

ABSTRACT

FAMILIAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND ECONOMIC VALUES AND EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS IN POVERTY

By Lisa Renette Scott

The purpose of this study was to determine the academic, monetary and familial, values of single African American mothers in poverty. Four focus groups explored the values and attitudes of low-income single mothers. The key findings from this research indicated that these low-income, African American, single mothers' value systems were similar to that of mainstream America, however, there were very specific obstacles to overcome in order to accurately implement those values. A discussion of the findings are presented including important implications for what are revealed about low-income, African American, single, mothers' values and attitudes. Limitations of the study are discussed, and implications for additional research are addressed.

**FAMILIAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND ECONOMIC VALUES AND EXPERIENCES OF
SINGLE AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS IN POVERTY**

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Faculty of Miami University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science
Department of Family Studies and Social Work

by

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2004

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2004

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Dedication

"Without struggle, there is no progress."

~ Frederick Douglass (1818-1895)

In honor of all the Black women who struggled before me to pave the way. Your perseverance will not be forgotten.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to give thanks to God, for through him all things are possible. Next, I would like thank to my committee and chair, for which without their guidance, motivation and wisdom this thesis would not be. Dr. Thompson, thank you for your immense enthusiasm, direction and mentorship throughout the development of this study. For Dr. Link who always reminded me “it’s not the product but the process”, these true words of wisdom are not only applicable to the project, but also to life. Dr. Brubaker, thank you for always being there and eagerly providing me with feedback and helpful and sustaining literature. A special thank you to all of Family Studies Faculty and associates, with a special thank you to Dr. Evans and Dr. Lipnicky for simply showing faith in my ability to excel and additionally going out of your way to ensure my entire transitioning process was smooth and successful.

I would like to thank my mother, Eva Scott, who instilled in me the belief that life is a clean slate and “you can be anything you want to be, there’s nothing stopping you”. I would like to give a special endearing thanks to my biggest supporter, Tyrus. Thank you for all of your love and constant and unwavering words of encouragement. I would like to thank all of my family and friends for their prayers, phone calls, e-mails and support. A special thank you goes to my best friend, Lathresa whose invaluable friendship and listening ear can never be replaced. A special thank you goes to Mr. Boasman, Christina, Robin and the entire Johnson family. Thank you to all of the graduate students for your friendship, advice and support, with special thanks to Annie, Erin, Lori, Marika, and Paula.

I would like to thank the churches, Faith Temple Worship Center C.O.G.L.O. and New Jerusalem C.O.G.I.C for their participation in the recruitment process. Last, but not least, I would like to thank all of the single mothers from the Virginia Beach community who participated, for without them this thesis would not be possible. Thank you all for taking the time out of your busy schedules and sharing your most earnest and honest beliefs and experiences. If I left anyone out please charge it to my mind and not to my heart, for I am grateful to everyone whom has inspired me along this journey.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Social science literature has noted the correlates of African American single mothers and poverty, however, research has tended to focus on the pathological aspects surrounding the African American family life (Jarrett, 1996). Poverty persistence and the correlates to African American single mothers have been noted (Jarrett, 1996). However, the values, or “lived experiences” of this particular group remains unclear. We have yet to define the meaning constructions of African American single mothers in poverty.

African American single mothers living below the poverty line face major obstacles in raising themselves and their children out of poverty. Research shows that they have substantially less education, lower marital possibilities and less work experience than other single mothers, so they are likely to earn on average over two dollars less per hour than their counterparts not living in poverty (Rind, 1991). This is important because as Harris (1993) stated, this actually identified race as a correlate of welfare receipt and duration, although the explanation for the race effects remains controversial. Harris (1993) pointed out, African American women have been found to experience more persistence on welfare, largely because of lower marriage rates although African American women have always displayed higher activity rates in the labor force. However, the “lower educational levels and poorer family resources of African American women relative to those of White women probably make it less likely to obtain the higher paid work that would permit them to leave welfare” (Harris, 1993, p. 323).

Over the past two decades, the faces of poverty have increasingly become those of women and children (Harris, 1993). In fact, Harris (1993) asserted that one in five U.S. families with children were actually headed by women in 1990 and that three out of five families in poverty with children were female-headed. Thus, an important factor to consider is that since poverty rates among children are now over twenty percent higher than in any other period since the mid-1960s, then it is the children who live only with their mother that are the most vulnerable (Harris, 1993). This is a growing issue since,

births to single mothers now represent 22 percent of Caucasian births and 66 percent of African American births (Blum & Duessen, 1996).

Harris (1993) points out that it is “young, single Black mothers with many children, without high school education or previous earnings or job skills that are prone to persistent welfare dependency” (Harris, 1993, p. 321). It is also these women who are often overlooked based on the uncertainty of marriage for the low-income single mothers. Furthermore, Blum and Deussen (1996) asserted that most scholarship on the African American family, particularly in quantitative surveys, ignores the existence of varied, extralegal male-female relationships.

We do not know much about this phenomenon as Blum and Deussen (1996) explained, research focuses only on the marital absence/ presence model, but fails to examine the “marital rationality.” In Blum and Deussen’s (1996) study, “the women resisted the assumption that legal marriage is required for good mothering, and they did not express strong desires to marry or rely on male breadwinners [primary income earners]: yet, mothers valued long-term partnerships and the presences of fathers in their children’s lives, and they framed marriage in pleasurable, if nonimperative, terms” (p. 208). However, Harris (1993) argues that economic resources and economically attractive traits improve marriage probabilities for women. Single mothers who never marry, Harris (1993) explained, have fewer resources to draw on for support of their children. Both mothers who have never married and teen-aged mothers may have lost the opportunities to invest in education or job training afforded by delaying first childbirth or through marriage, however short in duration. Remaining single and working without additional household income is the only viable avenue to self-sufficiency for African American single mothers. This, however, does not explain the economic benefits of work that must be weighted against the additional costs of childcare, medical care, role strain, and loss of time with children. Conversely, this dilemma is often resolved within African American community as Blum and Deussen (1996) explained that there are “female-centered networks of the Black community, and although motherhood is honored, the honor and responsibility for children are shared among sisters, grandmothers and other –mothers of the biological mothers” (Blum & Deussen, 1996, p. 206).

Overall, we do not know much about this group, as Sudarkasa (1996) explained that most research literature focuses on the negative or pathological aspects of African American family life, and the family life of African American people is often misinterpreted. “Such treatments obscure the structural causes of poverty and ignore women’s interest” (Blum & Duessen, 1996, p. 200). However, by focusing on the lived experiences and values of these people through this focus group, this study will, in essence, place African American mothers’ voices at the center of a look at single motherhood, their families and values. Thus, “listening to African American women’s negotiations with racialized norms of motherhood reveals both the particularity and unnaturalness of dominant norms and the ongoing presence of alternative scripts” (Blum & Deussen, 1996, p. 208) Specifically, this project will focus on the construction of meaning around monetary, academic and familial values by African American single mothers in poverty. The research question is: what are the monetary, academic and familial values by African American single mothers in poverty?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Prevalence of Single Motherhood in African American Community

African American single mothers have long been at greater risk for poverty. Most research explained the correlation between African American single mothers and poverty, but rarely does literature evaluate the roots of poverty. Payne (2001) explained that all behavior comes from a root or a value (appraisal of worth) system. Thus, to better understand why many African American single mothers are more likely to be in poverty, it is important to understand the value systems of these mothers.

In terms of responsibility, the traditional, functionalist model elicits that “men typically have responsibility for breadwinning; [while], women typically bear responsibility for home care, including housework, dependent care and attentive care and emotional labor” (Hall, Greaves, Schmiede & Zvonkovic, 1996, p. 92). However, Sudarkasa (1996) argued that when one looks at the African American mother, particularly in the workplace, one also encounters the dual stereotype and reality of the ‘strong Black woman’ and that, historically, they were the primary ‘breadwinners’ (income earner). Hattery (2001) acknowledged this by explaining the following:

The reality is that, African American women have a much longer tradition of working, even while their children are young. The tradition of labor force participation among African American families has its roots in slavery, when White women were exempt from laboring; African American women were not. Race, not gender or parental status, was the defining factor. African American women slaves worked regardless of their pregnancy or motherhood status, and often their children worked alongside them. As a result, [today], there has been a clear relationship between labor force participation and the construction of motherhood ideology among African American mothers. (p. 14)

Blum and Deussen (1996) further conceded that what may be less common is the ideology that the mothering notion, is not just based on gender, but is also racialized. Herschberg and Modell (1975) also clarify that part of the reason why, even still today,

African American families are largely matriarchal is due to the fact that in the 19th century, between a quarter and a third of most African Americans lived in a female-headed household. However, this phenomenon was not due to high divorce rates, desertion, or illegitimacy but a clear result of two key demographic factors; first, the free African Americans as well as the urban slave populations were sexually skewed: largely female, and second, the high adult mortality, particularly that of the African American male (Herschberg & Modell, 1975). Thus, historically there were a large number of single, yet, hard working African American mothers.

Values and Attitudes Toward Marriage

Although African American mothers have always had a history of labor force participation primarily due to the effects of slavery and racism, many today still balance work and family alone. During the 1950s and 1960s, when the labor force participation of “White mothers was still low, the employed mother had long been the norm for African American women...this legacy contributes to Black women’s greater equality in marriage and reduced [her perceived] need to marry” (Blum & Deussen, 1996, p. 206). Wilson (2003) acknowledged this by explaining that ‘women’ are not a homogenous group: African American women and Caucasian women experienced different trends in labor force participation and marriage, and the advantages and disadvantages of these operate differently for the two groups.

The central issue posed for “Black single mothers [is] how good a mother were you, not whether you were legally married” (Blum & Duessen, 1996, p. 203). Marriage is now being factored out of the working African American mother’s equation. In the current marriage pool, even if an African American single mother decides to marry, there is a notable lack of qualified candidates. Cose (2003) explained that today, twenty-five percent of young African American males go to college; compared to 35 percent of African American women. Additionally, a higher percentage of African American males are high school dropouts [17 percent compared to 13.5 percent females], further exacerbating the unequal marriage pool (Cose, 2003).

Davis and Rank (1996) suggest that African Americans are more likely to feel that their standard of living, career opportunities, social life, sex life, and life as a parent would be more favorable outside marriage than Caucasian couples. Research contributed by Brien (1997) also proposed that there has been a long history of correlations in the social science field between

marriage, economic status and the availability of African American males. Apparently, the benefits of higher levels of education are that those with education are moving into a completely different marriage market (Brien, 1997). The people with the higher levels of education are simply marrying each other.

Davis and Rank (1996) explained that this phenomenon could be a result of Caucasian husbands contributing a greater proportion to their respective family's income than African American husbands, thus, they might be perceived as a greater loss to their spouses. Davis and Rank (1996) stated that Caucasian wives report that their standards of living would be less satisfactory without their partners than African American wives. This finding by Davis and Rank (1996) explained that the incomes of African American men and women are much closer than those of Caucasian men and women. For example, research shows that, African American females who are working full time earn approximately 86 percent of the median income of African American males, whereas the figure for Caucasian females compared to Caucasian males is 72 percent (Davis & Rank, 1996). Also, African American women compared to Caucasian women have historically contributed more to their family incomes and have often been encouraged to foster a means to sustain themselves economically to fight against frequent African American male unemployment; which, in turn, has contributed to a greater independence on the part of African American women (Davis & Rank, 1996). Thus, even when African American married spouses express the same amount of marital satisfaction as Caucasian married spouses, the alternatives to marriage look somewhat better. This factor may be one of the keys to understanding why African American couples have a higher divorce rate than their Caucasian counterparts (Davis & Rank, 1996).

Brien (1997) identified that African American males have lower average income than Caucasian males, thus, fewer marriageable men are available in the marriage market for African American women. The idea that there are considerably fewer eligible African American men does not necessarily imply that there are fewer total men, but rather that the ones that are 'worth marrying' are in a limited number (Brien, 1997). In addition, the relatively low economic status of African American men and the shortage of African American men relative to African American women have generated a much poorer marriage market for African American women than for Caucasian women. Moreover, some studies argue that because African American

women face limited marriage prospects, they are less likely to marry and subsequently, have a greater proportion of children outside of marriage (Brien, 1997). Wilson (2003) concurred that African American women are increasingly likely to never marry; more likely to divorce, and less likely to remarry than Caucasians. Although the proportion married for both African American and Caucasian women has declined since the 1950s, the decline was much greater for African American women. Rates of divorce also grew for both sets of spouses, but the most dramatic change was that the number of never married African American women doubled (Wilson, 2003).

