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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Veronica King

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Parenting and Discipline Correlations with Social Supports for Single, African American
Mothers

by

Veronica King

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Clinical Psychology

Walden University

August 2018

Abstract

Assistance to young, single, African American mothers requires adaptation to their environmental stressors along with reliance on social support. Further information is necessary for developing and supporting an appropriate model for delivery of that assistance. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine potential correlations between general social support and parenting skills and disciplinary practices amongst low-income, African American single mothers. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory model supported this study to further develop an accurate perspective of African American families to inform more effective approaches to parenting. The participants for this correlational research design study were 78 mothers who had preschool age children, between the ages of 2 and 5. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, the Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire were used to measure the variables under study. Ordinal regression was used to examine the correlations between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices. A significant interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices was not found with the tools used in this study; however, there was only a relationship determined between general social support and disciplinary practices. The knowledge gained from this study can be useful to researchers and practitioners in developing culturally appropriate parenting support and education, positively impacting the delivery of parenting by single, urban, African American mothers.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my number one, GOD. I also want to dedicate this work to my significant other, Mr. Sterling, who has been patient throughout this journey. Obtaining my Ph.D. was all done for my son, Jady, who has been there since Day 1. To my parents, Dr. Marylee Wright-Bethea and Franklin Bethea, who have shown unconditional love. Thank you both for believing in me. To my grandmother, Dolores; my dad, Vernon; and my brother, Ronald; you all have been supportive. To the rest of my family, especially my sister-cousins, Ronnice, Ronda, and Marnice, you all have been understanding. I appreciate you all and I love you all!

Acknowledgments

I will forever thank my Heavenly Father for guiding me and listening to my prayers. The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy (Psalms 111:7). I would like to express my appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Robin Oatis-Ballew, for her endless encouragement, prestige, guidance, and incredible support. Furthermore, I would like to express my thanks to my committee member, Dr. Benita Stiles-Smith, for her prompt feedback and wise advice during this process. Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to my University Research Reviewer, Patricia Heisser-Metoyer, for sharing her expertise. I would also like to thank Kelly Moynahan for her direction with the foundation of this research study. Finally, I am grateful for my entire family including my aunt, Francine; my son and close friends. Thank you all for being a part of my accomplishment!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Parenting of African American children is often conducted by young, single, women in poverty (Damaske, Bratter, & Frech, 2017). Useful and contextually relevant assistance for this group of mothers should be informed by their experiences. Two variables of importance that researchers in the field have commented upon are the degree of physical punishment that occurs in these families and the degree of assistance that these families derive from family and community (Taylor, Hamvas, & Paris, 2011). Developing more understanding of these two noted aspects of parenting within this group may be useful in further adapting parenting assistance and education for these families and more efficaciously reducing their vulnerability.

Problem Statement

There is little understanding of the relationship between the parenting practices of young, single, African American mothers and the use that these young women make of community support. Researchers have indicated that future studies of parenting should look at African American mothers use of general social support, such as extended family and the clergy, to support the replacement of corporal punishment with nonphysical forms of discipline (Taylor et al., 2011). Yildirim and Roopnarine (2015) reported that future assessment models could consist of parents' beliefs about child rearing and children's appraisals of harsh treatment, childhood characteristics, home environment, and neighborhood conditions.

The problem is that assistance to young, single, African American mothers requires adaptation to their particular overall situation (environmental stressors along with reliance on social support) and that further information is needed in developing and supporting an appropriate model for delivery of that assistance. According to Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider (2013), in 2011, 4,085,938 out of 13,879,391 African American family households were headed by the woman only. African American mothers in the urban community face child-rearing challenges like single motherhood and being in a lower socioeconomic stratum (Roberts & Povich, 2009).

Currently, there are gaps in the literature when it comes to the understanding of parenting practices and general social support for African American single mothers in urban communities. Information is needed on the treatment being used to correct childhood misbehaviors due to poor knowledge of appropriate parenting practices (Yildirim & Roopnarine, 2015). An additional gap is related to African American mothers' use of general social support, such as extended family and the clergy, to support the replacement of corporal punishment with nonphysical forms of discipline (Taylor et al., 2011). Researchers have found that when African American mothers lived in urban settings and were faced with persistent stressors, they used fewer positive parenting practices (Tamis-LeMonda, Briggs, McClowry, & Snow, 2008). Assistance is needed to address the present concerns in the African American community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine potential correlations between general social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African

American single mothers. In this study, I also considered the relationship these factors have with their chosen disciplinary practices. The dependent variable in this study was discipline, and the independent variables were social support and parenting skills.

Significance

The results of this study could impact low-income, African American single mothers and their delivery of parenting. The impact could occur through the development of more appropriate tools for parenting using the findings of this study. Gaining knowledge about African American mothers' parenting skills, available social support, and disciplinary practices will be useful to researchers, practitioners, and advocates of social change. The results of this research matter because the information and tools used will assist in addressing the challenges faced by low-income, African American single mothers when raising a child. Producing those tools and understanding the relationship between the variables examined may inform the development of support for these mothers at social, culture, individual, and community levels.

Background

It is unknown to what degree low-income, African American single mothers use social support available in their communities to inform and maintain parenting practices used (Taylor, 2010; Taylor et al., 2011). In this section, I will provide a brief description of a selection of extant literature relating to disciplinary practices the mothers may choose based on their parenting skills, and general social support. For instance, Tamis-LeMonda et al.'s (2008) examination of challenges faced by African American parents showed similar patterns in an urban community. The challenges were related to poverty

and authoritarian parenting styles. Tamis-LeMonda et al. recommended that future research studies focus on the nature and influences of parenting across the African American population.

Parenting skills and discipline in African American families has also been the focus of many other researchers (e.g., Adkison-Johnson, 2015; Greene & Garne, 2012; LeCuyer, Christensen, Kearney, & Kitzman, 2011; Yildirim & Roopnarine, 2015). African American mothers described that their discipline strategies are associated with child manageability (LeCuyer et al.). Adkison-Johnson (2015) suggested African American families use general social support for addressing their child-rearing concerns, including child discipline. General social support includes receiving help from members of the extended family, neighbors, clergy, and church members to provide for the children's safety and well-being (Adkison-Johnson).

Research by Parent, Jones, Forehand, Cuellar, and Shoulberg (2013) addressed the role of coparents in African American single-mother families and found that grandmothers, aunts, and female family friends presented significantly more support than fathers. Parent et al. mentioned prevention and intervention programs targeting single-mother African American families being a future implication. Then Blair et al. (2011) provided information on the effects of positive and negative parenting, income, and African American ethnicity on early childhood, ultimately showing that parenting is affected by the conditions of poverty. Blair et al. also discussed future evaluations of early care using programs that promote optimal outcomes for children at risk.

Taylor (2010) and Taylor et al. (2011) presented different views of risk factors that warranted social support in African American families. Some of the factors the researchers found were low income, negative parenting, and economic pressure. Taylor et al. recommended future studies should investigate multiple dimensions of social support and parental behavior in different populations.

In a study focusing on social support, income, and African Americans in urban communities, McMahon, Felix, and Nagarajan (2011) illustrated the importance of extended family networks in impoverished African American communities. The researchers suggested further analysis of parent support services to families to reduce poverty. The following section discussed the framework used in this study.

Framework

The theoretical framework I used as the foundation of this study was Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory model. In 1979, Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed the model, which is focused the natural qualities of a child and the characteristics of the external environment. A child's interactions with the environment influence the child's growth and development (Bronfenbrenner). The tenets of the model pertain to the mesosystem, microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner). The mesosystem interlinks with the microsystems, and this is where the child develops (Bronfenbrenner). The mesosystem includes religious affiliation, peers, and family, while microsystems involve linkages with the school, neighborhood, and workplace (Bronfenbrenner). The exosystem is a system of interconnections that contain environmental elements, such as extended family, economic systems, and

parents' workplaces, that have an influence (Bronfenbrenner). An example of the African American single mother influenced by her exosystem is having challenges in the workplace. As a result, she takes it out on her child and mistreats the child at home. The macrosystem consists of social conditions, economic systems, and culture, and the chronosystem reflects both change and constancy in the child's environment (Darling, 2007).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory model supported my efforts to further develop an accurate perspective of African American families to inform more efficacious approaches to parenting in this study. For instance, women head a majority of the families, the parenting and discipline are more hierarchical, and family members provide support for mothers and care for children (Landers-Potts et al., 2015). This same model also extends to the challenges faced by African American single mothers when raising a child and the verbal or physical disciplinary practices they may choose based on their parenting skills and general social support. The Bronfenbrenner's model relates to the quantitative approach and understanding the correlation between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices amongst low-income, African American single mothers.

Research Question

The purpose of this quantitative study was to understand the correlation between social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers with respect to the relationship these factors have with the chosen disciplinary practices of the mothers. Below are the following research questions and hypotheses that I developed to guide this study:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between social support and disciplinary practices?

H1: There is a relationship between social support and disciplinary practices as measured by the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.

H_A1: There is no relationship between social support and disciplinary practices as measured by the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.

RQ2: Is there a relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices?

H2: There is a relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices as measured by the Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

H_A2: There is no relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices as measured by the Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

RQ3: Is there an interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices?

H3: There is an interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices as measured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

H_A3: There is no interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices as measured by the Multidimensional Scale of

Perceived Social Support, Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

For the study, the independent variables were social support and parenting skills. The dependent variable was discipline. I measured the variables with the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; see Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988); the Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire (see Johnson, Cohen, Kasen, & Brook, 2008); and the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire (see Furnham, 1995).

Nature of the Study

The study was quantitative and nonexperimental in approach and correlational in design. According to Thompson, Diamond, McWilliam, Snyder, and Snyder (2005), correlational studies are quantitative, multisubject designs in which participants are not assigned randomly to treatment conditions. Thompson et al. also stated that this approach is used to examine the relationship between two or more variables. A correlational design was appropriate to study the group of African American single mothers and the variables of social support, discipline, and parenting skills in this study because the design is used to attempt to describe the relationship between the variables. Additionally, correlational research can investigate the relationship between the variables, and the theory supports the platform for the choice of variables to be examined (Thompson et al., 2005). The SPSS statistical program (IBM, 2016) is used to calculate the correlational design to retrieve ordinal logistic regression results (Williams, 2011).

