RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of Education in the Parenting Practices of Black Parents of Preschoolers

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Few empirical studies have examined within group differences of Black parenting practices. This study aimed to identify the role of educational attainment in predicting within group differences on two parenting practices associated with academic achievement: home literacy promotion and parent involvement. A sample of 103 Black parents with preschool-aged children was recruited from private urban child care centers. Parents reported a wide range of family financial resources and educational attainment. Parents who attained a Bachelor's degree or more reported significantly higher home literacy promotion than those with some college experience or a high school diploma. No differences were detected in home literacy promotion between parents with some college or a high school diploma. Teacher reports of parent involvement did not significantly differ as a function of parental education. Implications for parent engagement are discussed.

Keywords: preschool; parenting; minorities

The Black American community has undergone significant changes in the last few decades, especially in the areas of education. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2013) between 1970 and 2013, the percentage of Black people over the age of 25 with a Bachelor's degree or higher more than tripled, from 6.1 to 22%. In that time, the percentage of Black

women attaining a Bachelor's degree or higher also increased from 5.6 to 23.4%. The rate of Black women with a four year degree, historically a lower percentage than their male counterparts until the mid-1990's, is steadily increasing. This increase in post-secondary educational attainment in the Black community, particularly for women who are often the primary caregivers of children, may hold implications for achievement-related parenting practices. In fact, during this time, the Nations Report Card has also shown improvements in achievement for Black children (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). The gap in reading proficiency between Black American children and other racial/ethnic groups is decreasing. However, these rates are still significantly lower for Black children (NCES, 2011). In addition to achievement, there have been noteworthy declines in high school drop-out rates, but again, a racial gap remains. Although the percentage of Black adolescents dropping out of school has decreased from 27.9% to 9.3% in the last few decades, the percentage is still almost two times greater than that of European American students (US Department of Education, 2010). Parenting or the home environment has been identified in the literature as a factor that contributes to the observed ethnic/racial achievement gaps (Brooks-Gunn & Markum, 2005).

The home environment is also often identified as a predictor of academic success (Baumrind, 1991; Brody & Flor, 1998; Clark, 1983; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Multiple proximal processes that promote young children's academic skills are operating in the home environment (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000), including home enrichment practices and parent involvement in school (Morrison, Bachman, & Connor, 2005; Taylor, Clayton, & Rowley, 2004). Parents' provision of a home learning environment that includes learning materials, rich language exposure, and assistance with academic tasks has repeatedly surfaced as an important predictor of children's academic competence (Taylor et al., 2004). Observed and parent-reported measures of the home learning environment are often positively associated with achievement in preschool (Leventhal, Martin, & Brooks-Gunn, 2004) and early elementary school (Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997). Likewise, a meta-analysis by Fan and Chen (2001) found moderate associations between parent involvement and academic skills during preschool and kindergarten. The family investment model (FIM) proposes that these parenting practices mediate the association between socioeconomic factors (e.g. parent education, family income) and academic achievement (Conger & Donellan, 2007). Thus, the increase in educational attainment for Black women is expected to promote cognitively stimulating and academically enriching home environment practices (Bingham, 2007; Conger & Donellan, 2007; Foster, 2002; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Taylor et al., 2008; Weigel, Martin & Bennett, 2006).

Predictors of Parenting Practices

Parenting practices are influenced by several factors, such as the psychological functioning of the parent, parent personality, parent stress, and parent social support (Belsky, 1984; Cox, Puckering, Pound, & Mills, 1987; Vondra & Belsky, 1993). There are also several social context variables that contribute to parenting practices, including the family culture. The culture of a group or family includes shared traditions, values, beliefs, and practices. Families of the same socioeconomic status (SES), across varying racial/ethnic groups have displayed similar beliefs, values, and practices in the home (Peters, 1997; Serpell, Sonnenschein, Baker, & Ganapathy, 2002), suggesting that SES is intertwined with family culture. As parents move into new SES

groups, parenting practices change and the existing family culture may be renegotiated (Peters, 1997).

