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WHAT SHALL I TELL MY CHILDREN WHO ARE BLACK? AN OVERVIEW OF PARENT EDUCATION RESEARCH DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA AND BEYOND

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I begin by noting that from the perspective of this nation as a whole, at least one author reminds us that,

> Common themes in ideas about rearing infants and young children in the United States can be traced from the nation's beginnings to the present day. These themes include a strong concern about child rearing; belief that human beings are perfectible through better child rearing; an eagerness by parents to listen to the advice of 'experts'; a belief that infants and young children should be educated in schools or day-care centers by experts, competing with the belief that infants belong at home with their mothers; and a commitment to social reform, competing with the conviction that families should be autonomous. These themes provide a background for contemporary research, political controversy, and future discussion concerning how children should be reared (Clarke-Stewart, 1998, pp. 101-102).

This orientation applies to the larger American culture, and is not the subject of this paper. Rather, in this paper I argue that during the Civil Rights era, during that time of great concern regarding Black American voting and citizenship rights, ideas about rearing young Black children in the United States were explicitly introduced to guide parent education programs. Early emphases on deficits linked to educability, shifted to themes associated with parental empowerment, ecological and cultural sensitivity, social supports for family strengths, and most recently, parental involvement and empowerment, particularly vis-à-vis urban school reform. The themes, also inevitably political in nature, provide background to parent education research focusing on Black children. Given political and social conditions in Black communities, expert opinion on parental behavior and "parents as teachers" of children competes strongly with the conviction that outsiders have little understanding of the realities confronted by Black families. I conclude by discussing what I believe the continuing challenge is to educability, voting and citizenship that parents of Black children must confront in the near future, notably, parental empowerment.

The Moynihan Report

I was just a graduate student in the Committee on Human Development at the
University of Chicago when the Moynihan Report was issued in 1965 (Patterson, 2001). I had just completed a Masters degree in the aging area, during which time I was part of a research team that investigated the effects of institutionalization on an aged Jewish population in Chicago. I decided, after completing the study, that I wanted to research a different population for my doctoral dissertation, specifically, Black children and their parents. In truth, at the point of that decision, after two and a half years in graduate school, I was revisiting an interest area that I had initially abandoned upon entry in 1962. I had dropped my initial interest when a staff member on an earlier research project had indicated in what seemed to me at the time to be the same breath that the project was seeking "lower class Negroes" to participate in the study while asking how my great-grandmother (who raised me, and whom she did not know) was doing. Whatever the inquirer's true intentions, from that conversation I believed her to be a person I could not trust, and so I decided against joining the earlier project funded through the research of my mentor, Robert D. Hess. I think discussions about the Moynihan Report with fellow students brought me back to my initial interest area and, thanks to new funding support received from the US Office of Economic Opportunity by Hess at his University of Chicago-based Urban Child Study Center, I could become engaged in research with one of the founding Head Start programs without associating with the particular staff member who had personally offended me (Slaughter, 1969; Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001).

Entitled *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, the Moynihan report was issued while Daniel P. Moynihan was on leave from Harvard University and serving in the US Department of Labor. Using census track data from the years1920-1960, the report documented a trend over time towards increasing numbers of single-parent families in both Black and White communities. However, within Black communities, the incidence of single-parent families (21%) was nearly three times that of

White families (8%). Moynihan, building upon a thesis originally developed by Black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, argued that children being reared in single-parent families were, by definition, at greater risk for poor school adjustment and achievement. Being at risk for educability led in turn to a poorly prepared labor force pool, and therefore, reasoned the author, the situation provided a clear impetus for government intervention to provide supports for improved family life, specifically, improved parenting. In this framework, the emphasis is on compensating for cumulative deficits by getting children ready for school when they are from communities in which there are high numbers of single-parent families (McLoyd, 1998; Patterson, 2001).

What a different time that was! Almost without exception, the nation had undisputed faith in the quality of urban schools, inclusive of their ability to educate all children, and the utility and potential of quality research. Few disagreed with the "facts" of the Moynihan report. Rather, disagreements emerged from interpretations of the "facts." Moynihan was perceived by Blacks and many Whites as having targeted and blamed the victims of racial, economic, and social injustice for their own conditions. Middle class (and aspiring middle class) Black family members, the group that was then spearheading the civil rights movement for equity and social justice for all Black families, were especially enraged. The framework regarding Black educability provided a context for academics to engage the discussions and debates, pro and con, of Black achievement in the United States. It also provided a socially acceptable rationale for early intervention programs with young Black children and their parents, of which Head Start is undoubtedly the best known today, originating as it did in 1965 as a comprehensive early childhood intervention program designed to compensate for potential cumulative deficits experienced by lower income children prior to school entry.

Intervention for Educability

My involvement and research with the nation's first 8-week summer Head Start program in 1965 fueled some enduring research-related questions in my career and solidified my belief that empirical social research can never be sufficiently "objective" to extricate itself from contemporary social and political policies. My generation learned that selection of the problem, identification of the conceptual frameworks, and methodologies inevitably reflect intended or unintended biases that are not merely scientific problems linked to concepts and methods of inquiry. They are problems with social and political ramifications that the ethical researcher is duty-bound to respect. Nonetheless, I continued to believe that, given appreciation of its limitations, scientific research could be a valuable tool for learning about the world in which we live.