Possible Types and Sources of Data

Participants in this study were African American single mothers from northeastern United States, at least 18 years of age, who had children between the ages of 2 and 5 that attended daycare. Roberts (2014) reported that the income of households in Manhattan, New York, between 2012 and 2013, was the largest of any county in the country. The citywide poverty rate, however, is consistent with 21%, with 1.7 million New Yorkers living below the official federal threshold for poverty (Roberts). The poverty rate for African Americans is gradually increasing (Roberts). Northeastern United States is a great microcosm for the concerns of general social support and parenting skills when it comes to the discipline practices of African American single mothers because this urban area has the highest number of single-mother households in poverty at 48.4% (Mason, Sala, Ebanks, & Bowser, 2013).

I used scales and survey research methods in this study because they were appropriate for answering the research questions. A scaled questionnaire was used in person for the respondents to self-report without help from me as an interviewer. The participants filled out the Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire about parenting skills (see Johnson et al., 2008) and the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire about disciplinary practices (see Furnham, 1995). Additionally, I used the MSPSS to measure the general social support aspect of the study (see Zimet et al., 1988). A survey was also used to complete the data sources with demographic information.

Assumptions

Assumptions are aspects of the study that are believed but cannot be demonstrated to be true (Sherman, & Harman, 2010). One assumption I held was that the mothers

would give honest and truthful responses on the MSPSS, the Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire. Another assumption was that low-income, African American single mothers are more common in urban areas versus rural areas. Both assumptions were necessary for this study because they affected the inferences I drew from the results of the study. For instance, should responses to the tools used in this study not be honest, the outcomes would be inaccurate. Likewise, where most low-income African American single mothers are rurally located, an alternate conclusion to the one that I reached in this study may have been warranted.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to reach a deeper understanding of the relationship between the parenting practices of young, single, African American mothers and the use that they make of community support. Another aspect addressed in the study was that African American mothers living in urban settings and facing persistent stressors, like single motherhood and being in a lower socioeconomic stratum, use fewer positive parenting practices (see Roberts & Povich, 2009). I chose these aspects because the urban area under study had the highest number of single-mother households in poverty at 48.4% (see Mason et al., 2013). According to Roberts (2014), the poverty rate for African Americans is gradually increasing.

The population study was African American single mothers from northeastern United States at least 18 years of age. At the time of the study, these mothers had children between the ages of 2 and 5, who attended daycare. According to Chou, Yang, and

Huang (2014), the preschool age is critical due to the child's development and the fact that during this time the parents' guide their children for later learning in their daily life experiences. Moreover, during these ages, African American families have been shown to use influential parenting skills and discipline practices (Greene et al., 2012). In this study, I excluded men, people of any other ethnicity, and individuals younger than the age of 18.

I defined the boundary of the study when I excluded theories that were most related to the study, but I did not investigate. For example, the social learning theory model was most related to the area of study but was not used for this study. Bandura (1977) developed the social learning theory, which is relevant to behavior learned from the environment through observational learning. Another theory that closely relates, but was not included in this study, is the theory of attachment. Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1973) indicated the adaptation within the theory combines behaviors and emotions to understanding in the environment.

The potential generalizability from this study is that social support and parenting skills amongst all low-income, African American single mothers correlates to the chosen disciplinary practices of the mothers. The sample population in the study does not automatically dictate the same findings for the population as a whole, even though it is statistically probable. Some ways to address the potential generalizability are to have data on large populations like African Americans. Additionally, I used the convenience sampling method for the target population in this study. The nonprobability sampling strategy was necessary to generalize the outcome of the results and to ensure representation of the group.

Limitations

Limitations of the study related to design and methodological weaknesses were general compensation about internal validity. All mothers were rewarded a coffee mug for taking part in the study. The limitations of external validity are the reactive effects of experimental arrangements (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). The mothers in the study may have altered their responses on the questionnaires in fear of being judged or reported. Another limitation was that the participants were recruited only from The Daycare Center. However, the referral sampling method gave the participants an opportunity to share the study with a friend.

Selection bias could have influenced the outcome of the study. For example, the participants in the study were given general compensation, and this may have affected their responses, which could reduce the internal validity and have led to selection biases. A reasonable measure I made to address this limitation was to give all the mothers the same form of compensation rather than some mothers cash and other mothers gift cards. One way I addressed the concerns of the mother's fear of being judged or reported was by informing them that their names would remain anonymous and that I would protect their confidentiality.

Definitions

Discipline: To teach knowledge and skill using punishment and reward (Nieman, Calgary, & Shea, 2004).

Parenting skills: Skills that include ensuring the child's healthy and safe, preparing the child for a productive life as an adult, and conveying cultural values. Child

psychologists mentioned parenting skills consist of embracing praise and ignoring minor misbehaviors, teaching children how to cope effectively, and making time for self (Novotney, 2012).

Social support: Psychological, physical, and financial help available to an individual through their social ties to other individuals, groups, and community members (Ozbay et al. 2007).

Summary

In this study, I explored general social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers while taking into account the relationship these factors have with their chosen disciplinary practices. Additionally, I determined the effectiveness of general social support resources available to low-income, African American single mothers in their communities. In this study, I examined the correlations between general social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices within single mother households. The results were used to determine to what extent the mothers can use these factors while living in an impoverished, urban area. In Chapter 2, I will provide an exhaustive review of the current literature.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Introduction

It is unknown to what degree low-income, African American single mothers use social support available in their communities to inform and maintain the parenting practices they used (Taylor, 2010; Taylor et al., 2011). The parenting practices consisted of discipline, social support, teaching children essential long-term lessons for a productive life as an adult, and promoting child safety and respect (Novotney, 2012). The problem under study was that assistance to young, single, African American mothers requires adaptation to their particular overall situation (environmental stressors along with reliance on social support) and that further information is needed in developing and supporting an appropriate model for delivery of that assistance. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine potential correlations between general social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers. Positive social change may occur as a result of the information this study generated becoming available to those who develop support programs for single, low-income, African American mothers.

Adkison-Johnson (2015) suggested African American families use general social support for addressing their child-rearing concerns. General social support includes receiving help from members of the extended family, neighbors, clergy, and church members to provide for the children's safety and well-being (Adkison-Johnson). Adkison-Johnson discussed clinical mental health counselors, pediatricians, and religious leaders having the unique opportunity to deliver meaningful service to African American

parents in terms of seeking and following advice about child discipline, family environment issues, and parental counseling support.

In this review, I will focus on the history of parenting skills amongst low-income, African American, single mothers to provide a foundation for the current disciplinary practices recommendations, the process and factors of disciplinary practices implementation, and the theory of changing parenting views and how these views shift disciplinary choices. Through a review of this literature, I was able to develop a theoretical framework that guided the integration of the relevant bodies of literature for this study. Subsequently, my review can be used for future research studies that focus on the nature and influences of parenting across the African American population (see Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008).

Literature Search Strategy

I retrieved the literature reviewed for Chapter 2 via online databases, including EBSCOhost and Academic Search Premier. I also reviewed print editions of peer-reviewed educational journals and published peer-reviewed books during the research process. Lastly, the Google search engine assisted in accessing extant literature. The key search terms I used to locate literature were *social support*, *parenting skills*, and *discipline*. I also combined search terms including *low-income*, *African American single mothers in urban areas*.

My focus in this literature review was on the existing literature from 1988 through 2016, including the seminal works up to the present day. I used this time frame in the literature to determine context and illustrate the current use of the ecological systems

model within the history of other ecological systems efforts. Most of the sources that involved low-income, African American single mothers were taken from peer-reviewed writings published in the past 5 years. The existing body of literature was large in relevance to discipline, general social support, and discipline. However, in this review I focused on the relationship between the parenting practices of young, single, African American mothers and their use of general social support.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework I used as the foundation of this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory model. In 1979, Bronfenbrenner developed the model, which is relevant to the natural qualities of a child and the characteristics of the external environment. Per Bronfenbrenner, the tenets of the model pertain to the mesosystem, microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The mesosystem includes religious affiliation, peers, and family, while the microsystems involve linkages with the school, neighborhood, and workplace (Bronfenbrenner). The exosystem consists of extended family, economic systems, and parents' workplaces, and the macrosystem comprises social conditions, economic systems, and culture (Bronfenbrenner). The chronosystem reflects both change and constancy in the child's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

There are three significant assumptions of the ecological systems theory, and the first assumption is a person is an active player that exercises influence on their environment (Darling, 2007). The next assumption is that the environment is persuading a person to adapt to its conditions and restrictions (Darling). The final assumption is that

the environment is understood to consist of different sized entities that are placed one inside another, according to their reciprocal relationships and mesosystem, microsystems, exosystem, and microsystem (Darling).

Robinson and Werblow (2012) conducted an ecological system analysis of African American mothers' parenting style that they described as no-nonsense parenting. No-nonsense parenting was demonstrated in authoritarian and controlling approaches by mothers toward their sons, ensuring that the children behaved in ways that their mothers believed would serve them well (Robinson & Werblow). Ecological factors that the researchers described as influencing the family structure, discipline used, and interpersonal style included social oppressions such as lack of education and financial resources. Mothers were in a position of directive management of their sons in hopes of avoiding societal pressures toward gangs, drugs, and dropping out of school.

Hurd, Stoddard, and Zimmerman's (2013) also carried out a study guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model. They explored how neighborhood characteristics affected urban, African American adolescents' mental health outcomes via their social support and perceptions of neighborhood cohesion. The participants in their study included 571 urban, African American adolescents. Some of the measures the researchers used included the Brief Symptom Inventory, five items from the Neighborhood Cohesion Index, and demographic characteristics. The researchers concluded higher neighborhood poverty and unemployment rates lead to more internal symptoms through lower cumulative social support and perceptions of neighborhood cohesion. One limitation of their study was that they only assessed neighborhood effects

on youths' outcomes. Future studies can investigate bidirectional influences between youth and their neighborhood contexts (Hurd et al., 2013).

Bronfenbrenner's model is bidirectional, and there is a chance that any part of the system may act as a support for the delivery of parenting or may act as a barrier in the urban community. For instance, the family's religious affiliation and neighborhood can be the network support system. Whereas, the economic system and social condition are factors of the theory that can negatively impact the child's overall environment.

