

Race and Older Mothers' Differentiation: A Sequential Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

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The goal of this paper is to demonstrate a process by which qualitative and quantitative approaches are combined to reveal patterns in the data that are unlikely to be detected and confirmed by either method alone. Specifically, we take a sequential approach to combining qualitative and quantitative data to explore race differences in how mothers differentiate among their adult children. We began with a standard multivariate analysis examining race differences in mothers' differentiation among their adult children regarding emotional closeness and confiding. Finding no race differences in this analysis, we conducted an in-depth comparison of the Black and White mothers' narratives to determine whether there were underlying patterns that we had been unable to detect in our first analysis. Using this method, we found that Black mothers were substantially more likely than White mothers to emphasize interpersonal relationships within the family when describing differences among their children. In our final step, we developed a measure of familism based on the qualitative data and conducted a multivariate analysis to confirm the patterns revealed by the in-depth comparison of the mothers' narratives. We conclude that using such a sequential mixed methods approach to data analysis has the potential to shed new light on complex family relations.

Keywords: maternal differentiation, parent–adult child relations, race, within-family differences, sequential mixed methods designs

The study of race differences in family relations has been of interest to scholars for the past several decades. Theories of the family have proposed many ways in which Black and White kin relations differ, often focusing on the greater salience, closeness, and supportiveness of extended kin ties in Black than White families (Hays & Mindel, 1973; Johnson & Staples, 2005; Newman, 1999; Stack, 1974). How-

ever, empirical evidence on these patterns has been inconsistent.

We suggest that these inconsistencies are, in part, the consequence of the methodologies used to study Black and White families. Specifically, we argue that there may be systematic variations that are likely missed by standard survey techniques because closed-ended questions are by their nature limited in the range of responses. Further, variations between Blacks and Whites may appear in qualitative studies, but are seldom confirmed by systematic evaluation using large-scale survey approaches.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate a process by which qualitative and quantitative approaches can be combined to shed new light on race differences in the way in which mothers differentiate among their adult children that are unlikely to be detected and confirmed by either method alone. In doing so, we respond to Bronfenbrenner's (2005) call for "research in the discovery mode," which moves beyond simple verification of hypotheses to a progressive process in which the results of each step of the analysis set the stage for the next round and generate new hypotheses. We extend this viewpoint to suggest that a progression of mixed methodological approaches, in which researchers move between qualitative and quantitative approaches, is highly useful, particularly when examining complex issues such as race differences in family relations.

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Mixed Methodologies in Family Research

Combining quantitative and qualitative data has become increasingly common in research on family relations (Clark, Huddleston-Casas, Churchill, O'Neil Green, & Garrett, 2008; Neal, Hammer, & Morgan, 2006). Although quantitative analyses can identify patterns of associations among constructs, such approaches are less fruitful for pursuing the substantive processes underlying statistical relationships (Morgan, 2007; Neal et al., 2006), particularly when the focus is on complex patterns within family networks.

Qualitative and quantitative data have been combined effectively to study intergenerational families by providing explanations for observed patterns (Katz & Lowenstein, 1999; Sutor, Sechrist, Steinhour, & Pillemer, 2006) and illustrating complex family processes (Coleman, Ganong, & Rothrauff, 2006; Goodman, 2007; Haxton & Harknett, 2009; Sutor, Plikuhn, Gilligan, & Powers, 2008). However, we suggest that combining quantitative and qualitative data may also serve as a tool for revealing patterns that are difficult to assess using quantitative findings alone. We argue that this is particularly the case for parent–adult child relations. Specifically, parents have been found generally to present their relationships with their adult children in a positive light (Bengtson & Kuypers, 1971; Giarrusso, Stallings, & Bengtson, 1995), leading them to provide socially desirable responses to closed-ended questions, even when experiencing conflict in their relationships (Sutor, Sechrist, Gilligan, & Pillemer, 2011). However, parents appear to be more willing to reveal the complex patterns of their relationships with their adult children when asked to discuss those relationships in greater detail (Sutor & Pillemer, 2006; Sutor & Pillemer, 2007).