Blum and Duessen (1996) reported that the lack of stable employment for men, is a factor that discourages marriage within the African American community. Furthermore, Davis and Rank (1996) also asserted that the shortage of economically viable marriage partners constrains the choices available to young African American women, particularly those residing in inner city areas. In addition, Lawson and Thompson (1995) reported that economic changes in the past 30 years have produced major shifts in employment opportunities for African Americans. The reduction of manufacturing employment and the decrease in white-collar jobs has produced a decline in the African American working class, an expansion of the African American underclass, and an unstable African American middle class. For African American men, the change in the economy has resulted in a dramatic downfall in their labor force participation rate. Furthermore, studies have indicated the relationship between unemployment or sporadic employment and high divorce rates (Lawson & Thompson, 1995).

The shortage of African American males is further exacerbated by the large percentage of men who are unemployed, underemployed, imprisoned, and/or suffering from drug abuse or mental illness. Most African American women do not find these men attractive, and few women would consider them suitable for marriage (King, 1999). The high percentage of unsuitable individuals among the available pool of men reduces the pool of potential marriage partners available to African American women even more. Thus, the overall sex-ratio imbalance among African Americans and the relatively low percentage of marriageable males make it very difficult for African American women to find a potential husband, thereby reducing their chances of getting married (King, 1999). King (1999) attributed declining marriage rates among African American women to structural social and economic factors such as; the high sex-ratio imbalance among African Americans and the shortage of marriageable African American males.

Throughout history, African Americans have had a sex ratio imbalance. However, this imbalance has steadily increased over the past century (King, 1999).

Coogler, McKenry and Weber (1979) identified that marital separation has become almost a common, yet unexpected and unwelcome, experience in today's American lives. However, the proportion of African Americans who divorce, Lawson and Thompson (1995) stated, has increased whereas the proportion that marry has declined. In 1990, Lawson and Thompson (1995) found that the divorce ratio was 28.2 divorces per 100 marriages among African Americans, compared to 13 per 100 for Caucasians. In part, the increase in the divorce rate has led to a decrease in African American two-parent families. Another example is that in 1970, 68 percent of African American families had both husband and wife present, compared to 50 percent by 1990. This represents a decrease of 18 percent in 20 years, compared to a six percent decrease for Caucasian families. African American children of divorce comprise 19 percent of children who reside in single parent households; 56.3 percent of African American children live in single parent households, wherein the parents were never-married. Consequently, the enduring African American married couple is an "endangered species, and couples in which one or both partners have been married previously are becoming the norm" (Lawson & Thomson, 1995, p. 211).

Overall, these studies suggested that the majority of African American women want to marry and value marriage. These studies also indicated that many women are ambivalent about marriage and some would rather be single. However, if a woman decides to postpone marriage, she reduces the likelihood that she will find a suitable mate when she does decide to marry. She also reduces the probability that she will remarry if she particularly problematic for African American women (King, 1999). As they grow older, the pool of men from which they can select a mate diminishes due to males' shorter life expectancy and higher premature death rates. Moreover, by the time a woman in her 30s, a large percentage of the marriageable men in her age group will already have married. As the pool of marriageable men decreases, the competition for them increases (King, 1999).

Status of and Statistics on African American Single Mothers

Quantitative research has shown that many couples [in general], are making work and family decisions that result in both adults participating in the paid work force (Hall, Greaves,

Schmiege & Zvonkovic, 1996). However, in two-parent households, historically, African American women have also tended to have more “egalitarian relationships with their husbands than have White women” (Sudarkasa, 1996, p. 298). One explanation for this is that the African American women have always worked outside of the home, and hence, with the exclusion of a very small number of them, “they were not economically dependent on their husbands in the manner that most White American women were. Even now, the income gap between African American women and their husbands is far less than that between White women and theirs” (Sudarkasa, 1996, p. 298). Studies have shown that when African American women stop working, the household loses about half its income, whereas when Caucasian women stop working, their households lose only about one third of theirs. Consequently, “two [dual-earner] Black incomes are often necessary to equal that of one White breadwinner” (Lawson & Thompson, 1995, p. 214). Sudarkasa (1996) contends, “a number of Black economists have pointed that this is one reason that the status of middle class is such a precarious one among African Americans. The unemployment of one of the breadwinners can easily result in the family’s slip down the income ladder and out of the middle class” (Sudarkasa, 1996, p. 298).

Single parenthood has “risen among all U.S. racial-ethnic groups, yet 70 percent of non-marital births are to women age 20 years or older and the rate of increase in teen births among African Americans has been flat since 1970...(however), births to single mothers now represent 22 percent of White births, yet, fully 66 percent of African American births” (Blum & Deussen, 1996, p. 200). This emphasizes that African American mothers may still be single by choice, or by lack of suitable mates, but not necessarily because of teenage pregnancies (Rogers, 1996).

Further research also shows that some African American working mothers actually choose to be independent, and balance work and family on their own; this is based on perceived control, which is an important factor in most African American mothers’ daily lives. According to Bullers (1999):

Perceived control is a psychosocial construct that describes generalized beliefs about one’s ability to affect desired outcomes and avoid undesired outcomes. Individuals who feel that they can readily influence their circumstances or environment have high perceived control whereas those who believe that their lives are largely directed by external forces or influences have low perceived control (p. 181).

Knowing the above factors, many still fail to see the necessity of mothers working, even though the statistics may not be economically equal for women. For example, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2002), 48 percent of African American families are female-headed households, compared to 16 percent of Caucasian families. The poverty rate for African American families in 2002 was at 22.7 percent, compared to Caucasian families [and non-Hispanic Caucasian families] poverty rates, which rose from 7.4 percent in the last year to 7.8 percent. Still, the poverty rate among African Americans and Hispanics was roughly double that of the entire population. Furthermore, the U.S. Census Bureau (2002) also stated that income in African American households fell 3.4 percent, more than double the rate of decline in Caucasian households. The poverty rate for female-headed families was nearly three times as high as the poverty rate for all families. A striking 38.2 percent (of the total 48 percent) of families headed by African American single mothers lived in poverty in 2002, compared to 37.4 percent in 2001, and compared to 24.1 percent of (of the total 16 percent) Caucasian families headed by single mothers. Even for families headed by single working mothers, the poverty rate was 21.1 percent. Almost half of children living in female-headed households (48.6 percent) live below the poverty line U.S. Census Bureau (2002).

Furthermore, racial differences in marriage and family structures have always been part of an ongoing debate. Interestingly, according to Davis and Rank (1996) the structure of the Caucasian family of the 1990s resembles that of the African American family of the 1960s, which has raised questions regarding the links between African American and Caucasian families. Yet, Brien (1997) stated that African Americans and Caucasians in the United States exhibit huge differences in their marriage decision behaviors. Studies have shown that when African American women stop working, the household loses about half its income, whereas when Caucasian women stop working, their households lose only about one third of their income. Incidentally, “a number of Black economists have pointed that this is one reason that the status of *middle class* is such a precarious one among African Americans. The unemployment of one of the breadwinners can easily result in the family’s slip down the income ladder and out of the middle class” (Sudarkasa, 1996, p. 298).

Another interesting aspect appeared in 1993, 43.3 percent of all African American women, aged 30-34 were never married, versus only 15.5 percent of Caucasian women of the same age group who never married. In fact, not only are African American women marrying at a later age than Caucasian women, but more of them are actually choosing to never marry at all (Brien, 1997). One follow-up study as explained by Brien (1997) indicated that African American females marry almost a full year later than Caucasian females. In addition, the fraction of those who have been married by age 32 is 83 percent for Caucasian females and 62 percent for African American females (Brien, 1997). Ironically, historical evidence proposes that African American and Caucasian marriage rates were actually quite similar in the early parts of this century but have significantly changed only since the 1950s (Brien, 1997). Stack and Wasserman (1995) explained this phenomena by expressing that today, marriage and family ties are more of a key aspect of the African American ‘survival strategy’ against racism. Stack and Wasserman (1995) conceded that it is racism that produces both stress and a kind of ‘survival solidarity’ among African Americans. Thus, it is an advantage to be married for African Americans other than typical monetary and familial reasons.

Poverty and Single Mothers

According to Harris, Lokshin and Popki (2000) there are three major factors that can influence the income levels and economic stability of single-mother households “... low earning capacity of single women with children; inadequate level of support from the non-custodial fathers; and low level of government support and benefits for single-mother families” (p. 218). As we have established, although single, working parents may work hard, the total income of the struggling single parent is not always enough to meet the minimum living requirements. Furthermore, Rank (2001) indicated that:

The differences in parental economic and social class result in significant differences in resources and opportunities for children. For example, the quality and quantity of education that a child receives is strongly influenced by the level of parental income. Children in poverty are more likely to receive an inferior education, which then affects that child’s ability as an adult to compete effectively in the labor market ... hence, repeating the cycle. Furthermore, the likelihood of

marriage is substantially reduced among the poverty-stricken. The reason for this is that individuals contemplating marriage are often seeking or desire to be an economically secure partner. Poverty undermines the availability of such partners (p. 894).

Many of the general public believes that that no one has to be poor. Harris (1993) explained how poverty in America has historically been viewed as a problem of individual work effort. Upon further study, research reveals that almost anyone can become poor. However, just as likely, not all people who are currently below poverty level will remain there. In fact, Rank (2001) suggested that:

Much smaller number of households experience chronic poverty for years at a time. [If a parent does experience chronic poverty,] typically they have characteristics that put them at a severe disadvantage vis-à-vis the labor market (e.g., individuals with serious work disabilities, female-headed families with large numbers of children, and racial minorities living in inner-city areas). Their prospects for getting out of poverty for any significant period of time, are severely diminished. The odds of encountering poverty as an adult are significantly raised for African Americans and those with less education. Generally, those who experience poverty do so experience is for one or two consecutive years. However, once an individual experiences poverty, they are likely to be poor at some point again. Also, 34 percent of American children between the ages of one and 17 will have experienced poverty or near poverty (125 percent of the poverty line). Similarly, 40 percent of the elderly will encounter poverty at the 125 percent level (p. 884).

Harris (1993) concurred by stating that one in five families with children, in the U.S was headed by a woman in 1990, three out of five poor families with children were female headed. Poverty rates among children are now over 20 percent higher than at any other period since the mid-1960s, and children who live only with their mother are most vulnerable. Rank (1999) exclaims that:

By the age of six, fifty-seven percent of Black children will experience at least one year of life below the poverty line as compared with fifteen percent for White

children. By age twelve, the percentages rise to sixty seven percent for African American children versus twenty-one percent for White children, and by age seventeen, sixty-nine percent of Black children versus twenty-six percent of White children will experience at least one year of life below the poverty line. For some Black children the figures are even more startling. For example, ninety-two percent of Black children in a single-parent household where the parent holds less than twelve, years of education experienced at least one year of poverty by age six. By age twelve, the figure is ninety-eight percent of Black children. In other words, virtually every Black child with these characteristics experience at least one year of poverty early in their lives (p. 96).

Values Related to Economic Status

In addition, Rank (2001) pointed out those individual factors that influence poverty include attitudes, welfare and human capital. It is said that ... “the notion of poverty resulting from individual character flaws goes back hundreds of years” (Rank, 2001, p. 887). The argument has been that the poor lack the correct attitudes, motivation, or morals to get ahead. Researchers who have examined the attitudes of the poor have found little evidence for this position. Instead, according to Rank (2001) the poor tend to amplify and reiterate mainstream American values such as the importance of hard work, personal responsibility, and a dislike of the welfare system.

In a study by Lawson and Thompson (1995), the research indicated that the spending practices of some African Americans may be related to the way in which they cope with being perceived as culturally disadvantaged, intellectually inferior and linguistically deprived. Scholars have compared the temporary solace of consumer spending with the transitory euphoria of a drug-induced trance (Lawson & Thompson, 1995). Payne (2001) also acknowledged that there are three ways of viewing money based on a given group’s social economic status. Payne (2001) explained that the wealthy perceive money to be conserved or invested, while the middle class perceive money to be managed, but those in poverty see money only to be used or spent. Yet, Lawson and Thompson (1995) further suggested that the excessive use of designer clothing, expensive jewelry, and elaborate furnishings often manifest the social

marginality and discrediting of African Americans. For many in the African American community, extravagant clothing conveys social acceptance by symbolizing participation in a Caucasian consumer oriented-culture (Lawson & Thompson, 1995). It is probable that in coping with social subordination, African Americans often use expensive clothing to acquire a sense of self worth. Operating in this manner, clothes often elevate the self-images of African Americans. Payne (2001) asserted that money is seen by those in poverty as only an expression of personality and is used for entertainment and relationships. The notion of using money for security is truly grounded only in the middle and wealthy classes.

In addition, Payne (2001) also explained that even if the single parent in poverty does receive extra money, she would be immediately besieged with requests, as one of the hidden rules of poverty stated that any extra money is to be shared. In poverty, Payne (2001) explained, the clear understanding is that one will never get ahead, so when extra money is available, it is either shared or quickly spent.