Years of Disciplinary Practices, Parenting Skills, and General Social Support

In this section, I will provide a review of how disciplinary practices, parenting skills, and general social support have changed over time. Showing the history of the variables will further establish the relevancy of my research on young, single, African American mothers. I chose the studies reviewed in this section because they are related to the development models for therapeutic support groups for African American women. For instance, the work of Boyd-Franklin (1987) involved the development of a model for therapeutic support groups for African American women. The women in Boyd-Franklin's study were from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and experienced isolation, alienation, and stress, and the interventions promoted therapeutic change on an intrapsychic and behavioral level while providing a network support system. Over time, Boyd-Franklin (2010) incorporated spirituality and religion into the treatment of African American clients and families. The purpose of this 2010 study was for culturally competent psychologists to understand the diversity of religious beliefs within the population and the role of the church family or other faith-based organizations in the lives

of some of their African American clients. A limitation was Boyd-Franklin's study was the limited focus, primarily on African American Christian churches and spiritual beliefs. The strength of the study was continuing education for providers so that they could acknowledge the issues. For instance, psychologists oversee their ongoing updates of information. In retrospect, they can work effectively with this population who share strong spiritual and religious beliefs. More research and case material are needed on the treatment of those from other religious groups in the African American community, including the Muslim groups and African religions such as Kemet and Akan (Boyd-Franklin, 2010).

While Boyd-Franklin's work revolved around a model for therapeutic support groups for African American women, Tyler, Boykin, Boelter, and Dillihunt's (2005) work examined the role of culture in the socialization patterns found in low-income, African American households. In their study, 71 African American parents of elementary students were recruited from the Northeastern region of the United States. All the parents were African American, and the children received free or reduced lunch. Some surveys were completed via mail-in, and others were completed through face-to-face interviews. In the quantitative study, the researchers used the triple quandary theoretical framework to hypothesize that cultural themes consistent with an Afro-cultural ethos would be reported significantly more than those associated with a mainstream cultural ethos. The measure they used in their study was the cultural socialization scales which assessed the parents' reports of culture-based socialization practices present in their and their children's home activities and encounters. The four cultural themes included were

communalism, verve (Afro-cultural themes), competition, and individualism (mainstream cultural themes). The researchers concluded that parents reported communal practices significantly more than those activities linked to the remaining three cultural themes. Some limitations of their study were that the effect size for the cultural-theme-scenario main effect was small and some problems may have occurred with the instrumentation's readability index since there were few returned surveys with minimal response bias. Future research could further explore the response patterns generated for this cultural theme (Tyler et al., 2005).

Similar to Boyd-Franklin and Boykin is a family visionary, Birdsong (2015), who spent more than 20 years pointing out adaptations and using the strength-based approach to catalyze economic and social mobility (Birdsong). In "The Story We Tell About Poverty isn't True," Birdsong, discussed low-income single mothers and the misconception that poor people are lazy freeloaders, cheaters, and liars. Further misconceptions that were discussed in the work were people are helpless, neglected by their parents who did not read to them enough, and if they were shown the right path, they would make it. Birdsong emphasized people who are poor must remember what they are capable of and be inspired by reading the "Letter from Birmingham Jail," reciting "First Writing Since," or performing "Black Gold." Individually, they do not have a lot of wealth and power, but collectively, they can demand change from systems that were not made for them (Birdsong). Another one of Birdsong's works discusses rethinking policies for the demands of modern American families (Birdsong & Slaughter, 2016). In this study, the authors reported that in 1960, 73% of children were raised in married-couple

households, and by 2014, less than half were. The authors argued about the United States being stuck in using outdated policies for two-parent households. They further discussed future directions for policy changes that can help meet the demands of today's families (Birdsong & Slaughter).

LeCuyer, Christensen, Kreher, Kearney, and Kitzman (2015) researched unmarried, low-income, African American mothers and their disciplinary practices. The mothers in their study self-described the discipline strategies they used with their children in 1992 and 2012. Data were obtained through interviews conducted in 2011–2012 with 30 African American, low-income mothers in Memphis, TN. This was a 17-year follow-up study, and only 27 from the larger sample in 1992 were interviewed. Participants engaged in a semistructured, 1-hour interview in a similar setting to the 1992 interview and administered by the same two readers from the first study. The results conveyed that more mothers in 2011–2012 described the use of distraction and time out, displaying more of a variety of strategies than were used in 1992. They found that one of the most frequently described disciplinary strategies was the use of time out. Twenty-five mothers (83%) indicated timeouts are in corners, playpens, high chairs, on the couch, or on the bed (LeCuyer et al.). All participants (100%) in their study explained that their child could learn through playing, compared to the 77% in 1992. Some limitations of their study were the differences between these two samples over time, the findings cannot be generalized to all African American mothers, nor can the disciplinary strategies be used exclusively by African American mothers. The researchers emphasized that parents benefit from receiving guidance and more information and support for effective

disciplinary practices through community role models, mentors, or parenting support programs (LeCuyer et al.).

Additionally, research by Yildirim and Roopnarine (2015), examined the mediating role of maternal warmth in the associations between positive and harsh parental practices and externalizing and internalizing behaviors in Hispanic-American, African American, and European-American families with 5-year-olds. The parent measures were the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment and The Early Childhood HOME Inventory. The child measure was the Child Behavior Checklist. The results of the study associated the harsh parental treatment with the externalizing and internalizing behaviors of the children. The example provided was low-income African Americans were more likely to use spanking and verbal punishment with young children. Additionally, African Americans endorse physical discipline to assist their children in developing respect for their elders. A limitation was no control for contextual factors like cultural beliefs pertaining to child rearing and children's perceptions of parental harshness. Future studies may involve more complex models that examine the mediating role of maternal warmth over time to assess protective function against childhood behavioral risks (Yildirim & Roopnarine, 2015).

There is a history of many journal articles, books, and reports exploring the well-being of single African American mothers and their children as is described in the works of Boyd-Franklin (1987), Boykin (2005), and Birdsong (2015). This lengthy review included relevant types of data, the questions that frame analysis, and the principles of sample selection such as African American single-mother families. A limitation in the

studies included no control for contextual factors like cultural beliefs pertaining to child rearing and children's perceptions of parental harshness. The direction of future studies can pertain to parents benefiting from guidance on more information and support for effective disciplinary practices through community role models, mentors, or parenting support programs (LeCuyer et al., 2015). These presenting works have broached the views of economic support in correlation with the theory base. Furthermore, the studies presented have focused on the population of interest in this study.

General Social Support

This section focused on the topic of social support in African American single-mother families. Social support means psychological, physical, and financial help available to an individual through their social ties to other individuals, groups, and community members (Ozbay et al. 2007). These studies were chosen because they present current information regarding social supports available to low-income, single African American mothers, and adolescents. The following research displays the importance of social support in child rearing.

Research by Schrag and Schmidt-Tieszen (2014) mentions the nature and availability of social support networks for young, unmarried mothers. In the study were 18 African American mothers that lived at the homeless shelter with their children in a Midwestern city. The participant's ages were from 18 to 21, and the children's ages ranged between four months and three years of age. The measures utilized in the study were Tracy and Whittaker's (1990) Social Network Map and a series of questions based on Tracy and Whittaker's three types of social support: concrete support, emotional

support, and advice. The results conclude family was the network that offered the most support, followed by their friends, and then work/school. Initially, the mothers thought they were left alone, and no one else cares about them. After completing the interviews, the mother participants realized they have support, and the support systems were already in their lives. Additional research focusing on mutual support groups for this population can be of assistance.

Furthermore, researcher Taylor (2015) broached the topic of social support and low-income African American mothers and adolescents. The study focuses on the association of kin social support and social undermining with mother's adjustment, mother's report of their adolescent's adjustment and mother's parenting. The participants were 200 African American mothers and adolescents from a large city in the northeastern region of the United States. A total of 28 fathers completed interviews for analysis. The measures consisted of demographic measures, Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, Life Orientation Test, Revised Behavior Problem Checklist, Child's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory, and the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale. The study concluded kinship social support was linked with mothers optimism. When it came to parenting, kin support was positively associated with mothers emotional support and acceptance. Kin undermining was linked with the mother's depressive symptoms, mother/adolescent communication problems, and the mother's report of the adolescents' internalizing and externalizing problems. In comparison when mothers reported higher levels of kin support, there was less kin undermining with mother/adolescent communication problems. Furthermore, when the mothers reported higher kin social

support, there was lower kin undermining with adolescent externalizing problems. Some limitations were the findings are correlational and causal relations are not known, the measures examined were based upon mother's self-report, and the interviews were the only method of data collection. Future direction can lead towards understanding the interpersonal processes through which African American families and individuals manage their exposure to undermining kin relations, given the prevalence of extended family (Taylor, 2015).

In addition to parental perspectives, the research also attends to the children's viewpoints like Kenigsberg, Winston, Gibson, and Brady's (2016) study. Their research is about resources for support and urban, lower-income African American caregivers. The study examined whether the caregivers' stressful life events, affective symptoms and perceived support from their social network were associated with their children's perceptions of support from and conflict with the caregiver. The total sample consisted of 46 African American families. The measures utilized were the Peri Life Events Scale, Things I Have Seen and Heard Scale, Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scales Short Form, Social Provisions Checklist, and the Family Support and Conflict Scales. The research concluded when the caregivers reported greater support from their social network the children reported greater support from their caregiver. Additionally, when the caregivers reported increased attachment to members of their social network, the children reported increased emotional support from their caregiver. Limitations include the study's small sample size and cross-sectional design. The authors indicate future longitudinal research can examine the associations between the variables in a larger African American sample

that experience many stressors and have been historically disadvantaged with disparities in mental health and educational attainment. In addition to future research using the study's variables with both child and caregiver characteristics of caregivers' parenting style or children's personality (Kenigsberg et al., 2016).

Next, research by Parent et al. (2013) addressed the role of nonmarital coparents in African American single-mother families. In this study, the nonmarital coparenting roles are designated to the grandmother, father/social father, aunt, and female family friend. The purpose of this study is to figure out the associations among coparent identity to the child, co-parenting relationship quality, maternal parenting, and youth internalizing and externalizing problems. The population consisted of 194 African American mothers and children from central North Carolina. The measures used to assess the population were the Co-parenting Division of Labor Scale, demographic information, O'Leary-Porter Scale, Parenting Convergence Scale, the Interactive Behavior Questionnaire. In addition to the Child Behavior Checklist, the Youth Self-Report (YSR; adolescent-report), and the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale. The study concluded that grandmothers, aunts, and female family friends presented significantly more support than fathers. The limitation of the study is only the mothers report measured the co-parenting quality. A strength in the research was the use of statistical procedures that model measurement error. Parent et al. (2013) mentioned prevention and intervention programs targeting single-mother African American families being a future implication.