We believe that the study of race differences in parent–adult child relations provides a particularly promising domain in which to take a sequential approach to combining qualitative and quantitative data. Sequential mixed methods research is an established methodology for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2010; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Allowing for the exploration and integration of these two methodologies, sequential analysis mixes both elements across multiple stages of the research study and provides investigators with a rich understanding of the data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

To apply this approach to intergenerational family relations, we begin with a discussion of the inconsistencies found in the literature regarding differences between kin relations in Black and White families, and the ways in which we posit that methodological approaches contribute to these inconsistencies. We then introduce a series of analyses using the Within-Family Differences Study, starting with quantitative analyses of the way in which Black and White mothers differentiate among their adult children, followed by an investigation of this question using mothers' narratives about their children, which allow for the identification of patterns not revealed in the quantitative analysis, and a final quantitative analysis to confirm these patterns. Previous analyses using these data have placed greater

emphasis on the quantitative data using the qualitative component to illustrate or explain the patterns observed in quantitative analyses (Sutor, 2006; Sutor et al., 2006). In contrast, the analyses presented in this paper place equal emphasis on both quantitative and qualitative data to identify complex patterns in family processes.

Race Differences in Intergenerational Relations

Classic arguments regarding the Black family suggest that extended kin ties have been particularly salient throughout the history of Black families in the United States. The importance of these ties is often linked to the African heritage and the economically and socially disadvantaged position of Black individuals during slavery and segregation, which created a greater reliance upon intergenerational ties out of necessity (Allen, 1978; Frazier, 1939; Moynihan, 1965; Sudarkasa, 1997). These perspectives suggest that the cultural heritage and unique experiences of African Americans, including more recent patterns of discrimination and unequal opportunities, translated into a greater emphasis on and subsequently closer family relationships in contemporary Black families across the life course (Franklin, 2007; Johnson & Staples, 2005). Implicit in these arguments is the supposition that contemporary White families, which do not have the same cultural heritage or experiences, hold different values and expectations for their intergenerational relationships.

Although numerous empirical studies have explored differences in intergenerational relationships in Black and White families (Aquilino, 1999; Collins, 1990; Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Kulis, 1992; Newman, 1999; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004; Stack, 1974), this literature has revealed few consistent differences. We suggest that these findings can, in part, be accounted for by variations in research designs. Studies using quantitative approaches to compare Black and White families have differed widely in their results regarding race variations in family relations. Some studies have shown that both perceptions of normative obligations and salience of extended kin ties are higher in Black than White families (Burr & Mutchler, 1999; Hays & Mindel, 1973; Lee, Peek, & Coward, 1998). However, these differences do not appear to translate into variations by race in actual exchanges once socioeconomic status is controlled (Hogan, Eggebeen, & Clogg, 1993; Gerstel, 2011; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004).

Further, although some studies indicate that Black parent–adult child relationships are closer than those in White families (Aquilino, 1999; Collins, 1990; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998), other studies reveal fewer race differences in relationship quality in Black and White parent–child relations. For instance, one study reported no differences in relationship quality between blue-collar Black and White parent–child dyads, but that white-collar Black intergenerational relationships were marked by greater closeness than their White counterparts (Kulis, 1992). Other studies revealed similar levels of ambivalence (Pillemer, Sutor, Mock, Sabir, & Sechrist, 2007) and relationship

strain (Umberson, 1992) in both Black and White parent-child relations.

In contrast, classic and contemporary qualitative studies have reported greater intergenerational cohesion in Black than White families (cf. Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Newman, 1999; Stack, 1974). We suggest that such designs may be better suited for exploring complex constructs such as cohesion that involve both value dimensions such as filial obligation, and affective dimensions such as loyalty and affection. This may help to explain why these studies have yielded findings not replicated using quantitative approaches. Thus, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in the same study may provide an opportunity for researchers to move back and forth between these approaches to determine whether there are any points of convergence.

A Mixed-Method Within-Family Approach to Studying Race Differences

A promising approach to studying race differences in intergenerational relations is to explore differences in the dimensions of the relationship that are emphasized by Black and White parents, shifting the focus from description to explanation. We begin by examining whether the same set of factors explains how Black and White mothers differentiate among their children.

Investigations of within-family differences that have taken race into consideration have shown that there is substantial variation in parents' relationships with their adult children in both Black and White families (Pillemer et al., 2007; Suito & Pillemer, 2006; Suito & Pillemer, 2007). This does not mean that Black and White mothers necessarily differ in the factors that shape those relationships, although they might differ in the emphasis placed on various factors. For example, value similarity has been found to play an important role in shaping patterns of parental differentiation in adulthood (Sechrist, Suito, Vargas, & Pillemer, 2011; Suito & Pillemer, 2006, Suito & Pillemer, 2007). Yet, recent research has shown that mothers' reports of similarity of values, religion in particular, were more strongly related to relationship quality in Black mother-child dyads than White (Sechrist et al., 2011). We believe that race differences may be found when examining similarity in general as it relates to mothers' differentiation among children. Specifically, we would expect that Black mothers might place greater emphasis on value similarity than would White mothers when differentiating among their children, given the strong desire for continuity and cohesion between generations that appears to be more highly valued in African American culture (Becker, Beyene, Newsome, & Mayne, 2003; Hill, 1999; Newman, 1999; Sudarkasa, 1997).

