



Social Construction of Barriers or Challenges to Parenting: Black Jamaican Fathers' and Mothers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Children receive many benefits from the consistent involvement of two adults in their lives. Although mothers and fathers encounter various barriers and/or challenges related to parenting or involvement in their children's lives, there may be differences according to sex and social circumstances. Unfortunately, limited knowledge of ethnic minority families has negatively impacted the implementation of social policies and intervention programs to support these families. The present study employed qualitative methodology from a social constructivist perspective to contextualize the barriers and challenges that Black Jamaican parents encounter in parenting their children in middle childhood. Using 49 semistructured interviews with Black Jamaican fathers (24) and mothers (25), thematic analysis led to seven themes: (a) lack of resources, (b) child-related concerns, (c) time constraints, (d) work-related concerns, (e) worrying about parenting self-efficacy, (f) partner-related challenges, and (g) contextual difficulties. These findings highlight similarities and differences across sex and social class in the barriers or challenges that Black Jamaican parents experienced in their sociocultural contexts. Social policy, welfare, and psychoeducational intervention programs should be implemented to support families.

Keywords Challenges or barriers · Black parenting · Fathering · Mothering · Qualitative research

Highlights

- Mothers and fathers faced similar and unique challenges and barriers to parenting based on perceived role expectations and sociocultural contexts.
- Although mothers and fathers experienced similar challenges and barriers, they emphasized different aspects of their experiences.
- Middle- and lower-class parents faced similar challenges, but their experiences were driven by different issues.
- Although mothers and fathers expressed concerns about parenting self-efficacy, mothers emphasized complexities in their thought processes and feelings, but fathers focused only on their thought processes.
- The macrosystem was based on economic and cultural challenges and has created unique difficulties for Black Jamaican parents.

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Over the years, the parenting and fathering literatures have tended to explore early childhood and adolescence (Chuang & Costigan, 2018; Parke & Cookston, 2019; Simmons et al., 2017), with far less attention given to middle childhood (between the ages of 6 and 12 years), especially in sociocultural contexts (Brumariu & Kerns, 2022; Henrich et al., 2010). This is a major gap in the literature, as middle childhood is a distinct stage of development in comparison to early childhood and adolescence. For example, middle childhood is an important time for the development of self-control (Pener-Tessler et al., 2022). Additionally, middle childhood is a crucial stage for the socialization of children,

and parents play an important role in impacting social, emotional, and intellectual domains (Feng et al., 2019; Thomassin et al., 2019; Yan et al., 2018). Moreover, context may influence parenting perspectives and practices (Kuczynski et al., 2021).

Despite the importance of middle childhood as a critical time for psychosocial development, there is very little research on parenting in middle childhood that takes different sociocultural contexts into consideration. Parenting is embedded in a bioecological framework and is influenced by multiple interacting systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The sociocultural context plays an important and influential role in shaping parenting beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, with both direct and indirect influences on the child. Chuang et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of taking the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems as well as changes over time in any attempt to understand parenting. Focusing on middle childhood (aged 6 to 12), in the following sections, we use the bioecological perspective to frame and contextualize the present study, which explores parenting barriers and challenges among Black Jamaican parents who have been affected by unique factors such as slavery and its aftermath.

Bioecological Perspective

The bioecological perspective focuses on the context in which development occurs and is operationalized as the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In this model, development is regarded as occurring through reciprocal interactions in the immediate environment (proximal processes) over time between a biopsychosocial human organism and its environment. Proximal processes are affected by the characteristics of the person, the environment (immediate and remote), the developmental outcome under consideration, and the continuities or changes in the social context over time based on the person's life course and historical period. Bronfenbrenner (1977) conceptualized the environment as comprising nested systems, including micro-, meso-, and macrosystems. The microsystem is defined as the various complex relationships between a person and his or her immediate environment, such as his or her home or school. The term mesosystem refers to the interrelations between major immediate environments in which the person is developing, such as the home and school. The exosystem focuses on both formal and informal environments or settings in which the developing person does not participate directly but rather influences their immediate environment (e.g., neighborhood, mass media, the world of work). Unlike the other systems, the macrosystem does not refer to any specific context but rather to general prototypes based

on culture or subculture that determine the pattern and structures at the level of the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. The macrosystem, both explicit (e.g., laws, regulations, rules) and implicit (e.g., custom and practice of everyday life), provides “blueprints” for how society should operate. Finally, time, including (micro-, meso-, and macrotime), focuses on how developmental processes and outcomes impact changes over time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Using the PPCT model as a framework, we will discuss both the context of parenting in Jamaica and the dynamics of parenting in middle childhood in the following sections.

Contexts of Parenting in Jamaica

Considering the macrosystem and time, parenting in Black Jamaican families has been influenced by a history of slavery and its aftermath (Jemmott, 2015). The enslavement of Black people in Jamaica began in the 15th century when Africans were captured and transported to work as slaves on plantations in the Americas (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Slavery radically transformed the social life and heritage of Jamaican families, where the labor-maximization priority of the slaveholders disrupted all aspects of family life, relationships, and interactions with children (Jemmott, 2015) and dismantled traditional family functioning and extended family patterns (Aborampah, 2011). Scant regard was given to the sanctity of marriage and the importance of family relationships (Hill, 1999), and sexual unions were often terminated through the sale of slaves (Dunaway, 2003). Additionally, diverse family structures were established, resulting in children being parented in various family arrangements, including extended family networks (Chamberlain, 2003).

Apart from the impacts on the microsystem, slavery had indirect effects on families as well, with changes to the macrosystem impacting parenting based on economic and cultural factors. From an economic perspective, Black Caribbean families have faced significant austerity in the post-slavery period, making poverty a major issue that has been affecting parenting (Baker & Vernon-Feagans, 2015; Steele et al., 2016). In 2014, the Human Development Index (HDI) for the Caribbean and Latin America was 0.75 (high human development), and 14% of the population was undernourished (linked to poverty and deprivation) (UNDP, 2015). Data for Jamaica in 2015 revealed that the unemployment rate was 10% for adults and 33% for youths aged 15–24 (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2016). In 2010, 22% of children lived in poverty (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2014). Importantly, these economic challenges often result in unique family dynamics, such as mothers preventing fathers from participating in their children's lives due to fathers' lack of financial contribution (Anderson, 2009).

Regarding the impact of cultural factors on parenting, significant attention has been given to the establishment of fatherhood and motherhood within Black Caribbean culture. Specifically, manhood and womanhood are earned based on impregnation and conception (Chevannes, 2001), resulting in early parenthood outside of the context of marriage. Importantly, starting in the 1960s, common-law relationships (i.e., presenting oneself to friends and family as married without official marriage ceremonies) were responsible for a high proportion of births (Cumper, 1966) and are now regarded as possibly the most common committed relationship structure in Jamaica. Thus, parenting in Black Jamaican families takes place through several family arrangements, including common-laws, visiting unions (e.g., nonresident fathers), and female-headed households. Indeed, a large percentage of Black Jamaican households are headed by women. For example, 47% of the households in Jamaica were headed by women in 2010, reflecting an increase of almost 2% over 2009 (Planning Institute of Jamaica & Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2012). In comparison to male-headed households, these families were often larger and included multiple children, adult women, and elderly relatives but no resident partner. Despite their large size, these families consumed less food, and 56% of these families were dependent on remittances and family systems for support. In addition, their health care was often sacrificed to address other economic priorities, including food, education, and shelter (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2014).