Lastly, Taylor, Budescu, Gebre, and Hodzic (2014) discussed kin social support in low-income African Americans families. The participants consisted of 200 African

American mothers and their oldest adolescent living at home. The participants were in a large city in the northeastern region of the United States. The measures utilized in the study were the Kinship Support Scale, Adolescent Problem Behavior Scale, Family Resource Scale, Life Orientation Test, and the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale. The study results mentioned kin social support was positively linked to mothers' and adolescents' well-being. In addition to both mothers and their adolescents having social support from extended family offsetting the link of family economic problems with psychological well-being. The limitation of the study was the sample being composed of economically disadvantaged, African American mothers and adolescents from neighborhoods in a single urban community and the population was not a random sample. The strength of the research has revealed reliability and validity data using the Family Resource Scale as a measure of family financial strain and pressure. The authors indicated future research is needed on economic problems with parent-adolescent conflict and the association of kin social support.

It is known that social support is accessible in different forms to help an individual through their social ties to other individuals, groups, and community members. The general limitations consist of the studies small sample size, the sample is composed of economically disadvantaged, African American mothers, and studying only adolescents from neighborhoods in a single urban community. Future research can help understand the usage of mutual support groups for this population. As well as both child and caregiver characteristics of caregivers' parenting style or children personality. The contemporary studies were suitable for this section due to the relevancy of resources for

support and urban, lower-income African American caregivers. These studies play a role in determining whether there is an interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices in low-income African Americans families.

Parenting Skills

In this section, research studies focus on parenting skills and young, single, women in poverty. Parenting skills include ensuring the child's healthy and safe, preparing the child for a productive life as an adult, and conveying cultural values. Child psychologists mentioned parenting skills consist of embracing praise and ignoring minor misbehaviors, teaching children how to cope effectively, and making time for self (Novotney, 2012). The following studies were applicable due to parenting skills in African American low-income families.

For instance, a research study by Barnett and Scaramella (2013) focuses on parenting skills in African American low-income families. The study examined whether associations between the mothers' positive and negative parenting and children's externalizing and internalizing behaviors varied because of the child's sex. The sample entailed 137 African American low-income families. The measure used was the Child Behavior Checklist. The study determined in the observation that the mothers used less positive parenting with sons in comparison to their daughters. Also, the increased levels of observed negative parenting were linked to more externalizing behaviors for boys verse the girls. The limitation of the study is fathers' parenting was not measured. In this research study, the strength is not many studies simultaneously utilize the influences of negative and positive parenting skills on children's behavior problems. Interactions

between multiple caregivers and child sex to estimate the impact of parenting skills on children's behavior problems remains to be studied (Barnett et al., 2013).

Whereas the previous research analyzed the African American low-income families, Prusank and Duran (2014) discuss parenting for African American women. The purpose of this study is to analyze the themes provided to African American parents through the magazine *Essence*. *Essence* has the reputation of being the longest, consistently published magazine for African American women. The authors sought after magazines that identified African American readership, parenting, and exceeded 1,000,000 readers. After the analysis, 123 of *Essence* magazine articles were chosen. The data analysis consisted of three trained coders performing the quantitative analysis to test the categories of parenting topics, dominant parenting role, and dominant parenting style. A qualitative content analysis was used to examine advice regarding racial socialization and the conditions of when physical punishment was a necessary form of discipline. *Essence* magazine spoke to the women who were overscheduled and underappreciated. Unfortunately, minimal attention was given to the mother's additional stress of fulfilling work and family life. Many parents rejected the child-rearing practices of their parents, which included physical punishment or the authoritative parenting style. One of the limitations is the study's reliance upon one popular magazine for the articles. The strength of the research is it added to the knowledge base of what parents know and live and how they should parent (Prusank & Duran, 2014).

Moreover, Riley, Scaramella, and McGoron (2014) contributed to the topic of parenting and African American mothers. This study considers two mechanisms by

which an accumulation of contextual stress affects children's social skill development. The two theoretical models were Rutter's (1979) cumulative risk approach and a family stress model approach. The sample included 167 predominantly African American mothers and their 2-year-old children. All participating families resided in the greater New Orleans area and were very poor. On average, the mothers had three children. The measures included in this study are a cumulative stress index, the Me & My Neighborhood Questionnaire, and observational ratings of mothers' parenting behavior. The results indicated sensitive parenting predicted increases in social skills from age 2 to 4 during the highest cumulative stress. The hypothesis on the family stress model was expected to predict less sensitive parenting, to undermine social skill development and it was not supported. When it came to the Rutter's approach the distribution of stress was positively skewed because many families experienced some stress and experienced financial hardship. Social skills being measured only during sibling interactions was a limitation. Future research can go into depth on how sensitive parenting promoted more positive adjustment within the context of elevated stress (Riley et al., 2014).

Furthermore, Pearl, French, Dumas, Moreland, and Prinz (2014) discuss parenting in single parent, under-resourced African American families. The quantitative study investigates the bi-directional perspective of parent-child effects through parenting quality predicting child externalizing behavior and vice versa. Participants included 249 primary caregivers of children enrolled in kindergarten. The predominant African American students were recruited in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. The measures in the study consisted of the Parenting Practices Scale, Parenting Sense of Competence

Scale, Positive Parenting Scale, Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist, and Disruptive Behavior Disorders Rating Scale. The results indicated that child externalizing behavior predicted subsequent parenting quality and vice versa. Additionally, the influence of child externalizing behavior on parenting quality decreased with time, and the influence of parenting quality on child externalizing behavior increased with time. Some limitations were the data measuring parenting quality, and child behavior was caregiver self-report. Also, the validity information for the Parenting Practices Scale was not accessible on the African American population. The strength is this is one of the first empirical examinations of the bidirectionality of parent–child effects with a predominantly school-age sample and financially stressed, African Americans. Future research studies can replicate the findings, with the father’s report of parental characteristics and child adjustment (Pearl et al., 2014).

Lastly, Anton, Jones, and Youngstrom (2015) discuss parenting in African American single-mother homes. The study looks at parenting research starting with the person-oriented approach. The participants were 194 African American single mother-youth dyads. The mother’s age ranged from 26–64 years. The participating mothers reported having 1–8 children. In the research, the measures used were demographics, SES, and the Aggression and Conduct Problems subscales of the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). The study concluded the person-oriented approach captured richer variability in parenting styles within African American single-mother families. Most of the mothers reported the parenting style is relative to high levels of both warmth and control. The authors reference that the authoritative parenting style has been considered

optimal for youth outcomes. Parenting style and income were both associated with externalizing behavior. The overall model and the association between education and parenting style was statistically significance. A limitation of the research is the cross-sectional nature of the analyses may have precluded the opportunity for income to arise as a moderator. The strength of this study is the revert to the person-oriented approach to elucidate variability in African American single-mother parenting styles. Subsequently, family-focused interventions are better informed by this underserved group. Future research can include fathers and extended family in analyses of parenting style and examine the joint collaborative effects of parenting style on youth outcomes (Anton et al., 2015).

It is known that parenting skills focus on the child's healthy and safe, preparation for a productive life as an adult, and cultural values. The limitations of the studies consisted of the fathers' parenting was not measured, and the data only measured parenting quality and child behavior through the caregiver self-report. Future research can investigate the joint collaborative effects of parenting style on youth outcomes. Additionally, to investigate the interactions between multiple caregivers and the child sex to estimate the impact of parenting skills on children's behavior problems. The studies were pertinent for this section because they are linked to the variable of parenting skills in African American single-mother homes. These studies contribute to this research in figuring out if there is a correlation between parenting skills, social support, and disciplinary practices in single parent, underresourced African American families.

Literature Review Related to Disciplinary Practices

This section reviews disciplinary practices utilized in African American families. The particular studies are appropriate for this section due to the relevancy of child discipline in African American families and African American parent's responses to child misbehavior. Additionally, the studies connect to the variable of discipline through the controversy surrounding parent's ways to instill self-control in their child. Discipline means to teach knowledge and skill using punishment and reward (Nieman et al., 2004). Three common forms of discipline consist of time-out, reasoning, and disciplinary spanking. Some general recommendations about discipline include considering the child's age, the level of development and temperament. For example, time-out should last one minute per year of the child's age. Additionally, parents can praise positive behavior, ignore the unimportant behavior, and set reasonable and consistent limits (Nieman et al., 2004). These studies were chosen due to the relevancy of child discipline in African American families and African American parent's responses to child misbehavior.

Also, in a research study by Adkison-Bradley, Terpstra, and Dormitorio (2014), the aspects of child discipline in African American families were studied. The purpose of the study is to establish baseline data regarding disciplinary methods used by African American parents to address recurring misbehavior in African American children. The African American Child Discipline survey was utilized in the research. They also used a descriptive approach. The participants consisted of 189 African American parents from the southwest Michigan area. The results of this study indicated parents used a hierarchal disciplinary pattern meaning the second disciplinary method was more severe than verbal discussion. A limitation would be the exclusion of direct observations of African

American parents disciplining their children in this study. Future studies can examine the perspectives of counselor educators and supervisors when they assess the level of knowledge and skills around parenting skills in general and child rearing in racial minority families (Adkison-Bradley et al., 2014).

Next, is a study by Adkison-Johnson, Terpstra, Burgos, and Payne (2016) that discusses African American parent's responses to child misbehavior. The African American Child Discipline survey was the measure utilized in the study. There were 189 African American parents in the study, consisting of 35 males and 154 females. The results were mothers tend to use more severe disciplinary practices than fathers. An example would be the mother telling the child to stop (verbal) followed by a spanking (physical) if the child does not listen. Some limitations include participation bias due to a small number of men participants relative to women participants. Also, the participants may have toned down their responses, so they do not appear abusive. Future studies can have helping professionals interview African American parents together to explain child-rearing competencies in their families (Adkison-Johnson et al., 2016).

Lastly, is a research study by Westbrook, Harden, Holmes, Meisch, and Whittaker (2013). The authors examined the relationship between the use of physical discipline and subsequent child behavior problems and aggressive behaviors. The participants included 69 low-income African American mothers and their children. The children in this sample were between the ages of 3 and 25 months in the beginning of the study. The measures in the study include the Questionnaire on parental attitudes, Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale, Parenting Stress Index-Short Form, and the Conflict Tactics

Scale—Parent–Child, Supplemental Questions. Additional measures consist of the Brief Infant-Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment–Parent Version, Child Behavior Checklist (1.5–5)–Aggression subscale, and a background questionnaire. The results were summed up as most of the mothers used physical discipline at least once in the prior week. Also, older children were more likely to have been the recipients of physical discipline. Lastly, children with behavioral problems were males, mothers had lower levels of warmth, and the mothers used physical discipline. The sample size being limited was a limitation in the study. Future research can add concurrent variables in the regression models for greater statistical power (Westbrook et al., 2013).