Values Related to Education

Phillipsen (1993) asserted that educational research on the performance and dropout rates among minority students is almost primarily confined to urban settings, and yet, only limited attention is actually given to the educational status and needs of women of color. Pollack's (2001) study of race and achievement in various schools found that one "teacher, who labeled himself 'Black', immediately started comparing achievement behavior among racial lines as if such comparisons were completely natural" (Pollack, 2001, p. 3). This could be viewed as a problem, specifically coming from an academic authority who teaches these students. Jencks, Phillips and Ferguson (1998) stated that "teachers' perceptions, expectations and behaviors interact with students' belief behaviors, and work habits in ways that help to perpetuate the Black-White test score gap (p. 274)". This is even more so of a puzzle as "learning to bridge and negotiate contrasting cultural identities is a fundamental concern for ethnic minority youth, especially since they often hold very different cultural values, communication styles, and interpersonal relationship norms from those of the dominant Caucasian culture" (Jencks, Phillips & Ferguson, 1998, p. 378). Drost and Yeh (2002) urged that:

It is essential for school professionals to recognize students who have problems with conflicting identities and to provide appropriate interventions, because unaddressed difficulties may evolve into significant mental health problems, such as psychopathology, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem; social and relational concerns; academic failure; and gang involvement (p. 1).

Phillipsen's (1993) study indicated that there is a vast difference in the spoken values of African American women versus their actual applied values. "The findings of this research indicated the presence of numerous contradictions between educational beliefs (values-spoken) and actual academic behavior" (Phillipsen, 1993, p. 419). For instance, in Phillipsen's (1993) research African American women indicated that they truly believe education is important, yet they did not think that it applied to them, specifically in their community setting. Singham (1996) explained that, "the attempt by any individual Black to achieve academic success is seen as a betrayal because it would involve eventually conforming to the norms of White behavior and attitudes" (p. 13). Thus, as Phillipsen's (1993) research indicated that African American women's values strongly support academic achievement, but the lifestyle they live and proclaim is that there are no role models or mentors for them to follow. Payne (2001) supported this in her explanation that for those in poverty, education is valued and revered as abstract, but not as a reality. Singham (1996) stated that:

This view causes immense problems for those Black students who have higher academic aspirations. Many are torn between wanting to achieve academic success because of their parents' expectations and sacrifices on their behalf, and the natural desire to stay in step with their peers and retain important adolescent friendships. Many of them adopt a middle road, keeping their grades just high enough to avoid trouble at home and preserve good relations with their teachers but no more.... this strategy is called 'racelessness' - - behaving in what they see as a race neutral manner so as not to draw attention to themselves. (p. 14)

Pollack (2001) posited in this research that many non-Caucasian children succeed not because of their societal roles, but because of pressured expectations placed on them. They succeed not just because they want to, or their parents want them to, but, because the burden of their whole community is placed upon their academic achievement. Furthermore, Phillipsen

(1993) explained that many of the African American women stated that they were simply scared of entering the “White-world”, where-in lies exclusion and racism for them. They believe that there is no real support for them, and pursuing education does not apply to what is going on in the African American community. Thus, although they recognize the importance of higher education, many African Americans recall their strained childhood academic experiences and those experiences prevent them from pursuing further education.

Another aspect Phillipsen (1993) mentioned is how many of the African American youth in urban areas are in a rush to be viewed as adults. Although the young African Americans claimed to know the values of education, the African American youth still stated that they chose to drop out in order to get a job so that they could buy a car, or have a child, all of which the African American youth defined as adult activities. Rank (2001) also identified that women at lower income and educational levels also tend to have children at earlier ages and are more likely to bear children out of wedlock. For example, “the fertility rates per 1,000 unmarried women ages 18 to 24 reveals a rate of 300.9 for those with 0 to 8 years of education, 123.5 for women with 12 years of education, and 23.7 for those with 13 to 15 years of education” (Rank, 2001, p. 894). This poses a problem, “young, single, Black mothers with children, without high school education or previous earnings or jobs skills [that] are prone to persistent welfare dependency” (Harris, 1993, p. 321). Thus, Harris (1993) asserted that, “single mothers who substitute work experience for education must endure a longer route to economic independence” (p. 344). This is evident in research conducted by Rind (1991) that explained that less than one-fifth of the single mothers above poverty level had not finished high school, compared with almost one-half of those living below poverty level that had not finished high school.

Phillipsen (1993) stated that many African American women claim they will go back to school later, as they define education on essential, however, it is too inconvenient or even hard to do so. Phillipsen (1993) explained, that the contradictions between spoken values for African American women in urban areas and the way they live their values can be understood as the result of the competing “multiple voices,” which is active in the mind of the particular cultural group. Phillipsen (1993) asserted that the subjects of the study seemed to struggle with the tension between one inner voice reminding them to take education seriously, and another reminding them of past experiences of school and how they should not waste their energy on

education, since it is not very likely to provide them with immediate or concrete rewards. Rind (1991) made this clear as he reported that as a result of limited education, poor mothers earned substantially less than other mothers did: the average wage of single mothers living below the poverty line in 1986 was \$3.75 per hour, compared with \$6 per hour among single mothers not in poverty.

Values Related to Managing Family and Income

Parents believe that if they just work harder, or longer hours, they will eventually manage to bring their children out of poverty themselves without any form of governmental support. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Baum (2002) identified that childcare costs reduce the net benefit of working and consequently influence mothers' decisions to work. They affect the employment of low-income mothers in particular because they represent a larger portion of these mothers' earnings. Low-income mothers with infants are often the ones who are most affected by childcare costs. The results of Baum (2002) research also showed that childcare costs are a barrier to work that is larger for low-income mothers than for non low-income mothers. Further childcare costs have large negative effects on hours of work.

Parents in poverty can expect to utilize various resources, such as government housing, State-enforced child support, and even exchange childcare to assist in the parenting in poverty dilemmas. Parents are struggling to raise their children in an economically sound environment, so that most commonly, their children will have a better life than they did, be it better schools, better colleges, better work opportunities. Moreover, Rank's (2001) study pointed out that several ethnographic studies over the past 40 years have indicated that the poor are more likely to use a larger network of kinship than the non-poor to exchange resources and services. This extended network has served as a coping mechanism for dealing with the uncertainties and hardships of poverty, for example, a study of a poor African American community called The Flats, was found that it was virtually impossible for families to cover their various expenses and needs completely on their own (Rank, 2001). Consequently, a system of collective sharing arose as an adaptive strategy to survive the daily uncertainties and deprivation of poverty. Only through such a collective response were families able to get through the daily trial and tribulations of long-term poverty.

Child support and its enforcement has become an increasing concern. Rank (2001) stated that one reason that newly created female-headed households with children are at a significant risk of poverty is that mothers often fail to receive court ordered child support statements. Rank (2001) example of single mothers failure to receive court ordered support was in that in 1997, 1.9 percent of mothers received the full amount of court ordered child support payments, 26.6 percent received only partial payment and 31.5 percent received no payment. Rank (2001) stated that of the \$29.1 billion due in child support payments in 1997, \$17.1 billion was received, according to Census Bureau 2000.

There are, of course, other factors contributing to single parents, (women) living in poverty, such as the absence of the father's support. It is a fact that some men simply abandon their children out of neglect or despair, and simply do not contribute to their child's economical well being. Other men however, feel that because the child's mother would allow him to see the child (for various reasons that he should not have to take care of the child (Roy, 1999, p. 443).

Another reason men do not pay child support is because they may have been on the verge of poverty themselves and could not afford to pay the court ordered amount (Roy, 1999, p. 443). If the unmarried father did not earn minimum living wages, and therefore paid very low amounts of child support, then often, their most important contribution to their children came in the time they offered as caregivers or as parental options for custody (Roy, 1999, p. 447). Thus, many men feel that there are other forms of support that are important, such as the time that they may spend with their child.

Methodological Background

Strauss (1987) explained that, since the 1920s, qualitative research has developed relatively rigorous methods for collecting and treating data. Grounded theory is a deductive approach to data analysis that focuses on developing a theory based on data. Miles and Huberman (1984) expressed that the researchers need methods for data management and analysis that are systematic and explicit. As Berg and Mutchnick (1996) explained, it is a way to arrange data in a systematic way that allows for quick location and retrieval of specific elements: coding. The themes that are revealed from the coded categories result in the development of a grounded theory. The "methodological thrust of the grounded theory approach to qualitative data is toward the actual

development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research or theoretical interests” (Strauss, 1987, p. 5). Thus, grounded theory is not a specific method or technique, but merely a style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinctive features such as making constant comparisons between and within interviews and the use of a coding paradigm to ensure theoretical development and density (Strauss, 1987). Furthermore, Strauss (1987) asserted that:

Qualitative researchers tend to lay considerable emphasis on situational and often structural contexts, in contrast to many quantitative researchers, whose work is multivariate but often weak on context. Qualitative researchers tend, however to focus on only single situations, organizations and institutions (p. 2).

Grounded theory emphasizes the necessity for grasping the actor’s viewpoints for understanding interaction, process, and social change. Strauss (1987) explained that the grounded theory style of analysis is based on the premise that theory at various levels of generality is indispensable for deeper knowledge of social phenomena. Strauss (1987) also argued that such theory ought to be developed in intimate relation with data (such as a focus group), with researchers fully aware of themselves as instruments for developing that grounded theory.

Theoretical Background

The primary goal of this particular study is to conceptualize the educational, monetary, and familial values associated with African American single parents living in poverty. Symbolic Interactionist theoretical perspective is used to frame the experiences of single African American women in poverty. The theoretical rationale is that Symbolic Interaction explains the phenomena of how things or events are interpreted by actors’, in other words, people do what they do based on their beliefs. Klein and White (1996) explained that Symbolic Interactionist theory focuses on the idea of how complex symbol systems, or in this case, values are shared. A value, Klein and White (1996) asserted, is the worth of a utility or merit in usefulness or importance to the possessor. According to Klein and White (1996) Symbolic Interaction correlates this meaning of value in that it [Symbolic Interaction] hypothesizes that people are motivated to create meanings to help them make sense of their world. In addition, Klein and White (1996) stated, “it

encompasses actors' motives as constructed from the meanings available to the actor and relevant to the situation in which the actor is located" (p. 92). Thus, from a Symbolic Interactionist perspective, one's value of things, such as education, money or family, is influenced by their environment and experiences. For instance, for many in the African American community, expensive clothing conveys social acceptance by symbolizing participation in a Caucasian consumer oriented culture (Lawson & Thompson, 1995). Klein and White (1996) explained that in uncovering the Symbolic Interactionist perspective, "material objects, such as jeans and cars, not only perform functions (utility) but have symbolic significance aesthetically, religiously, and socially" (p. 92).

Klein and White (1996) stated that we acquire our symbols based on the socialization process of our beliefs, and attitudes of our culture. Thus, Klein and White (1996) further express that we define "the situation in which we find ourselves [i.e. single parent African American mother in poverty], which explained what problems we define and what actions and solutions we undertake" therefore, one would anticipate people having different values based on this theory (p. 93).

Conclusion

Previous quantitative and qualitative studies provided important insights regarding the relation of African Americans and poverty, in general, and even between social stigma and public assistance programs, including Aid for Dependent Children (Jarrett, 1996). Jarrett (1996) explained that often, quantitative studies have identified key correlates of poverty stigma and their relationship to economic, social and psychological outcomes. Yet, there remains a broad gap in the specific study of the value systems or beliefs of low-income African American single mothers. Research has not addressed what their values are, how they were formed, or what may be required to change some of the values that are keeping the people in poverty. Understanding these specific phenomena of values regarding monetary, academic and familial goals will be insightful for researchers, practitioners and other professionals to provide adequate assistance or education in bringing this specific group of out of poverty.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study employed a focus group research methodology. As a form of qualitative research, Morgan (1988) explained that focus groups are a type of group interviews, which strongly rely on the interaction within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher, who typically takes the role of the moderator.

Morgan (1988) stated that “at present, the two principal means of collecting qualitative data in the social sciences are individual interviews and participant observation in groups. As group interviews, focus groups combine elements of both of these better-known approaches” (p. 15). Focus groups are important in this study because, as Morgan (1988) asserted, “from a social science point of view, it is a self contained means of collective data” (p. 10). Morgan (1988) further expresses, that this unique form of qualitative research is the “hallmark form of explicit use in group interaction, used to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group” (p. 12). In concurrence, Casey and Krueger (2000) explained that focus groups work uniquely well to determine the perceptions, feelings and thinking of people about issues, products, services or opportunities. Casey and Krueger (2000) further stated that focus groups are also “crucial when you are trying to understand differences in perspectives (or values) in a specific group or category of people” (p. 24). Thus, the purpose of the focus group, is to uncover factors that influence opinions, behavior or motivation (Casey and Krueger, 2000).

Following the specific key questions, I addressed several follow-up and discussion questions. The interview protocol explored various aspects of how low-income single African American mothers adapt to conditions of poverty. The guiding themes for the study were taken from issues discussed in the poverty literature (Harris, 1993; Jarrett, 1996; Payne, 2001; Philipsen, 1993; Rind, 1991). Key topics included household and family formation patterns, household living arrangements, childcare and socialization patterns; economic adjustments or budgeting, intergenerational relations;

male-female relations and welfare, work, academic and social opportunities [see Appendix 1].

