

AN ANALYSIS OF BLACK PARTNERED AND NONPARTNERED
MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN AND SINGLE-MOTHER
EFFECTIVENESS

by

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Abstract

Using the culturally variant perspective and symbolic interaction theory, I examined the perceptions of Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers toward their children and how these perceptions shaped their views toward single-mother effectiveness. I conducted secondary analysis of National Survey of American Families [NSAF] (1999) with a sample of Black, non-Hispanic mothers with children between the ages of 6 to 17 years old. Black mothers significantly differed on age, education, income, and perceptions about their child's psychological and social behaviors, religious service attendance, and mental health. Mothers' age, education level, income, viewing child as having difficulty getting along with others and viewing child as harder to care for were significantly related to mothers' opinions toward single-mother effectiveness. Feeling angry toward their child and mothers' mental health score were moderately and significantly related to single-mother effectiveness.

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An Analysis of Black Partnered and Nonpartnered
Mothers' Perceptions of Their Children and Single-Mother Effectiveness

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The culture and society within the United States places the mythical traditional family on a pedestal (Coontz, 1998). Four principle beliefs undergrade the traditional family: (1) children need two parents, one of each sex; (2) family responsibilities should be divided between the parents, with fathers as economic providers and mothers as homemakers; (3) mothers are better suited for child rearing and caretaking than are fathers; and (4) primary caretaking for young children should be provided by family members (Lamb, 1982). Although the United States is comprised of a multiplicity of family types including two-parent, one-parent, cohabitating couples, gay and lesbian partnerships, extended households, diverse family structures, and racial and ethnic groups (Teachman, Tedrow, & Crowder, 2001), society marginalizes these families because they fail to hold the four principles that are considered to be a traditional family. Black families are among marginalized families and are viewed less favorably in society. Marginalized families and their behaviors are considered “nontraditional” and inferior compared to the traditional two-parent family (Allen, Fine, & Demo, 2000; Taylor, 2000).

Even though the traditional two-parent family is placed on a pedestal, there has been an increase in nontraditional family structures, especially within the Black community (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998a; 1998b; 2000; 2001). Nontraditional families have become a topic of scrutiny and debate within social science research and

policy making arenas (Acock & Demo, 1994). In particular, single-parent families are linked to potential negative outcomes of children. These outcomes and economic risks are evident in the census and other national data sets (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998b; 2000; 2001).

Two-parent families represent 69% of all families in the United States, whereas single-mother families represented 26%. Forty-three percent of single mothers were never married. Divorced mothers represented 35% of families; separated mothers totaled 18%; and widowed mothers represented 4% (U.S Bureau of the Census, 2001). Some of the major reasons for the increase in single-mother families include the availability of education and employment opportunities that help to promote the economic independence of women to maintain their own households with their children (Glick, 1984; Teachman, 2000).

The increased number of single-parent families and other diverse family structures appear to have profound implications for the Black community (Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1991). In 2000, 38% of Black children lived with both parents, 50% lived with just their mothers, 4% lived with just fathers, and 9% lived with other related and unrelated adults. Of those who were single-mother families, 65% represented never married mothers, 17% were divorced, 15% represented a spouse being absence, and 3% were widows (U.S Bureau of the Census, 2001). The large percentages of single-mother families reflect unequal gender ratios among Blacks, which is discussed in the review of literature.

Justification for Study

The limited number of studies that focus solely on Blacks warrants the need for the current study (Dillworth-Anderson, Burton, & Johnson, 1993; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2001), especially in light of the fact that Black families are frequently negatively portrayed in the social science literature and in the media (McAdoo, 1988; Rhodes, 1971; Staples, 1971). There is a need to conduct within group comparisons to examine the importance of race and diversity when studying family structure and dynamics. Although family strengths are found in the literature, Black families have largely been seen as less beneficial and deteriorating when compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Banks, 1987; Taylor et al., 1991).

Previous studies that examined single mothers in the larger population compared them to married mothers on issues of well-being, depression, social mobility, child abuse and neglect, and other issues relating to parenting (Amato, 2000; Keith, 1997; Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001). Black mothers have been compared on social and educational outcomes of their children (Battle, 1998; Battle & Scott, 2000). The majority of studies found negative implications for children of single-parent families (i.e., high poverty levels, school drop out rates, higher rates of teen pregnancy and juvenile delinquency) (Heiss, 1996; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Zill & Nord, 1994). Others have examined Black family strengths including religion and spirituality (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993; Hill, 1971; 1999; Ward, 2000), fictive and extended familial ties (Collins, 1995; 1999; Hill, 1971; 1999; McAdoo, 1988), socialization, and self-esteem (McAdoo, 2002; Peters, 1985). Even though there is a body of research on Black families and single mothers, there is still a need for a critical analysis of

nontraditional and racially diverse families (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993; McLoyd, et al., 2001).

Objective

The objective of this study is to explore the perceptions of Black mothers toward their children and to examine how these perceptions shape their views toward single-parent effectiveness. In the current study, symbolic interaction theory is used to link mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior to partnered status. People's perceptions of generalized conditions in their social situation are explained by the assignment of reasoning and meanings (Burr, Leigh, Day, & Constantine, 1979). A culturally variant perspective is used to give focus on Black mothers in particular because of the importance of race and ethnicity on families and family life. Race must be taken into account when examining Black families because of the historical background which separates Blacks from other groups (Peters, 1985), including socioeconomic opportunities, barriers, and cultural norms that make race an important factor when examining Black family life (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993) and Black mothers' perceptions.

A nondeviant approach is used in this study in order to challenge some of the negative stereotypes and myths that plague the Black family. Available literature indicates a void in the area of Black parents' perceptions toward their children's behavior (Jackson, 1993; Landers-Potts, 1998; Landers-Potts, Murry, & Brody, 1999; Stolba & Amato, 1993). This study contributes to the parenting perception literature. Based on the literature reviewed, there does not appear to be any research that solely focuses on Black mothers' perceptions in relation to partner status.

It is important to examine parental perceptions because of their connection to both mother and child characteristics. Black mothers' perceptions of their children have been related to the characteristics of mothers' depression, role strain, educational attainment, reliance on public assistance, perceived parental efficacy, and marital status (Brody & Forehand, 1986; Estroff, Yando, Burke, & Synder, 1994; Landers-Potts, 1998; Landers-Potts et al., 1999; Stolba & Amato, 1993; Teti & Gelafand, 1991; Whitehead, 1983). Child's gender, age, and type of behavior have also been related to mothers' perceptions (Campbell & Cooper, 1975; Fagot & O'Brien, 1994; Landers-Potts et al., 1999; Stolba & Amato, 1993; Teti & Gelfand, 1991). Building on the mother perception research, the current study focuses on the relationship of Black mothers' perceptions of their child and partnered status, and on how these perceptions influence their views on single-mother effectiveness.

Terms

The definitions of key concepts in this paper are as follows: (1) partnered status of mother is defined as whether the respondent has a spouse or partner. The partnered status of the respondent is one of the following: (a) no spouse or partner or (b) having a spouse or partner. (2) Black is self-defined as persons or individuals who are of African descent, consider themselves to be nonwhite, non-Hispanic, and not as other.

Significance

This study contributes to the body of research on Black families and Black mothers using a large nationally representative sample, the National Survey of American Families (1999). The study builds on previous research and contributes to the limited knowledge on racially diverse groups (McLoyd et al., 2001) and parental

perceptions of Black mothers. There are three important aspects that distinguish this study from previous studies. First, this study uses a nationally representative data set to examine perceptions of Black mothers of their children's behavior. This is an important element because Black mothers are usually compared to other racial and ethnic groups or using small samples. Second, this study examines mothers in various intimate partnerships. It is not limited to only mothers who consider themselves to be married or single. The study includes mothers who are living with a partner or spouse, which includes cohabitating couples. Third, this study examines the perceptions of mothers from various educational and economic backgrounds.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs a culturally variant and an interactionist perspective to examine the perceptions of Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers. The culturally variant perspective examines families as distinct entities without devaluing their differences or portraying familiar attributes as deviant (Allen, 1978). Symbolic interaction theorists focus on the connections that individuals make between symbols and their interactions in their environment (Klein & White, 1996; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Variation and interaction theories aid in examining Black mothers' perceptions of their children and single-mother effectiveness. The use of both perspectives assist in exploring Black mothers as a variant group without demonizing the group as a whole (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993).

Culturally Variant Perspective

Culturally equivalent, culturally deviant, and the culturally variant perspective represent three major approaches to the study of Black families (Allen, 1978). A culturally equivalent perspective fails to draw clear, cultural distinctions between Blacks and other racial and ethnic groups. Researchers who use this approach do not emphasize the differences within families, but rather highlight their similarities. The culturally deviant perspective focuses on the differences of families and portrays these differences as deviant or pathological when comparing racial or ethnic groups. The culturally deviant perspective only accepts the White middle class two-parent family as the norm and considers the various forms of Black family structuring as deviant or pathological (Allen, 1978; Moynihan, 1965). The culturally variant perspective views the Black family as being distinct, but does not attempt to portray it as deviant and does not devalue its differences. It recognizes the differences of Black families from other groups and examines the possible affects of social, historical, and cultural environments on these families (Allen, 1978).

The culturally variant perspective provides researchers with a conceptual framework to explore the variations of family structuring within the Black community. Scholars traced the variations in Black families from the continent of Africa to American shores (Billingsley, 1968; Kenkel, 1977; McAdoo, 1998; Staples, 1974; 1993). Researchers used a variant perspective to examine how Black families have adapted to the social, political, and economic hardships of enslavement, racial discrimination, and being negatively depicted by American society (Franklin, 1988; Gutman, 1976; Harley, 1994; Menaghan & Parcel, 1990; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, &

Crouter, 2001; Staples, 1999; Staples & Johnson, 1993) and to identify and explain Black family strengths and the survival mechanisms of the group (Hill, 1971; 1999). A culturally variant perspective is important because it helps link the histories of Black families to their current family structuring and routines. This perspective is also important because it causes researchers to do in-depth research on racial and ethnic groups

The current study uses the culturally variant perspective to examine within group differences of Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers. I place the Black family into a socio-historical context and provide an overview of the depiction of Black families in the social science literature to honor the adaptive characteristics of Black families in the United States. In the current study, I do not compare Black mothers to any other racial or ethnic groups. The study attempts to value the differences, strengths, and family structuring within Black families. The Black family portrays Black families as resilient and adaptive, in the face of its challenges (i.e., single-parent homes, economic stress, discrimination).

Symbolic Interaction

In addition to the culturally variant perspective, symbolic interaction aids social science professionals in explaining how humans, in concert with one another, create symbolic worlds and how these worlds shape human behavior (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Theorists attend to how individuals interpret events and things within their environment and how meanings and interpretations are developed through socialization (Burr et al., 1979; Klein & White, 1996). The four major concepts of symbolic interaction theory include: (a) self and mind, (b) those things that shape identities, roles,

(c) socialization or interactions, and (d) definitions of a situation or context. The self or identity refers to self-meanings in a role (Klein & White, 1996; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). It is how an individual constructs their identity in a particular role. An example of this is how a woman may view herself as a spouse, what she feels is her role in supporting the household, her views of being a helpmate, or a companion to her husband (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

The second major concept is role. A role has shared norms and rules that an individual is expected to follow (Klein & White, 1996; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). One example of this is the role of “it” in a game of hide and go seek. It is a norm for the individual who is “it” to close his eyes and count to 10 while the others hide. If the individual does not follow the norms of the game, he or she has not fulfilled the role. Socialization or interaction is the third concept of symbolic interaction, and is the process by which individuals acquire symbols, beliefs, and attitudes of their culture. One well-known example of socialization is the learning process of children through their interaction with their environment. The last concept is context or definition of situation. This concept is in relation to how individuals perceive and define situations and how these definitions form the behaviors of the individual (Klein & White, 1996; LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

Symbolic interaction has several major assumptions that aid in the understanding of the theory and executing the focus. Klein and White (1996) stated that the theory has four major assumptions: (a) That human behavior must be understood by the meanings of the actor. It is impossible to understand or explain human behavior without knowing the meanings that the particular human may have for that behavior.

(b) Actors establish meanings for context and situation in which they are a part. (c) Individuals have minds and that their minds have the ability to acquire, integrate, and process information. The third assumption also states that individuals have the ability to be reflexive of the information. (d) That society precedes the individual, which means that humans live in symbolic worlds. Within these symbolic worlds, humans use their minds to interpret the meanings and symbols within their environment (Klein & White, 1996).

LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) further stated that symbolic interaction has seven major assumptions: (a) Human beings act toward things on the basis of their meanings toward those things. (b) Meanings are developed during the process of interaction between people. (c) Meanings are handled and modified through an interpretive process when an individual has to deal with things that he or she encounters. (d) Individuals are not born with a sense of self, but this sense is developed through social interaction and socialization. (e) Self-concepts provide an important motive (e.g., self-values, beliefs) for behavior. (f) Larger cultural and societal processes influence individuals and small groups, which means that individual behavior is restricted by the norms and rules of society. (g) It is through social interaction in everyday situations that individuals work out the details of social structure.

In one study, researchers examined how individuals perceived themselves and their situations or context. Kools (1997) used symbolic interaction to explain the self-identity formation of youth who lived in foster care at some time during their childhood. Researchers examined how events, situations, and interpersonal interactions played a role in the formation of each of the children's identity and perception of self. When

people treated children who lived or had lived in foster care as outcasts, foster care children sometimes took on the role of outcast and behaved badly to fulfill that role.

Marsiglio, Hutchinson, and Cohan (2000) employed symbolic interaction theory to explore how men, who were not yet fathers, between the ages of 16-30 envision aspects of fatherhood and formed their views toward the role of father. From an interactionist perspective, the researchers were interested in the meanings men assign to situations, events, acts, others, themselves, and fatherhood. The dimensions associated with fatherhood were: (a) the male's sense of readiness for becoming a father; (b) views about the ideal fathering experience; (c) images of the good or ideal father; and (d) visions of future fathering experiences. The participants' views were shaped by their interactions with their own fathers, other fathers, religious practices or beliefs, and their own personal readiness in becoming fathers.

Symbolic interaction has been used in previous studies that have examined mothers' perceptions (Abney, 1991; Jackson, 1993; Landers-Potts, 1998). Landers-Potts (1998) used the theory to investigate the psychological and contextual variables that link adults' perceptions of children and to explore the variations in adults' perceptions of child's behavior (Landers-Potts, 1998). A goal of the study was to find the extent that adults found a particular behavior as problematic. Landers-Potts (1998) stated that meanings were given to children's behaviors by adults and that adult caregivers have perceptions of children's behavior.

Abney (1991) used symbolic interaction to explore Black mothers' retrospective perceptions of their childrearing practices. Respondents were asked to reflect on their style of childrearing from 1945 to 1955, using a phenomenological exploratory

methodological approach. Symbolic Interaction provided the framework to explore the context of segregation, definition of situation, and how the role of mother influenced child rearing practices of Black mothers' through life events and interactions with those in their environment.

In the current study, I use symbolic interaction theory to analyze the connection between mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior in relation to partnered status. I expect Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' perceptions to be explained by mothers' perceptions of their children's characteristics, mothers' characteristics, and demographic variables. Based on symbolic interactionism, mothers establish symbols and definitions of what they consider to be positive or negative child behaviors. Society shapes the symbols of human behavior and mothers' interaction with their children. This study also examines how mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior shape mothers' views toward single mother's effectiveness.

There are advantages and disadvantages of using symbolic interaction when examining Black families (Allen, 1978) and how these constructs may shape family interactions. One disadvantage of using symbolic interaction is that the theory takes into account family role attributes, expectations, and relationships. For example, some of the disadvantages have been the theory's primary focus on family interactions and specific time frames. By only focusing on the interactions of the individuals within the family, valuable information may be misinterpreted. This is a result of not putting the family into a social, historical, or political context (Allen, 1978). This is a major reason why the current study is also using a culturally variant perspective to examine the Black family. By placing the Black family into a social context, it shows how society plays a

role in the shaping of family interactions and the perceptions of individuals within these families.

I expect Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' perceptions to be a function of mothers' characteristics, perceptions of child's characteristics, and demographic variables. Based on previous research, mothers with depressive symptoms viewed their children's behavior as problematic (Brody & Forehand, 1986; Griest, Wells, & Forehand, 1979; Landers-Potts, 1998). Likewise, mothers viewed their boys as more problematic than their girls (Campbell & Cooper, 1975; Fagot & O'Brien, 1994; Jackson, 1993). Single mothers rated their children more negatively on behavior scales than married mothers (Stolba & Amato, 1993; Whitehead, 1983; Webster-Stratton, 1989). Consequently, the current study builds on the research on Black mothers and Black mothers' perception of the children by with the use of symbolic interaction, use of a national data set, and focusing primarily on Black mothers. In other words, do partnered and nonpartnered mothers differ on their perceptions of their children's social and psychological behavior? Additionally, do these differences explain mothers' perceptions toward single-mother effectiveness?

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

This chapter summarizes the literature on mothers' perceptions of their children, with a specific focus on Black mothers. This chapter proceeds in the following manner: (a) a historical context that begins with an overview from slavery, to contemporary times; (b) a description of the Black family in social science literature that includes Black motherhood, (c) an overview of research on partnered and nonpartnered households. This literature review also examines the relationships of family structure on child development. I completed my review of the literature with mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior and a critique of the current body of research on Black mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior.

Black Families In A Historical Context

Including a historical context to the study of Black families creates a link between past events and time on Black family life with careful attention given to single mothers. Throughout history and time, Black families' adaptive behaviors were a direct response to social, political, and economic hardships (Franklin, 1988). The Black familial experience in the United States is one that cannot be compared to any other racial or ethnic group because of the unique combined legacy of slavery, racial discrimination, and prejudice that has existed for over 400 years. Blacks Africans came to the English colonies as indentured servants along with Whites (Billingsley, 1968; Kenkel, 1977; Staples, 1974). After the development of large tobacco and cotton plantations, there was a need for a large, cheap labor force, that resulted in the system of enslaving Blacks for over two centuries (Staples, 1974; Staples & Johnson, 1993).

Black African slaves were from different tribes, which were mostly from the west coast of Africa (Billingsley, 1968; Kenkel, 1977; McAdoo, 1998). Despite the fact slaves were from different groups, had different languages, religions, and cultures (McAdoo, 1988), many knew several languages because of their interactions with Africans from different tribes in their homeland. The knowledge of different languages aided in the communication and interaction between newly captured slaves (Sudarkasa, 1997).