Taken together, the macrosystem and microsystem have interacted to present unique challenges and barriers for both mothers and fathers within Black Jamaican families. Greater insights into the influences of these interacting systems on parenting are needed to better understand the factors that are most relevant to Jamaican parents today and to inform the development of intervention and prevention programs, services, and policies for the health and well-being of these families.

Parenting in Middle Childhood

As parents engage in the socialization of children in middle childhood, the mesosystem reflects the interactions of microsystems, including the impact of community and the family system. Researchers have found that children in middle childhood who lived in urban Jamaica had very high exposure to violence in their communities, including witnessing, perpetrating, and experiencing physical violence directly or through the loss of a family member or friend (Samms-Vaughan et al., 2005). This has impacted parenting behaviors as parents become more restrictive in their parenting to prevent involvement in violence or criminal

activity, with some parents using corporal punishment to enforce the restrictions that they placed on their children (Kneeshaw-Price et al., 2015). Similarly, Burke and Sutherland's (2014) study on justifications for corporal punishment among Jamaican parents revealed that parents endorsed deterrence: "spare the rod, spoil the child" and behavioral control. In general, harsh disciplinary practices involving corporal punishment have been characteristic of Jamaican parents and stemmed from cultural norms that were partly developed from the experience of slavery and emphasized respect for parents and compliance with parental authority without questions or objections (Smith & Mosby, 2003). Importantly, when children are exposed to violence in their community, the family system is affected directly and indirectly, resulting in disruptions in parenting behaviors (e.g., increased negativity and decreased parental warmth) (Labella & Masten, 2018).

The macrosystem also impacts parenting practices based on factors such as remote acculturation. According to Ferguson and Bornstein (2012), remote acculturation is a form of modern nonmigrant acculturation through indirect and/or intermittent contact involving media, goods, and engagement with tourists. Remote acculturation can present challenges for individuals who are adopting goals and values from other cultural contexts. For example, Ferguson and colleagues (2018) reported that for Jamaican children, American identity or behavior directly or indirectly predicts unhealthy eating for girls and boys, respectively. Furthermore, remote acculturation has been found to influence identity, behavior, family values, intergenerational differences, and parent-child conflicts in Jamaica (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). This suggests that parents may have to cope with children who are influenced by values and principles that are foreign or unknown to parents. These findings highlight the many ways in which Jamaican parents may face unique challenges in parenting their children in middle childhood. However, there is a lack of information on the barriers and challenges that both mothers and fathers experienced in parenting their children in middle childhood.

In sum, parenting roles and responsibilities in cultural contexts such as the Black Jamaican family are complex. This family dynamic has been affected by the interaction of diverse systems and bidirectional interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For example, in Jamaican families, the bidirectional interactions of systems have been negatively impacted by challenging contexts involving community violence and cultural approaches that emphasize respect and utilize corporal punishment. These factors then place additional pressures on parents in their attempts to parent their children and protect them from harm and unhealthy influences. Additionally, the history of slavery has continued to impact parenting based on behaviors that were developed and that have continued to be transmitted

across generations (Green et al., 2019). With the advent of modern technologies and globalization, parents face additional challenges driven by foreign influences, including attitudes, values, and norms that children often incorporate into their ideologies (Ferguson et al., 2018).

Challenges and Barriers to Parenting

The capacity of mothers and fathers to effectively parent their children (i.e., demonstrating involvement such as being there, warmth, and support to their children) is impacted by their parenting self-efficacy. In association with general self-efficacy, parenting self-efficacy refers to a parent's evaluation of his or her abilities and capacities to successfully execute parenting behaviors in the context of parenting a child (Bandura, 1977). Parenting self-efficacy is an important construct of parenting that has been found to influence parents' capacity to demonstrate parenting practices that are associated with positive development for children (Vance et al., 2020). Importantly, when parents believe that they can parent effectively and have self-confidence in their parenting abilities, they are more likely to engage in positive parenting behaviors, which can enhance children's health and development or outcomes. Additionally, parenting self-efficacy has been found to be a protective factor for children and parents, especially those who parent in challenging contexts (Morelli et al., 2020; Vance et al., 2020), including communities in which children face negative influences. Notably, in a systematic review, Fang and colleagues (2021) reported that parenting self-efficacy is linked to child temperament, satisfaction of mothers with parenting, parenting stress, household income, depression of mothers, and perceptions of social support. There are factors that may exacerbate or ameliorate the challenges that parents encounter based on the impacts on their parenting self-efficacy (Morelli et al., 2020).

From a bioecological perspective, it is important to focus on gender as a person-demand characteristic in the context of parenting (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Mothers and fathers often face similar challenges that may affect their parenting self-efficacy through the direct and indirect impacts of various systems. Despite the similarity of the challenges that both mothers and fathers encounter, conjoint investigations of parenting difficulties in specific contexts (e.g., Albritton et al., 2014) are rare, and where researchers have examined mothers and fathers conjointly, they have found both similarities and differences. For example, parents face similar challenges in the context of parenting children with disabilities, including access to information and services, school and community exclusion, financial barriers, and family support (Resch et al., 2010). Not only do mothers and fathers face similar challenges in the same

context, but they sometimes also report only different challenges. For example, Albritton and colleagues (2014) investigated parenting challenges and stated that whereas mothers reported child safety, unbalanced parenting, and feeling unprepared for their parenting roles, fathers mentioned only limited financial resources.

Moreover, mothers and fathers face different challenges that are influenced by factors such as expectations and cultural contexts. Specifically, from the bioecological perspective, fathers and mothers faced challenges and barriers related to the influence of various systems, including, micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems, as well as personal system. For example, researchers have shown that fathers face barriers to parenting, such as contextual issues, psychological challenges, and personal difficulties (McKellely & Rochlen, 2016). Similarly, mothers face challenges and barriers based on the context of their relationship with their children's fathers (Meyer & Cancian, 2012), family structure (Clarke, 1999), personal history (Lansford et al., 2014), and characteristics of the child (Stepp et al., 2014). Additionally, employment or work may affect parenting by creating stress for parents, impacting parenting in negative ways (Han et al., 2020). In sum, mothers and fathers face both similar and different parenting difficulties based on their processes, personal characteristics, environment, parenting self-efficacy, and influence of time.