The research presented in this section details perspectives of child discipline in African American families, which differs from that of many American families. Recommendations for continued exploration of parenting in African American families have included: analyzing the perspectives of counselor educators and supervisors when assessing the level of general parenting skills and child rearing in racial minority families (Adkison-Bradley et al., 2014). Professionals can also interview African American parents to explain the child-rearing competencies in their families (Adkison-Johnson et al., 2016).

Discipline, Parenting, and Social Support

This section of the literature review covered mainly quantitative studies that include samples of African American single-mother families and focused on disciplinary practices, parenting skills, and general social support. The following studies were relevant in this section due to the relationship among child abuse, social support from

friends and family, and social functioning. For example, Gonzalez, Jones, and Parent (2014) discuss parenting skills and social support in African American single-mother families. The purpose is to understand the experiences of the mothers and their nonmarital co-parents. The participants were 95 African American Families from the African American Families and Children Together Project. Demographic information, Coparenting Division of Labor Scale, Interactive Behavior Questionnaire, Monitoring Scale, Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, O'Leary-Porter Scale, and the Child Behavior Checklist were measures utilized in the study. The results indicated the majority (87.2%) of coparents were female, with an average income of \$36,921. The coparents included the maternal grandmother, another maternal relative like an aunt, or a maternal friend. The limitation is only families with single mothers were identified as nonmarital co-parents in the study. Subsequently, this potentially created a biased sample. The strength is the single mothers explained with whom they coordinated their childrearing responsibilities, or they considered their families. Future studies can understand how public policy and intervention may best serve African American single-mother families with more research in coparenting (Gonzalez et al., 2014).

In addition to parenting skills and social support, the topic of disciplinary practices and general social support is discussed. Lamis, Wilson, King, and Kaslow (2014) examined the relationship among child abuse, social support from friends and family, and social functioning. The sample consisted of 152 African American children. Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short-Form, Child and Adolescent Social and Adaptive Functioning Scale, and the Social Support Appraisals Scale were the measures used in the

study. The study concluded social support mediates the relationship between child abuse and social functioning. For example, when low-income African American children experience child abuse, the detrimental consequences effects the child's social functioning, and this can be safeguarded through social support. The limitation is the sample only consisted of low-income African American children. A positive aspect is this is the first study to explore a mediational model focused on the relationship between child abuse and social functioning in low-income school-aged African American children. The researchers indicated future studies should investigate the types of family support that can serve as resources for abused children (Lamis et al., 2014).

Additionally, Wallace (2013) mentioned general social support and parenting skills in the study. The study examined the combined effect of mothers perceived community social capital on personal outlook and parenting quality. The participants in the study consisted of 889 African Americans, who carried the greatest responsibility for raising the child. The quantitative study utilized measures such as the Community Social Capital Measure, Social Cohesion and Trust Scale, Parenting Quality Measure, Community-Level Economic Disadvantage Measure, and the Life Orientation Test. Results showed that residential stability is positively associated with community social capital. The participants that lived in the community longer with the same neighbors developed more trust, had helpful interactions with neighbors, know the parents of other children, monitored the behavior of each other's children, and are more involved in safeguarding the community. A limitation of the research is no qualitative data on African American mothers' perceptions of social capital and its meanings for this group

was collected. The future studies can embrace survey responses from children that describe their African American mothers' parenting quality. In addition to survey questions that gather extended kin and other family members' perceptions of the mother's parenting (Wallace).

Furthermore, Boyd and Waanders (2013) focused on positive parenting skills and kinship support with low-income African American mothers. The study's purpose is to examine the effects of positive parenting skills on child depression and the potential protective effects of social skills and kinship support among depressed African American mothers who are depressed and low-income. The sample entailed 77 African American mother-child dyads from a large metropolitan area. The mother's ages ranged from 23 to 63 years. Most of the mothers were never married and received public assistance with a household income between \$0 and \$10,000. The research measures included the Parenting Practices Scale, the Social Skills Rating System, the Kinship Support Scale, and the Children's Depression Inventory. The results displayed positive parenting practices, and child social skills are associated with lower depression symptoms in children. In addition to positive parenting being beneficial for families suffering from maternal depression, maternal depression severity was correlated with child report of kinship support. The children of mothers with depression received good support from their extended family. The limitations of the study include the small sample size and the study not including the child report of the mother's parenting behaviors. The authors indicated future research could include more African American families to examine

cultural adaptations of already empirically-supported interventions to address the family's needs better (Boyd & Waanders).

It is known when African American mothers lived in urban settings and were faced with persistent stressors; they used fewer positive parenting practices. The limitations of the research included the small sample size and the sample only consisted of low-income African American children. Future research can explore survey responses from children that describe their African American mothers' parenting quality and investigate the types of family support that can serve as resources for abused children. The studies were appropriate because of positive parenting skills and kinship support with low-income African American mothers. These studies are vital to this research due to the proposed relationship between general social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices amongst urban, African American single mothers.

Integrative Summary and Conclusions

As researchers and practitioners continue to gain knowledge about available social support, African American mothers' parenting skills, and disciplinary practices this research is useful at individual and community levels (Wallace, 2013). The themes in the literature build upon ecological systems theories to provide an opportunity for future African American single mothers in an urban community. It is known that there are multiple research efforts and data on mother's perceptions of living in urban settings, being faced with persistent stressors, and using fewer positive parenting practices (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008). Yet, the use that these young women make of community support continues to be lacking (Roberts et al., 2009). Mothers continue to face child-rearing

challenges like single motherhood and being in a lower socioeconomic stratum. Thus, this present study may fill in at least one gap by trying to figure out what practices will be best for their children, while gaining support remains a high priority for parenting improvement (Roberts et al.). This quantitative study will extend knowledge in the discipline by understanding the correlation between social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers, concerning the relationship these factors have with the chosen disciplinary practices of the mothers. Chapter 3 includes the research design, data analysis, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

As I described in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to examine potential correlations between general social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers. In this study, I also considered the relationship these factors have with parenting skills as demonstrated in disciplinary practices. In this chapter, I will identify the research design and its connection to the research questions. Then, the methodology and data analysis will be discussed. Finally, I will discuss the threats to validity and ethical procedures of this study.

Research Design and Rationale

For this study, the independent variables were social support and parenting skills, and the dependent variable was discipline. There was available information pertaining to the variables in this study, as reflected in the literature review. However, information was needed on the treatment being used to correct childhood misbehaviors due to poor knowledge of appropriate parenting practices (Yildirim & Roopnarine, 2015). This research design of this study was correlational. The correlational research design is consistent with research designs needed to advance knowledge in psychology (Williams, 2007). The correlational design allows researchers to predict future events from present knowledge (Williams). For instance, a psychologist can assess the relationships among variables in everyday life events to predict a significant interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices. There were no resource constraints consistent with my use of this quantitative correlational design in this study; however,

there may have been time restrictions associated with this design due to the participants having 30 minutes to complete the surveys. One solution I employed for the time restriction was to give the mothers additional time to return the surveys.

The research design and its connection to the research questions was supported by understanding the correlation between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices amongst low-income, African American single mother. To address the research questions that guided the study, I used the MSPSS, the Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire. The MSPSS instrument was used to assess the general social support aspect of the study. The Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire allowed for examination of parenting skills in the African American single mother households. The Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire assisted me in exploring the disciplinary practices of the families. The 10-item measure also included the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the parents while spanking their children. I incorporated this quantitative design to align with related studies to investigate relationships between the delivery of parenting and support development for these mothers.

Methodology

Population

The target population was African American single mothers from northeastern United States at least 18 years of age. These mothers had children between the ages of 2 and 5, who attended daycare. I estimated the target population size to be 74. Northeastern United States is a great microcosm for the concerns of general social support and

parenting skills when it comes to the discipline practices of African American single mothers. Moreover, in this urban area, there is the highest number of single mother households in poverty, at 48.4% (Mason et al., 2013). In Chapter 4, I will provide specific demographic information about the participants.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

I used convenience or accidental sampling as the nonprobability sampling strategy for this study. Convenience sampling was chosen in this research due to affordability, ease, and the fact that the subjects were readily available (see Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The sample was drawn from self-identified African American single mothers from northeastern United States. The mothers were at least 18 years of age and had children between the ages of 2 and 5 that attended daycare due to their preschool age. The sampling frame exclusion criteria consisted of men and mothers younger than the age of 18.

In this study, I estimated the target population size to be 74. The statistical rationale for this sample size was due to the *g* power formula. The X^2 test family research was used to calculate the chi-square statistical test. I also used the priori power analyses for the formula that resulted in a sample size of 74. In addition to the input parameter being set for a one-tailed analysis, the alpha level, the probability of a Type I error, was cut-off at 5% (0.05), indicating a significant difference is due to chance and is not a true difference. The power level of .8 was chosen to show that 80% of the time the experiment will detect a difference between the control and experimental groups if a difference is present (see Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

In 2016, 56% of families living in the community under study were headed by single mothers living, and out of that population, 40% were African American single mothers (Onboard Informatics, 2016). The participants were African American single mothers from northeastern United States. In this study, the mothers were at least 18 years of age with children between the ages of 2 and 5, who attended daycare. The Daycare Center was the only facility used as a foundation for recruitment; however, I used the referral sampling method to expand the participant pool by inviting the participants to make referrals of other participants. A poster board was posted on the site's window with information on the voluntary participation, instructions to contact me as the student researcher via phone if they were interested, and the duration of the study. The participants approached me with their interest, and then the study took place in a private section of the center for the safety and comfort of both me and the participant.