The majority of Blacks in the United States were descents of Africans that came as slaves to the newly formed colonies (Davis, 1993; Sudarkasa, 1997), although some Black indentured servants or free persons were among the original colonists (Billingsley, 1968; Kenkel, 1977; Staples, 1974). In addition to the unique social location of Black Africans as free persons, indentured servants, and slaves, their familial structure was based on lineage. Lineage is a large multigenerational grouping of relatives based on a core group (Sudarkasa, 1997). Lineage was important because it carried distinct rights and obligations such as the care of relatives, inheritance, and marriage (Billingsley, 1968). There were three major forms of lineage in African culture; the most common was through the father line called patrilineage. Lineages traced through the mother line were termed matrilineages (Billingsley, 1968; Sudarkasa, 1997). The third form, double descent, traced kinship through both parents. African family structuring was also very different from European Americans, which are typically nuclear or traditional of two heterosexual parents with children. African families placed a great importance on extended family and community, which provides another historical lens toward understanding Black families in the United States (Billingsley, 1968; Sudarkasa, 1997).

Traditionally, African extended families lived together in residential units called compounds (Sudarkasa, 1997; 1998). Within compounds the well-being of children was not only the responsibility of parents, but the whole community and kinship group (Billingsley, 1968; Dickerson, 1995; Sudarkasa, 1997). Patriarchy was another form of family structuring; men had the majority of power and authority in the family and community (Kenkel, 1977).

Black Family in Captivity

Slavery had a major affect on Black family structure (Staples, 1974). The harshness of slavery infiltrated into family structure and caused it to be difficult for Black families to maintain two-parent households with children; the traditional nuclear familial experience of European Americans (Dickerson, 1995). One reason for this was parents' lack of control over their lives and their children's lives (Bruner, Bernhard, & Kutler, 1996; Dill, 1997; McAdoo, 1998). It was common for families to be separated by the selling of mothers, fathers, children, and other relatives. Slave families were fortunate if their relatives were sold to the owners of neighboring plantations and remained in close proximity. The selling of fathers often left Black slave mothers as the primary caregiver in the household. Even when the father was present, he was not able to have authority in his family (Dill, 1997; Staples, 1971) because of his lack of legal power over his family (Bruner et al., 1996). Disruption in the Black slave family resulted in the building of kinship relationships with other slaves to compensate for lost family roles lost through the sale, desertion, or death of family members (Gutman, 1976).

The Black Family After Emancipation and During Reconstruction

Emancipation and Reconstruction meant legal freedom for Blacks but came with several hardships that required adaptive family behaviors. Large numbers of newly freed Blacks died from starvation and illness due to the lack of personal resources to aid in their establishment as freedmen (Billingsley, 1968). To deal with some of the hardships of Black former slaves the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) was established. This national program was created to aid in the establishment of Blacks after slavery (Henderson, 1993; Lowe, 1993; Oubre, 1978; Parmet, 1971). The program was charged with the responsibility of assisting newly freed slaves in making the transition from slavery to freedom. Congress authorized the bureau to provide emergency rations to ex-slaves and gave the bureau control over abandoned lands to later distribute to Blacks through lease or purchase. The Freedmen's Bureau had several successes, which included the establishment of schools, hospitals, and provided food and shelter for former slaves. Some of the many colleges that were established by the Freedmen's Bureau were the historically Black colleges of Howard University, Atlanta University, Fisk University, and Wilberforce University (Henderson, 1993). The downfalls of the Freedmen's Bureau were due to the lack of funding and resistance from racist Whites. Because of the lack of funding and resistance all Blacks did not receive the opportunity to take part in the programs that were successful and many did not have the opportunity to acquire land through leasing or purchase (Henderson, 1993; Lowe, 1993; Oubre, 1978; Parmet, 1971).

Despite the economic hardships, family values were strong among freed slaves. Blacks searched for lost family members that had been sold away or escaped to pursue

freedom during slavery (Franklin, 1988). Many freed Blacks who could not marry or couple during slavery pursued the opportunity to marry legally after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation (Genovese, 1999; Gutman, 1976; Staples & Johnson, 1993). Massive numbers of Black ex-slaves legitimized their unions, demonstrating the importance of family within the Black community.

Scholars found that after Emancipation and during Reconstruction most Black families were traditional, meaning a mother, father, and children with the man heading the home (Gutman, 1976). After Emancipation, both Black men and women in two-parent families worked to maintain the household, which models contemporary dual career, dual-earner families (Menaghan & Parcel, 1990; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2001). The majority of Black men preferred that their wives stay home because the image of women working outside of the home was a reminder of slave times (Staples, 1976; Staples & Johnson, 1993). In spite of this, Black families relied on the income of women because it was difficult for Black men to obtain employment and paid wages sufficient to support their families (Harley, 1994).

Even though the majority of Black families were traditional during the period following Emancipation and Reconstruction, there were several other family forms and structuring. Some families consisted of grandparents raising grandchildren. Other family households included various combinations of uncles, aunts, cousins, and young children (McAdoo, 1988). It was also common for young unmarried mothers to live with their parents or other adults and not alone with their children (Sudarkasa, 1997).

Black Families During The Civil Rights Movement

The Black family during the Civil Rights Movement lived in a time of change and adjustment. The economic well-being of many Blacks improved with the shift of employment from working as subsistence farmers, tailors, postal workers, and porters to being able to earn middle-class incomes through working as managers, schoolteachers, or as principals. Black families also had majority changes in their geographic positioning. Many Blacks migrated from the South to the North; to the West and Southwest to obtain better employment and to avoid Jim Crow Laws (Ward, 2000).

Based on the 1960 U. S. Census, the majority of Black children (67%) were living in two-parent families (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1998b). Twenty percent of children were living with their mothers and 2% of Black children were living with their fathers. Of children who were living with their mothers, 24% of the mothers were divorced, 46% were separated, 27% of mothers were widowed, and 4% were never married (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1998a). This represents that the changes in the Black family structure with the increased number of single parent households is somewhat recent.

Black family traditions and obligations were focused around teaching children about Jim Crow laws, the importance of extended family and kinship networks, religion, and pride within the Black community (Ward, 2000). Families taught their children how to survive around Whites and to avoid physical and psychological harm by acts of racism and discrimination (Abney, 1991). Northern Blacks sent their children to the South for summer vacations to visit with extended relatives and kin to strengthen family ties. The church and religion was and remains a strong force in Black

familial traditions (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993; Hill, 1971; 1999; Ward, 2000). Sundays were mostly dedicated to religious services and spending time with family and the extended community. Having a religious orientation referred to an awareness of and commitment to a spiritual life-style that provides a sense of power and purpose to an oppressed group (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). Racial pride was taught to children through their parents and the Black community by teaching about African heritage and the accomplishments of famous Blacks such as Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Jesse Owens, Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, and Philip A. Randolph (Ward, 2000).

Black Families in Contemporary Times

The strong familial traditions among Black families survived the slave system, legal segregation, discrimination, poverty, and prejudice (Franklin, 1988). Prejudice and discrimination against Blacks affected the types of jobs and income Blacks obtained, thereby affecting their families' standard of living, quality of schools and housing, as well as job equity, and medical care (Barker & Hill, 1996; Peters, 1985). Through these hardships Black families persevered, although Black families still deal with covert racism, discrimination, and prejudice.

Black parenting. Blacks have had to adapt their parenting styles to compensate for economic, social, and political adversities. Many Black parents have had to sacrifice their own welfare to push their children forward in society. They have done this through preparing their children to become "somebody" in a White world that continues to treat them in various ways as "nobody" (Staples & Johnson, 1993) and in a society where blackness and diversity are devalued (Peters, 1985). Despite this

hardship, many Black parents are able to instill in their children self-dignity and the importance of racial identity, which McAdoo (2002) believes to be most important role for Black parents. Black mothers expect their children to be positive about themselves and want their children to desire respect from others (Peters, 1985). Black mothers encourage fair and honest play, but warn their children that they cannot expect the same in return and emphasize the importance love (Peters, 1985). They also instill in their children the values of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, restraint, reverence, reason, and reconciliation (Sudarkasa, 1997).

Summary of Black Families In A Historical Context

I give a review of the history of the Black family and Black family life as an important aspect of this study because it gives readers a clear focus of Black family life in the United States and demonstrates some of the ways that Black families vary from other cultural groups. The historical section gives an overview of the origin of the Black family from the countries of Africa to the United States showing the connections between African family structuring and contemporary Black family structuring (Billingsley, 1968; Dickerson, 1995; Sudarkasa, 1997; 1998). I also place the experiences of Black families in the context of the time. Slavery (Bruner et al., 1996; Dill, 1997; McAdoo, 1998; Staples, 1971; 1974), Emancipation/Reconstruction (Billingsley, 1968; Genovese, 1999; Gutman, 1976; Staples & Johnson, 1993), the Civil Rights movement (Abney, 1991; Ward, 2000), and contemporary times (Franklin, 1988; Peters, 1985; Staples & Johnson, 1993; Sudarkasa, 1997) were important historical and sociopolitical contextual influences in Black families in the United States.

The section shows some of the many ways that Black family structure has changed over time and how Black families have adapted to its sociopolitical environment. The goal of the section was to demonstrate some of the ways that Black families differ from White families (Billingsley, 1968; Sudarkasa, 1997) without using a deviant approach. Another goal of the section was to establish the foundation of Black family life and to debunk some of the stereotypical views of the Black family as being dysfunctional or nontraditional (Moynihan, 1965). Giving a historical lens to Black families shows how historical hardships have played a role in the formation of Black families (Bruner et al., 1996; Dickerson, 1995; Dill, 1997; McAdoo, 1998; Staples, 1971) and their adaptive measures (Gutman, 1976; Staples, 1971).

Depiction of the Black Family in Social Science Literature

Despite the Black family's survival techniques, adaptive behaviors, and resiliency (Hill, 1971; 1999) the group has generally been depicted negatively and deviant. The Black family has been depicted as having nontraditional family functioning when compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Bryant & Coleman, 1988; McAdoo, 1988; Moynihan, 1965). Black families have also obtained a large number of negative stereotypes and it has become difficult to separate fact from fiction (McAdoo, 1988).

A major stereotype of the Black family has been being described as a matriarchy by White America (Rhodes, 1971; Stacey, 1990), which is seen as dysfunctional and unstable (Moynihan, 1965). In fact, the Black family is not a matriarchy, but evolved into a matrifocal, or mother centered system, which was reinforced by the enslavement of Black families (McAdoo, 1988). Black women and mothers became a driving force

in the family, not because of the need or want to be in control, but as a necessity to keep the family unit together and to provide authority over children when the father was not present or was not able to act in the role of provider or authoritarian (Bruner et al., 1996; Dill, 1997; McAdoo, 1998; Stacey, 1990; Staples, 1971). Black women have had to deal with the shortage of Black men from the results of wars, imprisonment, and death by the effects of ghetto living conditions. In most cases Black women have not had a choice but to contribute to their family's well being. The major fault of the Black woman has been that she acted as a leader in her family, as well as in her community in a society that expects and rewards male leadership (Staples, 1971).

Some view the matriarchal stereotype of the Black family as a hoax or highly fictional depiction (Staples, 1971). One argument against the matriarchal stereotype is that Black men and women share power, which is consistent with Afrocentric family values (McAdoo, 1988). Another argument is that Black women have not had control over their livelihood or their families, despite the portrayals of Black women (Dill, 1997).

Black Motherhood

Although the ideology is gradually changing, the socially constructed perception of motherhood reflects that of White mothers and the ideology of domesticity (Collins, 1999). Black women never existed within the domesticity perspective of womanhood or motherhood in the same way as white women (Bruner et al., 1996; Collins, 1998; Dill, 1997; Harley, 1994; Roberts, 1997). Black women's inability to embrace the mythical domestic role of motherhood is a result of financial conditions due to structural racism faced by most households in the Black community prohibited the

majority of Black women to stay at home – they had no choice. Black mothers were responsible for nurturing their families’ emotional needs and contributing to the economic support of their children (Collins, 1999; McAdoo, 1988; Washington, 1988); these dual roles were consistent with Afrocentricity (Collins, 1999). The very survival of some Black family units depended and depends on mothers’ wages, no matter how minimal (Harley, 1990).

Since slavery Black mothers were better able to reconstruct motherhood. Mothers sought autonomy (i.e., parental, familial, and personal), creativity, and leadership inside their families when it was denied in larger society (Dill, 1997). Black women carried on this tradition by being leaders in the Black community and the church (Collins, 1999; Seccombe, 1999). In the Black community, other adults and especially mothers assisted one another by aiding in the development of each other’s children (Littlejohn-Black & Darling, 1993). Women who assisted the biological mother in caring are considered to be “other mothers” (Collins, 1995). Fictive kin, individuals who acted as relatives but were not related by blood, played an important role in raising children (Collins, 1999). Fictive kin were sometimes neighbors or close friends of the family.

Black married motherhood. Moynihan (1965) viewed married heterosexual couples as a more stable environment for Black family life and the nurturing of children. King (1999) stated that marriage provides children with an opportunity to learn how to develop intimate, mutually respectful, and supportive relationships with other gender peers. Children who grow up in single parent homes have few

opportunities to observe (Ward, 2000), on a daily basis, men and women assuming the roles of husband and wife (King, 1999).

Variations exist between Black married two-parent families, White two-parent families, and Black single-mother families. Black couples varied from White couples on power distribution and child rearing. Researchers described Black families as more egalitarian than White families (Broman, 1988; Dill, 1997; Hossain & Roopnaire, 1993; Staples, 1981). Equalitarian relationships among Black parents resulted from Black women having more power in intimate relationships and in the household than White women (Ross, 1987). Black couples shared the responsibility of financially supporting the household requiring more flexible roles within the family (Beckett & Smith, 1981; Hill, 1971; 1999). They also favored and accepted women's participation in the workforce more than Whites (Beckett & Smith, 1981; Huber & Spitze, 1981; Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1991).

Scholars found Black married and partnered mothers had greater economic and emotional well-being than Black mothers of other marital statuses (Jayakody et al., 1993; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2001; Wilson, 1997; Zollar & Williams, 1987). Nonpartnered mothers had less of a chance of living in poverty than mothers who were divorced, widowed, separated, and never married (Jayakody et al., 1993; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2001; Wilson, 1997). Zollar and Williams (1987) reported that Black married women had greater global happiness and life satisfaction than unmarried women. Black married mothers' were more likely to be depressed when they had very limited financial resources combined with high levels of negative marital interaction quality and co-caregiver conflict (Brody, Stoneman, Flor, McCrary, Hastings, &

Conyers, 1994). Black mothers also had increased depression when their children exhibit high levels of difficult behaviors (Brown, Brody, & Stoneman, 2000).

Black married mothers received less family aid than other mothers (Jayakody et al., 1993), but they received approximately the same amount of child care from family members as never married mothers and separated mothers. Marriage was a positive predictor for financial assistance from family members for Blacks, but this assistance decreases with the increase of poverty and living proximity to immediate family. Black married mothers have an advantage of having accessibility to both in-laws as well as families of origin (Jayakody et al., 1993). There is also the additional help of having the father in the household who is able to play the role of provider and child socializer (Hamner & Turner, 2001; McAdoo & McAdoo, 2002).

Black single motherhood. Black female-headed families were rooted in the slavery and maintained by the hardships following the Civil War (Bell, 1971). The media and other forms of propaganda have portrayed single parenting negatively and has constantly displayed images of poor Black single mothers (Franklin, 1997; Roberts, 1997; Ziegler, 1995). Single Black mothers have been depicted as receiving welfare, living in subsidized housing, and not having male role models for their children. They have constantly been labeled as inferior to two-parent families (McAdoo, 1988). Poor Black teen or unmarried mothers especially have been depicted as raising children with limited language, cognitive skills, and intellectual skills (Staples & Johnson, 1993).

Several reasons were linked to the rise of single mother families within the Black community. One of the reasons are the unequal gender ratios caused by the death or incarceration of Black men, migration of Black men to search for work, male

unemployment, overall higher birthrates of women, and shorter life spans of men (Dickson, 1993; Kiecolt & Fossett, 1997; McLanahan & Booth, 1991; Sudarkasa, 1997). Researchers found that an absence of Black men as fathers was associated with severe economic problems of the larger society, resulting in many poor Black fathers deserting or leaving their families (McAdoo, 1988; McLanahan & Booth, 1991). Poor Black fathers also refuse or were refused marriage due to their economic instability and poor economic prospects (Wilson, 1978).

The majority of researchers that have examined Black single-mothers most often use the cultural deviant paradigm (Allen, 1978; Bryant & Coleman, 1988; Dickerson, 1995; Dillworth-Anderson et al., 1993). This paradigm projects Black families negatively when comparing them to other racial and ethnic groups (Allen, 1978; Fine, Schwebel, & James-Myers, 1987). The deviant model is problematic because it results in the Black family being seen as unstable, deficient, and deviant (Dickerson, 1995) and has roots in the Moynihan report (1965). Moynihan (1965) stated that single-parent families were the reason why Blacks were making only limited gains during the prosperous 1960s. Since the report was produced by a federal government agency, it officially labeled the Black single mother family as inferior, nonproductive, pathological, and dysfunctional (Dickerson, 1995).

Well-Being of Mothers and Marital Status

Mothers' psychological well-being has been related to mothers' marital status within the larger European American population (Broman, 1988; Davises, Avison, & McAlphine, 1997; McAdoo, 1982; McLanahan, 1983; Zollar & Williams, 1987). Single-mothers reported lower self-esteem, lower efficacy, and less optimism about the

future; these factors were related, to stress and depression caused by having fewer financial resources (Brody & Flor, 1997; McAdoo, 1982) and lower levels of social support than married mothers. Davises and associates (1997) found that single mothers report higher levels of depression across the period of a year, as well as across their individual lifetime. Single mothers also reported having younger mean ages for the onset of depression and were more likely to have recurrent episodes of depression (Davises et al., 1997).

Economic Well-Being and Marital Status

Researchers expressed the need to look at the whole picture of families instead of family structure alone, therefore a focus on single mothers must include the limited economic resources of most single-mother families (Demo & Cox, 2001; McLahanan & Booth, 1991). The risks of limited resources increase when a mother is in her teen years because of the lack of education and job experience (Lucker, 1997). Black single mothers and their children have a high chance of living in poverty and are one of the most impoverished groups (Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1991; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2001; Wilson, 1997). In 2000, 44% of Black single mother households had a family income below the poverty level (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). Black single mothers (44%) have a greater chance of living in poverty than single White mothers (29%)(U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001).

Some proposed that the stressors Black parents experience affect their parenting (Taylor, 1997). Black mothers who experience financial strain such as job loss and unemployment used harsher parenting and had negative perceptions of their maternal

role (McLoyd, 1990). More depressive symptoms related to lower levels of mother-child harmony within family (Brody & Flor, 1997).