The Current Study

Despite our knowledge of the barriers and challenges that parents encounter in specific relational and situational contexts, there is a dearth of information based on studies that simultaneously explore the barriers and challenges that both mothers and fathers experience in the same sociocultural contexts, especially with a focus on middle childhood. Additional research is needed to provide a more nuanced perspective on the barriers and challenges to parenting in sociocultural contexts. The present study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by using a qualitative approach to explore fathers' and mothers' construction of the barriers and/or challenges to parenting in Black Jamaican families. Thus, the primary research question explored in this study was: "How do Black Jamaican fathers and mothers construct barriers or challenges to parenting?"

Method

Research Design Overview

The research design was based on a theoretical framework that included epistemology, a theoretical perspective,

methodology (i.e., strategy, plan of action, process, or design influencing the methods), and methods (i.e., techniques or procedures for collecting and analyzing the data) (Crotty, 1998). Thematic analysis is applicable in the endeavor to recognize, analyze, and document patterns or themes within a dataset, as well as being useful for organizing, describing, and interpreting the data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis is also regarded as particularly suitable for exploring questions such as how individuals conceptualize or think about certain social phenomena (Willig, 2013). Semi-structured interviews are suitable methods for thematic analysis because they generate materials that may be analyzed for content and meaning (Willig, 2013). In the present study, thematic analysis was utilized to focus on how participants socially constructed their perceptions of barriers or challenges to parenting, consistent with a constructivism/social constructionism epistemology. Phenomenological constructionism is based on social constructivism (an extension of constructivism), which is the perspective that the contexts in which individuals live influence their perceptions (Nichols, 2012). Social constructionist theory was used as the guiding theory, regarding participants' perspectives as a sense-making undertaking in which their reality was constructed in the contexts of their culture and situations (Falkheimer & Heide, 2006).

Participants and Procedures

The present study was a part of a larger study on how Black Jamaican mothers and fathers socially constructed their experiences of being parented and their own experiences as parents. In the present analysis, the focus was on how Black Jamaican fathers and mothers socially constructed the barriers or challenges that they faced as parents. Purposive sampling, including both criterion and snowball sampling, was utilized (Hays & Singh, 2011). The inclusion criteria for individuals were as follows: (a) a native Black Jamaican parent between 25 and 45 years of age, (b) an individual living in the Kingston and St. Andrew metropolitan areas of Jamaica, and (c) a biological parent of at least one child in middle childhood (aged 6 to 12). Participants were recruited through letters of explanation and promotional flyers distributed by stakeholders such as community leaders, business operators, school principals, and religious leaders. Participants also assisted with recruitment, as the snowball technique was used, whereby persons who completed the interview provided opportunities for contact with potential participants by obtaining consent to share potential participants' contact information with the recruiter or providing information to them to contact the recruiter. Additionally, the process of recruiting and interviewing was performed simultaneously until there were sufficient interviews based on the thematic analysis paradigm and tradition (Joffe, 2012).

Overall, there was a potential participant pool of approximately 152 fathers and 127 mothers. Many potential participants did not meet the inclusion criteria (223), decided not to participate (4), were unable to participate or withdrew during the interview (3). A final sample of 49 participants (25 mothers and 24 fathers) was interviewed and given a small token of appreciation (approximately 10 Canadian dollars). Additionally, seven couples in the study discussed challenges and barriers in parenting for the same identified child in middle childhood, and all the other participants discussed a different child in middle childhood. The researchers conducted the present study as approved by the University of Guelph's Research Ethics Board.

Demographics for the subsample of mothers and fathers are presented in Table 1. Participants were between 27 and 44 years of age ($M = 34.22$ years, $SD = 4.19$ years). Thirty-five of the participants lived in inner-city communities that were affected by poverty, a high rate of unemployment, dilapidated housing or shacks, squatting, drug abuse, gangs, gang violence, and curfews, as well as being volatile and lacking in social amenities. The other fourteen participants lived in middle-class communities with access to more resources. Overall, the socioeconomic status of the fathers and mothers, using income, education, and occupation, was lower-class (Father 11; mother 19) and middle-class (father 13; mother 6). Mothers tended to live in larger households ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 2.47$) than fathers did ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.78$). Thirteen of the households were multigenerational, with more mothers (8) than fathers (5) living in these households with their children. Additionally, grandmothers were living in all thirteen of these households (mothers 7, fathers 6). Mothers tended to have more children living with them on average ($M = 2.48$; 1 to 5 children) than fathers did ($M = 1.58$; 0 to 4 children), and 33 (66.35%) of the identified children had at least one sibling living with them. Except for two mothers, all the participants were religious and embracing Christianity, and one father was identified with Rastafarianism.

Interview Protocol

Individual semistructured interviews were conducted at the participants' homes (16), workplaces (13), offices (15), and other locations, such as their child's school, their spouses' workplaces, and outside places such as a park (5). Participants were able to use English and/or the local dialect (Patois) because the field researcher (lead author) is a native Jamaican and fluent in both. Before the interview, the interviewer provided relevant information about himself (e.g., familiarity with Jamaican culture, working with parents from several communities in Kingston and St. Andrew as a school counsellor) to establish common ground regarding experiences in the Jamaican context.

Table 1 Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

Characteristics	Mother		Father	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Marital Status				
Married	8	32.00	11	45.80
Common-law	7	28.00	3	12.50
Single	10	40.00	7	29.20
Divorced			2	8.30
Separated			1	4.20
Sex of identified child				
Boy	10	40%	12	50%
Girl	15	60%	12	50%
Class				
Lower	19	76.00	13	54.20
Middle	6	24.00	11	45.80
Place of residence				
Inner city	20	80.00	15	62.50
Middle class community	5	20.00	9	37.50
Education				
Below College	17	68.00	11	45.80
College and above	8	32.00	13	54.20
Head of household				
Self	8	32.00	22	91.70
Spouse	10	40.00		
Other	6	24.00	2	8.30
Self and Spouse	1	4.00		
Living arrangements				
Rent apartment or house	6	24.00	12	50.00
Own house	8	32.00	3	12.50
Family or friend no rent	5	20.00	4	16.67
Other arrangements	3	12.00	4	16.67
Lease house	2	8.00	1	4.20
Family or friends and pay rent	1	4.00		
Income				
None	5	20.00	3	12.50
Below minimum wage (\$298)	5	20.00	1	4.20
Above minimum wage	15	60.00	20	83.30
Occupation				
Sales and Services	8	32.00	4	16.67
Managers and entrepreneurs	5	20.00	3	12.50
Business, finance and administration	6	24.00	2	8.33
Education				
Trade/transport and equipment operator			6	25.00
Unemployed	4	16.00	2	8.33
Health Support Services			3	12.50

N = Mothers (25) and fathers (24). The minimum wage is quoted in Jamaican dollars

The interviews were conducted with questions in a preset manner based on the approved protocol that was developed for the present study, including additional probing questions for clarification (e.g., “What do you mean by X?” and “Can you give me an example?”). The participants were asked to provide additional thoughts one week after the interview based on their reflections, but only two participants provided feedback. The protocol included 34 questions; however, in the present analysis, attention was given only to the

following question: “What barriers or challenges do you face as a father (or mother)?”