The major question I posed was in the domain of the contribution of social class
or social status to children's educability(Davis, 1948; Hess, 1970). Given average social status differences in children's achievement, what could be made of individual child adjustment /achievement differences within lower income (social status) families at children's kindergarten entry? The Head Start population entering kindergarten in Evanston, Illinois seemed an ideal sample to study this issue since the school system enjoyed an especially good reputation and the Evanston Black community met lower income criteria (In fact, in 1965, middle class Blacks could not find suitable housing in Evanston, due to *de facto* segregation; most lived in the city of Chicago, commuting to work in Evanston as teachers, social workers, etc.). For the record, I found individual differences in reported maternal behaviors within the 90-subject Head Start sample that were positively correlated with children's achievement/adjustments during their first kindergarten year(Slaughter, 1969). Based on existing child development literature, I had theorized that differences in maternal behaviors within lower income Black communities based upon perceived sensitivity to the child's unique qualities, closeness to the child, and structuring of the child's home environment, would favorably impact children's early school achievement inclusive of IQ performance scores, teacher ratings, and Metropolitan readiness tests. I was right of course, and therefore, I completed my doctoral thesis five and a half years after I entered the program at the University of Chicago, inclusive of a double major in human development and clinical psychology.

The tradition in Head Start research has continued until the present; improved sampling and methods exist, but the basic approach is the same. For example, I recently stated in a Senate briefing (Slaughter-Defoe, 2003) on the subject that D'Elio, O'Brien, and Vaden-Kierman
(2003) reported research on the relationship of family and parental characteristics to children's cognitive and social development in Head Start. In a non-random sample of 2,573 Head Start children, both risk (maternal depression; exposure to violence, including domestic violence; involvement with criminal justice system) and protective (family activities; family support in Head Start) factors presumed associated with children's development were studied. Results of this important study indicate that the degree of parental involvement in Head Start, parental experience at Head Start, and parental satisfaction with Head Start can serve as moderator variables to attenuate the otherwise predictable adverse effects of family risk variables on early childhood cognitive and social-behavioral outcomes. These variables made a contribution to more favorable child outcomes even when parent education, income and employment, child gender, age, ethnicity, and frequency of parental reading to the child were controlled. The researchers concluded that Head Start is best viewed as a protective factor, and that it is important to understand the social and mental health challenges facing families in poverty when considering how best to prepare their children for school. Importantly, the ongoing study supports the view that school readiness is enhanced when early intervention programs work with families as well as children (Slaughter-Defoe, 2003)

Interventions as Vehicles for Parental Empowerment: Head Start as Example

It important to point out that early intervention programs like Head Start were not conceived by all designers and participants as simply compensatory educational programs for children. Early on, Head Start was also perceived as a vehicle for empowering parents, another tradition that endures today. In 1987, with a former student colleague, I described Valentine and Stark's characterization (cf. Zigler, & Valentine,1979) as follows, emphasizing the importance of the concept of "maximum feasible participation" as an integral aspect of President Johnson's Great Society programs:

> …for many low-income parents, Head Start has served as a basis for excellent 'grass-roots' training in political participation…the best early example of this latter role was located in Mississippi. The Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM) at one time served more than 6,000 children in 84 centers throughout the state. Indigenous poor were responsible for all decision-making, including preschool curriculum and the hiring of staff at the centers. In such a climate, Head Start parent Fannie Lou Hammer emerged as an important political figure. Valentine and Stark conclude that at least two quite distinct conceptual underpinnings of parent involvement in Head Start have existed since the beginning of the program, the emphasis on social and political empowerment of parents and the emphasis on parent education. Over time, greater emphasis has been given to the latter perspective. Without the emphasis on empowerment, however, they believe that the essence of Head Start, as a program designed to help eradicate poverty would be significantly compromised…the parent and overall community's need for control and self-determination are compromised (Slaughter & Kuehne, 1987, pp. 61-62).

Parenthetically, I think it is precisely the confluence and merger of different traditions that contribute to Head Start's status in the minds of many as a "national treasure."

While the concept of parental empowerment yielded to the concept of "parent as child's earliest teacher," it important to observe that its initial frontal attack was not in the early childhood arena, but when lower-income and Black parents attempted to effect change in New York city's urban schools. I am referring to the reasonably well-known Ocean Hill-Brownsville conflict that occurred between 1967-71 (Gordon, 2001). This conflict was preceded by Kenneth Clark's publication of first, the *Haryou Report*, and second, the sustained discussion of the meaning of its contents in the book, *Dark Ghetto*, in 1965. Parental and advocate efforts to exercise community control and change urban schools were thwarted and resolutely defeated by New York's United Federation of Teachers. Despite this eventuality, some studies even today emphasize the role of parents as educational change agents (Edgecombe, 1999). In emphasizing the need for scaffolding parent support in an urban school, one researcher recently reported that "…[parent] participation skills should be modeled for parents by peers who engage them in horizontal relations that allow them to learn without fear of being silenced, alienated, or embarrassed" (Friedlander, 1999). With respect to parental empowerment issues in Head Start, however, even today I have a student at this University who is finishing a doctoral thesis that is an ethnographic case study of these issues in a selected Michigan program (Slaughter-Defoe, 2003).