Children in Partnered (Married) versus Nonpartnered (Single) Mother Families

The increasing number of single-mother households has important implications for the living arrangements of Black children (Taylor et al., 1991). Black single-mother households imply the decreased emotional well-being of children, increased chances of living in poverty, and the possible negative affects on children's life chances. Children from single-parent homes have lower self-concept and lower self-esteem when compared to children from two-parent households (Randolph, 1995; Whitehead, 1983). The negative affects on children's life chances include lower educational attainment, socioeconomic achievement, and higher levels of adolescent unmarried motherhood when compare to children in two parent family structures (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Zill & Nord, 1994).

Scanzoni (1971) stated that Black children from single-mother families have risk factors that may not be attributed to father's absence or presence, but the economic deprivation that many Black families face. Risks significantly increase for children and families with lower family incomes. Father-absence in any household is inevitably linked to limited finances. Since lower income households and family structures negatively influence school achievement and retention, the limited resources of income and family structure may also hinder later occupational attainment for Black children raised in lower income families.

Children from economically disadvantage single-mother families were more likely to have lower school achievement than children in divorced families (Scanzoni,

1971). On educational performance, children from single mother families scored well below children from two-parent families in a sample of the mostly White participants and some African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans participants (Downey, 1994). Luster and McAdoo (1994) found that the presence of a spouse or male partner was unrelated to cognitive skills in a sample of Black children when examining the factors related to achievement and adjustment in this group. They suggested that the additional resources a spouse or partner brings to the household might have a greater importance than having an additional adult in the home.

Researchers indicated that children in the larger population who grow up in single-mother families are disadvantaged not only during childhood or immediately after parents' marital disruption, but also during adolescence and young adulthood (McLanahan & Booth, 1991; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Heiss (1996) noted that boys and girls from mother-only families were more likely to drop out of school and obtain fewer years of education on average. Children raised in single mother families produced by divorce have smaller chances of completing high school, entering and graduating from college, have lower occupational statuses, and lower levels of happiness in adulthood (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000).

Researchers found that gender plays a role in the differences between children from single mother and two-parent homes. Black boys from married, two-parent families showed higher self-esteem, self-control, feelings of personal power, achievement orientation, and self-competence than boys that were in mother only homes (Mandara & Murray, 2000). In a study by McLanahan and Bumpass (1988), they found that girls within the larger population who spent time in single-parent

families were more likely to have teen and premarital births, and to experience marital disruptions than girls who grew up in two- parent families.

Black children in single-parent homes appear to be in double jeopardy because of the increased risk of poverty, unemployment, crowded ghetto living, and discrimination (Peters, 1985). Black children are disproportionately impoverished and experience economic decline in America compared to White children (McLoyd, 1990). These economic risk factors are more detrimental to the well-being of Black children than familial structural arrangement (McAdoo, 1988). Consistent with McAdoo's (1988) finding, Heiss (1996) stated that a Black child from a two-parent family has no great advantage over one whose father is absent given the societal disadvantages that many Black children face whether they live in a two parent home or not. Between the years of 1970 and 1998, Black children represented percentages as high as 47.3% and no lower than 36.4% of children living below the poverty level (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

Some researchers refuted the belief that the negative risk factors (i.e., low cognitive development, low academic success, teen births, school dropout) on Black children from single-mother homes is caused by family structure alone and that these effects could be caused by other variables (Battle, 1998; Luster & McAdoo, 1994; Scanzoni, 1971) and linked these effects to other variables. Randolph (1995) suggested that family structure is not the problem, but the negative stigma and expectations society holds for single-parent families. Battle (1998) stated that educational outcomes for Black children in single-versus two-parent families significantly depended on their

socioeconomic status (SES). She found that there was no statistical significance in the scores between Black children in single-parent homes and two-parent homes.

Resources of Black Mothers

Single-parent households do not appear to be a problem in all Black families because Blacks have been able to successfully socialize their children and meet their developmental needs in a variety of family structures (McAdoo, 1988). Black families have found ways to adapt to their environment through a variety of living arrangements and social support networks. Smock (1997) found that only half of Black children in single-mother families lived solely with siblings and their mothers. A number of single-mothers lived with cohabiting partners, other relatives, and unrelated adults. Black single mothers were more likely to live with other adults in the home than other ethnic groups (Hofferth, 1984; Hogan, Hao, & Parish, 1990; Smock, 1997). Living with other relatives or adults is important because these arrangements could possibly have economic benefits and may be a way for individuals to pool resources (Taylor et al., 1991). Black single-mothers also live in closer proximity to family and kin networks that could possibly be resources of needed childcare to children along with income and support (Hogan et al., 1990).

Stability, as well as instability, can be found in two-parent families as well as in single-mother or diverse family structures. The focus on family structure omits the stability, love, and adequate resources that are available in a variety of Black families (McAdoo, 1998). Few researchers examine the strengths of Black single mothers, such as their ability to keep a family together with the occurrence of death, separation, divorce, or desertion. Some single-mothers successfully rear and provide for their

children (Hill, 1971; 1999) giving evidence of a stable unit (Kenkel, 1977) and family strengths. Some researchers found that Black mothers hold flexible roles and a long history of paid work and child rearing (Hill, 1971; 1999; Randolph, 1995).

Family resource management, substitute caregiving in the form of other mothers, fictive kin, and extended family to aid in the nurturing of their children are traditional in the Black community (Collins, 1995; 1999; McAdoo, 1988). Black mothers relied on the Black church to contribute to the development of their children, to provide their children with additional role models, to give children positive activities and rituals such as choir, plays, vacation bible school, and revival. (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, & Draper, 2002). Through these community opportunities Black mothers were able to instill pride in their children and enhance their own self-worth (Randolph, 1995). The Black community has a history of creating opportunities and assistance (Hildreth, Boglin, & Mask, 2000) in the forms of tangible and intangible resources. Tangible resources included food, clothing, money, and many other things. Intangible resources involved of childcare or emotional support (Jayakody et al., 1993).

Summary of Depiction of Black Family in Social Science Literature

I provided an overview of the ways in which that the Black family has been depicted in the social science literature. Some researchers viewed Black families as deviant and others counter arguments to the stereotypes of the Black family as being dysfunctional. In this section, I reviewed the role of mother in the Black community as well as in the family. I also explored some of the obstacles that Black mothers faced while caring for the needs of their families. Some of the major distinctions between Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers based on psychological and economic well-

being factors are critical to my study. The children from partnered and nonpartnered have been reviewed, as well as the implications of Black children growing up in various family structures. This section also covered some of the various strengths of Black mothers that have aided in their caring for their families and households.

Parents' Perceptions Of Children's Behavior

In this section, I reviewed the literature on parents' perceptions toward their children's behavior. Parental perceptions related to mothers' characteristics (i.e., self-efficacy, psychological well-being, marital status, context, receipt of government assistance, employment preferences, living arrangements) and children's characteristics (i.e., preterm births, gender, age) (Campbell & Cooper, 1975; Estroff et al., 1994; Fagot & O'Brien, 1994; Griest et al., 1979; Jackson, 1993; Landers-Potts, 1998; Landers-Potts et al., 1999; Stolba & Amato, 1993; Teti & Gelfand, 1991; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1988; Whitehead, 1983). Mother self-efficacy has also been related to mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior (Teti & Gelfand, 1991; Estroff et al., 1994).

Teti and Gelfand (1991) found a significant and negative relationship between self-efficacy and mothers' perceptions ($n = 86$) of an infant as being difficult in a sample of mostly White families and a very small sample of Blacks and Hispanics families. Of mothers in the sample, 56% were clinically depressed. Researchers examined the association of mothers' psychological wellness and perception of children's behavior. Some researchers have not found a significant difference in the perceptions of mothers who were depressed and mothers who were not depressed (Teti & Gelfand, 1991; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1988). Other researchers found a

significant positive relationship between mothers with high levels of depression and child noncompliance and perception that their children were maladjusted (Brody & Forehand, 1986). Depressed mothers were more critical of their children's behavior than nondepressed mothers (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1988).

In a sample of 22 mothers and their clinic-referred children where race and ethnicity was not specified, Griest and associates (1979) found that maternal depression was the best predictor of mothers' perceptions of their children. Within the sample, 13 of the children were boys and 9 were girls. The researchers used the Home Attitude Scale, the Home Behavior Rating Scale, and the Adjective Checklist Scale, which had adjectives that described the children's personality characteristics. The results demonstrated that mothers' depression was significantly related to parental perception measures. Mothers with higher depression scores perceived their children as more maladjusted than mothers with lower scores (Griest et al., 1979).

Whitehead (1983) found a relationship between marital status and mothers' reporting of children's self-concept (Whitehead, 1983). The sample consisted of 467 Black and White third grade children from diverse economic backgrounds, using both the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale (PHCSCS), a scale to measure children's self concept and a two-page Family Personal Data Questionnaire (FPDQ). Whitehead (1983) found that married mothers significantly reported higher self-concepts for their children than single mothers. There were no gender significant differences in mothers' ratings of their children's self-concept and the gender of the child, but single mothers did rate boys more negatively than girls (Whitehead, 1983).

Webster-Stratton (1989) found similar results in exploring the relationship of marital support, conflict, and divorce to parent perceptions on sample where race and ethnicity was not specified. In a sample of 137 single parents, 42 were supported by their marriages, 43 were distressed by their marriages, and 32 were divorced. Single parents reported that their clinic children (aged 3-7) had significantly more behavior problems than parents in two-parent family groups. The study included 80 boys and 37 girls and researchers, used the Marital Adjustment Test, the Child Behavior Checklist, Parent Daily Reports, the Parenting Stress Index Question, the Dyadic Parent-Child Interaction Coding System – Revised, and personal interviews. Lower marital satisfaction correlated with an increase of reported negative child behavior and high parenting stress. Lower marital satisfaction correlated with an increase in child compliance and child affective behaviors. Single-mothers perceived their children as having more behavior problems and reporting higher levels of stress for themselves than supported mothers (Webster-Stratton, 1989).

The researchers (Webster-Stratton, 1989) found that the total sample of mothers in the study significantly perceived boys as having more behavior problems as having more difficult temperaments than the girls. Single mothers reported having more stress due to caring for girls and perceived their daughters as having significantly more total behavior problems than distress mothers and supported mothers. There were no significant differences in the ratings of boys across the grouping of mothers (Webster-Stratton, 1989).

Child Characteristics Related to Parents' Perception

Health. Estroff and associates (1994) found a relationship between mothers who perceived their child as being vulnerable and mothers' perceptions of child behavior. A sample of 50 White, Black, and Hispanic mothers whose children (22 girls and 28 boys) had been born prematurely completed the Vulnerable Child Scale and the Child Behavior Checklist. The Vulnerability Scale was an instrument designed to assess a mothers' perception of her child's vulnerability. It consisted of 16 items that all consisted of health concerns for children. The scholars found that mothers who viewed their children as being vulnerable also rated their children as having more problems (i.e., child has more accidents and injuries than other children; child seems to have as much energy as other children). Mothers who identified their children as being vulnerable significantly saw their children as more aggressive, destructive, and socially withdrawn, as well as having more somatic problems. Mothers who saw their children as vulnerable felt significantly less competent as parents and in less control of their children's behavior.

Gender. Researchers found that parental perceptions were influenced by the gender of the child (Fagot & O'Brien, 1994). Fagot and O'Brien (1994) used the Behavioral Style Questionnaire, the Fagot interactive code, and the Toddler Temperament scale to interview the parents of 49 toddlers (25 girls and 24 boys) from middle to upper middle class backgrounds (mothers and fathers) about their children's toys and play preferences and were asked to fill out the Behavioral Style Questionnaire. In a sample where race and ethnicity of participants were not specified, parents and children were observed in their homes and by the researchers. Parents significantly

rated active boys more negatively on temperament characteristics and problem behaviors than active girls even when children were found to be similar by professionals prior to parents' observation (Fagot & O'Brien, 1994).

Age. Campbell and Cooper (1975) found age to be a factor in parents' perception of their adolescent's behavior problems. Campbell and Cooper conducted a study with 57 parents, who were caring for adolescences that were referred to a clinic for consultations and short-term counseling. Using the Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist (WPBIC), the researchers examined children ranging from 12 to 17 years of age, who were predominantly White Americans, with some Black, Asian, Chicano, and other Americans in the sample. Parents reported that children 12-14 years of age on average acted out more than children 15 to 17 years of age. The younger female group also had the highest mean score and largest range on the scale of immaturity. The intersection of gender and age was significantly related to withdrawal. Boys and girls 15-17 years of age had the highest mean scores on withdrawal. Gender was significantly related to distractibility within the sample. Within each gender group the mean for the younger adolescences was larger than the mean for older adolescents, but older and younger boys exceeded the group of girls. The younger female group appeared to exceed all other groups on displaying negative behaviors. Adolescents in this study were found to have significantly higher scores than severely disturbed elementary school age children for whom the scaled was normed (Campbell & Cooper, 1975)

Black Mothers' Perceptions of Children's Behavior

In reviewing the literature, I found four studies that closely related to mine, focusing on the perceptions of Black mothers. Landers-Potts (1998) investigated the psychological, contextual variables and adults' perceptions of children. The sample consisted of lower income African American families ($n = 144$) with children between 6 to 10 years old. The author used ecological and symbolic interaction theories to understand and explain factors that influenced mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior. Maternal depression and role strain were significantly and positively associated with mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior as being problematic (Landers-Potts, 1998).

Landers-Potts and associates (1999) also completed an analysis of African American mothers and receipt of government assistance. Their results showed that Black mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior was related to socioeconomic status and type of behavior under consideration. Mothers who were receiving some type of government assistance (i.e., Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, Women Infants and Children (WIC), Social Security Insurance (SSI), public housing assistance, unemployment insurance, energy program assistance, etc.) rated their children as having fewer externalizing behavior problems (i.e., depressed, always sad, feels inferior, says nobody loves him/her) than mothers who did not receive any government assistance. Externalizing behaviors referred to "annoys and bothers others; disobedient, difficult to control; impertinent, talks back, refuses to take directions, and won't do as told." Working class mothers' receipt of government assistance was associated with fewer internalized behavior problems but more

externalized behavior problems. Working poor mothers' role strain was a significant predictor of mothers' perceptions that their children had externalized behavior problems. The researchers did not find any significant differences between gender of child. Working mothers did perceive their daughters as having more internalized problems than sons. The major implication for the study was that family resources and maternal psychological characteristics could influence mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior (Landers-Potts et al., 1999).

Jackson (1993) examined Black single mothers and their preferences for employment, well-being, and perceptions of their preschool-aged children. The sample included 111 mothers (M age = 27) who were receiving subsidized child care through the county welfare department. The majority of mothers had at least a high school education (91%) and 58% had some education beyond high school (58%). Fifty-two percent of the participants were caring for boys and 48% were caring for girls. The focus was on the following variables: role strain, economic well-being, perceptions of children (i.e., is helpful and cooperative is confident and energetic; rather high strung, tense, or anxious; tends to fight, hit, take toys when playing with other children; is disobedient at home), employment preferences, actual working hours, educational attainment, and gender of child. Both raising boys and having a lower educational attainment level was significantly related to having more role strain, more depressive symptoms, and perceiving children as having more behavior problems. Black mothers who preferred employment and cared for girls were significantly more satisfied with their lives than mothers that preferred to stay at home. Jackson (1993) did not find a significant relationship between mothers' employment preferences and perceiving their

children more positively or negatively. Jackson (1993) concluded that parenting boys might be especially stressful for Black single mothers balancing work and family roles in poverty, particularly when low education is a factor.

Stolba and Amato (1993) examined the “additional adult” hypothesis by completing a secondary data analysis of the 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households. The sample included both Black and Hispanic mothers in intact two-parent households ($n = 1,398$), unmarried mothers living alone with children ($n = 1,176$), and unmarried mothers living in a household without the child’s father but with an additional adult ($n = 199$). The investigators examined mothers’ perceptions of children on psychological, social, and conduct variables.

Looking at the significant results, Stolba and Amato (1993) found that single mothers described their children’s behavior less positively than mothers in intact two-parent households and the results were influenced by age of child. No significant differences were found between single and married mothers’ perceptions of preschool children (0 to 4). Single mothers who lived alone and those who lived with extended family members rated children less positively than married mothers when caring for children in elementary school (5 to 11). Single mothers raising adolescents rated their children less positively when living alone. Stolba and Amato (1993) failed to find a significant difference between single mothers who lived with extended families raising adolescents (12 to 18) and those who were married raising adolescents (Stolba & Amato, 1993). Stolba and Amato (1993) concluded that all single-mother households are not alike, especially when mothers’ perceptions are concerned. Alternative forms

may be suitable for raising of adolescents but alternative forms may not be suitable for younger children (Stolba & Amato, 1993).

Critique of Literature on Black Mothers' Perceptions

There are some limitations in the literature on Black mothers' perceptions of their children's behavior. The first limitation is the minimum amount of research on Black mothers and their families. Secondly, only a few studies focused solely on Black mothers and several have used samples with mixed populations or ethnic groups (Amato & Stolba, 1993; Fagot & O'Brien, 1994; Teti & Gelfand, 1991; Whitehead, 1983). Amato and Stolba (1993) appear to be the only researchers that utilized a large representative sample in examining mothers' perceptions of children's behavior. A limitation of the current research is the trend of only examining lower-income mothers, mothers who are receiving governmental assistance, or limiting the sample to families by specific characteristics such as age or marital status (Jackson, 1993; Landers-Potts, 1998; Landers-Potts et al., 1999). Examining only low income mothers is a limitation because results may not be able to be generalized to mothers who have higher incomes and income may be highly correlated with perceptions of mothers.

Summary of Literature Review

To study Black mothers, I began my literature review with a historical lens to ensure using a culturally variant perspective (Allen, 1978). I traced the Black family from their place of origin, the continent of Africa, through captivity in the United States, Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement, and contemporary times. An overview of how the Black families were depicted in social science literature allowed me to critically examine previous research to inform my thinking and to determine

future research needed on Black families. I provided an overview of parents' perceptions of their children's behavior compared to mothers' self-efficacy (Estroff et al., 1994; Teti & Gelfand, 1991), depression (Brody & Forehand, 1986; Griest et al., 1979), and some researchers have not found any significant relationships between depression and mothers' perceptions of children's behavior (Teti & Gelfand, 1991; Webster-Stratton & Hammon, 1988). Whitehead (1983) found marital status parents perceptions of their children's behavior and parents' self-concept and child behavior (Stolba & Amato, 1993; Webster-Stratton, 1983). Some of the child characteristics that have been found to affect mothers' perception of their children's behavior are perceived child vulnerability (Estroff et al., 1994), gender of child (Campbell & Cooper, 1975; Fagot & O'Brien, 1994; Webster-Stratton, 1989) and age of child (Campbell & Cooper, 1975; Stolba & Amato, 1993).