During the face-to-face meetings, we reviewed the consent form and I reminded the recruited mothers that their participation was voluntary and discussed how it did not impact the services rendered at the facility. Subsequently, the participants were given an enveloped package. The package included an informed consent information letter and the self-administered questionnaires: the MSPSS, the Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire. I was present for the duration of the data collection. When I received the completed package from the participants, the mothers received a coffee mug for their participation. The participants kept a copy of the informed consent for future reference. Some of the

questions asked may have provoked strong emotional reactions, so I provided the phone number for a 24-hour call line for parenting support in the consent form. There was no following up with the participants after the package of questionnaires was completed by them.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Variables

In this study, I investigated the independent variables of social support and parenting skills and the dependent variable of discipline for preschool age children living in families headed by African American single mothers in an urban community. The instrumentation consisted of several instruments to investigate numerous aspects of social support, parenting skills, and discipline practices. The instruments were the MSPSS, the Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. Zimet et al. are the developers of the MSPSS, which was created in 1988, and was used to assess the relationship between social support and disciplinary practices in this study. Permission to use the MSPSS was requested from Dr. Zimet, and permission to use the MSPSS was granted on April 9, 2017, via e-mail. There were no established population norms on the MSPSS; however, the developer typically looked at how social support differs between groups such as married compared to unmarried individuals (Zimet et al.). This was relevant to the population of single mothers that I focused on in this study.

The internal reliability (using Cronbach's coefficient alpha) was calculated for the scale and the subscales in the study. The value was .88 indicating good internal

reliability, and the test-retest reliability value was .85, which indicated stability (Zimet et al., 1988). Factor analysis is used for the validity to distinguish the different sources of support (Zimet et al.). A strong factorial validity was found for this instrument with $F(1, 273) = 32.73, p < .001$ (Zimet et al.). The construct validity investigated the relationship between perceived social support and the symptoms of depression and anxiety, and Zimet et al. found moderate construct validity with $r = -.25, p < .01$.

Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire. The Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire was developed by Johnson et al. (2008). The questionnaire can be used to explore the relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices. I did not need permission to use the Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire due to the fact that I was carrying out noncommercial research for educational purposes. The purpose of the questionnaire is to assess parental behaviors that may or may not lead to inadvisable parenting (Johnson et al.). The instrument has been previously used with adolescences and participants in early adulthood and middle adulthood (Johnson et al.). This instrument was relevant to this study due to the relationship between the African American mothers and their children that the questionnaire could be used to assess. The questionnaire derived from the Disorganizing Poverty Interview and other validated measures of child-rearing behavior (Avgar, Bronfenbrenner, & Henderson, 1977; Schaefer, 1965). The validity of the child-rearing behavior assessment items has been supported by previous research (Cohen & Cohen, 1996; Johnson et al., 2001; Kogan et al., 1977; Wagner &

Cohen, 1994). Acceptable internal consistency was represented through the 33 items assessing child-rearing behavior (Cronbach's $\alpha=.79$; Johnson et al., 2008).

Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire. The Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire was developed by Furnham (1995). The questionnaire can be used to assess if there is an interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices. I did not need permission to use the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire because I was carrying out noncommercial research for educational purposes. There are no established population norms on the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire; however, the developer typically used ages ranging from 18 to 38 years old (Furnham). The appropriateness of using this instrument in this study revolved around discipline, including the spanking of children. The construct validity indicated younger subjects favored factor two (rarity of spanking) more strongly ($r = 0.30, p < 0.001$). The 10-item questionnaire was derived from Strauss's (1994) "Ten Myths about Spanking Children." Similarly, the test-retest intervals displayed with the younger subjects presented with those items and rated them on a 7-point, agree-disagree scale (Furnham).

Operationalization

Discipline means to teach knowledge and skill using punishment and reward (Nieman et al., 2004). Discipline was the dependent variable in this study, and it was measured by the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire. I scored the item responses on a 7-point, agree-disagree scale, where 7 was *agree* and 1 was *disagree*. The 10-item measure has three factors: prospanking attitudes, the rarity of spanking, and

alternatives to spanking (see Furnham, 1995). An example item from the questionnaire is “Parents can’t stop spanking unless they get training in alternatives.”

Parenting skills include ensuring the child’s healthy and safe, preparing the child for a productive life as an adult, and conveying cultural values (Novotney, 2012). Child psychologists have mentioned that parenting skills consist of embracing praise and ignoring minor misbehaviors, teaching children how to cope effectively, and making time for self (Novotney, 2012). In this study, I measured the independent variable of parenting skills by the Parents’ Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire. Item responses were scored on 5-point scales and included 1 *never* to 5 *often*, 1 *not at all like me* to 5 *exactly like me*, and 1 (*< 1 hour a day*) to 5 (*≥ 8 hours a day*). Other responses ranged from 1 *yes* to 2 *no*. In the Parents’ Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, the scores represent parental affection toward the child, parental assistance to the child, parental communication with the child, parental control of the child, and parental disciplinary consistency (see Johnson, Cohen, Kasen, & Brook, 2008). In addition to parental physical punishment, parental possessiveness toward the child, parental praise and encouragement of the child, parental rejection of the child, parental supervision of the child, and parental time spent with the child (see Johnson et al.). Some example statements from the instrument that participants respond to are “I often give up something to get something for my child.” and “I often praise my child.”

Social support means psychological, physical, and financial help available to an individual through their social ties to other individuals, groups, and community members (Ozbay et al. 2007). This independent variable was measured with the MSPSS. The

responses are scored using the traditional Likert scale where 1 was *very strongly disagree*, 2 was *strongly disagree*, 3 was *mildly disagree*, 4 was *neutral*, 5 was *mildly agree*, 6 was *strongly agree*, and 7 was *very strongly agree*. There are two ways to score the MSPSS utilizing the significant other, family, and friends subscales. One way is to designate the lowest group as low perceived support, the middle group as medium support, and the high group as high support. The other way is to take any mean scale score ranging from 1 to 2.9 and label it as low support, a score of 3 to 5 as moderate support, and a score of 5.1 to 7 as high support. An example item is “I get the emotional help & support I need from my family.”

Data Analysis Plan

The software that was used for analysis was the SPSS statistical program Version 22.0 for Windows (IBM, 2016). The data was screened for accuracy and validity by examining the value ranges of responses. Descriptive statistics were performed to refer to the demographic information (see Appendix B) of the mothers. The sample demographics include household composition, education of the mother, and socioeconomic background.

Ordinal regression was conducted to explore whether parenting skills and social support predict discipline to examine the research question. The statistical technique, ordinal regression, was used to predict the ordinal level dependent variable along with the independent variables. Ordinal regression consists of the independent variable that can be an interval, categorical or a ratio scale variable. The assumption of ordinal regression consists of one dependent variable. Next, there should be one regression equation per category of the ordinal dependent variable, excluding the final category. Finally, there

should be satisfactory cell count which includes 80% of cells having more than five counts and none of the cells having a zero count. For the assumption of parallel lines to be met, the slope of the log-odds should be equal for all the dependent variable categories (Statistics Solutions, 2013).

Research Question

The purpose of this quantitative study was to understand the correlation between social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers, with respect to the relationship these factors have with the chosen disciplinary practices of the mothers. I developed the following research questions and hypotheses to guide this study:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between social support and disciplinary practices?

H1: There is a relationship between social support and disciplinary practices as measured by the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.

H_{A1}: There is no relationship between social support and disciplinary practices as measured by the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.

RQ2: Is there a relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices?

H2: There is a relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices as measured by the Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

H_{A2}: There is no relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices as measured by the Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

RQ3: Is there an interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices?

H3: There is an interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices as measured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

H_{A3}: There is no interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices as measured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

Threats to Validity

A threat to external validity is the reactive effects of experimental arrangements. The mothers in the study may give answers that they believe are socially appropriate rather than that are accurate on the questionnaires in fear of being judged or reported. This threat was addressed by advising the participants that all responses are anonymous before taking the surveys.

Some threats to internal validity are compensation, reading difficulties, and the mothers feeling rushed. Regarding compensation, every mother is rewarded for taking part in the study. The internal validity was addressed by giving all the mothers the same

form of compensation rather than some mother's cash and other mothers a gift. Kelley, Clark, Brown, and Sitzia (2003) mention some ways to resolve reading difficulties are to make sure the instructions are clear and have headings to make the questionnaire easier to follow. Moreover, check to see that the mothers understand the terminology used in the questionnaires. Completion with reading help was an option for the participants from the researcher. A solution for those mothers feeling rushed was to give them additional time to return the survey package.

There are no threats to construct or statistical conclusion validity when it comes to measuring the variables. The MSPSS's construct validity was moderate and reported $r = -.25, p < .01$ (Zimet et al., 1988). The Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire's validity of the child-rearing behavior assessment items is supported by previous research (Cohen & Cohen, 1996; Johnson et al., 2001; Kogan et al., 1977; Wagner & Cohen, 1994). Per Furnham (1995), the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire's construct validity conveyed $r = 0.30, P < 0.001$. The study's questionnaires appear to measure what they are supposed to measure which is social support and parenting skills amongst African American single mothers, with respect to the chosen disciplinary practices of the mothers. Additionally, many participants were questioned in this study, subsequently laying the foundation for the construct validity.

Ethical Procedures

The informed consent was the agreement utilized to gain access to African American single mothers or data. American Psychological Association (APA; 2014) indicated informed consent is to give respect and inform the participants of the study.

Additionally, whenever research is conducted on people, the well-being of research participants comes first. APA (2014) further discussed the participant's rights include the informed consent, voluntary participation, right to withdraw, and anonymity or confidentiality. In this study, Walden University's institutional review board (IRB) approvals were needed due to the involvement of human subjects (IRB Approval #01-11-18-0262262).

Nijhawan, Janodia, Muddukrishna, Bhat, Bairy, and Musmade (2013) discuss ethical concerns related to recruitment materials, processes, data collection and intervention activities. The ethical issues would be putting the legal obligations first, despite the loyalty owed to the participants. Moreover, the African American mothers should be advised through informed consent and the acknowledgment of participant's right to refuse participation or early withdrawal from the study. The ethical considerations for this researcher's position are to value the mothers, their beliefs, and confidentiality. The tactic to address these concerns is to show the positive outcome, but the complication is how an individual shows results if no one participates (Nijhawan et al., 2013). With proper research and published results, this can help the mothers, families, community, and owner of the daycare see the benefit of the plan.

The data from the study were anonymous. Furthermore, the data was used for aggregated research purposes only. The raw data is kept for 5 years under lock and key before destroying in a shredding machine. Thus, the anonymous data like the surveys is protected after each participant completes it.