Analytic strategy

The first interview was transcribed and sent to another member of the research team for review and feedback. Questions were added or modified to ensure that the data were addressing the research questions. Additionally, areas where follow-up questions needed to be asked were identified. The field researcher kept a field journal in which thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and analytic memos were documented. Based on reflection and feedback, the first participant was interviewed a second time, with attention given to seeking clarification and deeper understanding. The interview with the second participant was also transcribed, and a follow-up interview was held to seek further clarification or explanation. After follow-up with the second participant, none of the other 47 participants was interviewed twice because there were no new questions or concerns that surfaced; therefore, the field researcher focused on the data collection and journaling. All interviews were digitally recorded ($M = 82.20$ min, $SD = 23.45$, ranging from 39 to 145 min) and transcribed verbatim.

Thematic analysis was used to recognize and organize patterns of meaning in the dataset and facilitate analysis (Joffe, 2012), whereby emergent themes represented important constellations in the dataset (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The themes were identified both deductively and inductively (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Joffe, 2012). Additionally, a hybrid approach to thematic analysis was utilized that combined some of the recommended guidelines (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Joffe, 2012). The steps of the thematic approach involved (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing and refining themes, (e) defining themes, and (f) writing up the findings. However, both deductive and inductive approaches were employed in coding, whereby the literature and data facilitated coding and the generation of themes. Additionally, the coding frame was developed and tested using a negotiated agreement before it was applied to the dataset.

For coding and interpretation of parenting barriers or challenges, the lead author reviewed his field journal to recall any biases (e.g., thoughts about the lack of cleanliness of the parents' home that may negatively impact interpretation of the data) and to obtain a sense of patterns in the data. Additionally, the transcriptions were reviewed to become familiar with the data corpus by actively reading the transcripts several times to gain good knowledge of the depth and breadth of the dataset while taking notes to assist in the development of a codebook (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Next, codes were generated based on a review of analytic

memos, ideas from extensive reading of the data corpus, and theoretical ideas (Joffe, 2012), which were then developed into a coding frame and applied to the entire dataset (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The coding frame, which included codes, definitions, and exemplar codes, was reviewed by another member of the research team, and adjustments were made, resulting in 26 initial codes.

The transcripts were coded in segments, using the key questions from the protocol whereby each question was coded across the transcripts before moving on to another question. Additionally, there were three phases in testing the dependability of the coding frame. First, the lead author coded five of the transcripts, and an independent undergraduate research assistant was trained to use the coding frame to code the same five transcripts. Utilizing sentences or sentences for unitization, the coded segments were compared, and there was 92 to 100% intercoder-negotiated agreement. Second, a native Jamaican researcher also used the coding frame to code the same five transcripts using sentence or sentences for unitization, and comparison with the sections coded by the lead author resulted in 100% intercoder-negotiated agreement (Campbell et al., 2013). Third, two postundergraduate research assistants coded 11 (22.45%) of the transcripts in NVivo 12, resulting in 98 to 100% agreement. Taken together, five people assisted in testing the coding frame, and three people were responsible for most of the coding. The data used in the present analysis were coded using MAXQDA, which assisted in keeping a trail of evidence, reviewing coded segments, and reorganizing codes and themes. Moreover, as the coding of the data progressed, the lead author had frequent consultation with members of the research team as well as other Jamaicans. The Jamaicans who were consulted were not included in the study but were Jamaican parents with lived parenting experiences in Jamaica. This process resulted in the identification of two additional codes, bringing the total to 28 codes (see Table 2).

In generating themes, the lead author reviewed the analytic memos from the field journal as well as the memos made in MAXQDA2020. Next, there was a process of sorting codes into potential themes and collating codes to identify themes that represented the data on a broader level both deductively and inductively (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). With the combination of memos, literature, sorting codes, and consultation with members of the research team, eight major themes were generated and supported by the literature. Subsequently, the preliminary results were presented to the other members of the research team, and adjustments were made. Additionally, after feedback from the reviewers, two of the themes were merged, resulting in seven major themes. Importantly, the themes and subthemes were selected based on their internal coherence and consistency and how well they represented

Table 2 Barriers and/or Challenges to Parenting for Black Jamaican Fathers and Mothers

Themes Codes	Subthemes	Parents	
		Father	Mother
Lack of resources		11 (15)	11 (14)
Financial	No Food		3 (3)
Money	Transportation struggles	1 (1)	1 (1)
Providing			
No Car			
Basic needs			
Child-related concerns		11 (12)	9 (9)
Illness	Child characteristics	5 (9)	4 (7)
Disability of child	Disability of child	2 (3)	2 (2)
Educational progress of the child			
Parental approach			
Child characteristics			
Communicating with the child			
Illness or disability of child			
Time constraints		8 (12)	
Balancing use of time			
Insufficient time			
Work-related concerns		6 (8)	3 (3)
Work demands			
Unstable work or inadequate work			
Unemployment			
Lack of energy			
Worrying about parenting self-efficacy		4 (4)	6 (7)
Cognitive pressure			
Emotional or feelings			
Partner-related challenges		3 (3)	4 (4)
Coparenting			
Issues with the child's mother			
Issues with parents and stepchildren			
Attitudes of the child's father or mother			
Lack of help or adequate support from other parents			
Contextual difficulties		3 (5)	1 (1)
Societal challenges			
Interference			
Negative peer influences			

Frequencies are in parentheses

the dataset based on the agreement of the research team (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Moreover, before the findings were presented, an audit was performed in MAXQDA 2020, as was a review of other files kept by the lead researcher.

Methodological Integrity

With attention given to American Psychological Association's reporting standards for qualitative research, several strategies have been used to ensure fidelity and utility

(Levitt et al., 2018). First, the semistructured interviews with 49 parents met the criteria for a substantial number of interviews for thematic analysis based on the research paradigm, and the data were suitable for answering the research question (Joffe, 2012). Second, the research team consisted of experts in fatherhood, parenting, and qualitative research methodology. The lead author, who was also the field researcher, had frequent meetings and consultations with members of the research team throughout the research design, data collection, and analysis. Moreover, the researchers were open to making appropriate adjustments to the research questions and design, which is consistent with the nature of qualitative inquiry (Willig, 2013). For example, the lead researcher wrote analytic memos after each interview to reflect on how the phenomena were being constructed and framed developing patterns regarding the research questions. However, to maintain the credibility or authenticity of the study, a trail of evidence was kept throughout the research process (Koch, 1994). Additionally, as a psychotherapist, the lead researcher used a client-centered approach to bracket personal attitudes, including thoughts, feelings, and actions, while interviewing and analyzing the data. A journal was also maintained throughout the research process, and it was used to reflect on how the research was affecting the researcher as well as how the researcher was affecting the research. Importantly, the multiethnic research team challenged the emic perspective of the lead author and researcher throughout the data analysis.