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This study is a secondary data analysis of the National Survey of American Families (NSAF) aimed at examining Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' perceptions of their children. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the advantages and disadvantages of using secondary data; give a description of the NSAF data set; give an overview of data collection procedures. I will also give a description of the sample for the current study; state the hypotheses; the plan of analysis and give an overview of the variables for analysis.

Secondary Data Analysis

Secondary data analysis is data gathered or authored by another researcher for a specific purpose. The purpose of the original researchers usually differs from that of the secondary researcher. Secondary data analysis has several advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages of conducting a secondary analysis are the savings of time and money by the data being previously collected. An advantage lies in not having to invade the privacy of the potential respondents or participants (Bailey, 1994). Another advantage is that secondary data makes it easier for other researchers to replicate a study and makes data available over a course of time. Using secondary data from large data sets can also help to increase representativeness and the number of observations which can lead to more encompassing generalizations (Nachimas & Nachimas, 1987).

Secondary data has some disadvantages. Some of the variables and information that may be needed for a complete secondary analysis may not be included in the

original data set. Another disadvantage could be in the possibilities of errors existing that are undetectable by the secondary researcher (Bailey, 1994). Errors may include nonresponse by those who refused to answer certain questions; potential respondents who may not have been at home when participants were being contacted; and some respondents may not have completed the entire survey. Wording of the original questions or the sequence of questions could affect secondary data analysis (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). It is possible that several respondents may have been unclear of what was being asked and fatigue must be considered. A complete picture of mothers and their perceptions may not be described in this study because life events and experiences have not been examined.

The National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) contains interviews from over 42,000 households, which yielded information on over 109,000 persons under the age of 65. Westat, a nationally known survey research firm, conducted the data collection for the Urban Institute and Child Trends (Safir, Scheuren, & Wang, 2000). The original researchers' goals were to monitor program changes and fiscal developments, and to monitor changes in well-being of children and families. One goal was to assist state and local policy makers in designing new policies and programs by providing information and results from the data. Another goal was to obtain social and economic information about the well-being of children in low-income households. Secondary goals of the data set were to obtain information on children in other households, on lower-income adults under age 65, and on other adults under age 65. There have been two rounds of NSAF data collection. The first was in 1997 and the second in 1999. A third collection is planned for 2002. The data set is representative of

the nation as a whole and had a specific focus on 13 states for in-depth study (Wang & Cantor, 2000). The original data set used over sampling, which could possibly cause estimates not to be as accurate as a data set where a random sampling of the entire population is used.

Procedure of data collection. This study uses data from the 1999 survey. Researchers conducted interviews over the phone from centralized facilities using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology (Brick, Broene, Cantor, Ferraro, Hankins, Rauch, & Strickler, 2000; Wang & Cantor, 2000). There were two parts to the NSAF surveying process. The first interviews consisted of a random-digit dial of households with telephones. The second half consisted of delivering cell phones to participate in households without telephones to connect participants to the interviewing center. The respondents who were in households without phones were obtained from supplementary representative area sample. Interviewing consisted of two stages: the first was used as a screener to determine whether the household was eligible for the study, which did not exceed 5 minutes (Brick et al., 2000; Wang & Cantor, 2000).

Eligible households had individuals less than 65 years of age residing in the home. If the household was eligible then an in-depth interview was completed that lasted from 27 to 45 minutes. Researchers placed all respondents into two groups: one group had adults with children less than 18 years of age and adults without children less than 18 years of age. Up to two children could be used for in-depth study for each household, one under the age of 6 and one between the ages of 6 and 17. The overall

national household response rate was 61.7%, with an area response rate of 86.1%, and a telephone response rate of 61.7% (Brick et al., 2000).

Interviews were conducted with the most knowledgeable adult (MKA), who was the most knowledgeable about the health care, education, and well-being of those in the household. The MKA was asked questions on the sampled children, their spouse/partner, and their families. In some cases there was more than one MKA. There were 29,917 interviews that consisted of MKA's with children. Both MKA's with children and those without were asked the same questions, but the questions in relation to children were not asked of those who did not have children. The questions that were asked of all participants were in regard to the following: economic security, health and health care, child well being, family environment, and opinions toward current issues such as welfare and single parenting.

Sample for Current Study

I extracted a subsample of participants who identified themselves as being Black, non-Hispanic for the current study. Most knowledgeable adults (MKA's) for the current study was separated from the larger sample based on partnered status, family structure, gender, and having a child in the home 6 to 17 years old. This extracted sample includes one child (6 – 17) for each mother. Children under the age of 6 were excluded to insure that the current study was only analyzing responses of mothers on one focal child and because several of the questions that are included in the study may not pertain to a child under the age of 6 (i.e., sad or depressed, difficulty concentrating). The current study consists of Black women. Both partnered and non-partnered mothers were used to complete an analysis of Black mothers' perceptions of child's behavior

and single-mother effectiveness. Two hypotheses were involved in the current study. These hypotheses included:

H0₁: Black nonpartnered and partnered mothers will not differ in their perceptions of their children. See Figure 1.

H0₂: Black mothers' perceptions of single mother's effectiveness will not be explained by mother demographics, child demographics, perceived child characteristics, or mother characteristics. See Figure 2.

Variables in Study

Variables used in the study include mother demographic characteristics, child demographics, perceived child characteristics, and mother characteristics.

Demographics for mothers include mothers' partnered status, age, educational level, and income. Mothers' partnered status was based on whether the mother had a partner or spouse living in the household along with her children. Mothers' age was originally a continuous variable but was collapsed into six categories. These categories consisted of under 20, 20 to 29 year olds, 30 to 39 year olds, 40 to 49 year olds, 50 to 59, and 60 and above. Mothers' educational level is defined as years of education that the mother has completed, including high school, college, and graduate school. Educational levels for the current study were collapsed into four categories: no high school diploma/GED; high school diploma/GED; post high school/associate degree; bachelor/bachelor degree with some graduate courses; or graduate/professional degree. Family income is based on the percentage of the poverty level or above the poverty level for the year of 1998, which is the way the variable was characterized by the NSAF.

Child demographics included age of child and gender of child. The original variable that represented a child's age was continuous in the larger data set but was collapsed into four categories for the current study: (a) 6-8, (b) 9-11, (c) 12-14, and (d) 15-17. Perceived child characteristics included perceived psychological and social behavior reported by mother. The perceived psychological behavior for children was based on the following variables: felt sad or depressed or if the child had difficulty in concentrating. Social behaviors included if the child was not able to get along with other children. Mothers had three responses to these questions, which included "often true", "sometimes", and "never true". See Table 1.

Mothers' characteristics include level of aggravation, religious service attendance, and mental health score. I compared mothers' aggravation to the following variables: "viewed child as difficult to care for", "felt that the child did things to bother mother", "felt that they were giving up more for child's needs", and "felt angry with child". Mothers were able to give four responses to these questions, which included "all of the time", "most of the time", "some of the time", and "none of the time".

Religious attendance was based on how often mothers attended religious services. Mothers responded to one of the following categories: "never", "a few times a year", "a few times a month", or "once a week or more". Mothers' mental health score was derived from mothers' responses on an established scale within the original survey that contained questions and variables (i.e., felt calm, was a happy person, felt downhearted, could not be cheered up) referring to psychological and mental wellness. See Table 1.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is to compare Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' perceptions of their children's psychological and social characteristics. Its purpose was also to examine the possible influences on mothers' perceptions of single mother's effectiveness. The variables of focus were mother demographic variables (i.e., partner status, age, education level, family income, family structure) child demographics (i.e., age, gender), child characteristics (i.e., psychological behavior, social behavior), and mothers' characteristics (i.e., aggravation with child, religious services attendance, mental health). The first focus of this analysis is to compare partnered and nonpartnered mothers on demographics, perceptions of their children's behavior, feelings of aggravation towards their child, religious attendance, and mental health score. The second focus was to examine if mothers' perceptions of their children, are able to predict mothers' opinions toward single mother's effectiveness (Table 1). The SAS software package was used to run all statistical analyses including descriptive statistics, correlations, t-tests, and logistical regressions.

Testing hypothesis one. Before running a t-test to examine group differences between Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers, descriptive statistics were run on all demographic variables, child characteristics, and mother characteristics. Descriptive statistics - frequencies, means, and standard deviations - give a graphic overview of the sample and helped to make inferences. Frequencies described the number of occurrences of a specific response within the sample (Wilcox, 1995). Means gave an average of each response and standard deviations represent the variance between

responses from the mean. Descriptive statistics define and characterized the sample (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987).

Means or averages describe one level of variability. Standard deviations measure dispersement within the sample or typical distance from the sample mean (Wilcox, 1995). A t-test was run to determine if there are any significant within-group differences between Black mothers' perceptions of their children based on mothers characteristics, child characteristics, and demographic variables. This was the next level of variability that was tested in the study. A t-test is used when a researcher wants to do a comparison of two samples (Glenberg, 1996).

Testing hypothesis two. Frequencies were run on single-mother effectiveness to aid in the analysis of hypothesis two. I used cross-tabs to describe the relationship of attitudes toward single-mother effectiveness and the variables of, (a) partner status, (b) age, (c) education, (d) income, (e) perceived child characteristics, and (f) mother characteristics. In the current study, I used logistical regression to examine mothers' perceptions of single mother's effectiveness. Before conducting the logistical regressions, correlation analyses were run. Correlations were on all variables to find if any variables were related and to describe the strength of their possible linear relationship (Bailey, 1994; Glenberg, 1996).

Correlations are the most commonly used method for summarizing the association between two measures (Wilcox, 1995) and are an important part of an analysis when trying to avoid spurious, intervening relationships, and multicollinearity (Bailey, 1994; Hickey, 1986). A spurious relationship is when two variables appear to be related because both are caused by a third variable. A relationship between variables

may also be caused by intervening variables, this is when the first variable is correlated with a second variable because the first variable causes the third variable, which in turns causes, the second variable (Bailey, 1994). Multicollinearity refers to high intercorrelations of variables that bring the reliability of the model into question. The reliability of variance between variables becomes questionable when two variables are highly correlated but the variance is not truly related to the variables being observed (Hickey, 1986).

Correlations were conducted on the following: (a) mothers' partnered status by child characteristics, (b) mothers' education by child characteristics, (c) income by child characteristics, (d) mothers' mental health by child characteristics and (e) the complete regression model. The correlation analysis is necessary to help clearly specify the regression model. Correlations demonstrated which of the variables varied together and test the factors that influence Black mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness.

Logistical regression allows researchers to predict a discrete outcome of a binary random variable such as group membership (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996; Wilcox, 1996). In the current study, I used logistical regression to find the variables (i.e., demographics, child's social behavior, child's psychological, mothers' aggravation, and all variables) that aided in the explanation or predicted mothers' views of single mother's effectiveness. Single mother's effectiveness was collapsed from four responses (e. g., strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) to two response categories (e.g., agree and disagree).

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Mothers' Perceptions of Children

H0₁: Black nonpartnered and partnered mothers will not differ in their perceptions of their children.

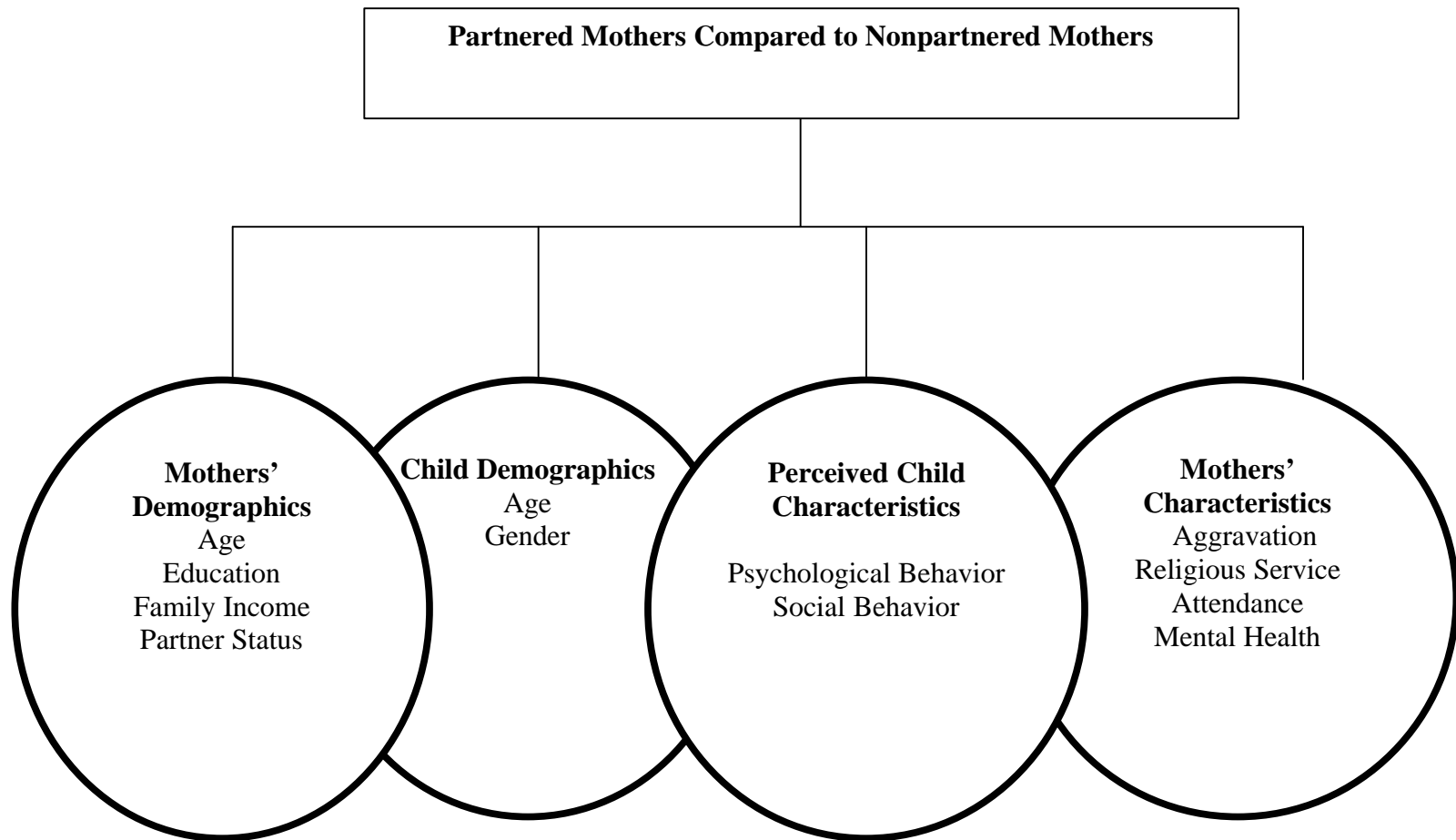


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Mothers' Opinions Toward Single Mother-Effectiveness

H₀₂: Mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness will not be explained by mother demographics, child demographics, perceived child characteristics, or mothers' characteristics.

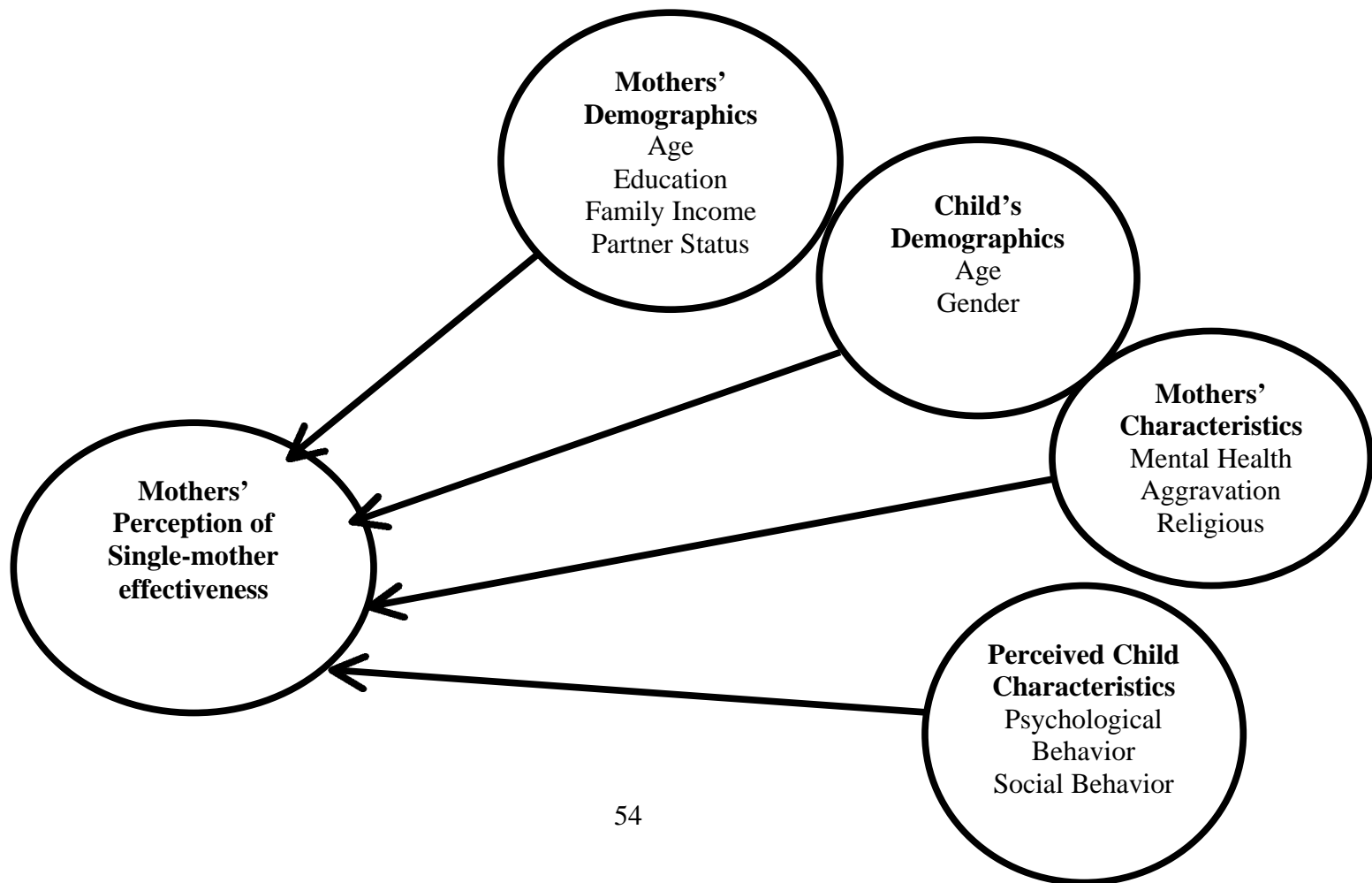


Table 1.