Following Klein and White's (1996) explanation of hermeneutics, the interpretation of textual materials, "this technique is currently applied to the conceptualized actor's language reports and activities. Hermeneutics is not just a technique of analysis. It is in addition, a way the researcher can, to some degree, experience what the actor experiences" (p. 108). In effect, the focus group analysis process was based on the pattern identification classification system. According to Casey and Krueger (2000), in addition to Klein and White's (1996) hermeneutics definition, the material was categorized into similar themes. "The reason you plan focus groups is to analyze across groups, the analyst looks for patterns and themes across groups" p. (26).

Four focus groups were used to collect the data, two groups of five women and two groups of six women (22 in all). A method for gathering qualitative information through group interaction, the focus group interview is primarily concerned with subjective perceptions, opinions, attitudes, values and feelings (Jarrett, 1996). Focus group interviews are particularly useful for exploring the range and patterns of subjective perspectives in a relatively short period of time (Jarrett, 1996). Each focus group session lasted approximately 90 minutes and was held with each of the two groups of six and two groups of five women. Casey and Krueger (2000) explained that the ideal size of focus groups is six to eight participants, as larger focus groups would be difficult to control and would limit each person's opportunity to share insights and observations.

The interviews were held at the local community center. At the site, the researcher and respondents sat in a circular group formation. The atmosphere was very relaxed, and discussions were quite frank. Women were provided with sodas, catered food, and even given the opportunity to smoke cigarettes as they express their views.

Incentives to participate in these focus groups included a random drawing for a \$100 Visa Gift card. The Visa gift card was then available to use any way the participant would preferred, i.e. to pay a bill, to treat themselves, or to save and use in case of emergency. According to Casey and Krueger (2000), it may be more efficient to pay more for incentives and thereby reduce the recruiting time and the likelihood that people

will not show up. Casey and Krueger (2000) explained that, as the incentive amount approaches or exceeds \$50, “an interesting phenomenon begins to occur. If the participant has a last-minute conflict, he or she is more likely to call the moderator and offer to send a replacement in his or her absence” (Casey and Krueger, 2000, p. 92).

Sample

Four focus groups, two groups of five low-income African American, single mothers, and two groups of six low-income African American, single mothers (22 total) were conducted in March 2004. The selection criteria for the focus group participants were based on demographic profiles of African American women at risk for persistent poverty. All of the women who volunteered met the criteria of:

- a. have at least one child
- b. live in the high poverty or economically declining neighborhoods in the city of Virginia Beach
- c. not consider themselves married mothers

The age range for the participants was between the ages of 20-30, most were in their early to middle 20s. Women in this study had at least one child; some had more. As single mothers, many experienced a variety of household arrangements, including living alone with their children, living with extended kin, and living with male companions, such as a live-in boyfriend.

Participants in the study were recruited from two local churches in the area with which the facilitator felt comfortable. The participants that volunteered met the requirements. The researcher, who is also an African American woman, visited the community center where the focus groups took place. The study was explained to all of the parents at the focus group sessions, and a short screening questionnaire was distributed. With the information from the demographic characteristics-questionnaire, [including: willingness to participate and availability], the researcher later telephoned each woman who fit the sample profile to invite her personally to the focus group session [see Appendix A]. Four primary research questions guided this study:

1. How is education valued by African American single mothers living in poverty? Is it important or unrealistic and why?
2. What priorities are assigned to marriage by African American single mothers living in poverty? Is it important or unrealistic and why?
3. How is money understood and used by African American single mothers living in poverty?
- 4.
5. What role does extended kin relay for African American single mothers living in poverty?

Limitations of Sample

The possible limitations of this study included the similarity of the homogenized sample. In a study where time and physical constraints were not an issue, a more diverse sample, in terms of ethnicity and religious background, could be recruited. However, Casey and Krueger (2000) argue that focus groups are often composed of participants who are similar to each other in a way that is important to the researcher. The nature of this homogeneity is determined by the purpose of the study. This similarity is a basis for recruitment, and participants are typically informed of these common factors at the beginning of the discussion.

Homogeneity can be broadly or narrowly defined, Casey and Krueger (2000) also explained that grouping people who regularly interact socially, either at work or within the same community, may in fact inhibit some disclosure on certain topics. This concern, however, was addressed in this study by actually playing up this situation as a benefit rather than a hindrance. In fact, these groups were encouraged to see the groups as the “just-us-girls” atmosphere, actually creating a more intense “safe-space” as opposed to the more stifling or uncomfortable stranger situation.

Another limitation in preparing for the focus groups was time scheduling. The facilitator scheduled meetings purposively to allow for work constraints and possible

after-school extra-curricular activities. It was assumed the average workday would end at 5:00 p.m., therefore meetings were scheduled to begin at 6:45 p.m. However, many of the potential participants did not work traditional work hours. Many of the low-income mothers worked shift jobs that started in the evening. This was an unexpected limitation in sample. In addition, if a participant did not make it to a previously confirmed meeting, then it was highly likely that she would not reschedule for a meeting later in the week. Perhaps this is due to the embarrassment of breaking a promise or perhaps the initial cancellation was a choice not to attend at all.

Another unanticipated limitation included the use of the telephone scheduling procedure. In this particular group, it is a common practice to avoid unsolicited calls through the use of the caller identification function [available on the telephone] as a method to avoid bill collectors. Many of the telephone invitations and/or follow up correspondence were hindered by the vigorous telephone screening of the single mothers. The practice of avoiding calls included using answering machines as well as having people who lived in the residence misrepresent who lived there. Many times, this conflict was resolved by leaving a message explaining who I was and that I would call right back in two minutes. Many times, the second call was met with apologies, laughter and relief by the participant.

An additional limitation regarded the use of incentives. The initial incentive for participants was a \$100 Visa gift card. This incentive was validated based on Casey and Krueger (2000) philosophy that “the time needed to recruit is reduced and ... thereby reduces the likelihood that people won’t show up” (p. 92). Justly, people arrived in anticipating the \$100 drawing. However, on the first night of the focus group, there was a rumor that each person would possibly receive twenty dollars for attendance. With that anticipation in mind, the recipients eagerly showed up for the guaranteed twenty dollar award. One recipient even stated that the twenty dollars was the whole reason she came, as the \$100 drawing was too risky for her to depend on. Many of the women the first night explained that the importance of the twenty dollars gave them the much needed help for the remainder of the month (for gas, baby formula, baby diapers, etc). Keeping in mind the demographics of the low-income single mothers, it is easy to understand the

importance of the guaranteed twenty dollars. I handled this situation by going to the nearest automatic teller machine to withdraw the cash, and later replaced my funds with the gift card.

Group Demographics

The ages of the mothers ranged from 19 to 31. The average age of the mothers was 24.3 years old. The average yearly income range was less than \$8,999 per year, and all of the mothers stated that they received less than \$999 in financial support from other people or other resources per year. Single mothers had between one and five children, with an average of 2.3 children. The mother's educational backgrounds ranged from some High School to a college degree. Two of the participants had Bachelor's Degrees. Of the 22 participants, seven were either not working, or in school full time [see Appendix E: Table 3.7]. The mothers who worked reported that their jobs were primarily service, clerical or telecommunication jobs. Most stated that they have worked in their current job between 2 to 3 years and worked an average of 35 hours per week.

Facilitator's Experience

A concern at the onset of this study was how I, the facilitator, would be accepted in the community. At the time of this study, I was an unmarried, 30year old, African American woman. Although I had a similar marital status, race and background in common with the participants, I did not share the background of being a parent and could not relate to their motherhood experiences [see Appendix E: Table 3.1]. Yet, I was familiar with the Virginia Beach community as I had lived in the community until the age of 18, as the daughter of a single mother. In addition, I had observed as many of my friends became single parents. Casey and Krueger (2000) stated that:

Just because someone has a skin color or ethnicity similar to participants doesn't guarantee that he or she will be trusted and effective. Indeed, [there has been] disasters with academics from a racial category who weren't trusted by people within the community, or when we thought the key factor was race and later found that the moderator was seen as an outsider ... (p. 182).

However, I felt accepted by the participants. The recipients seemed to respond to me, with ease. As I was aware of the community code of values and cultural norms,

which vary from city to city even in similar urban communities, I was able to relate to the participants on similar level. During many of the initial [invitation and follow-up] telephone conversations, it was often mentioned that I sounded like a “White lady”, which can be perceived as intimidating in this community. After the initial feedback, I adjusted my tone to a more relaxed, slightly-southern dialect [using common phrases such as “ya’ll, wanna’, lemme’, gonna’, etc.) which I was very familiar with, as it was a common vernacular I spoke myself growing up. After reverting to the more relaxed tongue, any previous discomfort among the participants was eased.

Research suggested that many African Americans have a history of high religiosity values, and African American churches are considered important in social and community life (Harris, 1994). Utilizing the local churches in the community as credible references and recruiting sources, the participants seemed to assume that the facilitator was also credible.

Overall, each of the focus groups was very successful. As the participants were all recruited from the same community, several of the participants knew one another, and in fact, requested to schedule their times with that of their close friends, which led to an even more comfortable atmosphere, as it was similar to that of a ‘girl’s night out’. Casey and Kreuger (2000) explained that this can be a limitation as the challenges include the facilitator to create an environment where the participants are willing to openly share their concerns, anxieties and suggestions. Casey and Kreuger (2000) further contends that the familiar climate may possibly “restrict open communication and discourage or even punish alternative points of views ... although knowing one another may promote sharing with one group, it may inhibit sharing in another group” (p. 172).

At the beginning of the focus group sessions, the respondents were greeted, directed to get some refreshments and get comfortable. As the participants enjoyed their refreshments, they were asked review the forms (letter of consent and demographic forms), while we waited for other participants to arrive [see Appendix A and B]. If the participants brought children, they were allowed to prepare their children’s meals, as the provided babysitter took them off to an in-house recreation site. As the participants filled out their forms, they comfortably chatted with each other. I explained that they were not

to put their name on the background form, as it was important that no one would know who they were. The assurance of confidentiality made the participants seem more relaxed. The conversation flowed comfortably as I explained the importance of this study, and the possibility of it helping the community as professionals and leaders become aware of this communities, needs, wants and values. Many times, the conversation shifted on its own from topic to topic parallel with the preplanned questions, [see Appendix C] often with little or no prompting from me. The single mothers seemed comfortable discussing their personal issues. At the end of the sessions, most participants stated that the experience was very therapeutic and cathartic.

At the end of each focus group, I asked the group what may have made the focus group better. Although each of the groups stated that they felt very comfortable, they suggested that possible transportation and/or telephone interviews may have allowed for a larger number of participants.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion of Themes

The major themes that emerged from this study included the stigma of help these mothers placed on family as opposed to the stigma of help from social services; and what was considered positive support versus negative stigma. Another theme that emerged within this study was a need for help or direction in utilizing resources, for example, how to work the social service system to their benefit. A third theme that emerged was that of the generational value of education, and how many of the mothers viewed education for themselves differently than education for their children. A final key theme that emerged was the expectations and idealization of marriage. This theme includes the role of relationships with men and ideals held about family relationships.

Stigma of Help

A frequent theme that constantly emerged in this study was that there was stigma related to certain forms of support. For these women, receiving aid from social services was acceptable in general. However, for these mothers, it was the type of help that determines whether or not it is negatively stigmatized. To receive certain social services aids such as Head-Start [daycare], Food Stamps or WIC (Women, Infants, Children), was defined as acceptable. In many instances, support related to aiding children with educational and/or physical development were depicted as desirable. Many low-income, single mothers felt that these supports were what truly allowed them to survive month to month, as most women suggest that they live pay-check to pay-check [See Appendix E: Table 3.3]. One woman explained: “... you can deal without [the TANF check], well- I can anyway, [but] the food stamps, man you - - ... when the milk run out at the end of the month, and no WIC ... oh my goodness ...” Another low-income single mother in her early twenties discussed it this way:

... My baby has a [digestion] problem, so his milk is \$8 a can, per day, and I was paying that [in] cash at the end of the month for at least a week and a half, and that ain't no joke! Especially doing it by myself too ...

A large proportion of the single mothers in this study suggested that, food stamps were not nearly as negatively stigmatized as other types of support. Some even equated food stamps to coupons, or even free food, as long as it was not actual money. Jarrett (1996) supported this idea in that AFDC [Aid For Dependents And Children] recipients, both African American and Caucasian single mothers, had lower psychological well-being than non-recipients. Jarrett (1996) continued to that “informants used a large range of strategies to neutralize the stigma associated with the use of food stamps, including concealing the coupons in certain situations and recasting the use of food stamps in a more positive light” (p. 369). In this particular study, the participants themselves assigned stigma to receiving a TANF check [Temporary Aid for Needy Families] previously known as AFDC [Aid For Dependents And Children], and it was perceived as very negatively stigmatized by the single mothers and their peers. During the focus groups, most women proudly denied ever having received a TANF check or expressed that maybe, at one point, they were receiving it, but now, they were not. As this mother expressed, getting off TANF was defined as an accomplishment:

... Even though I didn't want to be on the system, I had to rely on it for a time, but um, I mean, I'm off it. I've been off it for about five years now! But still, I mean, you might not want to do that, but sometimes you have to do what it takes to give your child ...