Third, several strategies were employed to ensure that the research reflected the perspectives of the participants. The strategies included developing and testing the coping frame for application to the data corpus, grounding the findings in excerpts from the participants, placing the findings in the context of the international literature on parenting, providing a thick description of the research context and participants, and ensuring that the themes represented the bulk of the data, giving voice to each participant. Moreover, interrater-negotiated agreement and interrater reliability were utilized to facilitate consistency, as was the use of a hybrid approach to TA. Finally, claims were supported through a rigorous process, including seeking consensus on the auditing process, providing in-depth thick descriptions, and ensuring researcher reflexivity (e.g., bracketing, memoing).

Results

The parents discussed barriers and/or challenges that they experienced as Black Jamaican mothers and fathers, respectively. Based on the interviews, parents' construction of barriers and/or challenges mapped onto seven major

themes (see Table 2). The themes included: (a) lack of resources, (b) child-related concerns, (c) time constraints, (d) work-related concerns, (e) worrying about parenting self-efficacy, (f) partner-related challenges, and (g) contextual difficulties. There were both similarities and differences between mothers and fathers. Specifically, fathers mentioned all the themes, but mothers did not mention time constraints. We discussed the themes in the following sections, with quotations for examples using pseudonyms for parents involved in the study.

Lack of Resources

A lack of resources referred to parents not having money, materials, or other assets to draw on to effectively function in their roles as parents. Parents discussed this theme with emphasis on unavailable finances (11 fathers, 11 mothers) regardless of marital status or social class. Specifically, insufficient finances created barriers and/or challenges in their attempts to provide and/or engage in activities (e.g., buying treats for children and taking out the family) for their children and/or families. David contended that the roles and responsibilities of fathers may still be impacted by enslavement, as family did not have much meaning. Additionally, he believed that the history of slavery continued to have negative impacts on families, but he regarded himself as head of his household and was attempting to fulfill one of his major roles as a financial provider despite financial limitations. He said, "I think for us it is a cultural barrier in the sense that in these times, and people like to say it is carried out from slavery where family meant nothing and all of that." He further remarked, "obviously, finances would be a barrier, too, because you have to pay for classes, you have to pay for extras. And...a father is that as head of the household you have to make sure the finances are okay" (M = married, MC = middle-class, BC = biological children 2). Similarly, in her role as a mother, Amy remarked, "well when I do not have it financially to give her, especially when I know she wants it" (S = single, LC = lower-class, 2 BC).

The parents' perspectives on a lack of resources also generated two subthemes: (a) food insecurity and (b) transportation struggles. Whereas only mothers (3) mentioned food insecurity, both fathers and mothers discussed transportation struggles (1 father, 1 mother).

Food Insecurity

Only LC mothers raised the challenges of food insecurity. For those mothers who lived in inner-city communities, they had to either give their children unbalanced meals or have no access to food. Amy explained, "Therefore, if I have to prepare only butter and dumplings or sugar and

water or if it is just water, me and my kids will just have to rattle it out (try to cope)...going to have to stay together” (S, LC, 2 BC).

Gail mentioned similar experiences. She said, “boy I face a lot of challenges. The worst is when I cannot find any food to give them...It is rough” (S, LC, 2 BC).

Transportation Struggles

This subtheme focused on how the cost of transportation (for LC families) or not owning a car (for MC families) affects the fulfillment of parenting roles and responsibilities. One married father who lived in a middle-class community with his wife and child remarked, “I think the only barrier that I have now...is just to have a car...prevents me from doing as much as I want to for him...take them out, whenever...and not to be depending on somebody else’s car...” (M, MC, 1 BC).

In contrast, one lower-class single mother discussed how the cost of transportation to and from work depleted her income and affected her capacity to take care of the financial demands associated with parenting. Specifically, Jessica lived in the inner-city in a multigenerational household with her three children, mother, and aunt. Her aunt was a student, and her mother earned the minimum wage. Additionally, her three children were from different fathers, and she was dependent on the focus child’s father, who had recently migrated overseas to support her child. She reported, “sometimes I don’t have any money but due to the fact that I have to take two buses, once I get paid my money is finished” (S, LC, 3 BC).

Child-related Concerns

Child-related concerns referred to how the impact of the children’s individual characteristics, illnesses, or disabilities and traits directly influenced parenting practices. Mothers and fathers in both middle-class and lower-class families mentioned this theme. This theme was discussed with attention to two subthemes: (a) child characteristics and (b) disability.

Child Characteristics

Child characteristics focused on issues that parents encountered that were associated with their children’s personality and/or temperament and attitudes. Mothers (4) and fathers (5) mentioned concerns such as personality, not listening, stubbornness, and lying that made their parenting more effortful. With attention to her role as a mother, Rose commented, “hyperactive and so sometimes you find that she doesn’t follow instructions so well” (M, MC, 3 BC). As a father, Curtis, remarked, “there is a time when he tells lie

for nothing...and a next thing again he loves to vex up (make up) his face when you talk to him. You know those stubborn kids” (S, LC, 4 BC).

Disability of Child

Disability of the child referred to the way in which prolonged physical illness or chronic disability affected parents’ capacity to provide adequate care and resources for their children. Four parents (2 fathers, 2 mothers) discussed challenges associated with chronic conditions, including sickle cell, hearing impairment, and autism spectrum disorder. For example, Moses, who separated from his children’s mother because of domestic violence, decided to parent his two girls alone. He discussed how caring for his child with sickle cell disease negatively affected his sleep and work. He explained, “one of the challenges that I face is her illness (sickler)...I have to be up with her the entire night when she is sick... There are times when I have to be away from work for a couple days” (S, MC, 2 BC). Similarly, David discussed the challenges of fathering a child with hearing impairment as an educator. He commented, “Paul who is hearing impaired...as you would be well aware that may be three quarters of our learning comes from what we hear because even if we couldn’t see we could visualize in our minds based on what we hear” (M, MC, 2 BC). Tricia also chronicled the emotional challenge in parenting a child with autism spectrum disorder. She remarked, “emotional challenges...my son’s behavior at times...he has mild autism. So sometimes he will behave a bit aggressive and that can be very tiring when you have to be behind him, to constantly supervise him even as he gets older” (M, LC, 1 BC).

Time Constraints

Time constraints referred to demands on parents’ time, which interfered with the time available to spend with their children. Only the fathers (8) discussed this theme as a barrier and/or challenge, and it was experienced among the MC and LC fathers. For example, the need for income resulted in fathers working long hours. Thus, although they had wanted to spend more time with their children, they were prevented from fulfilling their desire. English, who had three children with different mothers, argued that men and women do not become sexually involved because they want a family together, but they are compelled in the moment. As a result, he was engaging in nonresidential fathering, which was demanding his time. He concluded, “if I am able to find an extra two hours for him per day, I would get him exactly where I want him [how I want him to be]” (S, MC 3 BC). In contrast, one father, Eaton, who was married and lived with his wife and three children, believed

that slavery negatively impacted family life, as “men were just used as studs, just move them from estate to estate.” More specifically, the place of fathers in the lives of their children has been impacted by historical trauma that framed men’s behaviors. Regardless, he reasoned that the issue was not insufficient time; instead, it was his failure to make time. Eaton explained, “sometimes I don’t make the time because I don’t believe that you don’t have the time. If you understand the real priorities in life, you must, there is time...I myself might get too busy with responsibilities, ministry responsibilities, work responsibilities” (M, MC, 3 BC).