In general, when examining parenting practices, broader contextual variables such as race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status are associated with heterogeneity in parenting practices (Baumrind, 1972; Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Garcia-Coll, 2001; Brody & Flor, 1998; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Race and socioeconomic status seem pervasive to the discussion of family culture, parenting, and the overall home environment. In the last two decades, there have been large bodies of work examining these features among ethnic/racial minorities, specifically Black American families.

Parenting among black parents.   Black parents face multiple challenges, similar to other minority groups. Black parents have to prepare their child for a potentially antagonistic society that may interfere with their achievements, but also make certain that their children believe in their ability to be successful (Lawson & Sanders-Lawson, 2002; McAdoo, 2002). In addition to preparing their children for an environment with discrimination and prejudice, Black parents are faced with socializing their child to function in their home culture as well as the majority culture (Garcia Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Peters, 2002). The incongruence between the home and majority culture often presents itself in school settings. Unfortunately, Black children are overly diagnosed with mental health disorders and placed in special education services at higher rates than their non-Black peers (Anderson, Boyd-Franklin, & Draper, 2002). School personnel may misinterpret the reason for student behaviors or difficulty in grasping concepts because of cultural discontinuity. Also the family structure parenting arrangements in Black families may differ from other groups. The percentage of single parent households is high in the Black community compared to other groups (US Census Bureau, 2013a). Fifty-five percent of Black children live in single parent households compared to 21% of White children and 13% of Asian children. Also confounding the research of Black parents is the disproportionate amount of Black families living in poverty (US Census Bureau, 2013b). The percentage of families living in poverty and the impact of poverty in the Black community is often the focus of past research efforts (Garcia Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1995).

Financial hardship.   Since a great deal of poverty research has been conducted with Black and White families living in poverty, the effects of poverty on parenting practices are well documented. Many have found that when family economic conditions worsen, parents experience higher levels of stress and depression symptoms (Cain & Combs-Orme, 2005; Elder, Eccles, Ardelt, & Lord, 1995; Jackson, 1998; McLoyd, 1990). Increases in economic pressure and depression symptoms have been associated with lower levels of parent efficacy (Elder et al., 1995). Parent efficacy or a parents' sense of competence is positively associated with parent involvement in their child's life and the parent-child relationship (Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Beyond parent efficacy, the presence of parental depression symptoms have been associated with a less cognitively stimulating home environment; depressed parents were less likely to read or sing with their child, and were less optimistic or confident about their child's future academic success (Bigatti, Cronan, & Anaya, 2001). The effects of parental depression symptoms are particularly concerning for young children since they are more dependent on parents (Lovejoy, Graczyk, O'Hare, & Neuman, 2000). Depressed parents with young children were less responsive and more likely to disengage (Bingham, 2007; Cox et al., 1987). The results found in the literature expose the potential negative effects of financial hardship on parenting practices.

Much of the research on Black American families has focused on low-income samples and the detrimental effects of poverty on family functioning (Garcia Coll et al., 1995; McLoyd, 1990). However, if higher education brings higher income, the increase in income could influence the resources available for home literacy promotion.

Educational attainment.   An increase in post-secondary attainment has occurred annually in the Black community for decades. In 2013, 22% of Black Americans had a Bachelors' degree or more and 23% of Black women had attained a Bachelors' degree or more, a 16% and 18% increase, respectively since 1970. As Black parents experienced increased educational attainment compared to previous generations, potential within group differences in parenting practices should be examined. Although there are a few studies that have focused on middle income and affluent Black families (McAdoo, 1981; McAdoo, 1995; Ogbu, 2003), most studies of Black families focus on low SES families (e.g. low income and low education) (Garcia Coll et al., 1995). However, in the Black community, especially for Black women, increases in education may not necessarily translate into immediate economic or socio-cultural change (Kewal Ramani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007; McAdoo, 1981). This may be due to entry into fields with lower wages, timing of degree completion, or obstacles associated with upward mobility in the Black community. As Black people move up socioeconomically they may rely on a social support network (McAdoo, 1981). This network provides assistance and support but also requires giving back to others, which may limit the accumulation of wealth. Because of the complex relationship between educational attainment and financial resources, variation within Black parenting practices and/or the home environment is often missed.