Another woman described that:

... That's why I don't receive ADC, not that I'm trying to prove a point to somebody, but to myself - - like I can do it. I don't have to break down and depend on the system, because - - I mean, when I were receiving the food stamps -when the child support was suppose to come and if it did, [then] he'd have to write a letter to the State about why he was giving me money and that [he actually] did and they'd cut my food stamps off, so it was always something...

One mother's statement encompassed this overall theme, “I want to provide ... not to depend on the system - - that's very hard because, you know, people do look down on you if they know you getting a check ...” While another mother stated: “Food stamps isn't something...you [just] don't feel totally dependent on 'em ...” Although

many of the mothers did feel that that all forms of aid helped them economically, it appeared that it was more advantageous to the mothers to not receive a check to save face in front of her peers. In addition, the single mothers interpreted receiving a check as being dependent on someone, which was expressed to have a negative stigma associated with it.

Familial Social Support

Another theme that emerged from the focus groups was related to the use of familial social support. Mothers defined familial support as positive as long as it was not associated with receiving economic support from the family. While receiving certain governmental aid was associated with negative stigma. When it came to familial support, which was commonly used, there was no associated stigma with receiving physical or emotional support from extended family, as long as it was not in the form of money. Receiving familial support was positive if it was in the form of mental, physical, emotional or instrumental support (e.g. gifts for the baby). Additionally, familial support was viewed as positive when the family volunteered services and the recipient did not directly ask for aid. One single mother closer to the age of twenty years old stated:

... you depend on your momma all the time and all that. I was like, okay, but I'm dependent on her for good things, I'm not just dependent on her for: "okay, gimme some money so I can go to the club" - - but [instead] "gimme some money so I can go to this job interview" okay, [or] "you watch the kids while I can go do this", or "can you do this" or "can you do that", I'm not just dependent on her just to do nothing with it, it's for - -like she said, to do better things...

The use of familial support was defined for the mothers as necessary to get ahead. The use of familial support was commonly referred to as helping to gain independence.

Another single mother closer to the age of twenty years old stated: " ... by depending on them I'm becoming more independent, and they know that, so they try to help ... " The levels of dependency these mother experienced is related to receiving monetary support, while independence, is still maintained by only receiving other forms

of support. Ranks (2001) explained that using a larger network of kinship to exchange resources is a necessary coping mechanism for the dealing with the uncertainties and hardships of long-term poverty [see Appendix E: Table 3.5]. Ranks (2001) further concluded that it is virtually impossible for families to cover their various expenses and needs completely on their own. Consequently, a system of collective support is an adaptive strategy to survive the daily uncertainties and deprivation of poverty.

Call For Help

While some forms of assistance were stigmatized, all of these low-income, single, African American mothers felt that their primary need was for information from the government. These informational needs included how to work the system to appropriately benefit themselves not just now, but in the long run. Many mothers conveyed that if they just knew what to do, then they could do it. However, many did not even know where to start. One mother of three articulated this idea this way:

... Every time I went to social services - - I mean, they used to have a board, a board of jobs, and they act like - - you know I'm saying, you're on your own ... There wasn't anybody kinda leading you into the right direction ...

In consensus with the previous excerpt, Jarrett (1996) found that many welfare recipients are constantly “reminded of their deviant status as they [are] queried about their sex lives, judged as reluctant workers, and overall, treated disrespectfully” (p. 369). Jarrett (1996) further explained that sometimes the welfare recipients coped with “discriminatory treatment by adapting a nonconfrontational demeanor as a way to defuse caseworkers’ antagonism” (p. 369). This may explain the reluctance many single mothers have about asking for help or seek assistance. One mother in this study clearly articulated her need in a simple statement: “ ... more help basically, that’s all we need is help ... ”

Intergenerational Value of Education

Many of these single mothers acknowledged that education was vital for economic and career success, in general. Yet, there were varied opinions on whether education was actually important for the mothers themselves. For instance, the women closer to their thirties felt that education was definitely an important tool, yet some of

the single mothers could not seem to identify how it could benefit them personally. In accordance with the Philipson's research, (1993), many African American women express a "contradiction of values spoken in education, versus the values that are often lived" (p. 419). Similar to this study, Philipson (1993) explained that African American women often hear about the opportunities of education via church, networks, families and the media, but they often encounter a glass ceiling, or limited job opportunities in urban areas. There was a common theme in these data of the mothers not believing that having a higher education would actually benefit them within their own community [see Appendix E: Table 3.6]. Some mothers expressed that they were in a rut, and simply saw no way of achieving such an objective. Many of the discussions embraced the importance of education but recognized that education would not be helpful to them in their own community:

... Sometimes, [I believe] it is just another piece of paper, 'cause I see people who go to school, get these degrees and still end up working at McDonalds somewhere ... can't find - - know what I'm saying, the job that they majored in and stuff ... but to me it's not like another piece of paper it's like a goal to me that I have achieved something better ... something ...

Another woman explained:

... - - [I've seen education help] my cousin, it helped him move from Virginia to better his life, to be you know - - he works in the computer field. He has a good job, he's buying his own house. It made him, instead of him being like the other guys he grew up with ... Bums, drug addicts, hustlers ... By him going away to go to college, he got away from all that so it bettered him, versus if he would've stayed here and not went to college.

Another low-income, single mother closer to the age of thirty years old expressed that:

... I would love to have a diploma, but it's just not right now in my life, I don't see it right now in my life - - at this moment - - at this moment! - - you know what I'm saying, at this moment, right now I need a JOB, I can't go to school and don't get paid - - [of] course I'm sitting home now, but I can't go sit up in school and don't get paid, right now I need a job, right now - - I need a job...

Another common theme related to education, specifically for the women closer to their thirties, was the importance placed on ensuring that their children received an education as well as understood the importance of receiving an education for themselves. One low-income, single mother closer to the age of thirty stated that:

... Well, it's a big deal for my kids because the way - - ... the situation that I'm in, I stopped at the eleventh grade and, and far as my mother, you know, she didn't get to go to the sixth grade. But, you know, for my kids, I do want them to ... you know, get their education, and be - - make something, get their education...yeah...so they can get a job, you know 'cause my son he wants cars and other stuff and I'm like "you have to get your education, and - - and go to college" or whatever and "you can get a good job and get a car and all that." But see, I'm old, not old, but as far as my education ... that's it, I mean, you know what I'm saying, that's it ...

Another low-income, single mother of three explained that education for her children was an important aspect of assuring a positive future:

... especially the typical Black male, young, Black male ... in society - - a trouble maker, a thug, um, but all of 'em. I mean the majority of 'em are not like that but their stereotyped as being that way ... it makes me angry and - - my son is - - at times, trying to play that role even though he knows it's not the right way to be, and he just ... it makes me angry, and that's why I told him education is number one. You have to have your grades, 'cause without your grades, you can't do anything. I mean, he wants to be a basketball star and I told him 'without schooling you're - - you're not going to be a star, you know. You're not going to know responsibility, ...you can't have everything you want, you have to earn it, and work hard for it, 'cause nothing comes - - you - - you know, you don't get handouts, we don't work like that ...

While children's education was a priority, many of the single mothers expressed that the same priorities were not placed on their own education. During the 1950s, Humphries (1995) explained that "only 50,000 Black students were enrolled in higher education in all of America (p. 57)." By the 1970s, when most of these single mothers

were born, Kane (1994) stated that only “32 percent of Black 18-19 year old youths had mothers who were high school graduates. By 1988, [when these single mothers were in high school] that proportion had roughly doubled to 63 percent” (p. 890). This explained the intergenerational expectation and values of education being passed down. One single mother described her own mother: “she only pushed what she knew.” This may have stemmed from a long line of generational values and or hindrances. However, many of these single mothers recognized that they must break the cycle of not promoting education and were searching for the tools to change this family pattern. One mother clarified this phenomenon by stating:

... I mean my momma and your momma about the same age ... but your household [was not] like my household. I mean, no - - my momma...she went to school, but I would come home report card time and ... my momma was there but, oh definitely she raised us right, you know, she was saved [born again Christian] and everything, but she didn't have, - - my momma went to the fifth grade ... she only pushed what she knew on me. She didn't help me with my homework, I had to go to my friends or my brother and then report card time came she didn't know nothing about no report card. She didn't know ... I mean, I mighta said “look ma’, this what I got”, but that was it. Yeah, I should show up in the school by my children, but it's time to break [the cycle]. I'm trying to break [the cycle] ... I want my kids to learn ... my momma didn't help me with my homework, but your momma mighta' helped you with yours, I'm like taking little bits of pieces from other people's families 'cause I didn't have ...

Rank (2001) explained that the quality and quantity of education that a child receives is strongly related to the level of parental income. Children in poverty are more likely to receive an "inferior education, which then affects that child's ability as an adult to compete effectively in the labor market ..." (p. 894), hence repeating the cycle. However, the low-income, single mothers closer to the age of 20 expressed pride and even excitement in the pursuit education for themselves. One young mother closer to the age of twenty years old explained that:

... Education is important to me 'cause I wanna be the example I didn't have, I want to be the example for my child - - because education wasn't pushed any further than high school, because it wasn't expected, but then I found out that I was settling for less. So education is very important because I look around and I see the things that I desire, the things my child ask for and I can't give it to her ... everything ain't - - I mean, yeah, there's people willing to help but ... you have to go out and get [it] ...

This may be explained by Sudarkasa's research (1996) which showed that many African American parents were themselves "uneducated or poorly educated, cannot help their children with their homework, do not know what is required to make the children do their homework, and cannot otherwise motivate by example" (p. 20). Sudarkasa (1996) continued to explain that improved "high school graduation rates among African Americans and the large number of first generation African American college students in our institutions today, prove that the thirst for education still exists among low-income African Americans" (p. 20). Furthermore, until the last couple of decades, in many cases, just receiving a high school diploma was a huge achievement in African American communities.

Limitations to Education

The final theme related to education was the obstacles of pursuing an education, at both the high school and college level. Common obstacles included transportation, lack of information, daycare, and balancing work, school and time with children. Simpson's study (2003) found that the influence that one receives with growing up, various processes (i.e., education), can then positively or negatively determine the child's outcome in his or her adult life. For example, Simpson (2003) asserted that a person from a high SES (Social Economic Status) or privileged background tend to make better life choices or at least had the resources available to make informed decisions. In this particular study, it is evident that many of the single mothers did not have the privilege of coming from a high SES background, and consequently the resources and other forms of general knowledge were unavailable to them. Many of these low-income, single mothers had no idea of where to turn for help with academic

pursuits, or even what type of help they should be asking for. One mother closer to the age of twenty years old expressed her desire for academic direction as:

... I think, basically, hmmm ... that's when your advisors are basically supposed to step in, they're supposed to help you and guide you. That's what they're there for - - it's because your advisors are supposed to advise you, steer you into the right direction and if you don't have that, you don't know where to go from there ...

Another mother in the groups managed to achieve this balance and expressed that:

... I am 26 almost 27, I walked in May of last year, when I finished my internship, I finally had my degree. Most people graduate when they're like 21 or 22 - - I mean there's nothing wrong with that but it's hard, going to school, doing my homework, doing his homework, getting a babysitter. You know what I'm saying? Like, when I'm coming home at night, I just want to come home. But I gotta go wake him up from my momma's house, bring him home, disturb his sleep and it's just hard, and it's doing the work, then you gotta go to work and get money and ... I mean it's so hard, but you get it done, but it's at a slower pace and I just get frustrated ...

Another common theme for the younger mothers [closer to age 20] was that they expressed a clearer understanding of how to obtain resources should they decide to pursue higher education. Most of the younger low-income, single mothers agreed with the statement:

... But as far as paying for the education and stuff most of us are eligible for financial aid ... So that's one good thing... That's about the only good ... Being a single parent! ... If you put down there you are a single parent! - - they will give you the financial aid for schools ...