One other feature of Head Start that has not changed, is, notably, the primacy of socioeconomic status, specifically poverty, as the focus of this intervention program. However, we know much more about the conditions under which poverty can have the most deleterious effects, and the factors which can be erected to buffer against those factors (Johnson et. Al, 2003; McLoyd, 1998; Slaughter-Defoe & Brown, 1998). For example, single parenting is frequently associated with poverty because of reduced family income-thus, it is poverty which places children at risk, and not single-parenting per se. Further, being truly a single parent, as contrasted with simply being a never married, separated or divorced parent, is more risky because the former parent may have no reliable extended family members (e.g., maternal grandparents or aunts) to share child care, or the resources to secure and purchase quality extra-familial care (Johnson et. Al, 2003; McLoyd, 1998).

Engaging and Sustaining Parent Involvement in Parent Education Programs

From the beginning in 1965, Head Start programs recruited staff, inclusive of teachers and even directors, from neighboring communities. And from the beginning, given their focus on parental education and empowerment, Head Start programs had less difficulty recruiting and retaining parent involvement in comparison to other parent education programs. Other approaches to research that favored naturalistic field studies, instead of laboratory research, engaged pediatric clinics rather than schools. Nonetheless, despite a penchant for conducting the research in natural or field settings, in that time, the standard child "outcome" or indicator of program success was IQ score. Other criteria for success deemphasized child socio-emotional and parent outcomes. I think a study reported in 1977 by Morris and Glick is illustrative and typical. The authors described a short-term (12 bimonthly sessions) intervention study in which Hispanic and Black parents of children aged 20 to 39 months were introduced to play with educational toys. The sample initially consisted of 518 children matched on age, sex, ethnicity, and randomly assigned to an early or late treatment group in two New York City child health clinics. All children were pre-tested. However, at the end of the study, only 147 children remained to be given the post-test IQ measure. Favorable outcomes for early-, and subsequently, late-treated groups were obviously overshadowed by the 72 per cent attrition rate. Even though this intervention study was conducted in a clinical setting with which participants were presumed familiar, other factors severely affected parent participation and involvement with the educational program. Then and now, programs that sustain parent

participation receive the attention of prospective program developers and of child development researchers (Auerbach, 1968; Badger, 1971; Blumenthal, 1985; Levenstein, 1970; Smith, Perou & Lesesne, 2002).

Another impetus for the parent education programs of the 1970s that I believe important to mention, is the focus on provision of social supports that would minimize the combined threat of Black parental child abuse and neglect (Fantuzzo, Wray, Hall, Goins,& Azar,1986; Stevens, 1981; Unger, 1987). As one example, in 1979, Wesley published an article which concluded that programs should be developed to teach Black parents how to parent and to find alternative ways of expressing anger. As another example, a working paper by Gray (1983) for the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse discussed the results from an evaluation of eleven demonstrations programs of three types: perinatal programs; "culturally relevant" parent education efforts; and community-wide education, information, and referral. One of the three programs that combined both a community and parent education-focus served impoverished Blacks in Atlanta and is described as having sought: to provide parent and family education along with courses on childrearing skills; to strengthen informal helping networks; and to use the media to educate the public about family support resources. For various reasons associated with premature births, and the like, similar early intervention research persisted into the 1990s and beyond (Lee & Alfonso, 2003; Swick, 1992). I am keenly aware of this focus, because I contacted the federal government to request that my ongoing intervention study be removed from the list of resources available to assist in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Regardless of how others perceived my research, I perceived myself as primarily conducting an educational intervention study, a study that would promote/enhance cognitive/intellectual development, not a study that would remedy, or circumvent the need to remedy, socio-emotional deficits.

Given these comments, this is my opportunity to discuss the background and rationale to the educational intervention study that I conducted and published 20 years ago (Slaughter, 1983; 1996). When I completed the correlation study for my thesis described earlier, the chance remark of a peer impressed me. She commented that the next step should probably be an experimental study, to determine if I really understood the "individuating" process I had attempted to describe. I resolved that if I had the opportunity, I would conduct an experimental intervention. I found the rationale and support for that in two longitudinal naturalistic and home-based observation studies that were just concluding, one by the late Jean Carew (1980; Carew, Chan,& Halfar, 1976) and the other by a colleague at the University of Chicago, K. Alison Clarke-Stewart (1973). Both researchers found in their studies of mother-toddler dyads that a mother who was judged warm, contingently responsive, stimulating and enriching, from both visual and verbal perspectives, appeared to produce an intellectually competent, secure child as observed from behaviors whether at home or outside the home. Further, the best single predictor of the child's overall competence score was the amount of maternal verbal stimulation, whether or not in direct response to children's vocalizations. In the Clark-Stewart study, whereas maternal behaviors appeared to determine childhood cognitive competencies, childhood social behaviors appeared to determine whether mothers and children at these ages (9-18 months) engaged in reciprocal interactions. Carew's focus on the contribution of human relationships to the elaboration of adaptive intelligence was compatible with the Clarke-Stewart study though the latter reported similar based findings on the results of factor analyses of discrete behaviors, rather than on predetermined behavioral categories as identified in the Carew study. Though African American herself, Carew did not involve African Americans in her first path-breaking research; however, Clarke-Stewart had Black and White mother-child dyads in her research sample.