Greater years of parent education are strongly associated with cognitively stimulating home environments, education preparedness, and positive educational outcomes for children (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Greater years of education predict higher vocabulary and receptive language skills for a child (Bingham, 2007; Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Parents with more years of education tend to believe that literacy is important during the preschool years and enjoy engaging in literacy activities with their child (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006). Weigel and colleagues (2006) also found that parents that enjoyed reading were more likely to view early literacy as important. Among Black families, if increases in education transpire without comparable increases in financial resources, educational attainment may be a more useful predictor of parenting practices related to academic achievement.

Finally, the parent role extends beyond the internal home interactions; the parent-school partnership is also influential in academic outcomes for children. Young children with parents that have frequent contact or communication with the school perform better socially and academically (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). Unfortunately, even when parents of varying SES are equally involved, the parent-school partnership quality may differ between SES groups. For example, middle class Black families have reported a school culture that encourages their input, whereas working class or poor Black families perceived schools as resistant to their involvement (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). If the school experiences of parents with fewer economic resources or less education are negative, they may be less likely to stay involved and disengage.

The Present Study

This current study focuses on Black parents with varying levels of educational attainment. Higher parent educational attainment potentially changes the culture of the home and family, which could result in greater parental investment in young children's home literacy promotion, as well as school involvement (Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Foster, 2002). This paper will focus on the influence of parent educational attainment on two parenting practices associated with preschoolers' school readiness skills: home literacy and parent involvement (Clark, 1983; McWayne et al., 2004; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Specifically, the major research aim of the present study was to examine the association between parent educational attainment and parenting practices related to preschoolers' school readiness skills, namely home literacy environment and parent involvement, in a primarily low- and middle-SES sample of Black parents.

METHOD

Participants

Parents were recruited over a two year period, from 28 urban community-based child care centers, located in primarily areas with high poverty rates within a mid-Atlantic city. All but one of the centers ($n = 27$) was participating in a state early childhood quality initiative program at the onset of this study. The unenrolled center was engaged in the application process during this study and is currently enrolled. Parents were recruited during afternoon and evening hours at the child care center. The original sample includes 289 participants from 3 cohorts of parents with children 4 to 5 years of age, including 133 Black parents. Approximately 16% of Black families ($n = 22$) left the child care center prior to completion of the study; a few of the reasons provided include loss of child care funding, a family move to a new area, and maternity leave. This attrition rate is comparable to other studies of low-income, urban families of young children, such as the Three-City study (Bachman, Coley, & Carrano, 2011). Thus, the final analysis sample includes 103 Black parents. As shown in Table 1, the educational attainment of parents included 33% high school diploma or less, 45% some college but less than a Bachelor's degree, 23% Bachelor's degree or more; the average years of education was 14.5 years. The partnership status includes 23% married, 10% cohabitating, 19% in a romantic relationship, 48% single. The average income-to-needs ratio was 1.52, indicating a relatively low-income sample (Boushey, Brocht, Gundersen, & Bernstein, 2001), but the range was of 0 to 4.60. The median age was 30, with a range of 20 to 50 years of age.