We suggest that race differences may appear when considering other factors as well. For example, patterns of differentiation among Black mothers may be affected more strongly by their children's successful transitions to normative adult statuses, such as the completion of school, marriage, and employment, because their children experience greater risk of structural, social, and health obstacles to these achievements (Centers for Disease Control & Preven-

tion, 2005; Green, Ensminger, Robertson, & Juon, 2006; Williams, 2003; Wildsmith & Raley, 2006). Black mothers may also place greater emphasis on residential proximity than do White mothers because of the greater expectation of high levels of social interaction and support exchange between the generations in Black families (Burr & Mutchler, 1999; Lee et al., 1998).

In sum, we anticipate that Black and White mothers' patterns of differentiation will be influenced by several factors, with differences being greatest on those factors that have greater salience for one of the two subgroups. Specifically, we expect that Black mothers will be more likely than White mothers to select a child with whom they share a similar outlook on life, who has higher education, is married, is employed, and who lives in closer proximity.

To examine these issues, we began with a focus on how mothers differentiate among their children in terms of emotional closeness and emotional support. We then turned to the narratives of these mothers to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that lead mothers to differentiate among their children more generally. We then used a quantitative analysis to confirm the patterns observed in the narratives in order to control for other important factors.

Method

Sampling

The data for this paper were collected as part of the Within-Family Differences Study (Suito & Pillemer, 2006, Suito & Pillemer, 2007).¹ The design involved selecting a sample of mothers 65–75 years of age with at least two living adult children and collecting data from mothers regarding each of their children. Only community-dwelling mothers were included in the sample.

Massachusetts city and town lists were the source of the sample. With the assistance of the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, we drew a systematic sample of women ages 65–75 from the town lists of 20 randomly selected communities in the greater Boston Census-designated Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA). An equal number of women in the target age group were selected from each community; they were first, sent a letter of introduction describing the study, then contacted by an interviewer from the CSR to conduct screening to determine eligibility for participation and attempt to schedule a face-to-face interview.

The interviewers began contacting potential respondents and continued until they had completed interviews with 566 mothers, which represented 61% of those who were eligible for participation. Comparison of responders and nonresponders indicated that Blacks were slightly more willing to participate than were Whites (64% vs. 60% respectively). In most cases, when possible, interviewers and respondents were matched by race. At the end of the interviews, mothers

¹ Portions of the Method section have been published elsewhere (Suito & Pillemer, 2006, Suito & Pillemer, 2007).

were given \$50.00 for their participation in the study. The interviews were conducted between August of 2001 and January of 2003.

A major design goal of the Within-Family Differences Study was to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches. To meet this goal, each mother was interviewed in person for between 1 and 2 hours using a combination of closed-ended and open-ended items. The full sample is composed of 157 Black and 394 White mothers. For this paper, we chose to select subsamples of White and Black mothers who were matched on educational attainment, to provide a more appropriate race comparison in which the mothers' educational levels were controlled. Many studies stress the importance of socioeconomic status when examining race differences in family relations (Gerstel, 2011; Kulis, 1992; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004; Schwartz, 2009; Wharton & Thorne, 1997). Because measures of education, income, and occupation can have differing effects depending on the context of study (Smith & Graham, 1995), we chose to match on educational attainment rather than income or occupation because it is strongly related to value orientations (Lee et al., 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) and quality of parent-adult child relations (Aquilino, 1999; Rossi & Rossi, 1990).

Although field notes were prepared in cases in which the interview tapes were incomplete or when taping had not been permitted, for the present analysis we felt it was essential to use only cases in which we had complete tapes. Applying these criteria resulted in a subsample of 102 Black mothers and an equal number of White mothers matched with the Black mothers on educational attainment ($n = 102$).

Sample Characteristics

Table 1 presents the mothers' and children's demographic characteristics for both the combined sample ($N = 204$) and the subsamples of Blacks and Whites.