Work-related Concerns

Several parents (6 fathers, 3 mothers) cited work-related concerns, which referred to the impact that employment or unemployment had on the fulfillment of parental responsibilities. For example, the demands of the job often kept them away from their children, or unemployment prevented them from meeting the needs of their children. Gary thinking about his challenge as a father said, “so, I cannot spend the time that I would want to spend with them because of work...I cannot take a day because the money is going to be short...” (S, LC, 3 BC). Kevin also remarked, “I don’t have a job, so sometimes it is challenging to even get a bills [\$100]. If somebody is eating an ice cream and he is there [desiring one], he cannot get it because I don’t have it [the money]” (S, LC, 1 BC). Joyce, whose work involved supervising more than 30 people in customer service, described her focus child as hyperactive. She said, “so I find you know the hectic schedule sometimes steals your energy so you find you are not doing as much as you should or in terms of her because she requires a lot of hands on” (M, LC, 2 BC).

Worrying about Parenting Self-efficacy

Worrying about parenting self-efficacy referred to how parents appraise themselves in their role as parents. Fathers (4) and mothers (6) both discussed this theme but had different perspectives. For fathers, their focus was on being able to provide for their children and/or families or being a good role model for their children. This was a challenge experienced by both the MC and LC fathers. For example, when fathers did not know how they were going to provide for the needs of their children and/or families, they struggled mentally to deal with negative thoughts and tried to remain positive. Wayne had to live outside of his community with friends because of community violence and be unable to be with his child or meet the requests of his child or child’s mother for support remarked, “your head hurts you. You think all type of things. You think about where you are going to get it from. However, as a father, you have to try to remain positive and stay put” (S, LC, 2 BC).

Regarding concerns about being a good role model, one father assessed his effectiveness as a father to his son. He was constantly thinking about whether he was the kind of parent that he wanted to be because setting a good example was important to him. Jonny said, “sometimes I wonder if I am doing the things that a father should do for my son to look up to me in a positive way” (D = divorced, LC, 1 BC).

When mothers focused on their worry about parenting self-efficacy, they mentioned the difficult feelings and thoughts that were experienced when they faced inadequate support to meet the needs of their children. Specifically, they felt overwhelmed and strongly disappointed when they were unable to meet important needs of their children or unable to perform or complete their tasks and responsibilities. As Tricia remarked, “sometimes work can be overwhelming, whether house chores or just going to school, my studies or my son’s behavior at times” (M, LC, 1 BC). Similarly, Amy, who went to live with her aunt when she was in middle childhood and had a difficult time, decided to stay with her children no matter how difficult. She explained the emotional toll that she sometimes experienced in caring for her children. She said:

When I do not have any lunch money and I tell her I don’t have any lunch money, she starts bawling with her eyes full of tears, and those things make you feel bad as a mother because you know that she is supposed to go to school, and you don’t have the money to give her. In addition, she is literally bawling in front of you telling you that she wants to go to school. Therefore, I start to feel embarrassed and say to myself that I have let her down and those things there... However, you know I just have to do the best I can, and at the end of the day, nobody never said that I didn’t do the best I could. In addition, I told myself when I was younger and that coming up, I will not hand over my children to anyone else because it wasn’t a good experience for me.

Partner-related Challenges

Partner-related challenges were defined as intimate partner concerns between a parent and the other parent of their child. The parents (3 fathers, 4 mothers) discussed unacceptable attitudes toward them from their children’s fathers or mothers. As a feature of the challenges raised by both MC and LC parents, these attitudes were often demonstrated through a lack of collaboration in meeting the needs of the child. Instead, there was a pattern of poor attitudes toward each other or victimization. Barry, whose ex-wife wanted more financial support than he was providing, decided to take him to court. She wanted a 167% increase in what he was paying.

The court ordered him to give his ex-wife 33% less than he was already giving her. He commented, “communicating with his mother in the best interest of the child is difficult. You know, because she just does anything that she feels like, whenever she wants to, and then just ask me for the money for it” (D, MC, 1 BC). Similarly, Amy reflected on her experiences with her child’s father, who was not assisting her in meeting the needs of her child. She concluded that although the father was not supporting his child in the way that she believed that he should, she would allow him to take the child overseas to live with him. However, she would not do this until the child was better able to care for herself. She said that she would take this step because it could be that the father is not supporting the child because, as parents, they do not like each other. She reflected:

I am not saying that if and when her father asks me if he can have his child, my only problem with that would be that I tell him to wait until she can take care of herself, not now because right now she is too young. So I am not going to stop her from going to stay with him just because I don’t like him and I find him disgusting and whatever because maybe he just doesn’t like me, you know? Because he is not that type of person as I said before, when we were together, he did everything for her more than I did. (S, LC, 2 BC)

Moreover, negative attitudes often strengthened when mothers perceived a lack of or insufficient level of support from fathers. For example, when mothers perceived that their children who lived with them believed in negative things about their roles as mothers and positive things about their fathers’ roles although they did not live with their fathers, it was emotionally turbulent for the mothers. As Amy explained:

And then I start to feel anger toward her father because he is just living his own life like that and leaving me with all the pressure, and I start feeling because I am the one that she is with then she is going to feel like I am the bad parent and all these things. Therefore, I just know that I will be looked at as the bad parent in the end because I am the one that she is around, and she is not around her father so he will always be seen as the good parent and it is just that I don’t have this, and I don’t have that and this. (S, LC, 2 BC)

Contextual Difficulties

Contextual difficulties referred to macrosystemic influences that negatively affected parenting. The parents (3 fathers, 1

mother) focused on how their ethnic culture and community influenced their roles and responsibilities. They emphasized societal challenges such as the impacts of the larger culture as well as challenges in the community. For example, as a father of four children in marriage, Daniel faced constant pressure about having too many children. Thus, he has been pressured to meet society’s expectations. He remarked, “society would expect me to have my own house, a car...I need to get more money because even the job that I have cannot support that and... requires me to use my time to get part-time jobs or two jobs” (M, MC, 4 BC). Additionally, Faith, who earned a graduate degree and chose to home-school her children, mentioned the challenges of living up to the way that things are expected to be in society even when you have sacrificed your career and made the decision to put caring for your children a top priority. She stated, “major struggle, society and society’s viewpoint of the family and the woman’s role in the family” (M, MC, 4 BC).