Description of Variables Used in Model on Mothers' Perceptions Toward Child

Variables	Description of Variables
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Demographics	
Partner Status (UMKASPOS)	Whether respondent has a spouse or partner. 1 = Yes 2 = No
Mother Age (UMKAAGE)	Chronological age of each respondent (mother).
Education of Mother (UMEDULEV)	Respondent's highest level of education. 1 = completed 8 th grade 2 = completed 9 th , 10 th , or 11 th grade 3 = completed 12 th , no diploma or GED 4 = GED (General Education Diploma) 5 = high school diploma 6 = completed some vocation/tech classes, no certificate 7 = vocational or technical certificate 8 = completed some college classes, no degree 9 = Associate degree 10 = Bachelors degree 11 = completed some grad/professional classes, no grad/professional degree 12 = graduate or professional degree
<hr/>	
<hr/>	

Table 1 (continued).

Description of Variables Used in Model on Mothers' Perceptions Toward Child

Variables	Description of Variables
Income (U_SOCPOV)	Represents family income in % of poverty level for 1998 <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ .5 = families under 50 percent of the poverty level▪ 1 = families between 50 percent and 100 percent of the poverty level▪ 1.5 = families between 100 percent and 150 percent of poverty level▪ 2 = families between 150 percent and 200 percent of the poverty level▪ 3 = families between 200 percent and 300 percent of poverty level▪ 4 = families above 300 percent of the poverty level
Child Age (AGE)	Chronological age of child.
Sex SEX	Gender of child. F = Female M = Male
Child's Psychological Characteristics	
Sad or Depressed (NCPROBC)	Respondent's opinion of child feeling sad or depressed in last month. 1 = Often true 2 = Sometimes true 3 = Never true
Concentration (NCPROBB)	Respondent's opinion of child not being able to concentrate in last month. 1 = Often true 2 = Sometimes true 3 = Never true

Table 1 (continued).

Description of Variables Used in Model on Mothers' Perceptions Toward Child

Variables	Description of Variables
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Child's Social Characteristic	
Getting Along (NCPROBA)	Respondent's opinion to if child gets along with other children. 1 = Often true 2 = Sometimes true 3 = Never true
Mothers' Aggravation Hard Care (NPCINTA)	Respondent's view of difficulty level of caring for child. 1 = All of the time 2 = Most of the time 3 = Some of the time 4 = None of the time
Bothers (NPCINTB)	Respondent's view of if child bothers them a lot. 1 = All of the time 2 = Most of the time 3 = Some of the time 4 = None of the time
Gives Up (NPCINTC)	Respondent's view of if they are giving up more for child's need. 1 = All of the time 2 = Most of the time 3 = Some of the time 4 = None of the time
Angry (NPCINTD)	Respondent's feels angry with child. 1 = All of the time 2 = Most of the time 3 = Some of the time 4 = None of the time

Table 1 (continued).

Description of Variables Used in Model on Mothers' Perceptions Toward Child

Variables	Description of Variables
<hr/>	
Mothers' Characteristics	
Religious Attendance (NRELIG)	How often respondent attends religious services 1 = Never 2 = A few times a year 3 = A few times month 4 = Once a week or more
Mental Health Score (UMH2)	Respondents' mental health score. Derived by summing the responses to five items that ask how often in the past month the respondent had been a very nervous person, felt calm or peaceful, felt downhearted and blue, had been a happy person, and felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer him ore her up. Higher scores indicate better mental health.
Mothers' Opinions	
Effectiveness of Single Mothers (PSINPGPAR)	Respondent's opinion toward effectiveness of single mothers. 1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly disagree
Family Structure (UFAMSTR)	Represents who focal child lives with 1 = Lives with no parents 2 = Lives with single parent 3 = Lives in a blended (step) family 4 = Lives with two biological/adoptive parents

CHAPTER IV

Results

In this chapter, I report descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, means, standard deviations, and cross tabulations) on the sample of the study. I use correlations to demonstrate the relationships between variables and the strengths of these relationships. I used t-tests to examine null hypotheses one: Black nonpartnered and partnered mothers will not differ in their perceptions of their children. To examine null hypothesis two: Mothers' perceptions of single mother's effectiveness will not be explained by mother demographics, child demographics, perceived child characteristics, or mothers' characteristics, I used logistical regression.

Mother and Child Demographic Characteristics

The current study contains a sample of 2,543 Black mothers who were caring for children between 6 to 17 years old. I selected participants who identified themselves as being Black, non-Hispanic. I deleted participants with the following characteristics: (a) those who identified themselves as White, Hispanic, or other; (b) those respondents who were male; (c) those respondents reporting on focal children under the age of six; (d) those households in which children and parents did not live together. I want to recall my readers' attention to the fact that deleting mothers with children under six to ensure that my analysis was based on one "focal" child and to better capture issues that maintain to older children. My final sample includes all Black mothers, 39% were partnered and 61% were nonpartnered.

Age of Mother

Less than 1% of Black mothers in the sample were under 20 years old; 23% were between 20 to 29 years old. Forty-six percent of mothers were 30 to 39 years old; 31% percent of mothers were between 40 to 49 years old. None of the mothers were between were 50 to 59 years of old. Less than 1% were over 60 years old. The mean age for Black mothers in the study was 30 to 39 years old ($M = 3.07$, $SD = .75$). See Table 2.

Table 2.

Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for Black Mothers' Age (n = 2543)

Variable	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age		3.08	.75
Under 20 years of age	.36% (9)		
20-29 years of age	23% (576)		
30-39	46% (1157)		
40-49	31% (773)		
50-59	0% (0)		
60 and above	.28% (7)		
Missing = 21			

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Partner status by age of mother was another way to view these data. Less than 1% of Black mothers were under 20 years old and all were nonpartnered. Of participants who were 20 to 29 years old, 19.6% were partnered and 24.9% were

nonpartnered. Mothers who were 40 to 49 years old represented 33.9% of partnered mothers and 28.56% of nonpartnered mothers. Of Black mothers over 60 years old, less than 1% were partnered or nonpartnered. See Table 3.

Table 3.

Cross Tabulations of Black Mothers' Partner Status By Age (n = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
Under 20 years of age	0% (0)	.60% (9)
20-29 years of age	19.6% (193)	24.9% (383)
30-39	46.3% (456)	45.6% (701)
40-49	33.9% (334)	28.56% (439)
50-59	0% (0)	0% (0)
60 and above	.2% (2)	.33% (5)
Missing = 21		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Education

Mothers' education ranged from the 8th grade to a graduate or professional degree. Around 15% of Black mothers did not complete high school or obtain a GED; 34% had a high school diploma or obtained a GED. Thirty-five percent of Black mothers reported having some post high school courses or an associate degree. Eleven percent of mothers obtained a bachelor's degree or had a bachelor's degree plus some graduate or professional courses; 6% had a graduate or professional degree. The

average educational level of Black mothers was 2.59, representing those who completed a high school diploma or GED. See Table 4.

Table 4.

Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations of Black Mothers' Education (n = 2543)

Variable	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Education		2.60	1.05
Did not complete high school	15% (368)		
High school/GED	34% (846)		
Post-high school/Associate	35% (877)		
Bachelor/Post Bachelor	11% (286)		
Graduate/Professional Degree	6% (140)		
Missing = 26			

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In comparing mothers' educational level by partner status, a larger number of nonpartnered Black mothers (16.9%) did not complete high school or a GED compared to 11.1% of partnered mothers. Thirty-four percent of nonpartnered mothers completed high school or obtained a GED compared to 32.4% of partnered mothers. I found similar results for Black mothers with a post high school or an associates degree – 34.4% were nonpartnered and 35.5% were partnered. A total of 9.7% of nonpartnered mothers and 14% of partnered mothers completed a bachelor's degree or a bachelor's

degree plus some graduate or professional courses; 4.6% of nonpartnered mothers and 7% of partnered mothers obtained a graduate or professional degree. See Table 5.

Table 5.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Black Mothers' Education (n = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
Did not complete high school	11.1% (109)	16.9% (259)
High school/GED	32.4% (318)	34.4% (528)
Post-high school/Associate	35.5% (349)	34.4% (528)
Bachelor/Post Bachelor	14.0% (138)	9.7% (148)
Graduate/Professional Degree	7.0% (69)	4.6% (71)
Missing = 26		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Income

I created three categories for family income based on NSAF's income variable of the percentage of the poverty level for families in 1998. Thirty percent of Black mothers lived in households where the total family income was below the poverty level, with a similar proportion having incomes between 100% and 200% of the poverty level. Thirty-nine percent of mothers had total family incomes above 200% of the poverty level. The average of income for mothers in the sample was between 100% and 200% of the poverty level ($M = 2.08$, $SD = .83$). See Table 6.

In a comparison of partner status by income, nonpartnered mothers represented the largest percentage of the sample that had family incomes below the poverty level of *Table 6*.

Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations of Black Mothers' Income (n = 2543)

	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Income		2.08	.83
Under poverty level	30% (777)		
100%-200% of poverty level	31% (786)		
200% of poverty level and above	39% (980)		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

(43.2%) compared to 10.7% of partnered mothers. Nonpartnered mothers (33.1%) had incomes between 100% and 200% of the poverty level; 27.5% of partnered mothers had the same income level. When comparing mothers with incomes above 200% of poverty level, 23.8% were nonpartnered mothers and 61.8% were partnered mothers. See *Table 7*.

Table 7.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Black Mothers' Income (n = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
Under poverty level	10.7% (106)	43.2% (671)
100%-200% of poverty level	27.5% (272)	33.1% (514)
200% of poverty level and above	61.8% (611)	23.8% (369)

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Age and Gender of Children

Children's ages ranged from 6 to 17 years of age. Twenty-nine percent of children were between 6 to 8 years old. Twenty-five percent were between 9 to 11 years old. Around 22% of children were between 12 to 14 years old. A total of 24% of children were between 15 to 17 years old. On average children were between 9 to 11 years old ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.14$). Slightly more Black mothers were reporting on the behaviors of girls (51%) than that of boys (49%). See Table 8.

Table 8.

*Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations of Child Demographic Characteristics
(n = 2543)*

Variable	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age		2.41	1.14
6-8	29% (742)		
9-11	25% (626)		
12-14	22% (570)		
15-17	24% (605)		
Gender		1.49	.50
Girls	51% (1285)		
Boys	49% (1258)		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In doing a comparison of Black partnered status to child's age, 30.2% of nonpartnered mothers had a focal child between 6 to 8 years of age compared to 27.5% of partnered mothers. Around 24% of nonpartnered mothers had a child 9 to 11 and 25% of partnered mothers had children in this same age group. Just under 23% of nonpartnered mothers and 21.8% of partnered mothers had a focal child 12 to 14 years old. About 23% of nonpartnered mothers and 25.7% of partnered mothers had a focal child 15 to 17 years old. The association of partner status and gender of the child were similar, meaning 49.5% of partner Black mothers were caring for girls compared to 50.5% of partnered mothers were caring for boys. When comparing partner status by

gender of the child, 51.2% of nonpartnered mothers were caring for girls compared to 48.8% of nonpartnered mothers. See Table 9.

Table 9.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Child's Age (n = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
6-8	27.5% (272)	30.2% (470)
9-11	25.0% (247)	24.4% (379)
12-14	21.8% (216)	22.8% (354)
15-17	25.7% (254)	22.6% (351)

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Perceived Child Psychological Characteristics

Sad and Depressed

The next section of descriptive data includes mothers' perceptions of child psychological characteristics. Mothers were asked if their child was sad or depressed within the last month. Four percent of mothers stated that their children were often sad or depressed within the last month. Thirty-six percent reported that their child was sad or depressed sometimes. Sixty-one percent of mothers stated that their child was never sad or depressed within the last month. See Table 10.

Table 10.

Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations of Child Being Sad or Depressed

(*n* = 2543)

	Percentage (<i>n</i>)	Mean	Standard Deviation
		2.57	.57
Often true	4% (96)		
Sometimes true	36% (882)		
Never true	61% (1504)		
Missing = 61			

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In doing a comparison of partner status and perception of child being sad or depressed, 4.8% of nonpartnered and less than 3% of partnered mothers responded that their child was often sad or depressed in the last month. Thirty-eight percent of nonpartnered mothers and 31.6% of partnered mothers responded that their child was depressed sometime within the last month. Just above 57% of nonpartnered and 66% of partnered felt that their was child was never sad or depressed in the last month. See Table 11.

Table 11.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Child Being Sad or Depressed (N = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
Often true	2.4% (23)	4.8% (73)
Sometimes true	31.6% (305)	38.0% (577)
Never true	66.0% (636)	57.2% (868)
Missing = 61		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Concentration

Ten percent of Black mothers reported that their child often had difficulty in concentrating within the last month. Around 36% of mothers responded that their child sometimes had difficulty in concentrating and 53% answered their child never had difficulty. See Table 12.

Table 12.

*Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations of Child Having Problems Concentrating
(n = 2543)*

	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
		2.43	.67
Often true	10% (259)		
Sometimes true	36% (896)		
Never true	53% (1333)		
Missing = 55			

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Comparing mothers' views by partner status was another way to examine these data. Just over 10% of Black nonpartnered and 10% of Black partnered mothers reported that it was "often true" that their child had difficulty in concentrating or paying attention. Of Black mothers who felt that this was "sometimes true," 37.7% were nonpartnered and 33.3% were partnered. Just under 52% of nonpartnered mothers and 56.7% of partnered mothers reported that this was "never true" for their child. See Table 13.

Table 13.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Child Having Problems Concentrating

(*n* = 2543)

	Partnered % (<i>n</i>) (<i>n</i> = 989)	Nonpartnered % (<i>n</i>) (<i>n</i> = 1554)
Often true	10.0% (96)	10.7% (163)
Sometimes true	33.3% (322)	37.7% (574)
Never true	56.7% (548)	51.6% (785)
Missing = 55		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Perceived Child Social Characteristics

Get Along

Black mothers gave their opinions toward their child's ability to get along with other children. Five percent of mothers often felt that their child did not get along with other children. Mothers who felt that their child sometimes had difficulty in getting along with other children represented 29% of my sample. Sixty-six percent of Black mothers felt that their child did not have problems with getting along with other children. See Table 14.

In comparing mothers' responses about whether their child did not get along with other children and partner status, 5.2% of nonpartnered mothers and 3.9% of partnered mothers felt that this was "often true." Of those mothers who felt that their child sometimes did not get along with other children, 30.6% represented nonpartnered

mothers and compared to 27.2% of partnered mothers. Just over 64% of nonpartnered mothers and 68.9% of partnered mothers indicated that their child did not have problems, getting along with other children. See Table 15.

Table 14.

Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations of Perceived Getting Along With Others
(*n* = 2543)

	Percentage (<i>n</i>)	Mean	Standard Deviation
		2.61	.58
Often true	5% (117)		
Sometimes true	29% (728)		
Never true	66% (1644)		
Missing = 54			

Table 15.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Child Doesn't Get Along With Others
(*n* = 2543)

	Partnered % (<i>n</i>)	Nonpartnered % (<i>n</i>)
	(<i>n</i> = 989)	(<i>n</i> = 1554)
Often true	3.9% (38)	5.2% (79)
Sometimes true	27.2% (263)	30.6% (465)
Never true	68.9% (667)	64.2% (977)
Missing = 54		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Mothers' Aggravation, Religious Service Attendance, & Mental Health

Harder to Care For

Black mothers shared their perceptions about whether their child was harder to care for than most children. Three percent of mothers responded “all of the time” to this question. Four percent reported that their child was harder to care for “most of the time.” Twenty-two percent of mothers reported that their children were much harder to care for “some of the time.” Seventy percent of mothers stated that their child was never harder to care for. See Table 16.

In doing a comparison of mothers' partner status and mothers' views of how hard it was to care for their child, 4.2% of nonpartnered and less than 2% of partnered mothers responded “all of the time”. Four percent of nonpartnered mothers and around 3% of partnered mothers responded “most of the time”. Around 25% of nonpartnered mothers and 21.2% of partnered mothers felt that their child harder to care for “some of the time.” Just fewer than 67% of Black nonpartnered mothers and around 75% of partnered mothers responded “none of the time.” See Table 17.

Table 16.

Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations of Child Harder to Care For (n = 2543)

	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
		3.60	.71
All of the time	3% (79)		
Most of the time	4% (93)		
Some of the time	23% (576)		
None of the time	70% (1734)		
Missing = 61			
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.			

Table 17.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Child Harder to Care For (n = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
All of the time	1.6% (16)	4.2% (63)
Most of the time	2.7% (26)	4.4% (67)
Some of the time	21.2% (204)	24.5% (372)
None of the time	74.5% (717)	66.9% (1017)
Missing = 61		
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.		

Child Does Things To Bother Mother

Black mothers were asked whether their child did things to bother them within the last month. Five percent reported that their child did things “all of the time” to bother them. Six percent responded that their child bothered them “most of the time.” Forty-seven percent of mothers reported “some of time.” Forty-one percent stated “none of the time” for this question. See Table 18.

Table 18.

Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations of Child Does Things To Bother

(n = 2543)

	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
		3.25	.78
All of the time	5% (122)		
Most of the time	6% (155)		
Some of the time	47% (1182)		
None of the time	41% (1030)		
Missing = 54			

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

When comparing partner status by mothers’ views of whether their child bothered them, 6.2% of nonpartnered mothers and 2.9% of partnered mothers reported “all of the time.” Just fewer than 7% of nonpartnered mothers and 5.3% of partnered mothers reported that their children bothered them “most of the time.” Around 48% nonpartnered mothers and 47.5% of partnered mothers stated “some of the time” to this

question. Just fewer than 40% of nonpartnered mothers and 44.3% of partnered nonpartnered mothers reported “none of the time.” See Table 19.

Table 19.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Child Does Things To Bother (n = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
All of the time	2.9% (28)	6.2% (94)
Most of the time	5.3% (51)	6.8% (104)
Some of the time	47.5% (460)	47.5% (722)
None of the time	44.3% (429)	39.5% (601)
Missing = 54		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Mother Gave Up More for Child’s Needs

Black mothers shared their opinions on whether they felt that they gave up more of their life to meet their child’s needs than expected in the last month. Fourteen percent of mothers reported “all of the time.” Nine percent of mothers responded “most of the time.” Around 24% believed that they gave up more of their life to meet their child’s needs “some of the time.” Fifty-two percent answered “none of the time.” See Table 20.