Measures

Dependent variables. To measure mothers' differentiation, we asked the mothers a series of questions that required them to select among their adult children. Each mother was asked to select which child: (a) she would be most likely to talk to about a personal problem and (b) to whom she felt the most emotionally close. Each child was coded (1) for each item for which he or she was chosen and (0) for each item for which he or she was not chosen. In cases in which respondents were initially unwilling to differentiate among their children, the interviewers were instructed to prompt the mothers with a follow-up question (e.g., "But is there one child whom you would call first?"). Analyses of the data revealed that less than five percent of the mothers were moved by the prompt to select a child, and there were no differences between mothers who did and did not respond to the prompt.

Most but not all mothers were willing to name particular children to whom they were most close (62%) and in whom they would be most likely to confide (79%). Separate anal-

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Mothers and Their Adult Children

	Full sample N = 204	White n = 102	Black n = 102
Mothers' characteristics			
Race (%)			
Black	50.0	—	—
White	50.0		
Age in years (SD)	70.7 (3.2)	71.1 (3.2)	70.7 (3.2)
Marital Status (%)			
Married	34.5	50.0	34.5*
Separated/Divorced	19.5	2.9	19.5*
Widowed	45.5	47.1	45.5
Never Married	0.5	0.0	0.5
Education (%)			
Less Than High School	42.4	42.2	42.4
High School Graduate	36.9	37.2	36.9
At Least Some College	11.8	11.8	11.8
College Graduate	8.8	8.9	8.8
Number of Children (SD)	4.0 (2.0)	3.0 (2.0)	4.0 (2.0)
	N = 811	n = 359	n = 425
Children's Characteristics			
Age in years (SD)	43.3 (6.1)	42.6 (5.6)	43.8* (6.4)
Daughters (%)	51.0	51.8	50.0
Married (%)	48.1	63.8	35.6*
Parents (%)	71.9	68.8	74.1
Employed (%)	80.0	84.3	76.0*
Distance from mother (SD)	4.3 (1.9)	4.0 (1.8)	4.6* (1.9)
Education (%)			
Less Than High School	14.1	6.4	19.9*
High School Graduate	45.1	43.9	46.4*
Some College	13.0	11.2	14.3*
College Graduate	27.8	38.6	19.4*

* significant race difference ($p < .05$).

yses revealed that none of the mothers' characteristics on which we have data (e.g., race, age, marital status, education, religion, religiosity, health, or number of children) consistently predicted mothers' willingness to choose among their children (Sutor, Sechrist, & Pillemer, 2007).

Independent variables. Race, the independent variable of central interest, was measured by asking the mothers a series of questions regarding their race and ethnicity. Mothers who identified themselves as Black or White were included in the analysis; those who identified themselves exclusively as Asian, Hispanic, or Native American were omitted.

Other independent variables included value similarity and children's sociodemographic characteristics. Perceived value similarity was measured by the item: "Parents and children are sometimes similar to each other in their views and opinions and sometimes different from each other. Would you say that you and [child's name] share very similar views (4), similar views (3), different views (2), or very different views (1) in terms of general outlook on life?" The mean scores on this variable did not vary by race. Marital status was measured by whether the adult child was

currently married (0 = unmarried; 1 = married). Parental status was measured by whether the adult child had any children (0 = no children; 1 = had child). Mothers were asked into which of the following educational categories each of their adult children fell: (1) less than high school; (2) high school graduate; (3) some college; (4) college graduate. Mothers were asked whether their children were employed but not the number of hours that they worked (0 = not employed, 1 = employed).

Control variables. Child's gender and residential proximity were essential to include as controls because they have been found to be strong predictors of within-family differences (Suitor & Pillemer, 2006, Suitor & Pillemer, 2007). Proximity was measured in distance the child lived from the mother in terms of travel time by ground transportation. Categories were: (1) same house; (2) same neighborhood; (3) less than 15 minutes away; (4) 15–30 minutes away; (5) 30–60 minutes away; (6) more than an hour but less than two hours; and (7) two or more hours away. Child's gender was coded 0 = son, 1 = daughter.

Finally, birth order was included as a control. We compared youngest (1) to a combined measure of other birth orders (0) because previous analyses have shown that the dimension that differentiates among children regarding closeness is youngest versus all other positions (Suitor & Pillemer, 2006).