Getting Ahead Financially

One of the biggest challenges that seemed to concern many of the low-income, single, mothers was the obstacles to getting ahead financially. Many of the mothers expressed anxiety about how to advance in life [for example, catch up on bills or save for a car] when any additional income that they earned or received was subtracted from

social supports (e.g. Food Stamps, Medicaid] that they may have received from the government. For example, one mother in her early twenties explained: "... 'Cause my sister had given a \$100 or some dollars, and wrote me a check. So, I deposited it and they [Social Services] deducted it from my food stamps last month just because I had 100 extra dollars ...". Another mother closer to the age of thirty explained a similar situation in that: "Yeah ... cause you better not say too much [about how much economic support you receive], so I just wrote something [more] down, why the next week, I got my TANF check and I lost some. I was so mad ...". The challenges for these low-income, single, mothers were how to catch up on bills or save for the future when additional sources of income [via another job, gift, or even child support], were subtracted from supplemental income. This obstacle left the mothers with no way to get ahead or eventually lift themselves out of poverty. One mother explained: "... they limit you to a certain amount that you can make in order to get that extra assistance that you need!" Whereas another mother explained that:

... as soon as you get up to a certain level, they push you back, and you say okay, I got my money, I got my job, I got this, I got a car, I got this and that - - but as soon as you got to pay the rent and the rent go up so high. Then that's like all your money, and you can't even make it, and you have to move out ...

Some mothers address this barrier to economic advancement by withholding information or lying to the social services authorities. Many of these single mothers agree with the statement this one particular mother made: "... it's not like you lying to have plenty...or more money, you're trying just to get milk ... just to make ends meet ...". Distressed, one single mother proclaimed that:

... once you make a whole bunch of money...you gotta pay [increased] rent ... or you get out on your own ... that's why a lot of young, single mothers don't have jobs, they don't work ... because basically it's holding them down ...

Loss of independence and privacy. Many mothers felt that they were being forced to stay at a certain economic level by the system. The mothers expressed frustration with the minimum requirement procedures, related to receiving aid, and for many of these mothers, the process was described as difficult and personally intrusive.

Mothers expressed a sense of loss of independence and privacy. One mother suggested that:

... it feels like your in jail...they have to know everything ... Every part of your business ... They come and do inspection on your house ... You got to tell them when people staying the night, if they gonna be there longer than 2 days, and when you going out of town, that's crazy ...

These mothers' experiences are supported by Payne's discussion (1996) of the phenomena of the language of negotiation. Payne (1996) asserted that all people have three internal voices: the child voice, the adult voice and the parent voice. However, most people in poverty, particularly those who parent at an early age, never develop the internal adult voice also known as the negotiation voice [which allows for issues to be examined in a non-threatening way] and only internalize the child voice and the parent voice. When certain people, specifically a social service representative, express things to them, it is immediately interpreted negatively. These mothers felt shame and frustration from this paternalistic relationship. Instead of having an adult negotiation relationship with social services, it was of an authoritarian and paternalistic nature. One single mother in her early twenties offered her explanation: "... They feel like you're a leech ... just trying to suck everything out of the system, and that's not what everybody's doing ..."

Whereas another mother closer to her thirties explained:

... I received food stamps, and going down there to take care of the paperwork and everything ... it's just like the atmosphere that they set, it's just so mean, like you can't do anything and they just don't care ...

Another mother stated:

... I mean, I feel like I'm trying to get my foot in the door, and you're shutting the door on me telling me, that this is the way it's going to be for the rest of your life, and I just refuse to accept that ...

In all, these mothers expressed a desire for a system that not only provides financial support, but a system that provides direction or a process that will allow them to methodically exit out of poverty while maintaining a sense of self worth.

Relationships with Men

Unfaithful partners. Davis and Rank (1996) explained that African American women compared to Caucasian women have historically contributed more to their family incomes and have often been encouraged to foster a means to sustain themselves economically to fight against frequent African American male unemployment. This, in turn has undoubtedly contributed to a greater independence on the part of the African American women. This assertion follows the themes conveyed by the single mothers in this study, in that many of these single mothers preferred self-sufficiency, and as one mother expressed the idiom: “I can do bad all by myself.” Nearly all of these single mothers believed that they did not need a man to help make things worse. They insisted that if he was going to be there, then he should, at least, be helping and providing financially. Jarrett (1996) proclaimed that “marriage to an economically insecure male would not lift them out of poverty ... in fact, this prospect was viewed as making the situation worse” (p. 371).

When the single mothers in this study were asked for their definitions of a ‘good man,’ most expressed that a good man was one that accepted their child(ren) by previous fathers; had a respectable job with enough income to support her and her child(ren) and would not cheat on them. However, these definitions of a good man, were all defined as idealistic and not perceived to be realistic or attainable. Thus, most of the single, low-income mothers seemed to settle for less than their ideal partner and accept simply having someone there. One woman expressed: “... I - - I have a live-in man, well it’s not really a live-in man, it’s sometimes. Sometimes - - sometimes it’s live in ...” Another mother in her early twenties explained:

... Well, I have a live in man, and it still feels like I’m by myself half the time, ‘cause I have to do everything. I’m the one who have to get up in the morning, get him [the baby] ready, take him to the babysitter ... and like, where he [the man] works at, he don’t have like a set schedule or anything, so half the time I’m at work and he laying home in bed and stuff. So, I’m bringing in, like, the main income and stuff. He helps out, but not as much as he should, and sometimes, I feel like I’m by myself ...

Many of these women had a preconceived notion of what an ideal mate should be. However, based on the infrastructure of their environment [i.e., occupational, educational and other opportunity barriers], these mothers felt that these ideal men did not exist in this community. When asked, most of these women agreed that all of the “good men” were either in church or already married. This idea coincides with King (1999) who explained that for every 100 African American women, there are only 85 available African American men and in many central cities and low-income neighborhoods, the sex ratio balance is even more skewed. King (1999) further concludes that by the time a woman is in her thirties, a large percentage of the marriageable men in her age group will already have married. One single mother of three, closer to the age of thirty recounted:

... I don't think I'm getting married, for one thing, I don't have the boyfriend to even consider being married to him, and I mean, I mean ... I gotta go find him ... the situation I'm in now, one gonna have to come to the door, one gonna have to come knock on the door and say “ Hey! Hey!” You know? “I'm ready to marry you” ...

As previously discussed, as the pool of marriageable men decreases, the competition for them increases. Because of these circumstances, it is conceivable why many African American women have simply given up. Many women expressed a lack of optimism for finding a partner. One mother's personal account for this phenomena was that: “... Some people meant to be married, and some people meant not to be married, and I think I must be one of the ones. It's too late for me ...” This statement supports Brien (1997) hypothesis that, not only are African American women marrying at a later age than Caucasian women, but more of them have no alternative or are choosing not to marry at all.

Undependable partners. Based on the single mothers' experiences, many of the mothers had accepted the fact that they would either end up with an unworthy man, or alone. The clear message among many of the single mothers was that marriage seemed to be an unachievable option. Most of the men these single mothers had been associated with seemed to be unfaithful, and the mothers expressed this preconceived

notion about all Black men. Consequently, for many of these mothers, a pragmatic hope for marriage was lost. One mother explained:

... I really don't care. At one time it would've been an option. I think there's a trust issue in my situation, I thought I knew somebody recently and um ... it turned out to be, he wasn't who he, ... and then he got married ...

This statement was not unique among the single mothers. Another low-income mother affirmed:

... - - So well, it's like I'm very picky now because of what I been through in the past, and it's like you really can't trust a man now from my point of view, you know what I'm saying ...

Another mother justified her lack of belief in finding a suitable mate as:

... They could be –showing me everything you wants to see, then later they change. That's how my relationships were, they were like good to me, and stuff like that and all of a sudden, the baby's born and ... they changed things and stuff like that ...

While yet another young, single mother's comment further signified, the frequent reference that past experiences with men may be an inhibitor to marriage. She proclaimed:

... 'cause mens, they can change just like ... They change like the weather ... And then the next minute ... I'm always going to look for a change 'cause of what I went through before, you know what I'm saying. You've always gotta go off of your experience or whatever. So, I'm always going to be ready for it, I guess if that's what you want to call it, be ready for anything, because, you're not doing this, you're not going to do that, you're leaving you're ... I'm ready for it ...

Absent fathers. Another emerging category from this theme was, the mothers' relationships to their children's fathers. When it came to the baby's father, the low-income, single mothers were willing to accept a less committed relationship in order to have some relationship with him. Many women explained that the fathers came by and then they were "ghosts," gone for days, in a sort of disappearing act. One single mother in her early twenties stated: "... My baby daddy always on the go, he'll come by for five minutes say hi, play with him and be like 'I'll be right back' - - and ghosts!" In discussing marriage, there was

acknowledgement that even marriage may not be a long-term commitment. One woman asserted: "... marriage ... it's a lot to go through, but that must mean he cares about you and he's going to be there for at least a minute ..."

One of the key aspects the single mothers desired was simply to have someone there. It was a common experience that their current partners or baby's father(s) did not tend to be physically present. However, the attitude that was expressed over and over again in this study was "he may not be good, but that's all I got." Some women said that they stay with the father of their child just based on the fact that something is better than nothing. Sudarkasa (1996) acknowledges this by stating that many "African American wives have accepted the pattern of what contemporary Africans now call "outside wives," because they know they have to share ... or risk losing them [the men] altogether" (p. 28). Confirming the study of Sudarkasa (1996), one of the single mothers with two children proclaimed: "... All these cheatin' and stuff ... some people just dust that right off, you get to the point [where] if you go through it all the time, [then] you get to the point where, [you say] I don't care."

One of the reasons the women gave for settling for an uninvolved "baby's daddy" was that they wanted their children to have a father figure in the home. In addition to their desire for a father figure, women expressed personal needs as well. Their needs included sexual needs, need for companionship and social support, however limited it may be. One mother of three explained that:

... I mean we kinda like ... twice a week I mess with him, you know what I'm saying. I mean other than that - - I'm with him to have ... [barely whispers] ... to have sex. I mean - - I don't - - I don't want to be on my own. I don't want to go out and sleep with anybody, so I figure since I done been wit' 'em, and ...

Idealizing Relationships

Marriage as an idealized institution. Many of the low-income single mothers held idealized views of marriage, and viewed marriage as the answer to all of their problems, an unrealistic fantasy. When asked to describe what marriage symbolized or represented, most of the answers were at one extreme, indicating that it was a strong desire, or the other, suggesting that it was too late for marriage. However, each

respondent's answer remained wishful. This theme was congruent with the King (1999) study which indicated that the majority of African American women wanted to marry and valued marriage, yet many women are ambivalent about marriage and would rather be single.

The symbol of marriage as an idealized institution correlates with Klein and White's discussion of Symbolic Interaction theory (1996) as it suggest that people are motivated to create meanings to help them make sense of their world. Marriage is romanticized for the single mothers as it gives hope for a better future. In addition, Klein and White (1996) contend that we acquire our symbols based on the socialization process of our beliefs, and attitudes of our culture. Everything in American culture from childhood fairytales to adult soap operas give the impression that marriage will make everything better. Common answers in this particular study, included expressions such as this single mother of three in her mid-twenties:

... it was an option for me, 'cause one day I do wanna be married. I wanna have a house you know ... a house. Something I can leave to my kids. Something me and my husband can leave to our kids ... um, like she said the companionship; going on trips, talking, um ... renting movies with the kids. Even if they're older, you can still have family time, you can have some - - a certain day set aside for your family, just to be a family, you know a family - - not saying this is me, myself, being a single parent, that you don't have a family, I'm just - - to me it makes it complete for me ...

While other mothers who had completely lost hope made similar profound statements such as: "... All I - - I know, [is that] my grandmomma and my granddaddy been married 52 years and that inspires me, but I know ain't nobody gonna really stay married like that ... "

The previous quote echoes King's (1999) explanation of a previous national survey. The survey indicated that 40% of the African American respondents felt that they did not know if they wanted to be married because there were so few good men. One interesting conversation emerged in the focus group when they were asked where the good men were:

... Well, if they ain't in church, then I don't know...

... They gone girl, they done vanished.

... I don't know where they at.

... They not around!

When further posing the question, regarding why was it commonly believed that the good men were in church, almost unanimously, the mothers answered: “the family that prays together stays together.” It was apparent that most of the single mothers held religiosity to be a primary reason for establishing and maintaining a marriage. There was a belief that the “good men”, [if they did exist] were in church. Most answers regarding why the ‘good men’ may be found in church consisted of: “[those marriages last] ... because of their faith and religion, because they believe ...” Another frequent response regarding why the church influence the outcome of marriage was: “... a lot of people are in church when they get married, and they try to work it out before they get a divorce anyway ...” Having understood this, it would be safe to assume that the church was a significant pillar or role model in this low-income community.

When asked to identify role models, there were examples of a reality versus fantasy model. Often the women sought role models, as long as they were “perfect.” These idealistic views were based on media images, which often the women in a sense of despair, observes as a way to escape everyday life. The mothers seemed to be hoping for the fantasy role model, but accepting the reality. One of the single mothers explained:

... [a role model is] somebody that sets a good example, I mean, he will make a difference...A role model can be somebody ... they can do their dirt, you know what I mean, but, as long as they don't display, you know what I mean ...

Another single mother explained her idea of a role model, keeping the idealized form, while settling for her realistic form:

...[my grandparents are] my only role models 'cause they do everything ... they work and they retire, they inspire me to go work 30 years...[but] I can't work 30 years and retire like them. You know what I'm saying, plus they still work after

they got their retirement and I get up every morning tired, “grandma I don’t wanna go to work ...” “what girl?! I’m going to work right now, I don’t wanna hear it ...” You know what I’m saying so they inspire me, you know what I’m saying, to go to work and do things like that ...