Table 20.

Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations Of Mother Gave Up More for Child's

Needs (n = 2543)

	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
		3.15	1.07
All of the time	14% (348)		
Most of the time	9% (232)		
Some of the time	24% (606)		
None of the time	52% (1294)		
Missing = 60			

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

When comparing Black mothers' views toward sacrifice for their child, 16.4% of nonpartnered and 10.4% of partnered mothers responded "all of the time." Around 9% of nonpartnered mothers and 9.6% of partnered mothers responded "most of the time." Just over 25% of nonpartnered mothers and 23% of partnered mothers felt that they gave more for their child's needs "some of the time." Around 49% of nonpartnered and 57% of partnered responded "none of the time." See Table 21.

Table 21.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Gave Up More for Child (n = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
All of the time	10.4% (100)	16.4% (248)
Most of the time	9.6% (93)	9.2% (139)
Some of the time	23.0% (222)	25.3% (384)
None of the time	57.0% (551)	49.2% (746)
Missing = 60		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Angry

Black Mothers shared their views about if they felt angry with their child within the last month. Around 1% of mothers felt angry with their child “all of the time”, 2% felt angry with their child “most of the time.” Sixty-two percent of mothers responded “some of the time.” Thirty-four percent of Black mothers reported that they were angry “none of the time.” See Table 22.

Looking at partner status and Black mothers’ feelings of being angry with their child, 2% of nonpartnered mothers and less than 1% of partnered mothers responded “all of the time.” Under these same categories, 2.3% represented partnered mothers and 2.6% were nonpartnered mothers responded “most of the time”. Around 62% of nonpartnered mothers and a little over this percentage (62.6%) of partnered responded that they felt angry toward their child “some of the time.” Just under 34% of Black

nonpartnered mothers and 34.4% of partnered mothers said they felt angry “none of the time”. See Table 22.

Table 22.

Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations Of Feeling Angry With Child (n = 2543)

	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
		3.29	.59
All of the time	1% (37)		
Most of the time	2% (62)		
Some of the time	62% (1543)		
None of the time	34% (846)		
Missing = 55			

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 23.

Cross Tabulations Partner Status By Feeling Angry With Child (n = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
All of the time	0.72% (7)	2.0% (30)
Most of the time	2.3% (22)	2.6% (40)
Some of the time	62.6% (605)	61.7% (938)
None of the time	34.4% (333)	33.7% (513)
Missing = 55		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Religious Attendance

Black mothers gave their response to a question on religious service attendance within the past 12 months. Twelve percent of Black mothers did not attend services. Around 19% Black mothers attended services a few times a year; 22% reported that they attended religious services a few times a month. Forty-seven percent of Black mothers attended religious services once a week or more. See Table 24.

Table 24.

Frequencies, Means, & Standard Deviations of Religious Service Attendance

(n = 2543)

Variables	Percentage (n)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Religious Attendance		3.04	1.07
Never	12% (297)		
Few times a year	19% (477)		
Few times month	22% (538)		
Once a week or more	47% (1182)		
Missing = 49			

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

In relation to mothers' religious attendance and mothers' partnered status, 13.7% of nonpartnered mothers and 9.1% of partnered mothers never attended religious services. Around 21% of nonpartnered and 15.9% partnered mothers reported that they attended religious services a few times a year. Around 23% of nonpartnered and 19.3% partnered mothers specified a few times a month. Forty-two percent of nonpartnered

mothers and 55.8% of partnered mothers attended religious services once a week or more. See Table 25.

Table 25.

Cross Tabulations of Partner Status By Religious Service Attendance (n = 2543)

	Partnered % (n) (n = 989)	Nonpartnered % (n) (n = 1554)
Religious Attendance		
Never	9.1% (88)	13.7% (209)
Few times a year	15.9% (154)	21.2% (323)
Few times month	19.3% (187)	23.1% (351)
Once a week or more	55.8% (542)	42.0% (640)
Missing = 49		
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.		

Mothers' Mental Health

NSAF derived mothers' mental health score by summing mothers responses on how often in the past month the mother had been nervous, felt calm and peaceful, felt downhearted/blue, felt happy, and felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer them up. A higher score indicated a better mental health. The mean scores of mothers within the sample was 77.02 (*SD* = 12.23).

Correlations Results

I conducted correlation analysis to estimate the association of partner status of mothers, demographic variables, child characteristics, and mothers' characteristics. As

noted in Chapter 3, researchers are able to identify problems of spuriousness and multicollinearity using correlation analyses (Bailey, 1994; Hickey, 1986). Correlation analysis also helps researchers to better specify their regression models (Hickey, 1986). Table 26 gives a complete overview of the correlations of my study. I do not report p values when the significance level is .0001.

Mothers' Demographic Characteristics

Partner status correlations. Beginning with the relationship of Black mothers' partner status and demographic variables, there was a significant negative relationship between partner status and mothers' age ($r = -.07, p < .001$), educational level ($r = -.11$), and income ($r = .12$). A significant negative relationship also was found between partner status and child's age ($r = -.03, p < .10$). A significant negative relationship existed between partner status and perceiving a child as sad or depressed ($r = .10$). There also was a negative relationship between partner status and mothers' perception about their child concentrating ($r = -.04$) and perceiving a child as having difficulty with getting along with other children ($r = -.05, p < .05$). The relationship between partner status and mothers' characteristics was mostly negative. There was a negative relationship between partner status and viewing a child as harder to care for ($r = -.10$), feeling that a child bothers ($r = -.08$), having feelings of giving up more for child's needs ($r = -.09$), religious service attendance ($r = -.13$), and mothers' mental health ($r = -.18$). *See Table 26.*

Age of mother correlations. A positive significant relationship existed between these variables: mothers' age and education ($r = .12$); mothers' age and income ($r = .15$), and mothers' age and child's age ($r = .49$). Mothers' age had a significant

negative relationship with viewing children as sad or depressed ($r = -.05, p < .05$). A significant positive relationship existed between mothers' age and perception of child's concentration ($r = .10$); and mothers' age and perception of how well their child got along with other children ($r = .05, p < .10$). A significant positive relationship existed between mothers' age and their feelings of anger ($r = -.06, p < .01$). Mothers' age had a significant positive relationship to religious service attendance ($r = .19$) and a significant negative relationship with mothers' mental health ($r = -.18$).

Educational level correlations. Mothers' education was significantly and positively related to income ($r = .36, p < .001$) and perceptions of a child being sad/depression ($r = .06, p < .05$). Educational level was also positively and significantly related to Black mothers' perception about their child's ability to concentrate ($r = .10$) and difficulty in getting along with other children ($r = .17$). Education also was significantly and positively related to the mother aggravation variables of child was harder to care for ($r = .13$), child bothers ($r = .10$), and mother gives up more for child's needs ($r = .14$). A significant positive relationship existed between mothers' education and religious attendance ($r = .16$) and mothers' education and mental health ($r = .17$); there was less than a 1% probability of Type I error (Glenberg, 1996).

Family income level correlations. Mothers' level of income was positively and significantly related to child's age ($r = .09, p < .001$) and child's gender ($r = .05, p < .01$). Income had a positive and significant relationship with Black mothers' views about their child's potential sadness or depression ($r = .08$), concentration ($r = .09$), and ability to get along with others ($r = .12$). There were also positive relationships between mother aggravation characteristics of child being harder to care for ($r = .15$), views of

that child bothers ($r = .15$), and feelings of giving up more for child's needs ($r = .15$). Income was also significantly and positively related to mothers' characteristics of religious service attendance ($r = .16$) and mothers' mental health ($r = .23$). See Table 26.

Child Demographic Characteristics

Child age and gender correlations. Child's age had a significant negative relationship with perception of sadness or depression ($r = -.11$). There was a significant positive relationship between perceived child concentration ($r = .09$) and if child got along with other children ($r = .06, p < .01$). A significant negative relationship existed between child's age and viewing child as being harder to care for ($r = -.04$). Black mothers' feelings of giving up more for their child's needs ($r = -.06, p < .01$) and feelings of anger from mother ($r = -.09$) were both negatively related to child's age. There was a positive relationship between mothers' religious service attendance ($r = .12$) and child's age. Child's gender only proved to be significant with difficulty concentrating ($r = -.15$). See Table 26.

Perceived Child Characteristics

Sad or depressed correlations. Perceptions of a child being sad or depressed were significantly and positively related to perceptions about the child's (a) concentrating ($r = .34$), (b) getting along with other children ($r = .34$), (c) being harder to care for ($r = .26$), (d) bothering mother ($r = .30$), and giving up more for child's needs ($r = .17$). Perception of child being sad or depressed was positively and significantly related to religious service attendance ($r = .06, p < .01$) and mothers' mental health ($r = .29$). See Table 26.

Concentration correlations. Perceptions that child had difficulty concentrating was significantly and positively associated with how mothers perceived their child's ability to get along with other children ($r = .39$) and if the child was harder to care for ($r = .30$). A significant negative relationship existed between concentration and mothers' views about her child bothering her ($r = -.27$). Difficulty concentrating also was related to mothers' feelings of giving up more for child's needs ($r = .15$) and having feelings anger toward child ($r = -.16$). Difficulty concentrating was positively and significantly related to mothers' religious service attendance with 6% of the variance explained between the two variables. Mothers' mental health explained 22% of the variance in perceptions about child's ability to concentrate. See Table 26.

Child doesn't get along with other children correlations. How well children got along with other children was positively and significantly associated with viewing child as harder to care for ($r = .25$), if child bothered mother ($r = .29$), if mother felt she was giving up mother for child's needs ($r = .17$), and if mother felt angry with child ($r = .20$). Doesn't get along with others was positively and significantly related to religious service attendance ($r = .20, p < .01$). Child doesn't get along with other children was positively and significantly related to mothers' mental health ($r = .06$). See Table 26.

Mothers' Characteristics: Aggravation, Religious Attendance, and Mental Health

Child harder to care for. Harder to care for was significantly and positively associated with if the child bothered mother ($r = .44$), if the mother felt she was giving up more for child's needs ($r = .33$), and if the mother felt angry with child ($r = .26$). Harder to care for was also positively and significantly related to religious service attendance ($r = .05, p < .01$). Viewing a child as being harder to care for was

significantly and positively related to mothers' mental health and explained 33% of the variance of mothers' mental health. See Table 26.

Child does things to bother. Child does things to bother mother was significantly and positively associated with if the mother felt she was giving up more for child's needs ($r = .31$) and if the mother felt angry with child ($r = .43$). Child does things to bother mother was also positively and significantly associated with religious service attendance ($r = .04, p < .10$). Mothers' views that child bothered was highly related to mothers' mental health ($r = .35$). See Table 26.

Giving up more. Mothers' views of whether they gave up more for child's needs were significantly and positively associated with whether mothers felt angry with child in the past month ($r = .21$) and mothers' mental health score ($r = .29$). Perceptions of giving up more for child were not significantly related to any other variables. See Table 26.

Religious attendance. Mothers' frequency of religious service attendance was significantly and positively related to mothers' mental health score ($r = .16$). See Table 26.

Table 26.

Correlations of Demographics, Perceived Child Characteristics, & Mothers' Characteristics (n = 2543)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Partnered Status	-						
2. Age	-.07***	-					
3. Education	-.11*****	.12*****	-				
4. Income	-.42*****	.15*****	.36*****	-			
5. Child Age	-.03+	.49*****		.09*****	-		
6. Gender Child				.05**		-	
7. Sad/Depressed	-.10*****	-.05*	.06**	.08*****	-.11*****		-
****p < .0001.	***p < .001.		**p < .01.		*p < .05.		+p < .10.

Table 26 (continued).

Correlations of Demographics, Perceived Child Characteristics, & Mothers' Characteristics (n = 2543)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Concentrate	-.04*	.10****	.10****	.09****	.09****	-.15****	.34****
9. Get Along	-.05*	.05+	.17****	.12****	.06**		.34****
10. Hard Care	-.10****		.13****	.15****	-.04*		.26****
11. Bothers	-.08****		.10****	.15****			.30****
12. Gives Up	-.09****		.14****	.15****	-.06**		.17****
13. Feels Angry		-.06**			-.09****		.27****
14. Religious	-.13****	.19****	.16****	.16****	.12****		.06**
15. Mental Health	-.18****		.17****	.23****			.29****
****p < .0001.	***p < .001.		**p < .01.		*p < .05.		+p < .10.

Table 26 (continued).

Correlations of Demographics, Perceived Child Characteristics, & Mothers' Characteristics (n = 2543)

Variables	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
8. Concentrate	-							
9. Get Along	.39****	-						
10. Hard Care	.30****	.25****	-					
11. Bothers	-.27****	.29****	.44****	-				
12. Gives Up	.15****	.17****	.33****	.31****	-			
13. Feels Angry	-.16****	.20****	.26****	.43****	.21****	-		
14. Religious	.06**	.06**	.05**	.04+			-	
15. Mental Health	.22****	.20****	.33****	.35****	.29****	.24****	.16****	-
****p < .0001.	***p < .001.		**p < .01.		*p < .05.		+p < .10.	

Results of Hypothesis One

Differences between Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers. To test hypothesis one, I conducted a t-test to determine if there were any significant differences between Black nonpartnered mothers and partnered mothers on demographic variables, child demographics, perceived child characteristics, and mothers' characteristics. Based on my analysis, Black mothers differed on the demographic variables of age ($t = 1.72$), educational level ($t = 5.37$), and family income ($t = 23.02$). Partnered mothers had higher mean ages, educational levels, and family incomes than nonpartnered mothers. When examining the demographics of the focal child, results showed that focal child of partnered and nonpartnered mothers were moderately different on the variable of age ($t = 1.72$). Nonpartnered mothers were reporting on a focal child with higher mean age than partnered mothers. No significant differences were found on the gender of the focal child.

Perceived child characteristics were also examined in regards to partner status, I found that Black partnered mothers and nonpartnered mothers were significantly different on all of these variables. Black mothers' perceptions differed on viewing their child as being sad or depressed ($t = 4.81$), their perceptions of their child having difficulty in concentrating ($t = 2.14$), and in their perceptions of whether their child did not get along with other children ($t = 2.55$). Black partnered mothers were found to have significantly higher means on all of these variables than nonpartnered mothers.

The next variables to be described are mother characteristics. Mother characteristics included mother aggravation variables, mothers' religious service attendance, and mothers' mental health score. Black mothers significantly differed in

their perceptions of their child being harder to care for ($t = 4.86$), doing things to bother her ($t = 4.05$), and having feelings of giving up more for child's needs ($t = 4.40$).

Looking at the means and standard deviations for my t-tests, Black partnered mothers had significantly higher means on these variables than nonpartnered mothers. No significant differences were found between Black partnered mothers and nonpartnered mothers on their feelings of angry toward their child. Black partnered mothers and nonpartnered mothers were found to differ in their religious service attendance and mental health score ($t = 6.55$). Black partnered mothers also were found to have higher means; partnered mother had higher religious attendance than nonpartnered. Black partnered mothers had better mental health scores based on the means for each group. See Table 27.

Table 27.

T-tests for Black Partnered and Nonpartnered Mothers ($n = 2543$)

Variable	Partnered Mothers ($n = 989$)		Nonpartnered Mothers ($n = 1554$)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Age	3.15	.73	3.03	.77	3.74***
Education	2.74	1.06	2.51	1.03	5.37*****
Income	2.51	.68	1.80	.79	23.02*****
Child's Age	2.46	1.15	2.38	1.14	1.72+
Gender of Child	1.50	.50	1.49	.50	.79
Sad/Depressed	2.64	.53	2.52	.59	4.81*****
Concentrate	2.47	.67	2.41	.68	2.14*
Get Along	2.65	.55	2.59	.59	2.55*
Hard Care	3.68	.61	3.54	.77	4.86*****
Bothers	3.33	.71	3.20	.82	4.05*****
Gives up	3.27	1.01	3.07	1.11	4.40*****
Angry	3.31	.55	3.27	.61	1.51
Religious Attendance	3.22	1.02	2.93	1.09	6.55*****
Mental Health	79.25	14.26	75.60	15.66	5.87*****
***** $p < .0001$. *** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. + $p < .10$.					

Results of Hypothesis Two

The focus of hypothesis two was to determine Black mothers' perceptions toward whether a single mother could be as effective as a married couple. First, I report some of the frequencies and crosstabs to give an overview of Black mothers' views toward single-mother effectiveness. Second, I give the results of the logistical regression to determine if Black mothers' views toward single-mother effectiveness can be explained by child's demographic characteristics, mothers' perception of their child's psychological and social behavior, mothers' aggravation, and mothers' characteristics of religious service attendance and mental health.

Perception of Single-Mother Effectiveness By Mothers' Demographic Characteristics

Single-mother effectiveness and partner status. Sixty-seven percent felt that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple. Thirty-three percent of Black mothers felt that a single mother could not be as effective as a married couple. Of mothers who felt that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple, 41.6% were partnered and 58.4% were nonpartnered. Of those who felt that a single mother could not be as effective as a married couple, 47.7% were partnered and 52.8% were nonpartnered. See Table 28.

Table 28.

Cross Tabulations of Perception of Single Mother Being As Effective By Partner Status

(*n* = 2543)

	Nonpartnered % (<i>n</i>)	Partnered % (<i>n</i>)
	(<i>n</i> = 1554)	(<i>n</i> = 989)
Agree	41.6% (446)	58.4% (627)
Disagree	47.7% (251)	52.8% (275)
Missing = 944		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Single-mother effectiveness and age of mother. When I compared age and perception of single-mother effectiveness, less than 1% of Black mothers under 20 years old felt that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple. Around 21% of mothers between 20 to 29 years old agreed that a single mother could be as effective compared to 18.8% who did not. Of those mothers 30 to 39 years old, 45.8% believed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple compared to those who did not (41.1%). Thirty-three percent of Black mothers between 40 to 49 years old responded affirmatively to single-mother effectiveness; however, 39% of Black mothers of this same age group disagreed. Less than 1% of mothers over the age of 60 years agreed (.09%) that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple, and .96% disagreed. See Table 29.

Single-mother effectiveness and educational level. Of those mothers with less than a high school education, 15.8% agreed that a single mother could be as effective as

a married couple compared to those who did not (14.7%). Close to 34% of Black mothers with at least a high school diploma or GED agreed and 30.7% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. Mothers who had some classes beyond high school or an associate's degree (33%) agreed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple compared to 34.7% who disagreed. Almost 12% of mothers with a bachelor or with a bachelor plus some graduate courses agreed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple. Just under 14% of Black mothers with the same level of education disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. Around 6% of mothers with a graduate or professional degree were in agreement with single-mother effectiveness. Among Black mothers with a graduate or professional degree, 6.1% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. See Table 29.