Statistical Approach to Studying Within-Family Differences

It is important to note that in Multivariate Analysis I, the child, rather than the parent, is the unit of analysis. In other words, the 819 children who are the units of analysis are nested within the 204 mothers on whose reports the present analysis is based; thus, the observations are not independent. To address this concern we used conditional logistic regression, which is preferable to standard logistic regression in this case because the procedure controls on mothers' characteristics much as it would be if a dummy variable were created for each of the 204 mothers and the set of dummy variables was included in the regression equations in which the mother–child pair was the unit of analysis (cf. Alwin, 1976; Suitor & Pillemer, 2006). Thus, conditional logistic regression allows us to focus on our primary question of interest—within each family, which child does the mother choose—while controlling for mothers' characteristics. Regressions were run separately by race and coefficients were compared across models using the following equation (Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, & Piquero, 1998):

$$t = \frac{b_1 - b_2}{\sqrt{(SEb_1^2 + SEb_2^2)}}$$

Because the mother, rather than the mother–child dyad, is the unit of analysis in Multivariate Analysis II, we used ordinary logistic regression.

Qualitative Approach to Studying Within-Family Differences

As already noted, only cases in which we had complete tapes and full transcripts of the interviews were used for the present analysis. Thus, each interview could be constructed and interpreted as a case study. It is important to note the structure of the interview. Mothers were first asked closed-ended questions about the demographic characteristics for each child. This section was followed by a portion of the interview on differentiation among children, which began with the open-ended question, "How would you describe the differences between your children's personalities?" This question was then followed by a series of questions asking mothers to identify the child they would most likely choose for several relational dimensions, including the child to whom they felt most emotionally close and would most likely talk to about a personal problem. When mothers identified a child they were asked a follow-up, open-ended question, "Why did you choose [Child's Name]?"

We conducted a detailed examination of all narrative responses from both Black and White mothers regarding differentiation among their children. Two of the authors reviewed each of the 204 transcripts independently taking all open-ended answers and side comments into account (rather than focusing on each separate open-ended item at a time) and making notes about the case. This holistic approach provided the opportunity to uncover patterns beyond those that were the foci of the original investigation. The codes from each author were compared and in most cases (77%) there was complete agreement about the codes. Using an approach based on the group interactive analysis component of Borkan's "immersion-crystallization" method for analyzing qualitative data (Borkan, 1999), any discrepancies in coding were discussed by the authors until consensus could be reached.

Results

Step I: Multivariate Analyses Predicting Mothers' Differentiation

As noted earlier, our first step was to explore predictors of Black and White mothers' differentiation using a multivariate approach. The set of conditional logistic regression analyses we conducted to examine predictors of confiding and closeness revealed far greater similarities than differences by race. As shown in Table 2, both White and Black mothers were more likely to confide in daughters than sons, and in children with whom they shared a similar outlook on life. Although it appears that residential distance may have played a stronger role in choosing a confidant for White but not Black mothers, tests for significance in the difference in coefficients using a *t* test revealed no significant differences in the role of residential distance from mothers.

The findings presented in Table 3 regarding the children to whom mothers felt the most emotionally close provided a more complicated picture. Initially, it appeared that the only factor that had similarly strong effects on Black and

Table 2
Conditional Logistic Regression Analysis: Child With Whom Mother Is Most Likely to Talk to About a Personal Problem

Variable	Full Model				White				Black			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	95% CI
Youngest	-0.23	0.19	0.79	0.55-1.15	-0.07	0.26	0.94	0.57-1.55	-0.50	0.30	0.61	0.34-1.09
Similarity to Mother	0.56**	0.13	1.75	1.37-2.24	0.61**	0.22	1.84	1.25-2.71	0.52**	0.17	1.68	1.21-2.33
Female	1.62**	0.22	5.03	3.30-7.68	1.60**	0.30	4.94	2.75-8.86	1.67**	0.33	5.33	2.79-10.16
Marital status	0.46	0.24	1.59	1.07-2.35	0.38	0.36	1.47	0.79-2.71	0.52	0.27	1.68	1.00-2.83
Parental status	0.00	0.22	1.00	0.65-1.55	-0.15	0.38	0.86	0.47-1.59	0.20	0.33	1.22	0.63-2.34
Education	0.18*	0.08	1.20	1.03-1.40	0.20	0.14	1.21	0.97-1.50	0.18	0.11	1.20	0.97-1.48
Employment	0.29	0.25	1.33	8.10-2.17	0.11	0.42	1.11	0.50-2.47	0.36	0.32	1.44	0.76-2.71
Distance	-0.13*	0.05	0.87	0.79-0.97	-0.21*	0.09	0.81	0.69-0.96	-0.09	0.07	0.92	0.80-1.05
Model χ^2			111.886**				52.306**				62.470**	
df		8				8				8		
n ¹		702				312				390		

+ $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

White mothers' differentiation was value similarity, whereas birth order, child's gender, and distance were substantially stronger predictors for Black than White mothers' choices. However, tests of the magnitude of the coefficients revealed that only the effect of distance differed significantly by race ($t = 1.872$; $p < .05$); specifically, Black mothers were more likely to name a child who lived in closer proximity than were White mothers.

