Black students and families and supports leaders by addressing implicit and perhaps explicit biases at the ground level. The role of a school administrator is to lead the school, which limits the amount of class time leaders have to witness the, at times, questionable interactions between teachers and Black students. BOMs advocating on behalf of students and families directly and indirectly holds teachers accountable and mitigates the amount of time school leaders may spend addressing classroom concerns from parents and students. Black othermothering at schools is a signal to the African American/Black community that says, "Yes, it's for us . . . there is someone for *us*" which has the propensity to impact generations, empowering African American students in ways that reflect the beautiful, Black schools where Black students thrived pre-segregation, while also embracing the present-day, K-12 schooling system.

To incorporate the opinions from teachers who may not fully understand nor agree with Black othermothering, future research at Ara's will seek to capture the data to further refine the work and discover new strategies of partnership, community, and support for teachers and Black students and families.

In this study, one teacher found an academic connection to from BOM connection in their classroom. Future research will intentionally analyze academic performance with Black students at the start of the school year or the inception of BOMs being present on site and monitor Black student achievement at each marking period for possible statistical significance.

Future research will also seek to include Black student voice, and will also include the voices of all students Ara's touches. Though Ara's was established to specifically support Black students and families, Ara's will never turn away a student or family in need of support and has established relationships with students of varying ethnicities and cultures. Here, the impact of BOM could be examined from a multi-cultural lens.

The impact of othermothering on students of other ethnicities should be studied to determine the impact of Black othermothering on other minoritized groups. Additionally, LatinX othermothering, Asian othermothering, and Middle Eastern othermothering should also be analyzed to determine if similar methods of cultural awareness increase the connection these families have with their children's schools. Additionally, otherfathering (Clark, 2019) is a relatively new phenomenon, and a study examining the impact of Black otherfathering would make an interesting study.

Lastly, in this study, the time it took to develop a relationship with African American students was expedited. A study specifically targeting time and the actions taken to expedite this process would be beneficial to the work. Tone of voice and trust

with African American families was another topic that ensued from this research and would make a compelling study.

Funding for Black Othermothers at K-12 Schools

Although there has been some debate about whether or not funding actually reaches those most in need (Brown, 2007; Chingos & Blagg, 2017), the work at Ara's can be funded in multiple ways. Title I funding was developed to ensure that underserved students have access to the same resources; thus, BOMs as cultural brokers for African American students and families can be funded with Title I funds. Also, this work also falls under family involvement of the local control federal funding (LCFF) priority 3 goal, which requires culturally relevant measures for increased parent voice and participation.

Message for School Leaders

For this work to be put into action, school leaders must be willing to understand their own cultural limits and embrace native experts, such as BOMs to provide African American students and families with what they need. We need leaders who are tenacious about student-centered practices that enable leaders to follow the leader of BOMs when addressing students, teachers, and when able, parents. The purpose of Black othermothering is to increase the connection Black students and families have at school. Rather than developing a deficit-based schema about disconnected Black parents, school leaders ought to examine their implicit cultural biases that may be off-putting to Black students and families and leverage BOMs to ensure that Black students and their families

feel connected, too. School principals and teachers are the key stakeholders who have the ability to influence the implementation of this work. Parents, by way of school site council, also have the ability to vote this work into their child's school.

Limitations and Strengths

Limitations

This research was relegated to the four teachers who most closely worked with Ara's, rather than including Black teachers and students who received support from Ara's. Also, it would have strengthened the study to include each site Ara's was supporting and to examine the BOMs outside of me, the owner of the agency being assessed. I did attempt to include a second BOM from another school site, but the teacher she primarily supported was unresponsive to solicitation for participation.

Strengths

The hypothetical responses from the Black parent surveys were validated by the actual relationships Ara's was able to develop with the White teachers and Black students within the classroom. This affirmed the need for BOM work from both the Black parent and White teacher perspective.

Reflection and Biases

I took a major risk when I chose to examine the work being done at my own consulting agency, Ara's Education Consulting, LLC. Contrary to the well-intentioned suggestions from faculty and my colleagues, I could see no other way to authentically engage in this dissertation process without being transparent about the work that I do

every day, my calling and life's passion. The fear of those who suggested I utilize another agency for my dissertation was that I could potentially research my way out of a job; if the data countered what I had been spent the last 3 years building from the ground up, I may be forced to close my doors. This was a risk I had to take. If Ara's was worth its salt, then it would be able to withstand this process. If not, then perhaps it was time to select another career. I had not come this far by fear and I was certainly not going to allow fear to take the driver's seat now.

