Parent-adolescent conflict of single working and single non-working African American mothers with their adolescent daughters

Bobbie Thompson Wing

Clark Atlanta University

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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORK

WING, BOBBIE THOMPSON  B.A. CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, 1970

PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT OF SINGLE WORKING AND SINGLE NON-WORKING AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS WITH THEIR ADOLESCENT DAUGHTERS

Advisor: Professor Naomi T. Ward
Thesis Dated: May, 1992

The overall objective of this study was to examine the parent-adolescent conflict of single working and single non-working African American mother with their adolescent daughters. To attain this objective, the following areas were addressed: (1) conflict, (2) contentment, and (3) responsibility. A comparative research design was used in the study. A convenient sample of 29 single African American mothers were utilized, 13 were single working mothers and 16 were single non-working mothers.

The study found that: (1) there was no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers with reference to conflict with their adolescent daughters (2) there was no statistical significant difference between single working
and single non-working African American mothers in reference to contentment with their adolescent daughters, and (3) there was no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers in reference to responsibility with their adolescent daughter.
CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT OF
SINGLE WORKING AND SINGLE NON-WORKING
AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS WITH
THEIR ADOLESCENT DAUGHTERS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER IN SOCIAL WORK

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

BOBBIE THOMPSON WING

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
MAY 1992
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I would like to thank Professor Naomi T. Ward for her invaluable assistance in completing this thesis; to Dr. Amos Ajo for his assistance; Mrs. Alvia Boone for her support and encouragement; my husband, John and two children, Natalie and Atiba for their love and patience, and to all of my extended family and friends for their emotional support and encouragement.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

There is a tendency in the American society to think of adolescence as a period of dramatic change for the adolescent and a period of stress for the parent. Adolescence is portrayed as a time of constant conflict between parent and child. The adolescent is believed to be seeking independence and is depicted as rebellious, moody and defiant. The parents are pictured to be at their wits end as to how to handle the adolescent. Consequently because of this unique period in a child's life, adolescence needs to be delineated.

Adolescence in a period of transition in which the youth seeks autonomy and independence from the parent. This is the period where the child moves from childhood to adulthood. Erick Erikson described adolescence as the period when autonomy is dawning on young people. They begin to choose their own friends and pastimes and to build meaningful emotional ties away from the family.¹

Adolescence is a period where stress can be created in the parent-adolescent relationship. Some families face severe crisis wherein conflict can not be resolved within the family. Yet, there are general societal expectations that some conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship will exist. A certain amount of conflict is thought to be normal in the parent-adolescent relationship. When conflict escalates to the point that the parent is unable to solve the conflict and must seek outside intervention, social work practitioners need to be knowledgeable about some of the factors that might have contributed to the conflict.

Throughout American history women have assumed the primary responsibility for the parenting of the children in the home. As many more women, including single African American mothers, enter the work force we may expect a change in the parent-child relationship as we know it today. As the number of single mother families increase, the role of the caretaker may shift from mother to adolescent child.

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The adolescent may be expected to make decisions and perform tasks usually attributed to the adult but may not be given the same level of autonomy when making decisions concerning themselves. Parents will retain the right to determine curfew, phone limits, chores, and will even attempt to mandate who the child will be friends with or date. These moments of vacillating role reversal may cause great conflict particularly in single African American homes where intervention or support may not be sought until the point where the conflict cannot be resolved.

Studies have shown that adolescent daughters have more conflict with their mothers than with their fathers. Single mothers may be described as the fastest growing entity structure among African American families. However, few studies have researched the relationships of the African American mother and her adolescent daughter. In African American single parent families, the single parent who provides the day to day parenting is most likely the mother. Therefore more research needs to be explored in this area because of the high population of single African American mothers.


The vast majority of the body of traditional research from 1870 to 1975 on single parent African American families profiled these families as dysfunctional. More recent literature have provided different findings. Among the finding are those of Sudarkasa and McAdoo who stated that the African heritage explains certain aspects of Black family structure. The study indicated that stability of the African extended family did not depend on the stability of the marriage(s). The children were cared for by a lineage in case of a divorce. The focus on extended families is apparent in African American families today and is a strength and stabilizing factor in these families.

Another finding by Dodson in McAdoo revealed that cultural differences in Black families are traced back to the Black American's African cultural heritage, and this study tends to focus on the strengths rather than weaknesses of Black families.

When children and families are allowed to describe in their own words what it means to live in a single-parent household a much different picture emerges. What is viewed as "pathology" by researchers then becomes a strength, the "Matriarch" becomes a strong, secure force against a hostile

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7Ibid., 39.
8Ibid., 77.
Instead of matriarchy, other factors such as underemployment or unemployment, family instability, limited personal resources, little or no education, and poor family support are major contributing factors to the quality of life and interpersonal processes in single parent families.