Summary

In this chapter I described the methods and procedures utilized to provide understanding about the correlations between general social support and parenting skills amongst African American single mothers and the relationship of their disciplinary practices. The research design, research questions, sample population, and instrumentation were presented. Additionally, the chapter discussed the data collection process, the potential threats to validity and the data analysis of the material retrieved. When the data was presented in Chapter 4, it addresses the previously mentioned research questions and the attained general demographic information.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to understand the correlation between social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers with respect to the relationship these factors have with the chosen disciplinary practices of the mothers. In the following chapter, I will discuss the data analysis results and provide an overview of the data collection process and the baseline descriptive and demographic characteristics of the sample. Chapter 4 will also include the statistical analysis findings.

Data Collection

I collected the data for this study from African American single mothers inside The Daycare Center. The participants were from the northeastern United States and were at least 18 years of age. They had children between the ages of 2 and 5 that attended daycare. The mothers were given a coffee mug for their participation. I started the data collection in January 2018, following Walden University's IRB approval. From January 2018 to February 2018 the data collection, cleaning, and analysis took place. The actual recruitment was from January 25, 2018, to January 26, 2018.

There was a discrepancy in the data collection process from the plan I presented in Chapter 3. Instead of collecting data from 74 mothers, I recruited an additional four, totaling in 78 participants. The sample was representative of the African American single mothers in northeastern United States. For example, I recruited more than the suggested sample size of 74 from the a priori power analyses. This sample was also representative

of Mason et al.'s (2013) report of this urban area having the highest number of single-mother households in poverty, at 48.4%.

Results

As seen in Table 1, the sample consisted of African American single mothers ($N = 78$) in an urban environment. Many of the households contained four individuals (33.3%). Forty-one percent of the mothers reported having one child, many of the children were 3 years old (33.3%), and half of the children were males (52.6%). Much of the sample had a minimum of some college education (57.7%). Many of the mothers were employed (84.6%) and had an income of \$20,000 to \$49,000 (35.9%). Most of the mothers reported they do not attend religious services (53.8%), and many of the mothers that did attend religious services indicated attending four times a month (20.5%). Many of the mothers reported they have not engaged in parenting class (69.2%).

Table 1
Descriptive and Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	Range	M	SD	N	%
Age	18 - 67	34.74	10.62	78	
Education					
Below High School				3	3.8
GED				5	6.4
High School				25	32.1
College				45	57.7
Income	0-150,000	27.34	63.52		
Children	1 - 6	2.03	1.12		
Children's Age	2 - 5	3.38	1.07		

Analysis of Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1. RQ1: Is there a relationship between social support and disciplinary practices?

H1: There is a relationship between social support and disciplinary practices as measured by the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support.

The chi-square statistic ($p > .0005$) indicates that the model fits this study. The pseudo R^2 values (Nagelkerke = 5.3%) indicates that social support explains some proportion of the variation between disciplinary practices. The Wald test statistic for the social support was 3.951 with an associated p value of 0.047. With the alpha level set to 0.05, I rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that the regression coefficient for social support was found to be statistically significant in estimating disciplinary practices in the model. For the model, the proportional odds assumption appears to have held because the significance of the chi-square statistic was $.111 > .05$. Table 2 shows the results of the ordinal regression for social support and disciplinary practices.

Table 2
Results of the Ordinal Regression for Social Support and Disciplinary Practices

Variables	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Discipline (1)	.635	.754	.709	1	.400	-.843	2.112
Discipline (2)	1.640	.775	4.484	1	.034	.122	3.159
Support	.565	.284	3.951	1	.047	.008	1.122

Research Question 2. RQ2: Is there a relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices?

H2: There is a relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices as measured by the Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

The chi-square statistic ($p > .0005$) indicates that the model fits this study. The pseudo R^2 values (Nagelkerke = 3.0%) indicates that parenting skills explain a relatively small proportion of the variation between disciplinary practices. The Wald test statistic for the parenting skills was 1.856 with an associated p value of 0.173. With the alpha level set to 0.05, I accepted the null hypothesis and concluded that the regression coefficient for parenting skills was not found to be statistically significant in estimating disciplinary practices in the model. For the model, the proportional odds assumption appears to have held because the significance of the chi-square statistic was $.147 > .05$. Table 3 shows the results of the ordinal regression for parenting skills and disciplinary practices.

Table 3
Results of the Ordinal Regression for Parenting Skills and Disciplinary Practices

Variables	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Discipline (1)	.360	.904	.158	1	.691	-1.412	2.131
Discipline (2)	1.347	.917	2.159	1	.142	-.450	3.143
Parenting	.462	.339	1.856	1	.173	-.203	1.128

Research Question 3. RQ3: Is there an interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices?

H3: There is an interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices as measured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Parents' Child Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire.

The chi-square statistic ($p > .0005$) indicates that the model fits this study. The pseudo R^2 values (Nagelkerke = 7.4%) indicates that parenting skills and social explain some proportion of the variation between disciplinary practices. The Wald test statistic for the parenting skills was 1.340 and social support was 3.308 with associated p values of 0.247 and 0.069, respectively. With the alpha level set to 0.05, I accepted the null hypothesis and concluded that the regression coefficient for parenting skills and social support was not found to be statistically significant in estimating disciplinary practices in the model. For the model, the proportional odds assumption appears to have held because the significance of the chi-square statistic was $.126 > .05$. Table 4 shows the results of the ordinal regression for parenting skills, social support, and disciplinary practices.

Table 4

Results of the Ordinal Regression for Parenting Skills, Social Support and Disciplinary Practices

Variables	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Discipline (1)	1.547	1.097	1.989	1	.158	-.603	3.697
Discipline (2)	2.569	1.123	5.232	1	.022	.368	4.770
Parenting	.402	.347	1.340	1	.247	-.278	1.082
Support	.542	.288	3.308	1	.069	-.041	1.089

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to understand the correlation between social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers with respect to the relationship these factors have with the chosen disciplinary practices of the mothers. I used ordinal regression analysis to investigate these relationships. For Research Question 1, I assessed the relationship between social support

and disciplinary practices with Wald $\chi^2(1) = 3.951, p = .047$. There was a statistically significant difference based social support and disciplinary practices. The significance suggests there is a relationship between social support and disciplinary practices as measured by the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire and MSPSS. For Research Question 2, I assessed the relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices with Wald $\chi^2(1) = 1.856, p = .173$. However, statistically significant differences based on parenting skills and disciplinary practices were not found. For Research Question 3, I assessed the interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices with Wald $\chi^2(1) = 1.340, p = 0.247$ and Wald $\chi^2(1) = 3.308, p = 0.069$. There were no statistically significant differences based on social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices.

In Chapter 4, I presented the results of the statistical analysis and provided a description of the demographic characteristics of the sample and the data collection. I also reported details about the results. In Chapter 5, I will interpret the findings, discuss the limitations of the study, and provide recommendations for future research and practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to understand the correlation between social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers with respect to the relationship these factors have with the chosen disciplinary practices of the mothers. The correlational design was appropriate to describe the relationship between the variables for the group of African American single mothers as participants and the variables of social support, discipline, and parenting skills. I used the SPSS statistical program to assist in retrieving the ordinal logistic regression results. This research was not only conducted to examine general social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices but in hopes that the information gathered might be of assistance to professionals in the development and delivery of parenting education for African American single mothers. Developing the necessary tools for and understanding the relationship between the variables examined may inform the development of support for these mothers at social, culture, individual, and community levels.

With RQ1, I assessed the relationship between social support and disciplinary practices. The results of this study supported the hypothesis that there is a relationship between social support and disciplinary practices. RQ2 addressed the relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices. I found that no factors significantly influenced the relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices. In RQ3, I assessed the interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices. The results of this study indicated there were no differences based on social

support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices. In Chapter 5, I will interpret the findings of this study, identify the limitations of study, make recommendations for future research, and discuss the implications for positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

Research Question 1

In this section, I will describe how the findings compared with what I found in the peer-reviewed literature and the theoretical framework. The results of this study supported the hypothesis that there is a relationship between social support and disciplinary practices. Some of the mothers disagreed with physical discipline (46.2%) and reported high social support (73.1%). These findings confirm and extend the results of previous studies (Lamis et al., 2014; LeCuyer et al., 2015). Researchers have emphasized that parents benefit from guidance and support for effective disciplinary practices through community role models, friends, and family, or parenting support programs (LeCuyer et al., 2015). Per Lamis et al. (2014), social support mediates the relationship between child abuse and social functioning. Significant others, family, and friends were the type of social supports endorsed by participants in this study.

Analyzing these findings, it can be interpreted that there is a relationship between Bronfenbrenner's model's macrosystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the mother's disciplinary practices. For example, social conditions, social support, and disciplinary practices interlink and may relate to the child's growth and development as represented in Hurd et al.'s (2013) study. These results mean there is an interaction between the help the mothers receive from individuals and the skills they use for discipline and reward. I

concur that there is a relationship with the help the mothers receive and the skills they use for discipline. In my opinion, an increase in social support enhances the chances for positive disciplinary practices, just like a decrease in social support promotes the probability of negative disciplinary practices.

Research Question 2

I found that no factors significantly influenced the relationship between parenting skills and disciplinary practices. In the findings, many of the parents had good parenting skills (67.9%); however, the participants may have toned down their responses, so they do not appear abusive, which would coincide with the results of Adkison-Johnson et al.'s (2016) study. Leary (2005) developed a theory of post-traumatic slave syndrome about the African American community. Leary (2005) indicated one of the key patterns of behavior reflective of post-traumatic slave syndrome is intense feelings of suspicion due to negative motivations of others.

Also, most of the mothers disagreed with physical discipline (46.2%), had an income of \$20,000 to \$49,000 (35.9%), and had a young male child (52.6%). The income factor displayed that those mothers with higher incomes had different views. These findings disconfirm Westbrook et al.'s (2013) and Barnett et al.'s (2013), who found that low-income mothers with male children use physical discipline. These findings also disconfirmed Anton et al.'s (2015), who discussed the authoritative parenting style as the most effective for children in African American single mother homes. In addition to disconfirming the authoritative parenting style and income relating to the child's behavior, these results imply there is no interaction when it comes to ensuring the child's

health and safety and the use of discipline and reward. The lack of parenting skills and disciplinary practices, whether positive or negative, can have a long-term effect on a child.