In sum, these findings did not support the hypotheses that similarity and achievement of normative adult statuses would have stronger effects on Black than White mothers' patterns of differentiation among their adult children. In fact, these findings show that both Black and White mothers' patterns of differentiation are shaped by a similar set of factors, particularly similarity of values and child's gender, with daughters favored over sons.

Step 2: Qualitative Analyses Comparing Black and White Families

Next, we turned to the qualitative data to explore whether there were variations by race in mothers' differentiation among their children that were not apparent from the quantitative analyses. As noted above, mothers were asked to select a child to whom they were most emotionally close and in whom they would be most likely to confide. Following each of these questions, mothers were asked to explain why they had chosen the particular child. In examining the responses to those questions, we once again did not observe any systematic race differences in mothers' responses.

However, rather than ending the analysis after comparing Black and White mothers' responses to questions regarding confiding and emotional closeness, we proceeded to examine the full narratives to see whether there were race differences that we had not detected. In doing so, variations emerged regarding the ways in which Black and White mothers differentiated among their children in other domains. These were clearly seen when examining the question "How would you describe the differences between your children's personalities?" When White mothers answered

this question regarding their children, they typically focused directly on their offspring's personality attributes:

Let's see. Maureen² was somewhat more of a perfectionist . . . Elisa is more easy-going [and] Ann probably has the shortest fuse of them all.

I would say Barbara is more outgoing. She makes friends easily . . . she's opinionated. She's very generous. She likes attention but she gives attention. Trenton is a workaholic. He's very devoted to his work. He puts in many, many long hours. He works lots of weekends. He's not so people-oriented as Barbara is.

Catherine is more aggressive. I would say Catherine and Janet are very loving, very generous, very understanding. And Linda is very fair-minded, very good. Linda has a more business, independent attitude but also very loving, very kind, very good.

Michelle is very intelligent. Very domineering [and] very self-centered. I would say controlling. Mary is thoughtful, considerate [and] helpful. Julie is completely unselfish.

In contrast, Black mothers were more likely to emphasize the children's relations with one another and with the mothers themselves, and were much less likely to cite differences in children's personalities:

Well, Thomas and I are very close. Very close. The last one, he the baby of the family, and we're very close. [He] checks on me every day.

Susan is a very caring person but she worries about me a lot . . . she looks out for my well-being . . . we talk to each other a lot and we confide in one other . . . she's also like a friend. Jamie is also a very caring person. He's sort of close to me. Jamie's a kidder. He's always kidding me about things. If I had to choose someone to live with . . . I would choose John. He don't seem to worry as much. . . . When it comes to business, Michael and I are alike. We can talk more—business and financial situations or dealing with plans dealing with the future. He is very outspoken person—also very caring. All of them are very lovely children. We're very close—very close.

² Names used are pseudonyms.

Table 3
 Conditional Logistic Regression Analysis: Child With Whom Mother Feels the Most Emotional Closeness

Variable	Full Model				White				Black			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	95% CI
Youngest	0.35	0.19	1.42	0.98–2.08	0.12	0.28	1.12	0.65–1.92	0.62*	0.29	1.86	1.06–3.28
Similarity to Mother	0.59**	0.14	1.81	1.38–2.37	0.72**	0.22	2.05	1.33–3.16	0.49**	0.19	1.64	1.13–2.37
Female	0.48*	0.22	1.61	1.06–2.45	0.44	0.30	1.55	0.87–2.79	0.69*	0.34	2.00	1.03–3.88
Marital status	–0.37	0.24	0.69	0.44–1.10	–0.26	0.36	0.77	0.38–1.56	–0.47	0.35	0.93	0.32–1.22
Parental status	–0.16	0.25	0.85	0.52–1.39	0.09	0.38	1.10	0.52–2.30	–0.40	0.33	0.67	0.34–1.31
Education	0.00	0.09	1.00	0.84–1.20	0.10	0.14	1.10	0.84–1.44	–0.07	0.13	0.93	0.72–1.19
Employment	–0.44	0.27	0.65	0.38–1.10	–0.45	0.42	0.64	0.28–1.44	–0.32	0.37	0.73	0.35–1.50
Distance	–0.20**	0.06	0.82	0.72–0.92	–0.08	0.09	0.92	0.77–1.10	–0.32*	0.09	0.73	0.61–0.86
Model χ^2			49.554**				16.166*				41.043**	
df			8				8				8	
n ¹			529				232				297	