Measures

Parent and family characteristics.   Primary caregivers (96% mothers, 3% fathers, 1% legal guardians), completed questionnaires via mail, in-home interview, or telephone interview. The primary caregiver reported family demographics that include years of education, highest degree attained, parent age, relationship status, number of household members, and family income. Many of the parent and family characteristics collected may also contribute to the

differences in parenting practices across varying levels of education; therefore they were included as covariates in the regression models. Parents reported on partnership status (0 = *cohabiting, dating/relationship, and married*, 1 = *single*), and years of education completion, with a range of 10 to 23 years. Parents also reported their highest degree attained (1 = *High school diploma or less*, 2 = *Above high school diploma but less than a Bachelor's degree*, 3 = *Bachelor's degree or more*). The "Bachelor's degree or more" group served as the reference category in analyses. Parents reported the number of children currently living in their household, the number of adults, and their total monthly household income. Based on these data, income-to-needs ratios were calculated for each family by dividing the total household income by the federal poverty threshold for the appropriate family size.

In addition to parent and family demographics, the parents' psychological functioning and perceived relationship with their child are important covariates that may be related to differences in parenting practices. Parents completed the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale which contains 20 items which assess physical and emotional symptoms of depression (CES-D, Radloff, 1977). Parents rated the items on a 4-point scale the degree to which they experienced symptoms in the past seven days (0 = *rarely or none at all*, 1 = *some or a little of the time*, 2 = *occasionally or a moderate amount of the time*, 3 = *most or all of the time*). The composite score was calculated by summing the responses for all 20 items, and adequate reliability was obtained for this sample (α = .88). Higher scores reflect greater depressive symptomatology. Parents also completed a parent-child relationship scale that draws items from the Conflict/Anger scale (Pianta, 1994). The original scale, intended for teachers to rate their relationship with students, consisted of 12 items; the scale used in this paper includes six of those items. Parents rated on a 5-point scale the degree to which each item applied to their parent-child relationship (1 = *definitely does not apply*, 2 = *does not apply somewhat*, 3 = *neutral/not sure*, 4 = *applies somewhat*, 5 = *definitely applies*). The parent-child relationship scale contains items such as "This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other", and "Dealing with this child drains my energy". The composite score was calculated by averaging the responses of the six items, and adequate reliability was calculated for this sample (α =.71). Higher scores reflect more conflict and discomfort between parent and child.

Home literacy environment.   The overall literacy promoting environment was measured using an inventory of items from Griffin and Morrison's (1997) home literacy environment inventory. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on seven items of the Griffin and Morrison (1997) measure of home literacy environment using principal components analysis (PCA) with a promax rotation. Based on the EFA results and theory, the final measure included 4 items (i.e., number of children's books in the home, frequency of parent reading, frequency of parent-child reading, number of books in the home). The composite score was calculated by averaging the responses (responses transformed to a 3 point scale 0 - 2) of the four items, and in this sample, internal reliability for this inventory was modest (α = .60). Higher scores reflect more literacy rich home environments (e.g., more frequent joint literacy activities and print resources).

Parent involvement.   Preschool teachers reported on parent involvement, which was measured using the Parent-Teacher Involvement Questionnaire (Miller-Johnson, Maumary-Gremaud, & The Conduct Disorders Research Group (1995).An exploratory factor analysis was performed on 6 items from this measure of parent involvement using PCA with a promax

rotation. Four items were retained, including informal in-person communication with teacher, parent initiated telephone calls, parent asked questions and/or gave suggestions, as well as frequency of parent-child home activities. Teachers rated on a 7-point scale the frequency of items throughout the year (1 = *never*, 2 = *1-2 times per year*, 3 = *3-4 times per year*, 4 = *about once a month*, 5 = *almost every week*, 6 = *more than once a week*, 7 = *almost every day*). The composite score was calculated by averaging the responses of the four items, and adequate reliability was detected for this sample (α = .77); higher scores reflect greater involvement at home and at school.

Procedures

Informed consent was obtained from each parent during afternoon pick up times at each child care center in the fall (September-October). Eligibility to participate was based on the age of the child enrolled in the preschool classroom; all children were required to be four by November 1st. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire by telephone with a trained interviewer for approximately 45-60 minutes. If multiple attempts to conduct a phone interview were unsuccessful, a small group of parents completed the questionnaire at home and returned it to the preschool teacher. Overall, the parent interview completion rate was 91 percent, with 84% of parents completing the telephone interview, and 16% of parents completing the questionnaires at home. Teachers reported on parents' involvement in the spring (April-June).