The idealized good family. The mothers also held idealistic views of what symbolizes a ‘good family’. Many women expressed that they may have had a taste of what a good family was, but no longer know if it is achievable. The idealized ‘good family’ included expectations and the symbols of what a ‘good family’ represented to the mothers as well as what they had previously experienced. When asked what represents a good family, most mothers expressed sincere desires of “being together.” One mother in her early twenties explained her brief encounter of being a part of a good family as:

... made me feel like a family because we did things that I wasn’t used to - - I wasn’t used to with my first children’s fathers. Like Saturday night he’ll cook, or he’ll wake up in the morning and cook everybody breakfast, and that was like an everyday thing...

Family time and consistency also seemed to be important representations of what symbolized a ‘good family’. Another mother made a similar suggestion of her idea of a ‘good family’ as she expressed:

... I like doing family things personally like taking kids out on family stuff I mean, we do stuff like, we go fishing and stuff, we do old people stuff we older, we do old stuff ... We go fishing and crabbing ...

And yet another young mother expressed:

... I do wanna get married because I wanna be part of a family... But it feels like love and caring, just a sense of being needed and comforted and someone to be there and know that ...

Mothers described that due to skewed media (e.g. Soap Operas), and perhaps even memories of childhood fairy tales, many of the single mothers compared their ideal marriage or mate with that which is commonly expected or presented in the traditional, middle class, Caucasian experience. Sudarkasa (1996) suggest that “Black

families are usually measured against yardsticks that are reflective of the ideals of middle class White America” (p. 3). These mothers’ reality or lived experiences conflicted with their fantasies causing many broad responses such as: “... a White man would probably treat you better than the Black dude anyway ...” None of the single mothers had a problem dating outside of their race, but many stated that they would never approach a non-African American man. Across the board, there were many idealistic views that a “White husband” would take care of you and his family. One single mother gave this example:

... My aunt had 3 kids, and then she found this White guy, my uncle Paul, who she’s married to now, she had her last baby by him, they been married for umpteen years ... She ain’t got to work or nothing, he take care of her, her house ...

These excerpts support the [previously mentioned] research of Brien (1997) regarding the available marriage pool for African American women. These mothers seem to have internalized Brien’s (1997) concept that Caucasian husbands contribute a greater proportion of their respective family’s income than African American husbands, which they might perceive as a negative trait of the African American males in their community. Another single mother confirmed the theory by explaining that: “... because the girl at my job, her sister married a White man - - and he taking care of both her sister and her... Well that’s just what White guys do ...”

Conclusion

In all, whether it was the discussion of marriage, relationships, education or economic support, it is apparent that these single mothers had ideals and values similar to that of mainstream America. The mothers believed in the value of education, they idealized the institution of marriage and longed for financial security. Yet, due to persistent poverty and lack of constructive intergenerational knowledge, the negative experiences of living in a socially and economically challenging community [where social support and direction is limited] has altered many of the goals and values of the mothers, to the point of which many of the mothers seem to have traded their values and

aspirations for day-to-day coping strategies. However, they continue to express hope that their children will have a better future.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was primarily to explore the values and priorities of single, low-income, African American mothers. To better understand why many African American, single mothers are more likely to be in poverty, it was important to understand the value systems and experiences of these mothers. Much of previous research did not address what the single, low-income mothers' values were, how they were formed or what may be required to change some of the values that are hindering the escape from poverty. Understanding these specific phenomena of values regarding monetary, academic and familial goals will be insightful for researchers, practitioners and other professionals to provide adequate assistance or education in bringing this specific group of minorities out of poverty.

Major Themes and Findings

African American, single mothers living below the poverty line face major obstacles in raising themselves and their children out of poverty. Research shows that they have substantially less education, low marital possibilities and work experience than other single mothers (Rind, 1991). This study enveloped several major themes. The first of which, was the understanding of the positive versus negative familial social support stigmas within the community. Familial social support was described as acceptable only in the terms of mental support, physical support, emotional support or instrumental support [such as gifts for the baby]. Furthermore, asking for help or receiving monetary social support from the family is generally associated as a negative stigma. Many of the mothers believed that generally depending on the family for support is a positive path to independence.

A second key theme identified in this study includes a dual concept of education. Many of the younger mothers (closer to the age of twenty) felt that education was attainable and was a way out of their impoverished conditions. However, the mothers closer to the age of thirty often acknowledged education as an important tool yet could not identify with how it could uniquely

benefit them. All mothers agreed however, that in order for education to be conducive to a person, it was necessary to relocate from that particular neighborhood. Many mothers described that of their peers who managed to obtain a higher education, in that city, they generally faced glass ceilings and ended up working in local establishments in mediocre positions. The mothers believed that those who received higher education and relocated excelled when leaving the area. All mothers expressed that education was critical for their own children. They strongly encouraged their children with the hopes of ‘breaking the family cycle’ and promoting education, which in many cases, was not encouraged in their own families of origin.

A third theme identified within this study was the challenge for the single mothers to progress economically. While all of the mothers received some form of social service support, [Medicaid, Food Stamps, TANF, or Head Start daycare], many expressed that by receiving any additional resources of economic support (second income, monetary gift, or child support), they risked losing the supplemental social support provided by the government. Working a second job or depositing a gift check could easily cost them their health insurance [Medicaid] or even result in a reduction in their Food Stamp allotment. This often left the single mothers in the same previous impoverished condition, with no way to earn an increased income to save for their family’s future. Frequently, the mothers expressed a need for direction or assistance with processes and resources. The mothers often expressed that if they knew how, where or even what resources to utilize to their benefit, then perhaps they would more likely to improve their circumstances.

An additional theme focused on the ‘fantasy versus reality’ models of an idealized marriage and/or family. Many of the mothers identified relationships with men in a negative manner [i.e. unfaithful, absent, undependable] based on their own personal experiences with men. Yet, marriage for these single mothers, although often identified as unattainable, still represented an ideal. Most of the mothers interpreted marriage as an escape from poverty as they described potential mates as: good providers, accepting of their children and faithful. Although these were reasonable expectations, the mothers did not expect to find such a mate for themselves as they explained that they often seemed to settle for the less than ideal partner simply to have someone in their lives. In all, this research indicated that the mothers in this

study have a strong desire to succeed, marry and become financially independent, but without direction or proper implications, the odds are currently against them.

Means Differ/ Goals Do Not

All of the goals and values expressed by these single African American mothers were very similar to the values of mainstream America. The mothers expressed that they believed education to be an important tool and strongly encouraged their own offspring to seek higher education. However, due to long-term racism, many of the mothers' parents had been denied education, and thus could not pass on that academic legacy. Although education had not been encouraged for these single mothers themselves, they still valued education as an institution and hoped that their own children would seek what they, themselves did not have the opportunity to pursue.

These single African American mothers all had the same goal of escaping poverty and becoming financially independent, which is a widely held American value. Yet, because welfare systems do not currently have a pragmatic exit strategy, many of the mothers cannot save for their future. For instance, if a mother earns or receives any additional income [employment, gifts, child support], the additional money is subtracted from their social support aid [Medicaid, Food Stamps, TANF]. This leaves the single mothers with no way to advance out of their situation. In general, the mothers' values and goals are similar to mainstream American values; they all stated they wanted a house, a car, and money in the bank, but based on the way the current welfare system is set up, they do not have the means to implement those desires.

Similar to mainstream America, these single African American mothers stated that they desired to be married. The mothers explained that they believed in the value of marriage. However, the lack of available African American men is a hindrance for these mothers in achieving this goal. Statistics show that for every 100 African American women, there are only 85 African American men, and in many low-income or urban communities, the sex ratio is even more skewed. Thus of the available men, many of the women felt that they had to settle for unfaithful, undependable or even unemployed. Although the single mothers value and desire marriage, many of the mothers do not anticipate the possibility of getting married themselves.

Future Directions and Implications of Study

This study may be useful in designing a variety of educational programs planned around the single mothers' needs, keeping in mind employment restraints (i.e. inconsistent schedules, late-shifts), the constant need for daycare (and daycare expenses) and motivational standards ("Why would this help me, I'm stuck in a rut?" attitudes) observed in this study. For example, in the limitations section of this study we observed that most mothers do not work the standard 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. schedule. That would be an important consideration in the planning of programs or interventions. In addition, many mothers face daycare and transportation (public bus schedules or dependent upon others for rides) constraints. Furthermore, another mother of three stated she felt too embarrassed to participate in the "Welfare to Work" program as all she had was one "Sunday dress" and was too ashamed to wear that every day. This mother (and many others), were unaware of clothing resources such as the 'Dress for Success' program (a non-profit organization that helps low-income women make tailored transitions into the workforce). Therefore, in designing any program, practitioners need to consider all restraints that even with the best intentions would still hinder the mothers from participating in the programs.

In addition, most mothers stated that, after working to acquire additional income, it is quickly taken away from them in the form of subtracting it from other resources (i.e. Food Stamps, or other social service assistance) received, leaving the mothers in the same position they were in before. To many of these mothers there seems to be no way out of the system. This problem, should be a serious consideration while developing programs. It is important to know once a person enters into the system that there exists and the individual is aware of a pragmatic exit strategy.

Conclusion

Based on this research, all of these themes indicated that these low-income, African American, single, mothers' value system is similar to that of mainstream America, however, there are additional obstacles for this particular subgroup to overcome in order to accurately implement those values. Those obstacles may include the skewed male to female ratio hindering marriage rates and promoting unwed motherhood. In addition, generational racism inhibited

many African Americans from seeking education and passing on that academic legacy. The final obstacle of 'breaking the cycle' of poverty is currently hard to achieve as the current government programs do not provide a pragmatic exit strategy off of the welfare system. Otherwise, the value systems, the wants and desires are similar to mainstream America, but due to their circumstantial experiences, it is difficult to put the values into effect.

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APPENDIX A:

**FOLLOW UP LETTER
TELEPHONE FOLLOWUP STATEMENT
LETTER OF CONSENT**

Follow Up Recruitment Letter

(Date)

Lisa Scott
1008 Arrowhead Drive, Apt. 29
Oxford, OH 45056

Thank you for accepting our invitation to talk about the needs and values of the African American single mother. I need your opinions and thoughts to help professionals, services and organizations understand and learn about the experience of this special group of people. It does not matter if you live with your child's father or not. I am interested in all the ideas of single moms with children. This discussion group will be held:

March 18-22
6:45-7:45 pm
Seatack Community Recreation Center
141 S. Birdneck Road,
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
(757) 437-4858
Fax: (757) 422-3562 TTY: (757) 471-5839.

It will be a small group, about eight people. We've got a great child care arrangement provided if needed. We will have food and drinks for you and the kids, including a random drawing at the end of the evening, (for one lucky winner) for a \$100 Visa Gift Card to be used any way you like.

If for some reason you will not be able to join us, please call as soon as possible so we can invite someone else. If you have any questions, please give me a call at 513-664-8866 (call collect).
We are looking forward to seeing you and hearing your ideas!

Sincerely,

Lisa Scott

TELEPHONE SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE:

(This is only a guide. This will not be read verbatim as I invite people, it will sound conversational)

Name of person:

Phone number:

Time called:

Better time to call:

Hi, this is Lisa Scott, and I am with Miami University in Ohio. I'm doing research on the needs and values of the African American Single mom, and I got your name from Elder Thurgood, the pastor of New Jerusalem church, [or Elder Johnson (my uncle) from Faith Temple Church] and he explained that you might be interested in helping with the research I'm doing. I want to talk to African American Single moms, and get a feel for what is important to them, there values and their needs. You are a single mom, right? (could chat about how old kid(s) are, there names ...)

We are getting together in a small group of single moms from the neighborhood to get some input on what is really going on in the area, and the "system." I really want to hear some true honest opinions on your views about, family, men, money, education, you know the basics. I plan to get about eight moms together. It will be:

March 18-22, 2004

Time (6:45-7:45)

Seatack Community Center, on Birdneck Road

We will have refreshments and will have \$100 Visa card drawing at the end. So 1 in eight your chances are not too bad. We will also have childcare available, if you need to bring your children.

No _____ ok. Thanks for your time.

Yes _____ Great. I would like to send you a letter just to confirm everything. [see Appendix A].

I have (check spelling of the name from above and get address)

Address _____

Will you need childcare? No? _____

Yes _____ OK. Just to help us plan for the childcare, what are the names and ages of the children you will be bringing along?

Letter of Consent

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Lisa Scott. I am a full time graduate student at Miami Ohio University. I am pursuing a Master's Degree in Family and Child Studies. I will be completing a research project regarding single African American mothers.

I am interested in learning about the experience of the single, African American mother and what is important to her. Those who participate in this study will play a role in helping to provide education to other single mothers in building on the strengths of participants' daily life realities.