To summarize to the present day, in the developmental field, descriptions of effective parenting have portrayed mothers as being active and participatory in their exchanges with their young, preschool children. Effective mothers set standards of excellence, structure learning experiences, are verbally stimulating, and are firm and consistent in their disciplinary practices. They appear to use reasoning and persuasion and their knowledge of the personal interests of their children in order to motivate them. Knowing the child's personal needs, and being contingently responsive is my definition of an "individuating" mother. Such parents are neither extremely permissive nor severely punishing, but instead are contingently responsive to their children's needs in accordance with the child's perceived developmental status.

Missing from studies in the genre of Carew and Clarke-Stewart, I thought, was a serious consideration of the parent's social context, a tradition in which I had been steeped at the University of Chicago(Davis, 1948; Slaughter-Defoe & Brown, 1998). For example, my mentor Robert D. Hess, in his best-known research, had stressed average differences in mother-child interactions and child performance outcomes between social status groups (Hess, 1970). He believed patterns of parental authority and interactive styles between children and parents at home derived from experienced work roles, and therefore, he argued that parents who reacted passively to authority demands at work, were more likely to parent similarly at home where they were "the authorities." Conversely, parents who engaged in more entrepreneurial work styles were more likely, for example, to encourage assertive and negotiating behaviors in parenting relationships with children. My view, and my self-imposed problem, was different; I had to use the socio-cultural context to account for diversity *within* the lower income African American community. At the start of my intervention study, I argued that the element of traditionalism associated with earlier, more rural patterns of childrearing had been sustained and perpetuated in urban Chicago, much to the academic disadvantage of many children. If true, then changes in maternal and child behaviors in the direction of more "modern" approaches to childrearing as encouraged by intervention programs such as Head Start should be most pronounced in the African American mother-child dyads judged least "traditional" in child rearing beliefs and practices.

In defining "traditionalism, I sought support from the writings of cultural anthropologists (e.g., Clyde Kluckhohn) and sociologists (e.g., Alex Inkeles). In summarizing some of this literature, I later stated (Slaughter-Defoe, 1996),

> Two lines of research have addressed cultural values and social mobility as reflected through the expressed value orientations of members of the culture. The first line was developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, the second by Inkeles. Since each...had serious conceptual and methodological problems, the two traditions were reformulated and integrated to meet present needs...Ethnic cultures which possess similar values and traits are more likely to function effectively in American society, and therefore, experience more rapid assimilation and advancement...The modernization position, developed by Inkeles, . .[emphasized]. . .The concept of psychological modernity [that]. . . psychological adjustments and competencies required because of rapid modernization or industrialization of cultures...Neither focused on intra-societal urban contrasts...[and both] failed to include women in their researches and they rarely specifically addressed the role of prejudice and racial discrimination...Therefore, I [Slaughter] chose to develop a new measure of expressed values. The measure would incorporate: (a) an emphasis on the more familiar and traditionally adaptive styles within lower status Black communities, as contrasted with styles which might be more characteristic of middle or upper-status communities; (b) an expansion of the original Kluckhohn (1961) dimension categories to include Personal Control--the perceptions of desired control and influence over social others; and, (c) a greater opportunity for each respondent to locate her own personal position relative to her perceptions of the position of African Americans and Other Americans...Review of the historical and sociological literature, as well as discussions with our predominantly Black research team, led me [Slaughter] to posit that some value preferences would be more characteristic of the respondent who was currently actively pursuing educational mobility than others. The "modern" and "traditional" ends of the value continuum for each [presented] situation were thus defined (pp. 146-147).

This lengthy quote indicates how I struggled with ways to bring the prevailing insights of sociology and cultural anthropology to the developmental psychology paradigm embraced by colleagues like Carew and Clarke-Stewart. Mothers, I reasoned, were not just practitioner-parents, they also had beliefs and values that resulted from the socializing influences of their own interpersonal environments and significant others (i.e., their subculture). Further, as women and persons, some were more committed and competent at using education as a vehicle for social mobility for themselves and their children. Knowledge of these beliefs and values would help to identify those families likely to be most responsive to early interventions, particularly early interventions designed to support school readiness.

Support for this view was obtained from my study of early intervention with 83 Black mother-child dyads who resided in Chicago's housing authority complex. Two parent education models of intervention were introduced to the stratified random sample of dyads: the Levenstein Toy Demonstration (TD) model (Levenstein, 1970), and the Auerbach/Badger Mothers Discussion (MD) group model (Auerbach, 1968; Badger, 1971). In a productive collaborative arrangement, United Charities of Chicago, a social service agency, introduced both models, using experienced social workers as parent education interveners. In the TD format, mothers observed as the social worker modeled how to use a new toy in participatory, interactive play with the Demonstrator. Afterwards, they tried the method themselves and the toys were left as a gift. Controls received only the toys and no special services in parent education. Discussion group mothers (MD) had their own relationships facilitated by a participating social worker, also available to mothers for special case services. Children in the three dyads ranged between 18-24 months at the start of the two-year study.