Analytic Strategy

The first level of analysis involved the examination of correlations among the study variables. Subsequent multiple regression analysis was conducted to address the research aim of this study. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to predict achievement-related parenting practices (home literacy environment and parent involvement) by parent education, adjusting for parent age, parent relationship status, household income-to-needs ratio, parent-child conflict, and parent depression symptoms. Model 1 includes all the covariates, and Model 2 adds parent education to address the research aim and assess the unique contribution of educational attainment in predicting parenting practices.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for the predictor and outcome variables are reported in table 1. The sample was predominately low-income as indicated by the mean income-to-needs ratio of 1.54, but the sample also includes middle income participants. Approximately 20% of the sample was above the threshold for low-income status, with an income-to-needs ratio greater than 2.00 (Boushey et al., 2001). In addition, one-quarter of the parents (approximately 24%), reported depression symptoms in the clinical range (i.e., score of 16 or above). For the outcome variables, on average parents were engaging in some literacy promoting activities with a mean of 1.24 on a scale from 0 to 2 and were very involved in the child care center with a mean of 4.44 on a scale from 1 to 7. Correlations were computed for all variables to examine bivariate associations (see Table 1).

Parental age was also positively correlated with parent involvement in school related activities. Attainment of a Bachelor's degree or more was positively correlated with income-to-needs ratio, parent involvement, and home literacy practices. Additionally, single-parent relationship status was negatively correlated with income-to-needs ratio, and positively correlated with depression symptoms.

TABLE 1
Correlation Matrix and Descriptives of Predictor Variables and Parent Outcome Variables (n = 103)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Parent and Family Demographics								
1. Age								
2. In a Relationship	-.133							
3. Income-to-Needs	.266**	-.327**						
4. Parent Depression	-.116	.234*	-.129					
5. Parent-child relationship	-.126	.068	.112	.179†				
Parent Education[1]								
6. Bachelor's degree or more	.227*	-.178†	.382***	-.082	.130			
Parent Outcomes								
7. Home literacy	.183†	.014	.231*	-.108	-.006	.395***		
8. Parent Involvement	.233*	.043	.127	-.145	-.098	.252*	.235	
Mean	30.89	.48	1.52	10.36	1.80	.22	1.24	4.44
SD	6.53		1.08	8.69	.65		.48	1.18
Min	20		0	0	1.00		.25	1.00
Max	50		4.60	39	3.71		2.00	6.75

†$p<.10$. *$p<.05$. **$p<.01$. ***$p<.001$
Note. [1]Spearman's correlation coefficients presented for parent education.

Associations between Maternal Education and Parenting

Model 1 included parent and family characteristics to predict home literacy and parent involvement. Model 2 added parent education to predict home literacy and parent involvement, and standardized regression coefficients are reported (see Table 2). In Model 1, parent and family characteristics did not significantly predict parent-reported home literacy promotion or teacher-reported parent involvement.

After the parent education variables were entered in Model 2, the total variance explained in home literacy promotion was 21%, F (7, 95) = 3.633, p=.002. Parent education explained 12% of the variance in home literacy, after controlling for parent and family characteristics, F-change (2, 95) = 7.417, p =.001. Parents with a high school diploma or less, and those with some college but less than a Bachelor's degree had significantly lower home literacy scores than those with a Bachelor's degree or more. A post hoc comparison revealed no significant differences between parents with a high school diploma or less and parents with some college experience B=.18, t(93)=1.69, p = .095, sr^2=.023. In contrast, no maternal education differences were detected in teachers' reports of parent involvement.