For this cause, I approached my research with known biases and made every effort to ensure the data were valid, authentic, and reliable. When I initially proposed my research, I did not want to include Black parents in the qualitative interviews for two reasons: (a) due to Black history and research participants, I did not believe parents would feel comfortable participating in this process and (b) what did it matter to receive accolades from Black parents who had a positive relationship with Ara's? For this cause, I proposed an anonymous Black parent survey to be completed by Black parents who had not established a relationship with me and could speak hypothetically about how advocacy, relatedness, and care and concern could support their student and family. The teachers included in this study had positive experience with my agency; those who were not so welcoming of my work had little interaction with me and, thus, were not included.

When I initiated my doctoral studies, I was on a quest to support African American families with becoming more engaged in their children's learning. I wrote about this in my introduction and mention it here again. Through this process, I realized

that parental engagement is but one element to supporting the whole Black child in K-12. I also realized that by placing ownership on Black student underachievement on Black parents alone, I was contributing to the problem.

My experience in grade school was much different than that of many of the students I serve in my business. When I was in grade school, I had an engaged parent at home who was also known at my school, as she paid tuition for my sister and me and supported us with homework after hours. I attended private schools from preschool to 10th grade and though my parents divorced when I was 5 years old, my daddy remained active in my life. At nearly 37, I am still a daddy's girl. My personal experiences in K-12 and with parental engagement fit nicely in parental engagement models such as the Epstein model which has guided my own parenting. Unlike many of the students and families I serve, I acknowledge that I come from an element of privilege and choice where at times I have questions if I was "Black enough" to work for such a cause. I rest my hat on utilizing all of me to give back to my community in my own way.

Conclusion

These findings implicate the need for individuals who understand and are not intimidated nor fearful of Black people and Black culture within the K-12 system. How can one teach a child they fear or engage a parent they do not understand? Likewise, how are Black parents to feel comfortable in a system never designed with Blackness in mind? Despite the progress K-12 has made, the system never, ever intended for Black children to succeed. This system still exists today, and it is not difficult for one to ascertain when

they are unwelcomed. In K-12, these gestures of unwelcomeness are revealed through monolithic curriculum dominated by Whiteness, policies and regulations designed to meet the needs of white students and their families. Feelings of unwelcomeness are also manifested by a lack of teachers and leaders who reflect Black students and families. Though women are generally socialized to care and nurture others (Gilligan, 1982), Black women often exceed these social norms, which is why Black teachers effortlessly incorporate othermothering into their pedagogy.

In a school system heavily dominated by high-stakes testing, performance, and the numbers, these findings revealed that nurturance towards Black students is a precursor for connection to African American students and their families or as the old saying goes, “You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar.” These findings revealed that BOMs advocate, relate to, and show care and concern for African American students and families in organic and meaningful ways that benefit the teacher and student. In addition, African American/Black parents desire said support for themselves and their students.

Through relatedness and care and concern, BOMs expedited the amount of time it took for the White teachers included in this study to connect with their African American students and families. By simply being present, authentic, and consistent, the teachers interviewed in this research each expressed how their interaction with BOMs accelerated time it would generally take for teachers to connect with their Black students and families. With only 2 days per week at one school site, and 3 days per week at the other

school site, I was able to accomplish this emerging theme at both sites and with all four teachers. Ultimately, this resulted in teachers being able to connect with their students sooner, which meant that teaching, true teaching, was occurring prior to the Christmas break rather than February when at least two teachers shared that they typically discover a connection with their most challenging students. While all the teachers were confident that they could at some point gain the ears of their students, BOMs eased this process for everyone.

This is transformative work and long-term, this work has the ability to improve the connection with African American students and families nation-wide, and, ultimately, increase achievement in African American students. These results were accomplished by one BOM serving two school sites part-time; imagine the implications if every school had a designated BOM to increase the connection with Black students and families. Envision school sites that reflect the populations they serve by way of BOMs; school sites that feel more like home and where Black students thrive.