Mothers' discussion (MD) group participants were favored over the TD dyads and the no-treatment controls on all study outcome measures (Slaughter, 1983). Generally, mother-child dyads who were most participatory and interactive during a structured 20-minute play session in an experimental setting were also more likely to be "less traditional" with respect to maternal child rearing beliefs and values. Children in these dyads tended to continue to perform better as measured by scores on traditional IQ tests, with advancing age over the two-year time period of the study in comparison to children in other treatment conditions.

Despite elaborate praise of the scientific merit of this study by both monograph commentators, Bettye Caldwell and Felton Earls, I felt as if only a small group of informed devotees really appreciated the study and its utility. By that time, I had come to believe that social policy appeared to be made not by research findings, as had been hoped (and taught by Hess and colleagues), but at best by collaborative relations between researchers and persons in the practice and policy arenas. It seemed that the ultimate goals of my research were noble but naive. The larger society did not care about the origins of the beliefs and values of a group of Black women, and their impact, favorable and unfavorable, on their children. This interest in the importance of cultural context seemed to be a peculiar "affliction" of myself, born and raised on Chicago's southside in a predominantly working class African American community in the 1940s and '50s to four generations of "mothers" which extended from great-great maternal grandmother to mother, who were available to me at birth.

In contrast, the larger society seemed to care most about accounting for dysfunctional parents and families, those with multiple problems, who were also prone to child abuse and neglect. Some argued that the parents' childrearing practices had absolutely

nothing to do with their children's school failures. In focusing on parent-child relations, one was essentially "blaming the victim" instead of the sorry state of her child's school and its failure to educate children. Others pointed to the importance of the larger cultural context in shaping parental goals, subsistence goals that included emphasis not on formal schooling, but rather, on survival skills. And still others stressed that other relationships such as those with fathers, peers, and siblings were being neglected by narrowly focusing on mother-child relations. Importantly, I felt the dominant culture was not interested in a socio-cultural defense of the women who were being challenged for not rearing children who could advance themselves through the public education system.

Parent Education and Cultural Sensitivity

Nonetheless, I would like to think that the publication of my monograph, and other related papers (Slaughter-Defoe, 1996; Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001) helped to push parent education research in the direction of increased cultural sensitivity. In truth, it is likely that my professional support for the research and theorizing of the late anthropological scholar, John Ogbu, was just as important. By the 1980s, research scholars were ready to take his argument seriously that understanding the contribution of families and parents to children's learning and development required an understanding of the larger social and cultural context in which they subsist. Ogbu's (2003)last book, published just this year, continued in that same tradition when he analyzed the academic achievement gap between Black and White families in an affluent Ohio suburb by referencing the importance of removing Black parental barriers to participation and involvement in children's schooling that have long-standing socio-cultural reference.

Black theorists such as Andrew Billingsley (1980) and scholar-researchers such as Harriette McAdoo (McAdoo & Crawford, 1998) also had significant roles in broadening the paradigm associated with parent education research. For example, in 1988, McAdoo and Crawford reported the evaluative findings of Project SPIRIT, a study of an initiative of the Congress of National Black Churches that was begun in 1986. Project SPIRIT sought to nurture a variety of child virtues through program elements that included after-school tutoring, parent education, and pastoral counseling in the overall program. The evaluators indicated that assessments of 253 5- to 7-year-old children in three cities (Indianapolis, Atlanta, and Oakland) had been made, and pilot data collected from parents in Oakland. Parents reported that the components of the program that children most liked concerned Black history and the positive contributions of the Black race. Parents (mostly Baptist) were not regular church attendees. Though most had gone no further than high school, the parents expressed a high value for educational attainment on the part of their children. In this Black community initiative, children, but not parents, received explicit attention to Black history and the contributions of Black people, though it seems that in this ecological and community context (i.e., the Black church) parents favorably supported the program's efforts to support children's emergent awareness of Black history and culture.

Furthermore, in the 1980s, a number of papers addressing parent education programs and research emphasized cultural differences in relation to Black parents and families, in addition to the importance of viewing parents and parent educators as adult learners with contributions to make to their shared educational process (Alvy, 1985; American University ALPI, 1980; Memphis State University Symposium, 1980; Moore, 1986; Slaughter et al., 1989; Strom, 1990). Here I think it important to point out that I experienced the Reagan Era, the 1980s, as a time highly supportive of the concept of culture and race differences, but also a time which undervalued the importance of socio-economic status differences, particularly as in relation to child and family poverty. It was in the 1980s, for example, that I was funded by the National Institute of Education to study the arrival of Black students in significant numbers in elite private elementary schools in the Chicago area. We labeled the study: "Newcomers: Blacks in Private Schools." As another example, around the nation during the 1980s African American museums, art, and culture, more specifically cultural artifacts, received support.1
Such institutions, of course, heralded the availability of new and expanded cultural resources for both teachers and parents of Black children (Boykin & Allen, 1988).

Pluralistic Perspectives on Black Parent Education -1990s and Beyond

I believe that since the earlier studies of parent education were published in the 1970s and early 1980s, our nation's desire for sustained global and international competitiveness emerged and became strongly connected to getting a healthy start in the early years. Further, the arrival of newer immigrant, and frequently impoverished, populations, and the annexation of the concerns of child care advocates since Welfare Reforms were enacted (Johnson et al., 2003) also served to keep the parent education field active. Advances in biology and scientific technology renewed faith in the significant contribution of early intervention to learning and development. Finally, the nation's concern for literacy and for educating all the children occasioned a revisit to issues associated with child and family poverty by the late 1980s and early 1990s (McLoyd, 1998; Slaughter et al., 1989; Slaughter et al., 1988).