TABLE 2
Predictors of Home Literacy and Parent Involvement ($n = 103$)

	Home Literacy Environment						Parent Involvement					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2		
	B	*SE B*	*ß*	*B*	*SE B*	*ß*	*B*	*SE B*	*ß*	*B*	*SE B*	*ß*
Block 1: Parent and family characteristics												
Age	.009	.007	.127	.009	.007	.127	.036	.019	.197†	.036	.019	.200†
In a Relationship	.122	.101	.128	.129	.095	.135	.337	.250	.141	.338	.253	.142
Income-to-Needs Ratio	.105	.050	.230*	.042	.050	.092	.131	.123	.115	.075	.132	.065
Depression	-.005	.006	-.091	-.003	.005	-.053	-.017	.014	-.127	-.015	.014	-.114
Parent-child relationship	-.010	.075	-.014	-.048	.071	-.066	-.139	.185	-.076	-.178	.188	-.097
Block 2: Parent education												
High school or below				-.356	.135	-.350*				-.297	.358	-.117
Some College				-.471	.122	-.489*				-.445	.324	-.185
Adjusted R^2	.041			.153**			.046†			.045		
F	1.872			3.633			1.974			1.681		
ΔR^2				.123**						.019		

Note: Bachelor's degree or more is the reference group for parent education. Parent age, relationship status, family income-to-needs ratio, maternal depression, and parent-child relationship were included in all models as covariates.
$^\dagger p<.1$; $^*p<.05$; $^{**}p<.01$.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to assess the association between educational attainment and parenting practices that support children's early academic achievement in a sample of Black parents of preschoolers. The results of this study suggest that the attainment of at least a Bachelor's degree is associated with higher home literacy promotion than completing high school or some college. The findings of this study support previous research assessing maternal education and the home environment in more diverse or White samples, such that higher levels of maternal education are often associated with more cognitively stimulating home environments (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Past literature has examined the role of education on parenting practices among Black parents; however the samples often lack participants with higher education (Brody & Flor, 1998; Roberts, Jurgens, Burchinal, 2005). In contrast, family income was not a significant predictor of these home enrichment practices. Although the income-to-needs ratio initially positively predicted the home literacy environment, it was reduced to non-significance after educational attainment was added to the model. This finding is important because income is dynamic, and may increase or decrease over time, but educational attainment can only increase. Thus, the investments that Black parents make in the home environment as a result of their own educational attainment may be more stable than income-based investments over time.

Teachers and professionals may need to provide greater support to parents with low levels of educational attainment. To improve the quality of the home environment, parents will need to feel confident in their ability to engage in cognitively stimulating activities and support children's development and learning (Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Early childhood education (ECE) professionals can support parent efficacy using multiple methods, some of which include informally modeling for parents (vicarious experience), providing simple steps/activities (allowing for mastery experience), and providing feedback that highlights parent strengths (verbal persuasion) (Bandura, 1997). Modeling may occur with a parent observation of the ECE professional and child while in an ECE setting, on a home visit, or by sending a short video clip of the child interacting with the ECE professional through email or text. In fact, an evaluation of Early Head Start found that families receiving center based care in combination with home visits were more likely to show improvements in the home learning environment and child developmental outcomes (Love et al., 2005). Partnering with parents and modeling are key elements of an ECE program that incorporates center care with home visits. Additionally, ECE professionals can provide simple tips and activities (e.g., prompt a child to predict what happens next when reading), and verbally acknowledge parent strengths during drop off and pick up times.

Although the attainment of a Bachelor's degree in this study was meaningful in detecting differences in home literacy practices, the same was not true for parent involvement. Other studies of parent involvement with Black families have found that parents of children that are successful academically tend to have a different parent-school relationship than those that have a child that is struggling academically (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). Parents of children that are struggling may have frequent contact in response to a concern or problem. For this reason, both frequency of contact and additional information about the reason or quality the parent-school relationship, are important dimensions of parent involvement to consider. The parent involvement measure used in this study only captured frequency data. The parents in this

study with varying levels of education did not differ significantly in their frequency of parent involvement, but the quality or purpose of the involvement may have differed.