Research Question 3

The results of this study indicated no interaction based on social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices. Every household varies and there may be a mother who has social support but lacks parenting skills and does not discipline her children. There are research studies that indicate a child's behavior predicts parenting quality and vice versa (Pearl et al., 2014) and that community stability and parenting quality promote child development (Wallace, 2013). Adkison-Bradley et al. (2014) reported parents use a hierarchal disciplinary pattern meaning the secondary disciplinary method was more severe than verbal discussion. Adkison-Bradley et al. (2014) could not show an interaction between discipline, a professional's support and parenting skills in racial minority families, aligning with the results of this study. These results mean there was no interaction between the assistance the mothers receive from others, parenting skills, and the use of discipline and reward. Overall, the results of this study demonstrated that there is no interaction based on social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation I identified in the execution of this study was the wording of some of the questionnaires. The structured questionnaires contained close-ended questions, which limits the opportunity for broader responses. For example, the possible choices to

answer the prompt of “spanking is needed as a last resort when all else fails” were *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. However, to know what the other strategies are before spanking would require broader questions.

External validity was another limitation of this study. Since this research was based solely on African American women, whether the results of the study apply to other ethnic groups cannot be stated. Another limitation of external validity was the potential for portraying the self in a positive light. The mothers in the study may have altered their responses on the questionnaires in fear of being judged or reported despite being informed that their participation was anonymous. One final limitation was that the participants were recruited only from The Daycare Center. Even though the participants were invited to make referrals for other participants, only the mothers from the primary site participated in the study.

Recommendations

Like Prusank et al.’s (2014) study, the strength of this research was that it added to the knowledge base of what African American single mothers know, live, and self-describe as their parenting. However, the results of this study cannot be said to apply to other ethnic groups. A recommendation for future researchers would be to explore these variables across other ethnic groups, African American fathers, or couples.

Another recommendation for future studies would be to use alternative questionnaires for parenting skills, disciplinary practices, and social support in the general framework of this study. Although I used the MSPSS, the Parents’ Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire, and the Attitudes Toward Spanking Children

Questionnaire to assess the relationship between the variables, some of the instruments lacked established population norms and open-ended questions. An additional recommendation for future studies is to use more than one facility to achieve generalizability of the population. Even though The Daycare Center was in an improvised, urban area like northeastern United States, the data in this study only came from one facility.

The results of this study were able to relate social support and disciplinary practices from low-to-high income, African American single mothers' perspective. Future research should take a closer look at levels of income as a variable. Nevertheless, there was agreement with Wallace's (2013) findings, who indicated future studies can embrace survey responses from children that describe their African American mothers' parenting quality. My final recommendation for future studies is to reproduce this study by using focus groups that include mothers and their supporters, for a more expanded perspective. The mothers and their supporters can take the opportunity to express how general social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single mothers relate to their chosen disciplinary practices.

Implications

The results of this research study can be useful to the general body of knowledge about low-income, African American single mothers in their delivery of parenting. There is a lack of research on available social support and African American mothers' parenting skills and disciplinary practices. So, in this study I examined the correlation between general social support and parenting skills amongst low-income, African American single

mothers. In this study, I also considered the relationship these factors had with their chosen disciplinary practices.

The significant finding of this study supported the relationship between social support and disciplinary practices amongst the mothers in an urban area. Additionally, this outcome has an association with the exosystem component of the Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model. According to Hurd et al., (2013) a fundamental aspect of social support is that significant others, family, and friends help the child transition successfully into adulthood. This aspect intertwines with the mother's discipline and reward practices found in this study.

The results of this study may inform those who develop support programs for single, low-income, African American mothers. For instance, the development of the appropriate support programs can potentially assist the mothers in evolving on a culture, individual, and community level. Overall, the findings of this study lead to potential outcomes for parenting education that are tailored for this population.

The results of this study suggest replication by expanding on the qualitative component and exploring these variables across other low-income, ethnic minority groups. These findings will also be useful to researchers, practitioners, and advocates of social change because they show the role of a network support system in single-parent families. A potential factor for consideration is that professionals can encourage the mothers to be honest about their disciplinary practices (Adkison-Johnson, 2015) while promoting the use of significant others, family, and friends. If professionals use these

results to develop and deliver parenting education for African American single mothers, they could potentially promote positive social change on an organizational level.

Conclusion

I did not find a significant interaction between social support, parenting skills, and disciplinary practices with the tools used in this study; however, there was a relationship between general social support and disciplinary practices. Researchers have suggested that African American families use general social support for addressing their child-rearing concerns (Adkison-Johnson, 2015). Taylor et al. (2011) and Taylor (2010) specified the lack of information on low-income, African American single mothers using social support available in their communities to inform and maintain parenting practices. The results from this study add to the literature concerning African American mothers' use of general social support, such as extended family and the clergy, to support the replacement of corporal punishment with nonphysical forms of discipline (see Taylor et al., 2011).

Parenting improvement ranges from the mothers trying to figure out what practices will be best for their children while gaining support to community advocates focusing on the nature and influences of parenting across the African American population (Roberts et al., 2009; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008). According to LeCuyer et al. (2015), parents will benefit from more information on successful disciplinary practices and the use of general social support from family and friends. Professionals will also have better information for constructing parenting education and support (Adkison-Johnson et al., 2016). The findings from this study build on the foundation of

implementing change and addressing the needs of economically disadvantaged, African American single mothers and their children in the urban community. Overall, the help the mothers receive from significant others, family, and friends can be an essential predictor of discipline and reward, and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) exosystem is also vital in the settings these mothers occupy.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

A COFFEE MUG FOR 30 MINUTES OF SURVEYING

PH. D Clinical Psychology candidate seeking African American Single Mothers to participate in a research study

REQUIREMENT:

- Volunteer African American single mothers 18 and older
- Mother to at least 1 child between the ages of two and five, living in the same household, who attend The Daycare Center
- All data gathered will be anonymous
- A coffee mug will be given to thank you for your time.

Interested volunteers may contact the student researcher, Ms. King at

XXXXXXXXX.

Appendix B: General Demographic Questionnaire

Date _____

Please indicate your age _____

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

Are you currently employed? _____

Estimated annual income _____

Number of people living in the household _____

How many children do you have? _____

Age and gender of each child under age 19

Do you participate in religious services? If yes, how many times a month?

Have you ever been to a parenting class? _____

Appendix C: Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire



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doi: 10.1037/t14894-000

Attitudes Toward Spanking Children Questionnaire

Items

3. Spanking is needed as a last resort when all else fails.
 6. If you can't spank, children will be spoiled, run wild, etc.
 1. Spanking works better than other methods of controlling children.
 10. It is unrealistic to expect parents never to spank.
 2. Spanking is needed as a last resort when all else fails.
 4. One or two instances of parents spanking their children are not going to cause any permanent damage.
 8. By the time a child is a teenager, spanking has usually stopped.
 7. Most parents spank only rarely or only for serious problems.
 5. Parents can't stop spanking unless they get training in alternatives.
 9. If parents don't spank they will verbally abuse a child.
-

Scale: Agree 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Appendix D: Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.

Circle the "1" if you **Very Strongly Disagree**

Circle the "2" if you **Strongly Disagree**

Circle the "3" if you **Mildly Disagree**

Circle the "4" if you are **Neutral**

Circle the "5" if you **Mildly Agree**

Circle the "6" if you **Strongly Agree**

Circle the "7" if you **Very Strongly Agree**

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Neutral	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My family really tries to help me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I get the emotional help & support I need from my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My friends really try to help me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I can talk about my problems with my family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E: Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire



doi: 10.1037/t24369-000

Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire

Items

Child-Rearing Behavior	Interview Item	Response Format
Physical punishment	"I hit or smack my child if he/she does something I do not like."	<i>never</i> (1) to <i>often</i> (5)
Parental control of child	"I teach my child to have unquestioning loyalty to me."	<i>never</i> (1) to <i>often</i> (5)
	"I expect my child not to question my authority."	<i>never</i> (1) to <i>often</i> (5)
	"I expect my child to do what I say, no matter what."	<i>never</i> (1) to <i>often</i> (5)
Parental possessiveness	"I worry about my child when I'm not around him/her."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
Parental assistance to child	"I sometimes feel that I am the only one who can take really good care of my child."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
Parental rejection of child	"I sometimes reject my child if he/she does something I do not like."	<i>never</i> (1) to <i>often</i> (5)
Consistency of parental discipline	"It sometimes depends on my mood how strict I am with my child."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
	"I often change the rules or routines my child is supposed to follow."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
Parental affection toward child	"I frequently show my love for my child."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
Parental assistance to child	"I always hug and kiss my child good night."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
	"I give my child a lot of care and attention."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
	"I often give up something to get something for my child."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
	"My child can count on me to take care of his/her needs in all situations."	<i>never</i> (1) to <i>often</i> (5)
	"I help my child with things if he/she can't do them."	<i>never</i> (1) to <i>often</i> (5)
Parental communication with child	"I like to talk to my child and to be with him/her much of the time."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
	"I really try to understand how my child sees things."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
	"I do not mind if my child tells me his/her ideas are better than mine."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
Parental praise and	"I often praise my child."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)



encouragement of child	"I frequently tell my child he/she makes me happy."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
Parental supervision of child	"Do you have rules for your child about homework?"	<i>yes</i> (1) to <i>no</i> (2)
	"Do you have rules for your child about time spent watching TV?"	<i>yes</i> (1) to <i>no</i> (2)
	"Do you have rules for your child about time for being in at night?"	<i>yes</i> (1) to <i>no</i> (2)

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doi: 10.1037/t24369-000

Parents' Child-Rearing Behavior Interview Questionnaire

Items

Child-Rearing Behavior	Interview Item	Response Format
Parental supervision of child (<i>continued</i>)	"Do you have rules for your child about not hanging around with certain kids?"	<i>yes</i> (1) to <i>no</i> (2)
	"Do you have rules for your child about not smoking?"	<i>yes</i> (1) to <i>no</i> (2)
	"Do you have rules for your child about not drinking alcohol or using drugs?"	<i>yes</i> (1) to <i>no</i> (2)
	"Do you have rules for your child about telling you his/her whereabouts when he/she is away from home?"	<i>yes</i> (1) to <i>no</i> (2)
Parental time spent with child	"Do you have rules for your child about not watching violent TV?"	<i>yes</i> (1) to <i>no</i> (2)
	"I spend almost all of my free time with my children."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
	"I am always available when my child needs me."	<i>not at all like me</i> (1) to <i>exactly like me</i> (5)
	"About how many hours a day on the average do you spend with your child? Include all activities."	<1 hour a day (1) to ≥8 hours a day (5)
	"About how many hours a day on the average do you spend taking care of your child's physical needs? This would include such tasks as shopping for clothes, supervising his/her personal hygiene, preparing food, and the like."	<1 hour a day (1) to ≥8 hours a day (5)

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