The metaphor for parent education and intervention in the 1990s is that of a thousand flowers blooming in the same garden, with only a few bound to be dominant, none of which have emerged as yet. In concluding this lecture, I have time to identify and describe examples of only a few flowers that I believe to be leading contenders for the limited space in the garden.

Parent education in child literacy as parental empowerment. No one should think that the processes of Black parental empowerment are simple as is evidenced in the description of what happened when Dr. Patricia Edwards, currently on faculty at Michigan State University, attempted to encourage lower income African American mothers to read regularly to their children. Edwards (1995a;1995b; 1994; 1989) engaged in literacy training of parents of young African American Head Start children in rural Louisiana in the late 1980s. She decided to find out what parents understood when kindergarten and first grade teachers told them to "read to their child." She found that parents had many and varied reactions that ranged from being concerned that they could not read themselves, and worrying about that; to opening a book and helping children sound out words; to having little idea what should come first, second, or third in such a "reading" process; to just "opening the book and reading to the end, just to get the job done" (1995a, p. 57).

Edwards' (1989) experiences during this early training subsequently led her to develop the Parents as Partners in Reading Program, a three-phase, 21-week program in which parents first receive demonstrations or coaching as to how they might read to their children, later engage in shared peer modeling experiences, and finally are observed in specific parent-child interactions around storybook reading. In reporting her observations, Edwards stated that parents (usually mothers) indicated they were pleased to finally understand what the school expected of them, and that her work with the primary grade teachers has been designed to help them to understand that parents need help in interpreting teacher directives. Importantly, these mothers did not initially feel empowered to actively participate in the early education of their own children. I think the above experience should be contrasted with similarly situated families in many Asian cultures where it is culturally normative to expect the mother to teach the child to read print before the child enters kindergarten.

Parent education as Black self-help genre. Primarily because of the era in which I began work in this field, a time in which African American communities resisted parent education programs, a resistance I might add that continues today, particularly in the form of resisting "White scripts for Black parenting" (Luschen, 1998; Stevenson, Davis & Abdul-Kabir, 2001) I find this development especially interesting. Fortunately, the occasion of this lecture provided me an opportunity to read some of the books in the Black self-help genre in which I found many creative ideas. Some reports simply annotate available resource materials, or provide criteria for appraising those materials, for purposes of Black parent education (Family Resource Coalition, 1994; Goetz, 1995-1996; Wingo & Mertensmeyer, 1994) Other books originate from professional observation and practice (Boyd-Franklin & Franklin, 2000; Comer & Pouisaant, 1992; Stevens, 1981). These books and materials seem directed toward middle class Blacks, many of whom are rearing children in desegregated communities, or toward Black and White professionals working in lower-income communities. Still other "self-help" books emphasize the vulnerability of the Black male population to the hegemony of dominant White privilege, or White racism (Bush, 1999; Madhubuti, 1991). Generally, these latter reports are not research-based, save for the conducted dissertation research of relevance to Black parent education conducted by Bush.

For this research project, Bush interviewed a cross-section of 27 Black mothers, and at least one of the sons of the 23 women who did not have infants at the time of the study in an attempt to address the question "Can Black mothers raise our sons?" The investigation was inspired by those who predict dire consequences for Black males, particularly those being reared in single-parent homes with limited positive male role models (Madhubuti, 1991; Rolle, 1990). Bush (1999) states that all mothers had at least one son, and were selected from middle and lower class backgrounds by him from "…churches, a homeless shelter, schools, and other locations…" The sons ranged in age from 6-19, 24, and even older. Commenting on the importance of his study, Bush argues, "Little work has focused on how Black women conceptualize, construct, and act upon their paradigm of manhood. This is an important question in the discourse of human development. As a majority of Black males are now being raised by single mothers, and because Black mothers, single or married, play a significant role in raising their sons, it is necessary…to understand how Black mothers define manhood" (pp. 82-83). Bush found the following traits included on the mothers' list of positive masculine qualities: love of people; believes that there is a God; Christian; compassion for everyone; concern for the human race; financially independent; good morals; honest; honorable…responsible. The findings that stress moral and spiritual support are consistent with another case study of five African American women (Mullins, 1992).

Bush concluded: "When comparing the list…with Eurocentric concepts of masculinity (e.g., aggression, ambition) and femininity (e.g., passive, illogical)…I realize that these Black mothers have constructed a masculine model that is not Eurocentric. *The qualities are balanced between the European and African models* (italics added)" (pp. 82-86). Whatever we think of the sampling methods, this study is original and important, especially because it has been conceptualized within the socio-cultural context of how significant numbers of Black children are being reared and socialized today. Bush's report of his interviews with the sons clearly indicates that the messages are being received. Importantly, he observed that Black mothers' strong emphasis on spirituality, and the strength of character needed by them to induce these qualities in their sons argues well for alternative perspectives on female parenting strategies and, I might add, of the role of parent education as a buffer and support of that very challenging process (Murry, 2003).