Regarding the focus on community challenges, only two fathers discussed this as a barrier and/or challenge. They discussed situations of interference and influence of individuals on their parenting. Pete said, “when people try to intervene. People try to intervene, meaning that they want to tell me what to do, how to grow your child” (S, MC, 3 BC). Additionally, Peter remarked, “you are here now trying to instill certain things in them, and you think they get it when they go outside to a different environment; there are other persons affecting what you have taught them in a negative light” (M, MC, 2 BC).

Discussion

We examined the perspectives of Black Jamaican fathers and mothers on difficulties faced in their parenting experiences, focusing on their children in middle childhood. This stage is crucial for the development of autonomy, and as the parents noted, they may encounter challenges based on the characteristics of their children. The themes that emerged from interviews with mothers and fathers were similar (lack of resources, child-related concerns, work-related concerns, worrying about parenting self-efficacy, partner-related challenges, and contextual difficulties) and unique (time constraints only for fathers), and the meanings and motives differed by sex, social class, and diverse circumstances. The findings highlighted universal and sociocultural barriers and challenges to parenting.

Consistent with previous research regarding the impact of the macrosystem, the current study underscored the role of economic difficulties in parenting (Roberts et al., 2014; Salami et al., 2020). Economic difficulties were raised regardless of sex and social class, but the challenges of lower class (LC) mothers were particularly salient. LC

mothers frequently described the difficulties they faced navigating parenting in the context of providing for their children as lone parents with inadequate support from their children's fathers. For example, LC mothers raised the issue of food insecurity as a major challenge, as they often face difficult choices when food is sparse or unavailable. Food insecurity is a major issue for LC mothers who are living in poverty (Wight et al., 2014). As one of the primary social determinants of health (Chung et al., 2016), poverty has a negative impact on multiple aspects of children's development, including poorer academic performance (Roy, 2014), health (da Fonseca, 2012), and mental health (Dashiff et al., 2009). When economic resources are scarce, children and parents are impacted in unique ways, challenging the dynamics of microsystems. For example, when parents face food insecurity, they experience additional stress and anxiety and decide to give the little food to their children, affecting their own health and well-being (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2014). Additionally, parents are more vulnerable to using inappropriate parenting strategies when they are anxious, hungry, or stressed and when they are unavailable enough to provide adequate supervision for their children, which ultimately impacts their children's outcomes. Therefore, programmes that address financial hardships, which are associated with food insecurity and negatively impact parents' abilities to effectively parent and decrease their parenting self-efficacy, should be implemented.

Economic factors also play a role in coparenting when mothers and fathers are living apart and nonresidential fathers are denied child access if they have not provided adequate financial support (Anderson, 2009; Poole et al., 2015; Threlfall et al., 2013). Interestingly, in the current study, neither fathers nor mothers reported that money prevented access or resulted in the denial of fathers' access to their children. Fathers were involved in their children's lives, regardless of family form and financial challenges. This may reflect increasing recognition of the changing roles of fathers and the general understanding (or acknowledgment) of the economic difficulties that fathers may face in Jamaica. Therefore, given the benefits of financial resources for children, fathers, and mothers, social policy should create industry guidelines and hiring practices to provide pathways and/or opportunities for parents to gain employment. Especially for young children, the provision of childcare adds additional financial strain to parents and may hinder their advancement in employment.

The macrosystem involving the cultural context was also critical for understanding how mothers and fathers conceptualized the barriers and challenges that they faced as parents. Although previous research has highlighted the influence of cultural, community, and societal expectations on parenting (Caines et al., 2019), unlike most other

contexts, parents in the present study were impacted by the historical trauma of slavery, reflecting the impacts of the chronosystem (Jemmott, 2015). In addition to depriving men of family life and their role as husbands and fathers (Hill, 1999), slavery also took away their personhood, dehumanized them and transformed their social heritage (Frazier, 1939). This affects self-efficacy, parenting self-efficacy, agency, and future focus. For example, there is intergenerational transmission of family or parenting practices that were developed during slavery (Clarke, 1999). Parents continued to use approaches such as corporal punishment and psychological control (Burke, & Sutherland, 2014; Smith & Mosby, 2003). These approaches may have had negative effects on how parents felt about themselves as children and when they became adults and parents. Additionally, parents may struggle with how to parent appropriately given the nature of their experiences with their own parents and the challenges that they have been navigating. One father provided an insightful comment:

We still have the little slavery mentally inside of us. If somebody is over us with any whip, we do not know what to do, so when we have people like you [the researcher, guidance counsellor, family counsellor, and marriage counsellor] can come and do these things [interview or talk to us], we are grateful for you. Because you come and tell us and show some of us things that we did not know. In addition, you know that out of the reasoning, we learn things which we never heard before and never seen [understood] before. (Omar, Common-law, LC, 2 BC)

Additionally, one mother provided further insights into the connection between slavery and the challenges and barriers faced by parents in Jamaica. This mother believed that the historical context in which the family was not allowed to remain as a unit may have continued to affect parents. She remarked, "I don't know if it has something to do with slavery and the fact that the slaves were separated and maybe that mentality [fathers and mothers not planning the future together for their children] has stuck with them" (Joyce, M, LC, 2 BC). Therefore, social policy should involve parental training and education for parents in the development of parenting self-efficacy, especially for fathers (Caldwell et al., 2014), to better overcome parental difficulties associated with the slavery mentality so that parents can support the wholistic development of their children. Importantly, parenting intervention programs have been found to positively influence parenting self-efficacy, helping parents feel more efficacious in terms of their ability to parent despite their situations and contexts (Gilkeron et al., 2020).

The historical trauma of slavery reflects the intersection of the macrosystem and the chronosystem on parenting. In

their discussion around societal influence, there was one notable difference in the subthemes that were discussed that may be indirectly connected to slavery. Specifically, only the fathers discussed dealing with difficult challenges in their communities, reflecting challenges associated with the mesosystem. Notably, the post-slavery period resulted in economic hardship and migration (Barrow, 2008), which affected the presence of biological fathers in families (Clarke, 1999). Rural–urban migration resulted in males leaving their communities without the supervision of parents or community members. Moreover, economic hardship also resulted in the marginalization of males. For example, mothers protected females in the confines of their homes (Chevannes, 2001) and were more likely to send females to school, whereas males were expected to provide financially for their families, which negatively affected their educational development (Jemmott, 2015). Collectively, these factors drove males into urban centers where they developed their identity on the streets, increasing their vulnerability to negative peer influences. Intervention programs should connect with males and fathers in their natural contexts to provide inspiration and enlightenment, facilitating positive changes in attitudes.

Another issue that these parents faced was the migration of their partners. The impact of slavery on economic struggles in Jamaica has resulted in the continuous international migration of Jamaican parents (Crawford-Brown & Rattray, 2001). As these mothers discussed, sometimes their children's fathers migrated internationally. Although the migration of fathers may increase family resources, sometimes fathers do not continue to support their children financially or provide inconsistent support. As a result of fathers' migration, mothers may face additional challenges in addition to financial difficulties. For example, they may encounter difficulties when they attempt to motivate their children to perform well in school because the children are living with the hope of joining their fathers overseas. Additionally, due to the proximal distance of fathers, mothers may not have added support from fathers to enforce discipline or provide supervision. Thus, international migration created additional challenges, especially for lower class mothers.