Moreover, while the early childhood education (ECE) teachers did not differentiate involvement as a function of maternal education, they did perceive older Black parents as more involved in their child's preschool education than younger Black parents. It is possible that valued parental resources in an ECE setting differ from K-12 settings. In a K-12 setting the socioeconomic status of the family is a valued resource and assists parents in navigating the system (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987). In contrast, in an ECE setting the age of the parent, or parenting experience, may be a resource that is valued and influences the parent-school partnership. Moreover, cultural overlap may exist between the ECE setting and the parenting practices of older parents. Parents that are older use a more child centered approach to discipline (Kelly, Power, & Wimbush, 1992). A child centered approach to discipline would be consistent with the discipline practices of center based care with National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation or participating in a state quality initiative. Additional age related differences in parenting have been found within the Black community. Older mothers reported higher parental efficacy and a greater sense of control than younger mothers (Stevens, 1988). Parents with a greater sense of competence or confidence in their parenting ability also tend to be more involved in their child's education (Elder et al., 1995). If this is the case, then ECE providers may need to initiate relationship building with young parents and encourage their involvement.

Overall, in order for ECE professionals to be successful in their efforts to support cognitively stimulating home environments and parent involvement, they need to establish a strong relationship with parents. Teachers are in the best position to initiate and foster a relationship with parents, but unfortunately they often lack the skills needed to do so (Caspe et al., 2011; Epstein, 2001). Higher education programs training early childhood professionals and professional development groups need to incorporate more extensive training on partnering with families, with an emphasis on diversity within racial/ethnic minority families. Programs that serve Black families should recognize the heterogeneity within the Black community, and more specifically, the variation in educational attainment within low-income Black families.

Over the last four decades there have been steady increases in educational attainment without comparable increases in income for Black Americans, but the research continues to overlook variation within low-income Black families. More within-group research on Black families is needed, along with a better understanding of when educational attainment should be expected to promote greater educational investments in the home environment (e.g., during enrollment or after graduation). Further research with a larger and more socioeconomically diverse may better distinguish the roles of increased educational and financial resources in parenting practices among Black Americans. Research examining the potential influence of educational attainment and school readiness skills outside of early literacy (e.g., numeracy, self-regulation) among Black families would also broaden our understanding of the potential impact of educational attainment on children's early development.

Limitations and Strengths

Several limitations of the current findings should be noted, including the reliance on cross-sectional data and a single reporter for both predictor and outcome measures. Activities within

the home, income, and educational attainment may change over time but because of the cross-sectional design, changes over time are not measured which limits causal inference. In addition, there is potential for single-reporter bias with the measures. Multiple data sources for the home literacy environment measure may have been useful; however there is some concern with using examiner-rated observations to assess Black parenting practices. Observations of Black parenting may not be valid when the observers do not belong to the group being observed (Gonzales, Cauce, & Mason, 1996). In this study, parents reported on the home literacy environment which eliminates the possibility of misinterpretation by an observer. Cultural bias may however, still exist for the parent involvement measure. Teachers were the sole reporters, and since 28% were not ethnically/racially matched with parent participants, their perceptions of parents may have influenced their observations and reporting of parent behaviors. Lastly, this sample does not represent all Black parents of preschool children, but instead highlights a group within the Black community that is often missing from research (low-income families with high levels of education).

Conclusions

Future studies of Black families should include both measures of family financial resources and educational attainment in the analysis model to gain a better understanding of the influence of multiple aspects SES, independently and jointly, on parenting practices. A significant number of Black families meet criteria for low-income status but have achieved high levels of educational attainment. Because in past literature there is a lack of variability, reporting, and/or inclusion of both educational attainment and financial resources in analyses, within group differences in the Black community are often missed. Attainment of a Bachelor's degree may not always be associated with more economic resources for Black Americans, but it appears to still support a cognitively stimulating, literacy rich environment that promotes young children's academic success.

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