Single-mother effectiveness and family income. When comparing Black mothers' family income and views toward single-mother effectiveness, 28.3% of mothers below the poverty level agreed with single-mother effectiveness; 30% of Black mothers with this income level disagreed. Almost 32% of mothers between 100% and 200% of the poverty level agreed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple compared to who disagreed (28.9%). Of Black mothers with incomes above 200% of the poverty level, 40.2% responded in the affirmative toward and 40.1% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. See Table 29.

Table 29.

Cross Tabulations of Perception of Single Mother Being As Effective By Mothers'

Demographics (n = 2543)

Single-Mother Effectiveness By Age of Mother

	Agree % (n)	Disagree % (n)
Under 20 years of age	0.47% (5)	0.19% (1)
20-29 years of age	20.6% (219)	18.8% (98)
30-39	45.8% (486)	41.1% (214)
40-49	33.0% (350)	39.0% (203)
50-59	0% (0)	0% (0)
60 and above	0.09% (1)	0.96% (5)
Missing = 961		

Single-Mother Effectiveness By Educational Level

Did not complete high school	15.8% (169)	14.7% (77)
High school/GED	33.9% (362)	30.7% (161)
Post-high school/Associate	33.0% (352)	34.7% (182)
Bachelor/Post Bachelor	11.5% (123)	13.9% (73)
Graduate/Professional Degree	5.7% (61)	6.1% (32)
Missing = 951		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 29 (continued).

Cross Tabulations of Perception of Single Mother Being As Effective By Mother

Demographics (n = 2543)

Single-Mother Effectiveness By Income		
	Agree % (n)	Disagree % (n)
Under poverty level	28.3% (304)	30.0% (158)
100%-200% of poverty level	31.5% (338)	28.9% (157)
200% of poverty level and above	40.2% (431)	40.1% (211)
Missing = 944		
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.		

Perception of Single-Mother Effectiveness By Child Demographic Characteristics

Single-mother effectiveness and child's gender. When comparing child's gender by views of single-mother effectiveness, 49.8% of Black mothers with daughters believed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple compared to 51% who disagreed. Just over 50% of mothers of sons reported that they felt that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple. Just under 50% Black mothers with sons disagreed with this assertion (49.1%). See Table 30.

Single-mother effectiveness and child's age. Twenty-seven percent of mothers raising a child 6 to 8 years old felt that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple and 27.4% disagreed. Mothers with children 9 to 11 years of age represented 25.4% of Black mothers agreed with this question and 23% who disagreed. Just over 22% of Black mothers with children 12 to 14 years old agreed with single-

mother effectiveness; 21.9% disagreed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple. Around 25% of mothers caring for children 15 to 17 years old agreed and 27.8% disagreed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple. See Table 30.

Table 30.

Cross Tabulations of Perception of Single Mother Being As Effective By Child

Demographics (n = 2543)

Single-Mother Effectiveness By Child's Gender		
	Agree % (n)	Disagree % (n)
Girls	49.8% (543)	51.0% (268)
Boys	50.2% (539)	49.1% (258)
Missing = 944		
Single-Mother Effectiveness By Child's Age		
6-8	27.0% (290)	27.4% (144)
9-11	25.4% (273)	23.0% (121)
12-14	22.1% (237)	21.9% (115)
15-17	25.4% (273)	27.8% (146)
Missing = 944		
Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.		

Perception of Single-Mother Effectiveness By Perceived Child Psychological Characteristics

Single-mother effectiveness and viewing child as sad and depressed. Single-mother effectiveness and perceptions about experiences of sadness and depression by participant's child was another indicator of mothers' perceptions of their child's psychological behavior. Of mothers who specified that their child was often sad or depressed, 3.6% agreed and 5.4% disagreed with a single mother being as effective as a married couple. Of those mothers who responded that their child sometimes was sad or depressed, 35.3% agreed with single-mother effectiveness and 37% disagreed. When comparing mothers' views toward single-mother effectiveness and perceptions of child never being sad or depressed, 61.1% of mothers agreed and 57.6% of mothers disagreed to single-mother effectiveness. See Table 31.

Single-mother effectiveness and viewing child's ability to concentrated. Ten percent of Black mothers who stated that their child often had difficulty concentrating, agreed with single-mother effectiveness and 12% disagreed. Around 36% of Black mothers who agreed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple and 36.6% who disagreed specified that their child sometimes had difficulty concentrating . Just fewer than 55% of mothers who responded that their child never had a problem concentrating agreed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple compared to those who disagreed (51.4%). See Table 31.

Table 31.

Cross Tabulations of Perception of Single Mother Being As Effective By Perceived Child Psychological Characteristics (n = 2543)

Single-Mother Effectiveness By Perceived Child Sadness/Depression		
	Agree % (n)	Disagree % (n)
Often true	3.6% (38)	5.4% (28)
Sometimes true	35.3% (377)	37.0% (193)
Never true	61.1% (653)	57.6% (300)
Missing = 954		
Single-Mother Effectiveness By Perceived Child Concentration		
Often true	10.0% (106)	12.0% (63)
Sometimes true	35.5% (379)	36.6% (192)
Never true	54.6% (584)	51.4% (270)
Missing = 949		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Perception of Single-Mother Effectiveness By Perceived Child Social Characteristic

Single-mother effectiveness and child doesn't get along with other children. Just over 4% of Black mothers who responded that their child often had difficulty in getting along with other children also felt that a single mother could be effective as a married couple compared to 5% who disagreed. Twenty-eight percent of Black mothers agreed that a single mother could be as effective as married coupled and 34.5% of Black mothers disagreed specified that their child sometimes had difficulty in getting along with other children. Of mothers who responded that their child never had problems

getting along with other children, 67.9% agreed that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple and 60.5% disagreed. See Table 32.

Table 32.

Cross Tabulations of Perception of Single Mother Being As Effective By Perceived Child Getting Along With Other Children (n = 2543)

	Agree % (n)	Disagree % (n)
Often true	4.1% (44)	5.0% (26)
Sometimes true	28.0% (300)	34.5% (181)
Never true	67.9% (727)	60.5% (20)
Missing = 948		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Perception of Single-Mother Effectiveness By Mothers' Characteristics

Single-mother effectiveness and harder to care. When comparing mothers' views toward single-mother effectiveness and perceptions of child being harder to care for "all of the time," 2.6% of Black mothers agreed and 4.6% disagreed. Around 3% of mothers agreed and 6.3% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness also perceived their child as being harder to care for "most of the time". Just over 23% agreed with single-mother effectiveness when perceiving their child as being harder to care for "some of the time." Within this same relationship 25.5% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. Close to 71% of Black mothers agreed and 63.6% disagreed that single mothers could be as effective as married couples were among Black mothers who perceived their child as being harder to care for. See Table 33.

Single-mother effectiveness and bothers a lot. When comparing perceptions of single-mother effectiveness and perceptions of if child bothers “all of the time,” 4.3% of Black mothers who agreed and 5.3% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. Around 6% of mothers who agreed and 2.7% disagreed that single mothers were effective as married couples also felt their child bothered them “most of the time.” Of those mothers who felt that their child bothered them “some of the time,” around 49.3% agreed and 46.3% disagreed with single mothers being as effective as married couples. When comparing perceptions of single-mother effectiveness and perceptions of if child bothers “none of the time,” 40.9% of mothers agreed and 40.3% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. See Table 33.

Single-mother effectiveness and gives up more for child. When comparing mothers’ views of single-mother effectiveness and feelings of giving up more for child’s needs “all of the time,” I found that 13.6% of Black mothers agreed and 13.4% disagreed with a single mother being as effective as a married couple. Around 10% of mothers who felt that they gave up more for their child’s needs “most of the time” also agreed to single-mother effectiveness, 10.7% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. Twenty-six percent of Black mothers who felt they gave up more “some of the time” agreed with single-mother effectiveness; 26.5% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. Just over 50% of Black mothers agreed with single-mother effectiveness and 49.4% of Black mothers disagreed that felt they did not give up more for their child’s needs.

Single-mother effectiveness and feels angry with child. Close to 2% of Black mothers agreed and just over 1% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness also were

among mothers who also felt angry with their child “all of the time.” Looking at mothers who felt angry with their child most of the time, 2% agreed and 3.6% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. Just over 65% of mothers who responded that they felt angry with their child “some of the time” agreed with single-mother effectiveness; 61.7% disagreed. Mothers who reported that they were angry with child “none of the time” represented 31.2% of mothers who agreed with single-mother effectiveness compared to those who disagreed (33.5%). See Table 33.

Single-mother effectiveness and religious service attendance. When comparing religious service attendance and views of single-mother effectiveness, 11.5% of Black mothers agreed and 10.3% disagreed with single-mother effectiveness never attended religious services. Of those who attended religious services a few times a year, 19.1% agreed and 18.1% disagreed with single mother-effectiveness. Black mothers who attended services a few times a month represented 22.8% of mothers who agreed with single-mother effectiveness compared to 21.1% who disagreed. Around 47% of mothers who agreed and 50.6% who disagreed with single-mother effectiveness attended religious services once a week or more. See Table 33.

Table 33.

Cross Tabulations of Perception of Single Mother Being As Effective By Mothers'

Characteristics of Aggravation (n = 2543)

Single-Mother Effectiveness By Child Being Harder to Care For

	Agree % (n)	Disagree % (n)
All of the time	2.6% (28)	4.6% (24)
Most of the time	2.8% (30)	6.3% (33)
Some of the time	23.1% (246)	25.5% (134)
None of the time	71.4% (760)	63.6% (334)
Missing = 954		

Single-Mother Effectiveness By Child Bothers

All of the time	4.3% (46)	5.3% (28)
Most of the time	5.5% (59)	2.7% (43)
Some of the time	49.3% (527)	46.2% (243)
None of the time	40.9% (438)	40.3% (212)
Missing = 947		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 33 (continued).

Cross Tabulations of Perception of Single Mother Being As Effective By Mothers'

Characteristics of Aggravation (n = 2543)

Single-Mother Effectiveness By Gives Up More For Child		
	Agree % (n)	Disagree % (n)
All of the time	13.6% (147)	13.4% (70)
Most of the time	10.2% (109)	10.7% (56)
Some of the time	26.0% (278)	26.5% (139)
None of the time	50.1% (535)	49.4% (259)
Missing = 950		
Single-Mother Effectiveness By Feels Angry With Child		
All of the time	1.6% (17)	1.1% (6)
Most of the time	2.0% (21)	3.6% (19)
Some of the time	65.3% (698)	61.7% (324)
None of the time	31.2% (333)	33.5% (176)
Missing = 949		
Single-Mother Effectiveness By Religious Service Attendance		
Never	11.5% (123)	10.3% (54)
Few times a year	19.1% (205)	18.1% (95)
Few times month	22.8% (244)	21.1% (111)
Once a week or more	46.6% (500)	50.6% (266)
Missing = 945		

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Perceptions of Single-Mother Effectiveness Explained by Demographics

Characteristics, Perceived Child Characteristics, and Mothers' Characteristics

The overall fit of the model was sufficiently specified ($\chi^2 = 48.36$, $df = 15$) at $p < .0001$, therefore, the results of the model did not occur by chance. The intercept of the model was not significant. Several of variables within the model did significantly explain mothers' perceptions toward single-mother effectiveness. Mother demographic variables that proved to be significant were mothers' age ($p < .01$), education ($p < .05$), and income ($p < .10$). Mothers' age and education both had negative influence on perceptions of mothers' views toward single-mother effectiveness. Mothers' income had a positive influence or relationship on mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness (see Table 34). When examining child's demographic characteristics, my results showed that a child's gender and age did not explain a significant amount of the variance in mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness. See Table 34.

When examining how perceptions towards child's psychological and social characteristics explained mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness, I found that mothers' perception of their child being sad or depressed and about their child's were insignificant. Mothers' perceptions of whether their child was not able to get along with other children explained a significant portion of the variance in mothers' views toward single-mother effectiveness ($p < .05$). See Table 34.

The results demonstrated that two of the mother aggravation variables significantly explained mothers' perceptions toward single-mother effectiveness. These variables included mothers' views about whether their child was harder to care for ($p < .01$) and if mother felt angry with child in the past month ($p < .10$). Mothers'

perceptions that child did things to bother and having feelings that she gives up more for child's needs were not significant. Mothers' attendance at religious services was not significantly related to single-mother effectiveness, but mothers' mental health positively and significantly explained mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness ($p < .10$). See Table 34.

Table 34.

Logistical Regression for Variables Explaining Partnered and Nonpartnered Mothers'

Perceptions of Single-Mother Effectiveness (n = 2543)

Variable	B	SE	χ^2
Intercept	-.50	.60	.68
Partner Status	.36	.12	8.17**
Age	-.22	.09	6.65**
Education	-.11	.06	4.23*
Income	.13	.08	2.75+
Gender of Child	.04	.11	.14
Child's Age	.03	.06	.39
Sad/Depressed	.02	.11	.04
Concentrate	.03	.09	.09
Get Along	.24	.11	4.78*
Hard Care	.29	.10	10.02**
Bothers	-.03	.10	.10
Gives up	-.07	.06	1.61
Angry	-.19	.11	2.83+
Religious	-.06	.06	1.22
Attendance			
Mental Health	.01	.004	3.12+

****p < .0001. ***p < .001. **p < .01. *p < .05. +p < .10.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Overview of Demographics

Black Mothers' Demographic Characteristics

The sample for the current study consisted of 2,543 Black mothers who were caring for a child 6 to 17 years old. Thirty-nine percent of mothers were partnered and 61% were nonpartnered. The majority of Black mothers were between 30 to 49 years old (77%); partnered mothers represented 46.3% and nonpartnered mothers represented 45.6% in this same age group. The mothers in my study resembled the population of Black mothers in the United States for the year of 2000. In the year of 2000, 38% of Black children lived with two parents and 50% lived with just their mothers (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001).

Education and income were descriptive variables used in my study on Black mothers' perceptions toward their child and toward single-mother effectiveness. Thirty-five percent of mothers had some post-high school education or an associate's degree. The second highest percentage of Black mothers (34%) had at least a high school diploma or GED. Eleven percent of mothers had a bachelor's degree. Income appeared to be evenly distributed. Thirty percent had incomes below the poverty level, 31% had incomes between 100% to 200% of the poverty level, and 39% had incomes above 200% of poverty the level. Around 43% of nonpartnered mothers had incomes below the poverty level compared to 10.7% of partnered mothers. The fact that a higher percentage of Black nonpartnered mothers were impoverished is consistent with previous research that showed economic vulnerability of nonpartnered mothers

(Jayakody et al., 1993; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2001; Wilson, 1997; Zollar & Williams, 1987).

I also described Black mothers in the current study by the gender and age of their child. Black mothers who were raising girls slightly outnumbered mothers who were raising boys. Age of child was somewhat evenly distributed across the two groups. The largest percentage of Black mothers had a child between 6 to 8 and 9 to 11 years old (54%). Based on partner status, 27.5% of Black partnered mothers and 30.2% of nonpartnered were caring for a child 6 to 8 years old.

Differences in Black Partnered and Nonpartnered Mothers

When examining differences on mother and child demographic characteristics, I found that Black mothers differed significantly on age, educational level, family income, and child's age. Black partnered mothers were older, had higher levels of education and higher family incomes than Black nonpartnered mothers. My finding that partnered mothers had higher family incomes was consistent with the research. Researchers have found that two-parent families were more financially stable than nonpartnered mothers (Demo & Cox, 2001; McLahanan & Booth, 1991; Taylor, et al., 1991; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2001; Wilson, 1997). Although my study does not address this matter, Black nonpartnered mothers' economic vulnerabilities have strong implications for their children. For example, lower educational levels and income levels were linked to mothers having more negative views of their child's behavior (Jackson, 1993; Landers-Potts et al., 1999).

Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers also were significantly different on their views toward their child's psychological and social behavior. Black partnered

mothers were less likely to view their child as being sad and depressed compared to nonpartnered Black mothers. Partnered mothers also viewed their child as having less difficulty in concentrating and less difficulty getting along with other children than nonpartnered mothers. Overall, partnered Black mothers tended to have more positive perceptions toward their child's psychological and social behavior, which is consistent with other studies (Stolba & Amato, 1993; Webster-Stratton, 1989; Whitehead, 1983). In previous research scholars have found that married mothers reported more positive behavior of their children than single mothers when examining children's self-concept, psychological behavior, social behavior, and conduct.

Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers differed significantly on several indicators of mothers' characteristics. Black partnered mothers appeared to be less aggravated than nonpartnered mothers. Black partnered mothers tended to state "some of the time" or "none of the time" on the questions about whether their child was harder to care for or if their child was bothersome. Feelings associated with giving up more for a child's needs were less likely to be held by Black partnered mothers than Black nonpartnered mothers. Using symbolic interaction theory, these results show that partnered mothers perceived their aggravation at lower levels than nonpartnered mothers. Even though there were significant differences between the two groups on level of aggravation; the two groups had similar response means on aggravation variables.

No significant differences were found when examining Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers on having feelings of anger toward their child. It is possible that Black mothers may not feel that it is unacceptable or inappropriate to admit that they

were angry with their child. Children historically have been highly valued within the Black community; therefore, many Black mothers may not feel anger toward their child but have feelings of love and affection (Billingsley, 1968; Dickerson, 1995; Sudarkasa, 1997). Culturally variant perspective theorists would suggest that Black mothers have developed adaptive perspectives to cope with the stress of parenting their children. These adaptive perspectives may have developed through having to cope with racial discrimination and economic hardships for which Black mothers may have built a tolerance against stressful situations. These adaptive perspectives may explain the insignificant differences between Black mothers perceptions of anger toward their child, but additional research is needed.

Black partnered mothers attended religious services more often than nonpartnered mothers in this study. Viewing these results using the culturally variant perspective (Allen, 1978), religious attendance may be a positive attribute for Black partnered mothers, providing them support, strengthening their resiliency, and giving them hope for the future. Despite my findings about Black partnered mothers, researchers found that Black families had strong religious orientations (Hill, 1971; 1999; Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993; Ward, 2000). The Black church is a valuable resource for mothers, helping them to nurture their children and to instill pride (Franklin et al., 2002; Randolph, 1995).