Parent education as an exploration of Black community values, inclusive of concepts of race. The final area I have time to mention explicitly addresses the role of parent education as a protective, supportive factor in western societies where race and

racism are omnipresent. This is not a new concern. For example, Hill and Peltzer (1982) reported a study of parent education for White adoptive parents of Black children. Recent focus has included racial socialization of Black parents, relative to parental teaching and development of racial coping strategies in children. Coard (2003) reported that in an open pilot study, lower income parents of children ages 5-6 stated that they engaged in socialization activities perceptibly associated with children's racial preparation, pride, equality, and achievement. She is presently designing a parent training program based on these four principles for African American parents of diverse socioeconomic strata; the design is inclusive of an evaluation strategy. Acknowledging the complexity of this line of inquiry, Coard is aware that she has crafted a program of study that could last a lifetime. She described her preliminary research on the Black Parenting Strengths and Strategies Program (BPSS) as follows:

> …the present study of children growing up in the inner-city found that despite the young age of the children, more than 70 percent of the parents engaged in racial socialization practices that focused on racism preparation…While all African American parents do not parent in the same way, the reality is that today's African American children are burdened with the facts of their lives…Therefore, parenting interventions must be designed with the consideration of the societal realities in which we live, and the formidable task African American parents have of helping their children interpret information related to such matters from an early age (e.g., how to talk to young children about race). The methods used…are consistent with basic behavior techniques emphasized in standard interventions with parents of young children.. (pp. 15-16).

Taylor (1994) and colleagues at the Center for Family Excellence at the University of Pittsburgh have devoted many years to study of the Values-For-Life curriculum (VLC). The curriculum was partly developed to help teachers implement instructional routines that support preschool children's learning and socio-emotional development, following an earlier study in the 1970s of Black and White parental perceptions of their children's futures. According to Taylor and colleagues, the comments of the parents of preschoolers when asked the question "How would you like your child to be 15 years from now?" were instructive; they report,

> Quite aside from parents' responses to the question, we were struck with their evaluation of the question: 'No one ever asked us to do this before.' Most seemed amazed that we should ask, and some were moved to tears as they reflected on their children's futures. It seemed we had tapped an underdeveloped subject of ego-involving significance to parents. Subsequently, we used a more differentiated strategy of inquiry…extended this line of inquiry to clinical and nonclinical samples of Black and White mothers and fathers of low and middle income. For these parents of children between 1 and 54 months of age, we found that between 80% and 99% of what parents said could be coded into one of six categories…1. Love and respect…2. Learning Orientation…3. Self-confidence…4. Self Persistence…5. Self-Esteem… (and) 6. Self-Reliance (pp. 211-212)

Taylor and colleagues discussed many implications of their program of intervention and research evaluation, concluding that the curriculum they have developed with parents and grandparents for children could also have implications for the parents themselves in that changes in the children could indeed effect changes in the parents. In a later paper, Taylor (2003) states that
In moving from identification of values to design of interventions that achieve these values, we confronted two major challenges-each reflecting the nettlesome possibility that values could be implemented in ways harmful to individual and communal viability. The first challenge we characterize as spiritual, the second as cultural…To avoid… implications of this kind…we have normalized our values set to promote…integrative ways of being…we chose to normalize each value in a manner that prevents or corrects identification with culturally disintegrative ways of being…we believe our normalizing standard of spiritual and cultural integration may have deep theoretical implications for the human sciences and broad practical implications for the design of prevention and intervention activities in minority, poor, or majority communities" (pp. 2-3).

Conclusion - The Illusive Pursuit of Black Parental Empowerment

In 1965, the same year that the first Head Start program was initiated, President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law. The Voting Rights Act suspended literacy and other racially discriminatory tests, including grandfather clauses, which had been used by states and local communities to prohibit Blacks from voting. It required that election ballots be in two languages in areas where many persons do not speak English as a primary language. It authorized federal examiners to replace local registrars and allowed federal observers at polling places. Finally, it required federal approval for changes in election laws and voting procedures. The 15th and 19th amendments to the US Constitution conferred voting rights on Black men and women, respectively, but despite this, and the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, and 1964, public consensus seems to be that the 1965 Voting Rights Act gave earlier amendments their "teeth" and thus provided the absolutely necessary supports to reversal of the historic disenfranchisement of the Black electorate which had characterized southern politics since the end of the Reconstruction. Reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act in 2007 requires a majority vote in both houses of Congress and the President's signature (Salzman, Smith & West, 1996).

The achievement of the 1965 Voting Rights Act resulted from the collaboration of many community organizations and civil rights

groups and activists over an extended period of time (Morris, 1984; Patterson, 2001). For example, consider the Southern Regional Council. Founded in 1919 in Atlanta, the Southern Regional Council, initially identified as the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, provided seed money and other resources to develop the Voter Education Project. Throughout its history, this non-partisan southern organization opposed racial segregation and lynching and campaigned for rural economic development. It has focused on access to the polls and the political process as a means of achieving these goals. Therefore, in 1962, the Council founded the Voter Education Project to collect statistical data on voter registration in the South, assigning this group the task of conducting the registration drive among Black Southerners. This Project subsequently became free-standing in 1965, and successfully registered more than two million Southern Black voters in the 1960s. Later, the organization's educational campaigns helped lead to the extension and strengthening of the Voting Rights Act in 1970, 1975, and 1982, and it expects to play an active role in the 2007 reauthorization of this Act.