In addition to economic and cultural or community difficulties, the parents in the current study raised several other concerns that have been discussed as parenting challenges by others in the literature, including effects on the biological system (e.g., physical and mental health challenges of children) (Patel & Mavungu, 2016; Roberts et al., 2014; Stewart et al., 2015). For example, both mothers and fathers mentioned the challenges of caring for children who have illnesses or disabilities. Although the effects of caregiver burden have been well established in the literature (Roper et al., 2014), barriers to accessing resources may further

complicate parents' experiences in sociocultural contexts such as Jamaica, where there is still widespread stigma associated with certain disabilities. As a result, parents who care for children with disabilities in Jamaica may face difficulties because of a lack of social support and social policies that protect children with disabilities. Caring for a child with a disability is a major stressor for parents (Rayan & Ahmad, 2018), and when parents do not have resources and/or the support of a partner, it produces additional challenges (Resch et al., 2010). Furthermore, sociocultural contexts influence access to resources for parents of children who have a disability (see Rogge & Janssen, 2019). Social and public policies should address the stigma associated with disability and implement accessibility standards to better support parents who care for children with disabilities.

Focusing on the biocological system at the level of the parents, the present study generated a more complex and nuanced understanding of parenting self-efficacy for fathers and mothers. For fathers, their concern about parenting self-efficacy was based on them grappling with the challenges of being the right role model and provider for their children in response to the demands of life. The fathers' concerns about being role models and financially supporting their children reflected both cultural and sociocultural perspectives on fathering. For example, Fletcher (2020) found that many fathers reflected on their anxieties regarding their capacity to do the things required or demanded of them, including the demands based on social discourse and public policy regarding fathering.

Fathers' discussion of challenges or barriers in providing for their children and being good mentors may be linked to the historical trauma of slavery (Jemmott, 2015). During slavery, fathers were not allowed to play a meaningful role in family life. For example, one father discussed how males were used as studs (kept primarily for breeding) or transferred from plantation to plantation. This devaluation of family life during slavery (Frazier, 1939) and during the post-slavery period created economic hardship, rural to urban migration, and international migration (Crawford-Brown & Rattray, 2001), which negatively impacted the attitudes of males. However, fathers are discussing the challenges associated with providing for their children and being good role models, which may reflect their desire to be better fathers (see Devonish & Anderson, 2017). Given the impacts of slavery, including the negative influences on men's personhood, agency, and efficacy, intervention programs should reaffirm men as valued persons. This should include the development of greater self-awareness with attention given to historical influences and the intergenerational transmission of attitudes, which include thoughts, feelings, and actions.

In contrast, mothers are portrayed as emotional (e.g., being affectionate toward their children), and researchers

have found that negative emotions and emotional exhaustion are challenges or barriers to mothering (Hajal et al., 2019; Resch et al., 2010). These mothers reflected on their thoughts and feelings regarding parenting self-efficacy. Additionally, the mothers made connections with their challenging emotions and thoughts regarding the quality of their parenting. This is unsurprising, as negative emotions and thoughts are associated with harsher discipline (Rueger et al., 2011), which is characteristic of Jamaican parents (Smith & Mosby, 2003). Furthermore, negative appraisals of parenting are exacerbated in the context of poor economic conditions due to significant material hardship and psychological distress (Karpman et al., 2018). These findings further highlighted the need for intervention programs that support mothers in dealing with the thoughts and feelings associated with negative parenting appraisal. For example, interventions aimed at lowering parental stress and improving social support can improve parenting self-efficacy (see Fang et al., 2021).

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present study contributes to the literature on the sociocultural barriers that parents face, there are several limitations. First, the recruitment strategies may have resulted in a sample of parents who regarded themselves as effective parents because parents who believed that they were engaging in poor parenting may not have chosen to participate. This challenged the depth of understanding of barriers and/or challenges to parenting that was generated. Thus, there may be other unique challenges or barriers that were not discussed, such as abuse, social policy, and personal resources.

A second limitation is the possibility that the parents did not discuss the areas in which their lack of personal resources was impacting their parenting due to social desirability. Moreover, parents were not asked directly about personal limitations or inadequacies that they believed were serving as barriers to their roles and responsibilities as parents.

Another limitation is that this study did not explore how parents responded to the barriers and/or challenges that they faced. Examination of this aspect with attention given to parents in different situations would contribute to the development of strength-based intervention programs to assist parents in the flight-fight dilemma that they often face, especially in tenuous relationships where they need to prioritize their children's well-being. Additionally, future research should consider multigenerational households because they have more women, less education, lower wages, and are more dependent on remittances from overseas, which can produce additional stress for both parents and children, compromising parental resources and the developmental outcomes of children.

Although information on the sex of the child was collected in the current study, attention was not given to the challenges and barriers experienced based on the sex of the child. Additionally, no focus was given to whether the challenges and barriers were similar for mothers and fathers based on the sex of the child. This is a line for future research, taking the effects of slavery into consideration.

Another line of research for future exploration is to focus on different patterns of these findings, such as whether parents were single parents or in a dual-parent home. This approach is important because social support or a lack of social support, including informational, instrumental, esteem, social network, and emotional support, as well as conflict with a partner, may influence parenting practices and children's outcomes in unique ways.

Finally, researchers have recognized the effects of North American culture on family life in Jamaica. Specifically, parents deal with issues driven by remote acculturation (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). Therefore, as parents seek to convey cultural value to their children, they may be impacted by their children's exposure and adaptation to certain aspects of North American culture. Consequently, parent-child interactions and issues associated with child characteristics may be affected by values that parents are unaware of, making it more difficult for them to relate to their children. Thus, future research should explore the effects of remote acculturation on parenting difficulties to guide parental education programs.

Conclusion

The present study further advanced the parenting field by stressing the importance of taking sociocultural context into consideration to better understand parents' interrelated barriers or challenges in parenting their children in middle childhood. The factors that negatively affected parenting were similar across middle- and lower-class parents. Moreover, there were difficulties that were similar across cultural contexts and unique to the experiences of parents in Black Jamaican families based on the historical contexts of slavery and its aftermath. Therefore, social policies are crucial for ameliorating the effects of historical trauma and contextual challenges for Black Jamaica parents, but an analysis of Jamaica's main social protection programs revealed that there is a fragmented social support system (Mera, 2021). For example, there is no universal childcare program to assist parents, including mothers who want to continue their education. Additionally, there is no employment insurance or program that provides both training and financial assistance for people seeking employment. Social and public policies should be arranged with the historical context of slavery and contemporary realities in mind to

better support families, parents, and children. Finally, the findings of the current study may prove helpful to professionals engaged in working with parents and families.

Data availability

The data are available upon request.

Code availability

Codes are available upon request.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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Informed Consent Participants provided written informed consent before participating in the study.

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