Before leaving this part of my discussion, I expected Black nonpartnered mothers to have higher levels of religious service attendance than partnered mothers. I thought that nonpartnered mothers would obtain the support from a church family more often than partnered mothers. It is possible that religiosity was not captured in my

religious attendance variable. Black mothers may have found other ways for their children to have religiosity in their lives such as sending their children to church activities alone or with other relatives, teaching their child to pray, or reading religious literature to their children in the home. Black mothers may also have their children participate in other activities such as National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Boys and Girls Club, vacation bible school, and summer camps instead of attending religious services consistently.

I also examined differences in Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' mental health; there was a significant difference between the two groups. Black partnered mothers ($M = 79.25$) had a higher mean score than nonpartnered mothers ($M = 75.60$). My findings are consistent with previous research that showed mothers' psychological well-being relation to marital status of African and European American mothers (Broman, 1988; Davises et al., 1997; McAdoo, 1982; McLanahan, 1983; Zollar & Williams, 1987). Previous researchers have linked poor mental health in Black mothers to lower levels of self-esteem, lower self-efficacy, and less optimism about the future. Scholars showed that nonpartnered mothers' poor mental health is related to nonpartnered mothers having less financial resources and lower levels of social support (Brody & Flor, 1997; McAdoo, 1982). This is an important finding because mothers with poor mental health tended to be more critical of their child's behavior than mothers with better mental health (Brody & Forehand, 1986; Griest et al., 1979; Landers-Potts, 1998; Teti & Gelfand, 1991; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1988). The implications of these studies signify the need for additional research.

Single-Mother Effectiveness and Mothers' Demographic Characteristics

Before conducting a logistical regression to examine Black mothers' views of single-mother effectiveness, I looked at descriptive data on Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' perceptions toward single mothers being as effective as married couples in raising children. Sixty-seven percent of mothers agreed that single mothers could be as effective as married couples compared to 33% that disagreed.

Black Mothers' Views Toward Single-Mother Effectiveness

Partner status, mothers' demographic characteristics, mothers' perceptions of child social behavior, and mothers' aggravation explained the variance in Black mothers' views toward single-mother effectiveness. Partner status was significantly and positively related to Black mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness – partnered mothers viewed a single mother as effective as a married couple. These results appear to be logical because around 42% of Black partnered mothers and 58.4% of Black nonpartnered mothers viewed single mothers as effective as married couples.

Mothers' demographic characteristics of age and education significantly explained Black mothers' perceptions toward single-mother effectiveness. Older Black mothers were more likely to agree that a single mother could be as effective as a married couple. This is not surprising because around 79% of participants who agreed with single-mother effectiveness were 30 to 49 years old. Mothers with higher levels of education were more likely to agree with single-mother effectiveness, which is consistent with the fact that the majority (70%) of Black mothers who agreed with single-mother effectiveness had some courses beyond high school. Mothers who are older and have higher levels of education may have had more positive experiences with

raising their children alone or may have had interactions with nonpartnered mothers who have been successful in raising their children as nonpartnered mothers.

Income was positively and moderately related to opinions of single-mother effectiveness. Black mothers with lower incomes were more likely to be positive about single mothers being effective. This could be connected to the fact that a larger percentage of nonpartnered mothers had incomes below the poverty level. Based on the culturally variant perspective, I would expect Black nonpartnered mothers to take an adaptive perspective toward single-mother effectiveness. It would be a contradiction for nonpartnered mothers to report that other nonpartnered mothers are not as effective as a married couple when they are caring for their child in a similar family structure. Thus, they would view themselves as competent parents, despite their nonpartnered status.

Mothers' perceptions of their child's social behavior explained Black mothers' views toward single-mother effectiveness. Single-mother effectiveness was positively and significantly related to Black mothers' perceptions of whether their child had problems getting along with others, meaning partnered mothers who viewed their child as having problems getting along with others agreed with single-mother effectiveness. There were no significant differences in Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' perceptions about their child "getting along with others," but in this analysis Black mothers' perceptions toward their child's social behavior significantly influenced their views toward single-mother effectiveness. This finding could possibly mean that nonpartnered mothers may have difficulty raising their child, but they do not believe that having another adult in the home will solve their child's behavioral problems. For

example, researchers found that children's academic performance was not different based on family structure (Battle, 1998; Luster & McAdoo, 1994; Scanzoni, 1971). Black nonpartnered mothers may also believe that they could receive help from other social networks to aid in the nurturing and socializing of their child (Franklin et al., 2002; Hildreth et al., 2000; Hill, 1971; 1999; Randolph, 1995). Once more, further studies are needed to test my suggestion about Black mothers not relating poor social behaviors in their children to ineffective parenting. The meanings that Black mothers attached to single-mother effectiveness is not fully captured by their perceptions of their child's social behavior.

Black mothers who answered in the affirmative about single mothers' effectiveness were more likely to perceive their child as being harder to care for than Black mothers who disagreed with single-mother effectiveness. Black partnered mothers and nonpartnered mothers significantly differed in their views of if their child was harder to care for. Using a culturally variant perspective and symbolic interaction theory to guide my thinking, Black mothers appeared to view a single mother as effective as a married couple. Considering that the sample was mostly nonpartnered mothers, it does not appear that nonpartnered mothers link their own aggravation or child's behavior to their partner status. Black mothers in the sample did not appear to be pessimistic about single-mother effectiveness, despite their family circumstances that may exhibit more adaptive behaviors and perceptions.

Despite the links to negative child outcomes (Heiss, 1996; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Moynihan, 1965; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998b; 2000; 2001; Zill & Nord, 1994), Black mothers appeared to be in agreement that a single mother could

be as effective as a married couple. Using both symbolic interaction theory and a culturally variant approach, Black mothers may not perceive two-parent families as being the superior model for raising children. Stated differently, they may believe that being partnered does not have any great advantage over being nonpartnered. Based on previous research, Black mothers have not relied just on fathers to care for children. Black mothers depend on other relatives, fictive kin, and other social support resources (Collins, 1995; 1999; Franklin et al., 2002; Hill, 1971; 1999; Jayakody, et al., 1993; McAdoo, 1988; Randolph, 1995). In this study, Black mothers did not attributed their own aggravation or lack of aggravation to their partner status and family structure.

Black mothers' feelings of anger were negatively and moderately related to mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness. Therefore, mothers who agreed with single-mother effectiveness were less likely to have feelings of anger towards their child. Earlier, I found no significant difference in Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' feelings of anger toward their child. Using symbolic interaction theory, Black mothers may not link their partner status to their feelings of angry towards their child, making this a viable research topic for future study. Using a culturally variant perspective to examine Black mothers' perceptions of anger towards their child, Black mothers may not perceive anger as an appropriate feeling or emotion to have towards their child. Black mothers in the study may not have felt comfortable in admitting that they were angry with their child to the interviewer. Because of the social stigma attached to Black single-parent families, some Black mothers may have tried to over emphasize that they were not angry to comply with social expectations of parenting in

American culture as well as with the values of motherhood in the Black community. All these ideas need to be tested more in depth in future studies.

Mothers' mental health score explained some of the variance in mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness. Mothers with higher mental health scores were more likely to answer affirmative to single-mother effectiveness than mothers with lower mental health scores. Using symbolic interaction theory, mothers who had higher levels of mental health may not believe that partner status is the only variable that translates into nurturing, effective parenting than mothers with lower levels of mental health. Therefore, from a culturally variant perspective, mentally healthy Black mothers may not embrace the stigma of single-motherhood. Additionally, Black mothers may have come to the conclusion that having an additional adult would not decrease their stress or increase their psychological well-being. I believe additional research is needed to explore mothers' perceptions of the stigma of single motherhood and resources that single mothers need to be effective.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers perceptions of their child's behavior and single-mother effectiveness. The study was a secondary analysis of the NSAF (1999) data set and examined mothers caring for a child 6 to 17 years old. I used a culturally variant perspective and symbolic interaction theory as the guiding conceptual frameworks.

My results showed that Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers were significantly different on their perceptions of their child's psychological and social behavior. Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers were also significantly different

on their level of aggravation toward their child. Other significant differences were found in Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' ages, educational levels, family incomes, religious service attendance, and mental health scores.

Even though Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers had similar views of their child's behavior, partnered mothers perceived their child's behavior more positively than nonpartnered mothers. These perceptions may be due to the fact that partnered mothers were more mature than nonpartnered mothers. It is also possible that their views were more positive because they had a stronger social support system by having a partner in the home and attending religious services more often. Black partnered mothers also had higher educational levels and mental health scores than nonpartnered mothers that may have added to their overall well-being.

The study had several significant findings that added to the research on Black families as well as the research on Black mothers. The study appeared to be one of the few studies that have used a nationally representative data set to focused only on Black mothers from various income levels and educational backgrounds. Based upon the literature reviewed for this study, this study was the first to examine Black partnered mothers' and nonpartnered mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness. Black mothers viewed single-mother effectiveness as a function of partner status, age, educational level, family income, and perceptions toward their child's social behavior. Black mothers' aggravation of feelings of anger towards child was moderately related to perceptions toward single-mother effectiveness. I have begun to examine this issue.

Considering the culturally variant perspective, it is possible that several of the variables within the study were not significant because they did not measure the views

and definitions that Black mothers hold toward their child's behaviors. I was not able to take into account the relationships of racism and discrimination on mothers' views of parenting their children or toward single mother-effectiveness. I direct my readers' attention to the Moynihan Report (1965) that failed to incorporate a culturally variant perspective to the issues facing Black families. To study Black mothers requires looking at the historical, social, political, and economic influences and the adaptive behaviors used to combat the challenges and successes of this heterogeneous group (Allen, 1978; Bruner, et al., 1996; Collins, 1995; 1998; 1999; Dill, 1997; Harley, 1994; Hill, 1971; 1999; McAdoo, 1988; Roberts, 1997; Washington, 1988).

The lack of a significant relationship between religious attendance and single-mother effectiveness was unclear and unexpected. It is possible that Black mothers do not feel that they need to attend organized religious services to be religious or other variables may be needed to get a more in-depth response. To address this concern would require using an interdisciplinary approach using research and methods indicative of Family Studies and Black Studies, Family Law, Political Science, and Religious Studies; this would provide a more complete understanding of religion among contemporary Black mothers. A pilot study on Black mother may be needed after and extensive interdisciplinary review of the literature.

Results of the study also demonstrated that Black partnered and nonpartnered mothers' perceptions of single-mother effectiveness were explained by partner status, mothers' age, educational level, income, views of how well child got along with others, viewing child as harder to care for, having feelings of anger toward child, and mothers' mental health score. Based on symbolic interaction theory, Black mothers' views of

single mothers were less shaped by their perceptions toward their child's psychological behavior. These data provide some evidence to explain Black mothers' views toward single-mother effectiveness. The way this unique racial group creates meanings of single-mother effectiveness warrants additional research to give a more complete understanding. It is important that when other researchers read this data that they do not directly tie negative perceptions of mothers solely to partner status. It is possible that the resources of mothers play a larger role than partner status in how mothers perceive their children's behavior.

Limitations

One of the major limitations as specified in the methods section, was the use of secondary data. As the researcher, I was not able to go back and ask participants additional questions about their experiences as Black mothers or to revisit factors that may influence their views toward single-mother effectiveness. Additionally, I could not have participants check my inferences against their reasoning or views.

An additional limitation related to the number of children in the household. I was not able to specify how many children were in the home because the NSAF focused only on two focal children and I manipulated the data to focus on one child. Black mothers with more than one child may view their child, as well as single-mother effectiveness, differently than Black mothers with one child. Additionally, I believe that there was a chance of selection bias because the mother was able to choose the focal child upon which the data were collected. A mother could have chosen a child that she favored or least favored, therefore skewing the results.

In using a secondary data set, I was limited to only the variables that were used by NSAF. The family income variable was limited in scope because it did not give an actual amount for family income – under \$20,000, \$20,000 to \$30,000; this limits the variability. Socioeconomic status is another way to conceptualize the demographic variable of income. Researchers could use the type of job held by partnered and nonpartnered mothers or other adults in the home. I would conduct a study using SES as measured by education and income categories. This may give a different lens of how income and family structure influences Black mothers' perceptions.

Partner status was another variable that could have been clearer in my study. In my study partner status was based on mothers' current partner status. The problem with measuring partner status based on current status is that significant past relationships may not be accounted for. Several differences could exist between mothers who were remarried, divorced, widowed, or never married. Differences could exist in how many times a mother could have been previously married along with stage of current relationship. Previous partner status could make a difference in both the economic and emotional well-being of Black mothers, a mother who has recently entered a new relationship may have a better well-being when compared to a mother who recently ended a relationship. It is also important to know the reasons why previous relationships were ended; if it was because of domestic violence, infidelity, or because both partners decided that a separation would be best. A mother who recently lost her partner to death may be better off financially than a mother who is separated from her husbands due to incarceration. Mothers who lost their partners to death may receive insurance benefits and social security to support her family; a mother whose partner is

in prison may not have any additional contributions to the well-being of her family. Future research must take into account the dynamics of marital status when examining the lives of Black mothers.

The next set of limitations related to issues of diversity. In using a culturally variant perspective, I attempted to look at how participants adapted to the environments in which they live. Only exploring the perceptions of Black mothers may be considered a limitation by other researchers who do not hold a culturally variant perspective. It can be seen as a limitation because I do not compare Black mothers to other racial or ethnic groups (Stanfield, 1998). However, Black mothers are not a heterogeneous group. The historical background of Black families may not apply to all Blacks or may apply differently to Blacks, even those included in the current sample. It is possible that some Blacks may have different racial and ethnic backgrounds (i.e., African, European, Caribbean). The experiences and hardships of Blacks may differ across the United States.

Another limitation may also lie in the fact that some potential participants who were of African descent may have been left out of the sample because they considered themselves as “other” by being biracial. It is possible that many Blacks within the sample may not identify with the history of Black families or Black motherhood that I gave in the literature review. I do not know how they develop meanings of motherhood and of single-mother effectiveness.

Future Research

I am suggesting for future researchers to do more research on the perceptions of Black mothers toward their children and single-mother effectiveness. It is important to use a culturally variant perspective to examine Black mothers separately from other racial and ethnic groups because they are a unique population within the United States. It would also be helpful for future researchers to do some qualitative work on how mothers define negative behavior and positive behavior of children (i.e., what is being disobedient, what behaviors do mothers reward, why would a child be punished). It is possible that qualitative interviewing may open doors toward a better understanding of how Black mothers view mothering. Some of the questions that need to be asked are mothers' views of how motherhood has changed them as individuals, their views of abortion, and the positive and negative aspects of single mother households. Using a culturally variant perspective, Black mothers should also be asked how the Black community views single mother households and how these households are accepted or not accepted. There is also a need to examine how Black mothers' view the influence of history on Black families in America, Black parenting, and Black motherhood. Comparisons between Black mothers and Black fathers would give some insight into how couples view Black motherhood. It would also be interesting to apply a life course approach by comparing women of different ages to see if age, cohort, generation, or other social constructions shape perceptions toward Black mothers and single-mother effectiveness. The application of various family theories to Black women's lives (Allen, 1978) becomes a reality when all of the above approaches come to pass.

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Appendix A

Vita

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Education

- 2002 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, M.S.,
Human Development, Blacksburg, VA. QCA: 3.83/4.0.
Thesis: A Secondary Analysis: Analysis of Black Partnered and
Nonpartnered Mothers' Perceptions of Their Children and
Single-Mother Effectiveness.
- 2000 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, B. S.,
Human Development: Human Services, Blacksburg, VA
QCA: 3.04/4.0

Honors/Awards

- 1999- 2000 All Academic Team, Virginia Tech Athletic Department,
Blacksburg, VA.
- 1999 **National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Leadership
Conference**
Selected to attend national leadership conference; addressed
issues faced by student athletes on college campuses; enhanced
team building, motivation techniques, and leadership styles.

Graduate Research Experience

- 2000-Present Graduate Research Assistant, Virginia Polytechnic and State
University, Blacksburg, VA
Duties: Collected data using personal interviews, focus groups,
and survey methods; transcribed data; developed code books.
Supervisor: Tammy Henderson

Graduate Teaching Experience

- 2000-Present Teaching Assistant, Virginia Polytechnic and State University.
Blacksburg, VA. HD 4344, Community Programs in Family Life
& Parent Education and Practice and HD 4364.
Duties: Assisted with the preparation of lectures, course packets
and materials, syllabi, and examinations. Developed power point
presentations and Excel spreadsheets for course grading.

Publications in Progress

Henderson, T. L. & Cook, J. (In Progress). Grandparent Raising Grandchildren: A Case Analysis of African American Appalachian Families.

Professional Experience

- 2000 Youth/Adult/Athletic Services Assistant, Bow Creek Recreation Center, Virginia Beach, VA
Duties: Lead diversified recreational programs and services. Supervised activities in weight room and gymnasium.
- 1999 Blacksburg Senior Center, Blacksburg, VA
Duties: Assisted instructor of senior computing class.
- 1999 Intern, Portsmouth Department of Child Protective Services, Portsmouth, VA
Duties: Assisted with intake and interviews process for neglected and abused children. Helped with the removal of neglected and abused children.
- 1998 Summer Camp Counselor, YMCA Mount Trashmore, VA Beach, VA
Duties: Planned activities for six-year-old children; supervised field trips and swimming lessons. Assisted social skills, self-concept, and overall well-being.
- 1997 Summer Camp Counselor, Virginia Tech Service Learning, Lantern Ridge Apartments, Blacksburg, VA
Duties: Planned recreational and craft activities for children in primary, middle, and secondary schools. Distributed lunches.

Professional Presentations at National Meetings

Cook, J. L. An Analysis of Black Partnered and Nonpartnered Mothers' Perceptions of Their Children and Single-mother effectiveness (2002). Poster submitted to the Quint State Conference, Blacksburg, VA.

Whitfield, C. L., Henderson, T. L., Kim, D. Gooden, S. T. & Beccerra, R. Parents' Perceptions Toward Quality Child Care (2001). Poster submitted to the Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Rochester, NY.

Professional Associations

- 2000 – Present Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS), Virginia Polytechnic and State University Chapter
- Vice-President (2001/Present)
 Assisted president; planned and organized special events including fundraising and community outreach. Supervised committees.
- 2001 – Present National Council on Family Relations (NCFR)
 Ethnic Minorities Section (2001/Present)

Professional Service Associations

- 1998 – Present Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated
- 2000 – 2001 Virginia Polytechnic and State University Athletic Department
 Advisory Board

Extracurricular Activities

- 2000 – Present Peer Mentor, Minority Academic Opportunity Program
- 1996 – 2000 Women's Track Team, Virginia Polytechnic and State University
 Team Captain (1999-2000 seasons).
 Competed in Atlantic 10 and East Coast Athletic Conferences.
 Developed leadership and team-building skills.