+ $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

JoAnn is more like me. She's more of a homebody woman. And . . . and she's up here a lot. You know, she comes and take care, you know, more than—well, I won't say more than Evelyn, but you know? . . . And um, um, Paula-she's-well, it's kinda hard to say. We're not as close as JoAnn, I'll put it that way. And um, Gloria—well, Gloria has her own thing. Her husband gave, got a little piece of money and . . . ahh! I think they think they're better than everybody else. I know it's kinda hard to say for a mother to say something like that about her daughter, but that's just the way she is. And he doesn't want them around us anyway.

I have a good relationship with both, but Sheryl I depend on more because she's always there. We all live in the same house. We go to the grocery store together. We go shopping together. . . My son, he comes around every day and do things, you know—little fixing up or things like that. Sheryl, she's the most caring person under the sun. . . My son, he's a little hard-headed. He'll go out his way to do things for people in the family—sometimes I think too much. I have a good relationship with both. I'm fortunate and so happy because. . . I got family. . . we all were a close-knit family.

These statements reveal striking differences between Black and White mothers' descriptions of their children. Specifically, Black mothers were substantially more likely than White mothers to emphasize differences among their children regarding their relationships to family members, whereas White mothers consistently described their children in terms of their distinct personalities. When White mothers described certain children as loving, caring, or thoughtful, these were cited as attributes observed in the child's interaction with others in general. In contrast, Black mothers' emphasized dimensions of relationship quality, loyalty, support, and commitment their children displayed toward them and other family members.

The greater emphasis on familism among Black than White mothers regarding their children is consistent with the arguments made by scholars using qualitative approaches. In the next step of the analysis we attempted to confirm this pattern using a quantitative approach in which we could control on variables that have been found to explain differences in mothers' relationships with their adult children.

Step 3: Multivariate Analyses Testing Qualitative Insights on Race and Differentiation

In the final analysis, we focused on the characteristics the mothers emphasized when comparing all of their children, where the mother is the unit of analysis. Although the research focus remains on differences in how Black and White mothers differentiate among their children, the final step is in contrast to the first analysis, where we explored which factors explained why a particular child was more likely to be chosen by their mother as a confidant or most close.

To prepare the data for this analysis, each of the 102 Black and 102 White mothers were coded independently by the authors regarding the way in which the mothers discussed personality differences among their adult children. For the present analysis, mothers were classified as having emphasized family relationships (1) or having emphasized other characteristics (0). We then conducted a logistic regression analysis that allowed us to determine whether there were race differences in mothers' likelihood of emphasizing family relationships. In this analysis, we included controls for aggregate-level child characteristics that have been found to predict within-family differences in parent–adult child relations (Suitor et al., 2007). To be consistent with Multivariate Analysis I, we included only those mothers who chose a child in whom they confide or to whom they felt the most emotionally close ($n = 186$).

The findings (see Table 4) revealed the same strong differences between Black and White mothers' found by the qualitative analysis regarding the way in which mothers differentiated among their children's personalities. Specifically, Black mothers were substantially more likely than White mothers to emphasize family relationships; in fact, the odds of Black mothers discussing their children in terms of family relations were more than two times greater than the odds of White mothers emphasizing this factor. Thus, the multivariate analysis confirmed the pattern we observed when reading the transcripts of the mothers' interviews, revealing strong race differences.

Table 4
*Logistic Regression Analysis of Mothers' Descriptions of Their Children's Personalities*¹

Variable	Full Model			
	B	SE B	e ^B	95% CI
Race	0.78*	0.35	2.18	0.23–0.91
Education	–0.07	0.17	0.93	0.66–1.30
Age	0.06	0.52	1.06	0.96–1.18
All live within 30 minutes	–0.06	0.42	0.95	0.42–2.15
Proportion of daughters	0.00	0.63	1.00	0.29–3.40
All share similar outlook	–0.32	0.38	0.73	0.35–1.52
All are married	–0.76+	0.44	0.47	0.20–1.10
Constant	–3.70	3.72	0.03	—
Model χ^2			14.89*	
df			9	
n ¹			186	

¹ 1 = Mothers emphasized familism; 0 = mothers emphasized other attributes.