Please read the information, and if you agree to participate in this study, please sign the bottom of this paper and return it to the researcher.

1. You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face in-depth focus group, (with 6-10 other single mothers) which will last approximately 1-2 hours.
2. The focus group session will take place at the Seatack Community Center in Virginia Beach, VA.
3. At the interview you will be asked to talk about your experiences as a single mother involving family, education and money.
4. You will receive a questionnaire form at the focus group meeting to further assist with general background information about you.
5. The focus group session will be tape recorded and then later typed. I, Lisa Scott, will be the only person who will directly know your identity and all identifying information, but the data will be kept confidential and known only to the researcher and her advisor. The data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.
6. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate and even if you agree to participate, you are not required to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable, and you may quit at any time. There is no penalty for participation, non-participation, or withdrawal.

For questions about the study, contact:

Lisa Scott - (513) 529-2151 or (513) 664-8866 (call collect)
Professor Elizabeth A. Thompson – (513) 529-2339

For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, feel free to contact:

Office for the Advancement of Scholarship and Teaching – (513) 529-3734

I would like to participate in this study.
I give permission to tape record the interview.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET

Please answer the following items by choosing the response that best describes you and/or your family by circling, checking or filling in the blank where indicated.

ALL INFORMATION IS ANONYMOUS DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

1. What year were you born?

2. What is your current marital status?

- Married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed
- Never Married
- Engaged
- Never Married, But Living Together
- Single But Seriously Dating
- Single And Casually Dating
- Single And Not Dating

3. What is your approximate yearly income range?

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less Than \$8,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$17,000-\$20,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$29,000-\$32,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$41,000+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$9,000-\$12,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$21,000-\$24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$33,000-36,999 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$13,000-\$16,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000-\$28,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$37,000-\$40,999 | |

4. How much financial support do you receive from other people or support sources per year?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than \$999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000-\$4,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$8,000-\$9,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000-\$2,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000-\$7,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> more than \$10,000 |

5. How many children do you have?

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 more than 8

6. Ages of Children?

Age of 1st Child Age of 4th Child Age of 7th Child
 Age of 2nd Child Age of 5th Child Age of 8th Child
 Age of 3rd Child Age of 6th Child Age of 9th Child

7. Total number of people living in your household?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. Highest level of education achieved?

Less Than High School GED AA Degree
 Some High School Certificate Some College/Degree
 High School Diploma Technical Degree

9. Closest Description of Job Title?

Not Currently Working Clerical Domestic
 Executive Administrative Operator
 Professional Service (Salon, Server...) Cashier
 Other _____

10. How many years have you been at your current employment?

11. Approximate Number of Hours Worked Per Week?

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group Questions

(Please note: the examples given, are only in case of silence, and no volunteers for answers. All questions will be phrased open-ended, with no suggestive answers. The purpose is to obtain the pure and uncontaminated values/ attitudes about said topics from the participants) The bolded questions are the main questions, the un-bolded questions are the follow up (if necessary) questions.

Single Motherhood

- 1. What is the greatest joy of being a single mother if any? (i.e. raising your own offspring, being independent, the unconditional love, none, it is all hard...)**
2. What do you believe the biggest struggle is as a single mother?
3. If you had, it to do over again would you? Why/ Why not?
4. If any struggle, what would make the transition easier? (a spouse, better income, more support [family, government], ...)
5. Did you feel there were options of being a single parent? If so, where you scared, excited?
6. Was being a single mother planned/unplanned, Why? Why not, what were alterative motives? (i.e. to grow up faster? In hopes of getting married? To have someone to love? Simply loved children & ideology of being a mother? ...)
7. What age were you when you had your first child? Do you think that is an appropriate age?
8. Would you like to have more children, and if so under what conditions?
- 9. What advice would you give to a new single mother?**

Familial/Marriage

1. **How do you feel about marriage?** (looking, don't care, not important, would be nice, not enough opportunities...)
2. Where/Are your parents married? (necessary to show generational values/attitudes)
3. Was settling down and finding a good husband ever encouraged in your upbringing? (why/why not?)
4. Are you with the father of your child(ren)? Why/ why not? If not, did you believe you would be?
5. In general, how many African American married couples do you know? (i.e. none, less than 5, less than 10, less than 15, less than 20, ...)
6. **Would you like to be married? Why/Why not?**
7. Do you have certain qualification(s) for marrying?
8. Would you marry outside of your race? (why/why not)?
9. Do you think life/circumstances would be better/worse with a husband? Why?
10. Are you currently looking for a husband? Why/Why not?
11. Where there any childhood values taught to (directly/indirectly) that may allow you to feel this way?
12. **Do you feel you have extended family support? If so what type and how?**
13. Do you think you would be better off with/without the extended family support?
14. What type of support do you receive from family? (i.e. monetary, emotional, childcare, advice, none, headaches...)
15. Do you currently reside with other relatives/friends/ live-in boyfriend? Why? (to join funds, to physically take care of the other, childcare, love, had not thought of it, comfort....)

Education

1. **In general, what types of education or job training do you have?** (i.e. some HS, HS Diploma, GED, a certificate of some sort, some college, AA Degree, BS Degree, MS, PhD...)

2. Why did you stop at the level that you did? (i.e. to help the family economically, got bored, did not see how it benefited you, wanted to pursue other interests, was not cut out for it, it was the fad,...) Would you do anything differently?
3. What is the highest level of education of anyone in your family?...of anyone you know?
4. Do you see sufficient African American role models, if so where, (i.e. in community, on television, movies, books, magazines...)
5. **Have you seen education make a difference for anyone?** If so who and how?
6. Are you interested in obtaining more education? (i.e. GED, a certificate of some sort, AA Degree, BS Degree, MS, PhD...) Why or Why not
7. Do you believe education is merely a bunch of hoopla or that it is genuinely important? Why/why not?
8. **What are current hindrances from education?**
9. Does anyone plan to obtain higher education? If so When?
10. **What would make receiving higher education more convenient?** (location, family support, childcare, information, money, transportation...)
11. Do you believe additional education assist you? Why/Why not? (i.e. doing just fine, already content, no because of racism in job market, no jobs in area, ...)
12. Will you force your children to receive a higher education?
13. What type of financial support if any are you aware of that is available for you? (scholarships, grants, school-aided, government-aided, private organizations, military...)
14. Do you think those sources readily are available to you?
15. What levels of education were pushed in your family? Why?
16. What levels of education did your parents achieve? Why?

Monetary

- 1. What do you think are the top three things you spend most of your income on?**
2. If you won the lottery, what would be the first three things you would do? (i.e. pay off all your bills, donate to the church/charity, go on a shopping spree, move, buy a luxury car, invest...)
3. If you win the \$100 VISA Gift Card drawing, what will you probably do with the \$100? Why (would you use it for that)?
4. **What are different forms of income do you currently have?** (job, child support, pension/disability, AFDC, ...)
5. What type of things do you save for? (what about retirement? Is that a concern, why or why not?) (i.e. work part time, live on social security, full pension, already have investments, see what happens...)
6. **What does the term budget mean to you? Is budgeting realistic? Why /why not?**
7. **What are some of your goals?** (i.e. pursuing higher education, applying for a better job, getting married, working extra shifts/additional jobs...)
8. **What does “prestige” mean to you and how do you exhibit it?** (i.e. Is it important? i.e. yes, of course not, only in the neighborhood, only with strangers ...) Why? Do think you sacrifice sometimes to get it?
9. **If you had the option of : a) maintaining your current living situation and getting a new car, or b) maintaining your current mode of transportation and getting a house, which would you choose? Why?**
10. **What types of entertainment do you indulge in? Do you sometimes sacrifice other things in order to indulge?** (i.e. avoid this month’s electric bill, planning to make up for it next month in order to buy a new outfit...) If so why?
11. **How do you usually use credit cards?** (i.e. to pay bills, to pay other credit cards, do not have any, shopping sprees, only in case of emergencies, for major purchases only, paid in full...)

12. Do you currently know your credit rating and is that important to you? (why or why not)
13. **Do you feel you live paycheck to paycheck, or you have enough in “emergency” savings to sustain in an event of emergency?** What would allow you to change your status?
14. What do you usually use “money” for: more as an investment tool, a means of getting ahead, a means of surviving, a means of simply having fun, providing for you (your family’s) future...what?
15. If you had more of it, what would you do with it?
16. **Considering the amount that you make, what annual income amount (i.e. \$20,000, \$32,000, \$40,000...) do you think would allow you and your kid(s) to live comfortably (not necessarily lavishly)?**
17. What type of job do you think would allow you to make that type of money?
18. **Are you working your ideal job?** Why or why not?
19. What would it take for you to get that particular job? (i.e. better childcare opportunities? Education? Motivation? Transportation?) And do you currently qualify for it?
20. **Do you receive any type of economical support outside of your current job?**
If so, what types of support?
21. How long have you received this type of support, and is it a permanent part of your total income package?
22. Do you believe there is a negative stigma with receiving any variation of this support? (i.e. in your own community it’s fine, no one knows/ or talks about it...,no stigma, do not know, would not care if there were...)
23. **Is the process of getting/applying for this support, easy, difficult, need help from others...)**
24. What is the best part of receiving this support/the-worst part?
25. What is the general process of receiving aid?

26. What would make the process easier/what would you recommend improve the system? (i.e. nicer people, less forms, less stigma, more aid, less requirements/minimums...) Give examples.
27. Give some examples of really positive experiences related to support, "... " negative experiences? How did that make you feel/and how did you cope? What advice would you give others?
28. Where did you first learn of this support? (fliers, ads, friends, media...)
29. Do you feel this information of (support) is readily available or accessible?
30. Do you feel you are where you thought you would be today? (i.e. Just about right, better off, satisfied, worse off, almost there...) Why?
31. Where do you think you would be without this support? (just fine, would find a way somehow ...)

APPENDIX D: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL LETTER



MIAMI
UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL AND
OFFICE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

OFFICE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP
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February 2, 2004

To: Ms. Lisa R. Scott, Family Studies & Social Work
Mr. Elizabeth A. Thompson, Family Studies & Social Work
CAMPUS

From: Gordon Allen, Chair, Institutional Review Board for Human
Subjects Research

Re: Human Subjects Project:
*Familial Educational, and Economic Values of Single African American Mothers in
Poverty*

Thank you for submitting the above-referenced protocol to the Institutional Review Board
for Human Subjects Research. The committee has reviewed and approved your proposal.

Approval of this project is in effect until: February 1, 2005

Should you decide to change your procedures relating to the use of human subjects in the above
project, you must obtain approval from the Committee **prior** to instituting any changes.

Miami University policy requires periodic review of human subjects for all ongoing projects. If
your project will continue beyond the approval date mentioned above, you will need to submit
an Application for Continuing Review so that the committee can review your application in a
timely fashion.

Please submit your next application for continuing review by: January 1, 2005

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and best wishes for the success of your project.

03-191

APPENDIX E: TABLES

Table 3.1: Marital Status of Participants

Marital Status	Number	Percent
Married (But Spouse Incarcerated)	2	.09
Divorced	0	0
Separated	0	0
Engaged	1	.05
Never Married	4	18
Never Married, Living Together	1	.05
Single, But Seriously Dating	5	23
Single, But Casually Dating	5	23
Single, Not Dating	4	18

Table 3.2: Age of Participants

Age	Number	Percent
33-34	1	.045
31-32	4	18
30-29	3	14
28-27	5	23
26-25	2	.09
24-23	3	14
22-21	3	14
19-20	1	.045

Table 3.3: Income of Participants

Yearly Income	Number	Percent
< \$8,999	12	55
\$9,000-\$12,999	6	27
\$13,000-\$16,999	2	.09
\$17,000-\$20,999	1	.045
\$21,000-\$24,000	0	0
\$25,000-\$28,999	0	0
\$29,000-\$32,999	0	0
\$33,000-\$36,999	1	.045

Table 3.4: Total Children of Participants

Total Children	Number	Percent
One Child	8	36
Two Children	7	32
Three Children	4	18
Four Children	3	14

Table 3.5: Number of People in Participants' Household

Number In Household	Number	Percent
2 -3 People	9	41
4-5 People	11	50
6-7 People	2	9

Table 3.6: Education of Participants

Education	Number	Percent	Working	Non-Working
Less Than High School	2	.09	1	1
Some High School	6	27	2	4
High School Diploma	7	32	5	2
GED	1	.045	1	
Certificate (i.e. Technical or Vocational Studies)	0	0		
Technical Degree	2	.09	1	1
AA Degree	2	.09		2
Some College	2	.09	1	1
BS/BA Degree	0	0		

Table 3.7: Employment Titles of Participants

Job Title	Number	Percent
Not Currently Working Outside the Home	7	32
Clerical	3	14
Domestic	2	.09
Administrative	2	.09
Operator	2	.09
Service (Salon, Server)	3	14
Cashier	1	.04
Executive	0	0
Professional	0	0
Other	2	.09