"If you plan for everyone, you plan for no one." While pursuing my graduate studies at Pepperdine University in 2013, one of my professors shared this statement with our cohort. The same is true today and especially as it relates to Black students and families. Black othermothering is a method of inclusion that enables Black students and families to feel at home while at school. When they see other Black women in authority, not only are they indirectly reminded of their mother, aunt, sister, or community member within the confines of their schools, this sends the message of yes, the system *is* for us, I

am supposed to be here and I will succeed! This is not only desired by Black parents; it was embraced by the White teachers in this study and a framework that can be duplicated to serve more Black students and families.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Survey

1. **How Would you Describe Yourself?**
    a. Black
    b. African American
    c. Black and African American
    d. Something Else
2. **I Have Children in the Following Grades (Check all that apply)**
    a. Elementary
    b. Middle School
    c. High School
    d. All of the Above
    e. None of These
3. **I believe my child or family has been discriminated against at school. If another Black mother or teacher was there in my absence, I believe my child would have received the support they deserved.**
    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly Disagree
    f. Comments

4. **Community Cultural Wealth: Othermothering, advocacy and relatedness to families. How much do you agree with the following statement 5 being fully agree, 1 do not agree at all?**
    a. It would bring me comfort to know that there was another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity at my child's school who was available to advocate for my child in my absence.
    b. I believe advocacy is needed for my student.
    c. I believe advocacy is needed for parents.
    d. I would be more comfortable talking to someone who reflects my ethnicity and culture at my child's school than a teacher or principal of another ethnicity.
    e. If there was someone who reflected my ethnicity and culture at my child's school to help navigate educational procedures regarding my children, hear and respond to complaints and to provide other support resources, I would be more comfortable talking to this person.
    f. I would welcome the all of the above regardless of the person's cultural or ethnic identity.

5. **Ethics of Care: Othermothering and expression of care to families. How much do you agree with the following statement 5 being fully agree, 1 do not agree at all?**
    a. It would bring me comfort to know that another mother of my family's culture ethnicity provided emotional support for my child.
    b. If my child is having a bad day, it would be nice to know that another mother of my family's culture and ethnicity would be available to nurture them at school.
    c. I view other mothers as sisters of our people and would welcome their affection on my child at school.
    d. I would welcome the all of the above regardless of the person's cultural or ethnic identity.

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocols

"Yes, It's For Us: An Examination of Othermothering a Framework for Cultural Brokering for African American Families

Interview Protocol: Parents/Guardians

1. What grade is your child in?
2. How long has your child been attending his/her school?
3. Have you at times felt as though your student or family was targeted or misunderstood at school?
4. Have you ever desired advocacy and representation for your child while at school?

RQ#1: Connectedness

5. In your experience, has Ara's increased your connection to your child's teacher, administrator or school? If so, how?

RQ#1A: Advocacy

6. In your experience has Ara's spoken up for you or your student and/or provided you with inside information (i.e. information related to life within the classroom – good or bad) that benefited your child and your understanding of school nuances?
    1. Do you believe such advocacy has impacted the student's connection to school?

RQ#2B: Relatedness

7. In your experience, has Ara's interacted with you and/or your child in ways that seemed specific to African American culture?
    1. Do you believe such interactions have an impact on the students' connection to the school?

RQ#2C: Care and Concern

8. In your experience, how has Ara's exemplified care and concern for you or your child?
    1. Do you believe this level of care and concern has an impact on the student's connection to the school?

What's Missing?

9. What haven't I asked that I should have asked?

Research Questions:

In what ways has Black othermothering impacted school connectedness to African American families?

1. **How has Black othermothering impacted advocacy for African American families?**
2. **How has Black othermothering impacted relatedness to African American families?**
3. **How has Black othermothering impacted expression of care to African American families?**

Interview Protocol: Teachers/Administrators

1. What grade do you teach?
2. If junior high, what course(s) do you teach?
3. How long have you been teaching?

RQ#1: Connectedness

4. In your experience, has Ara's increased your connection to your African American students and/or families? If so, how?
    If *you* do not necessarily feel more connected to your African American students, from your observation, how has the presence of Ara's supported the *students'* connection to school?

RQ#1A: Advocacy

5. In your experience, in what ways has Ara's spoken up for African American students and families and/or provided you with inside information (i.e. information related to life outside of the classroom – good or bad) that benefited the student, your understanding of his/her/they background and possible barriers and overall classroom environment?
    Do you believe such advocacy has impacted the student's connection to school?

RQ#2B: Relatedness

6. In your experience, have you witnessed Ara's interact with students in ways that seemed specific to African American culture?
    Do you believe such interactions have an impact on the students' connection to the school?

RQ#2C: Care and Concern

7. In your experience, how has Ara's exemplified care and concern for African American students and families?
    Do you believe this level of care and concern has an impact on the student's connection to the school?

What's Missing?

8. What haven't I asked that I should have asked?

Research Questions:

In what ways has Black othermothering impacted school connectedness to African American families?

1. **How has Black othermothering impacted advocacy for African American families?**
2. **How has Black othermothering impacted relatedness to African American families?**
3. **How has Black othermothering impacted expression of care to African American families?**

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