+ $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

The central goal of this paper was to explore the potential benefits of applying multiple methods to examine the complex patterns of race and family relationships. The sequence of quantitative and qualitative analyses we have presented provides evidence that this approach was able to shed new light on race variations in maternal differentiation among adult children.

Although both theoretical arguments and ethnographic studies have emphasized greater salience of extended kin ties in Black than White families (Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Franklin, 2007; Johnson & Staples, 2005; Newman, 1999; Stack, 1974), these differences have seldom been found using traditional survey techniques and controlling for sociodemographic characteristics (Pillemer et al., 2007; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004; Sutor et al., 2007; Wharton & Thorne, 1997). Consistent with most quantitative research, our initial multivariate analyses did not, in fact, yield any consistent race differences. Gender, similarity, and proximity predicted both Black and White mothers' choice of child for emotional closeness and confiding; in fact, the only significant race difference was the stronger effect of proximity on emotional closeness, in Black families. However, by exploring the narratives of the mothers' descriptions of their adult children, we were able to uncover a clear race difference—namely that Black mothers emphasized familism to a much greater degree than did White mothers, who instead focused on children's interests, accomplishments, aspirations, and personality attributes when differentiating among their children's personalities.

The emphasis on family relations in Black families is consistent with the findings that solidarity and interconnectedness within African American communities is an emergent theme in previous qualitative and ethnographic studies of Black families. In particular, these studies suggest that ethnic minority families rely on extended family to promote successful outcomes for their families in the face of both social and economic hardships (Harrison, Wilson, Pine,

Chan, & Buriel, 1990; Hunter & Taylor, 1998; Wilson, 1986). This dependence upon extended family members is often related to practical support, but fosters greater cohesion and highly valued intergenerational relationships (Newman, 1999; Stack, 1974). Consistent with these studies, Black mothers in this analysis distinguished among their children in terms of their history of support exchanged, but also highlighted how adult children put priority on the mother–child relationship and their closeness and loyalty to mothers and extended families, mirroring the complexity of intergenerational relationships in Black families (Burton, 1995; Jarrett, 1994; Jarret & Burton, 1999; Roy, Tubbs, & Burton, 2004). Further, the methods we employed allowed us to show that this pattern of familism was observed more often in Black than White families; subsequently these race differences were confirmed in an analysis controlling for other factors.

From the perspective of the study of intergenerational relations, these findings are important for two reasons. First, they highlight the salience of relational contexts in detecting race differences. When asked about specific dimensions of their relationships that involved differentiation regarding emotional closeness and confiding, Black and White mothers' responses were remarkably similar. However, when asked about a more global domain, such as their children's personalities, it became clear that Black and White mothers were concerned with different issues. White mothers focused on a combination of achievements and personality characteristics, whereas Black mothers differentiated on the basis of family behaviors and values. Second, these patterns could not have been revealed using traditional between-family designs, which focus on a single parent–adult child dyad. Thus, the findings show the strength of combining qualitative and quantitative methods in the contexts of within-family designs.

The additional insights revealed by the sequential mixed methods approach should encourage family scholars to apply and expand this approach in future research. One important context in which this approach can be applied fruitfully is panel studies. The data we used were collected concurrently; thus, we were not able to use the information learned from the qualitative analysis to collect additional information that could be used to create quantitative items that would capture the multiple facets of familism; that is, loyalty, closeness, history of support, and devotion. However, if this method had been employed at an early stage in a panel study, it would have been possible to use the findings to build toward the next phase. We encourage researchers conducting panel studies to consider this approach.

We also recommend that family scholars apply this approach to the study of race differences in other family contexts, such as marriage, parenting practices, and family caregiving to older relatives. It is apparent from this study and other ethnographic studies that there are complexities in Black family structure and intergenerational relationships that have not been adequately captured in quantitative measures (Burton, 1995; Jarret & Burton, 1999; Roy et al., 2004). For nearly two decades family scholars have been

calling for developing measures that are more sensitive to cultural differences (Anetzberger, Korbin, & Tomita, 1996; Lange, Evers, Jansen, & Dolan, 2002). We believe that responding to this call is particularly essential to the study of race differences in family relations because these are delicate processes that tend to elicit socially desirable responses unless great care is taken to use sensitive measures.

In sum, we have demonstrated that a sequential mixed methods approach can reveal patterns that are unlikely to be detected without coming “full circle” from quantitative to qualitative approaches and back to quantitative approaches. We encourage family scholars to apply these procedures to a wide array of research questions to determine whether they have a broader place in the study of complex family processes.

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