In 1997, the Southern Regional Council (SRC) published an audio-taped history (*Will the Circle Be Unbroken*, 1997) of the Civil Rights Movement, with special focus on five southern communities. The transcripts quote historian Vincent Harding as characterizing the Civil Rights Movement as being "An epic life-affirming, non-violent struggle for the expansion of democracy." The struggle used lawsuits, sit-ins, marches, and boycotts to successfully overturn and eliminate, in my lifetime, *de jure* racial apartheid in the United States of America. According to Patterson (2001), the Civil Rights movement peaked between the occasion of the Brown decision in 1954, and 1965, losing force almost immediately after passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also in 1965, which authorized cut-offs of federal aid to school systems practicing *de jure* racial segregation. The transcript of SRC Episode 26 quotes Myles Horton's discussion of the Movement's accomplishments: "…Something very important happened. We had legally enforced racism and segregation. There were all kinds of regulations and laws that prevented Black people from voting. Now in terms of this, the dignity of a person to be able to get rid of those laws, in fact reverse them, so that it's illegal now to discriminate where it used to be illegal if you didn't discriminate. Those are steps forward…" Another interviewee, Charlie Cobb, stated that: "…At bottom, it seemed to me that the movement was not so much about getting a cup of coffee at a restaurant or something like that. It was about people gaining more say so over the decisions that affected their lives; and politics is obviously a part of that…" By the end of 1967, two years after the conventional agreement that the Civil Rights Movement had peaked, the Moynihan Report had been issued, and Lee Rainwater and William Yancy had published both the Report and rejoinders in a book entitled *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (Patterson, 2001). By now, this audience understands that I believe this report definitively catapulted issues of Black family functioning and education for parenting to the forefront of social science and educational research.

The astute listener will also have noted that I have not personally studied parent education and intervention since the late 1980s. Actually, in the 1990s I participated in a school-based intervention study of the implementation of the Comer model in Chicago and I did not research parental involvement in that process due to funding limitations. I am looking forward to my upcoming sabbatical semester in part to summarize my observations and findings in reference to that study. However, one of my motivations for updating the status of this line of inquiry is because I think I may embark on another look at parent education research. Any such research would be both highly personal and political, though I am quite sure it will be "objective." It would be personal because large numbers of African American youth are being reared today in extended family contexts, with both maternal and paternal kinfolks, similar to my own early socialization years ago. Many other children reside with foster care parents or "fictive" kinfolk, also in extended family contexts. It would be political because disparate American policy groups have widely different ideological positions about this phenomenon, although the fact that it is the socio-cultural context encountered by the majority of African American youth today is not disputed. Although I no longer firmly believe that particular research findings will significantly inform or influence either policy or practice, I do believe that empirical research and theorizing can serve the function of highlighting important problems and issues that despite a few precious exceptions (Brooks-Gunn, Berlin & Fuligni, 2000; LeVine, LeVine & Schnell, 2001; Slaughter-Defoe, Addae & Bell, 2002; Strom & Griswold, 1994; Watson, 1997) are being virtually ignored, in everyday professional discourse.

Ironically, some of the most celebrated research in parent education today did not surface online when, in preparation for this lecture, I required explicit attention to Blacks or African Americans in reference to parent education. On occasion, authors made specific reference to race and gender, using a sample from one of these studies in a sub-study report. For example, I believe Fuerst and Fuerst's (1993) report of gender differences in follow-up research of the Child Parent Centers in Chicago to be a sub-study of the research of Dr. Arthur Reynolds (Brooks-Gunn, Berlin & Fuligni, 2000; Smith, Perou & Lesesne, 2002) The good news is that the paucity of research with this focus rendered the topic manageable for this lecture; the bad news is that apparently even in 2003 many of the most respected researchers still write as if they can study and evaluate efforts to change the life course of Black children and their parents without attention to socio-cultural context. Happily, several recent reviews have been critical of this perspective (Garcia-Coll et al., 1996; Gorman & Balter, 1997; Lee & Alfonso, 2003; Lewis, 1992).

In any case, we know little about intergenerational transfer of strategies for coping with racism, and the potential role of parent education in buffering and supporting that process, in diverse settings like the urban school. Therefore, and in conclusion, though I have not completely abandoned the power of science to push us past the conventional ways of approaching issues of practice and of policy, I am clear that doing scientific research is simply a tool that can be placed in the service of evil as well as for good, and that this is no less true in reference to parent educational research. However, I am quite positive, all myth-making aside (Mattingly et al., 2002; Rogoff, Matusov & White, 1998; Slaughter, 1991; Slaughter-Defoe, 2003; Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001;

White, Taylor & Moss, 1992) that parental teaching in the earliest years, and parental empowerment, as revealed in parental choice of schools and involvement in the educational process, are critical and necessary components of the effective schooling of urban African American children.

Notes

1 - I named this lecture for the poem written by African American artist and Chicagoan, Dr. Margaret Burroughs (2002) The Museum of African American History that she and her late husband founded in their home in 1961 had reached its zenith by the mid-1980s, and today is still going strong. back

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