In single African American mothers, stress may contribute to conflict in their interpersonal relationships with their adolescent daughters. African American single mothers who have conflict with their adolescent daughters have been given little attention in the research, however, many social services must provide services for these families on a frequent basis.

It is the researcher's observation that these families are referred to public social agencies or that these parents approach the agencies only after they have lost control of the adolescent. The parent and adolescent are then usually unable to resolve their conflict without outside intervention. Services are sought to help these families bring about some acceptable changes in the parent-adolescent relationship. Further observations revealed that the majority of the parents are female and single. Their employment status varies and most likely impacts their

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10 Ibid., 77.
relationships with their adolescent daughters.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence has a reputation as a crisis period in many families. Some of the severe problems exhibited by adolescents are running away from home, truancy, teen pregnancy and delinquent behavior. Some other issues in adolescent families are those dealing with curfews, household responsibilities, peer relationships and school studies.

While some conflict is thought to be normal in families where there are adolescents, there are some related factors that might contribute to severe conflict within the family. The conflict found within these families is often multifaceted. Among the various factors are those associated with the area of adolescent development which involve the roles of the parent and the socio-economic conditions.

The research problem is parent-adolescent conflict when comparing families headed by single working mothers and those headed by single non-working mothers of African American descent. Adolescents are seeking autonomy in which parents must make adjustments in the parent adolescent relationship. The parent may not be ready to accept the autonomy that the adolescent seeks. Curfews, dating, peer relationships, and household responsibilities are some of the problems that might create conflict between the mothers and adolescents.
Single mothers have the additional issues of adjusting household responsibilities to meet the family needs. The shift in responsibilities might contribute to role confusion in the home. This may be especially so in African American families where traditionally mothers have been employed outside of their home and an older sibling cares for younger siblings. It is the researcher's observation that as more and more adolescents of single parents become known to juvenile courts and counseling services, issues regarding the mother-adolescent-daughter relationships will seem more complex.

**The Purpose and Significance of the Study**

Adolescence is said to involve dramatic transitions in the physical, social, sexual and intellectual spheres, and transitions of this order might be stressful. While both males and females experience the stresses that normally accompany adolescence, this developmental phase is considered to be more stressful for female adolescents.\(^n^\) This study will address the female parent-adolescent conflict of single working mothers and single non-working mothers in the African American culture.

The researcher has had the experience of working in a public welfare agency with clients who are experiencing parent-child conflict. Whether the mothers are working or

\(^\text{n}^\)C.M. Siddique, and Carl D'Arch, "Adolescence Stress and Psychological Well-Being," *Journal of Youth and Adolescent* 13 (December 1984), 460.
non-working, the parent-adolescent conflict is severe by the time the situation comes to the attention of the agency. The families are under a great deal of stress. The parent-adolescent relationship is often strained to the point of the mother having lost control of the adolescent. Thus, the researcher finds a need for more attention to the area of mother-daughter relationships in African American families. More culturally specific information needs to be available as the researcher's experience has found African American mothers experiencing conflicts in which the family must seek intervention through social service agencies.

Once these families are identified in social services agencies, intervention and guidance must be available to meet their needs. From this researcher's experience in social services, African American families usually do not seek outside intervention until the problem has become severe. There is a dearth in the literature on parent adolescent conflict between single African American mothers and their adolescent daughters. Yet with the increase in single African American mothers, it is likely that there will be an increase in parent-adolescent conflict cases in the child welfare system. Child Welfare Workers need knowledge and expertise in helping these families.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

When exploring the general area of parent-adolescent conflict, the initial emphasis in this review is on adolescence. In exploring related concerns in parent-adolescent relationships, the primary areas of focus in this study were theory on adolescence, parent-adolescent conflict, parent-adolescent relationships, and single parenting and ethnicity.

Theory of Adolescence

Adolescence is a period in the life cycle that has received considerable attention. As such, there are varying views on the meaning of adolescence.

Shalov and others, in a theoretical view of adolescence, defines adolescence as follows: "It is important to recognize that adolescence is a time of growth. In fact, the root of the Latin word adolescence, meaning to grow up is the same in the root for the word 'adult'. However, the growth process involves a myriad of annoying, perplexing, and frightening behavior patterns."

According to this view by Shalov and others, the behavior patterns include: (1) lack of impulse control, (2) the need for instant gratification, (3) identity confusion,
(4) a desire for separation and independence, (5) challenge to authority, (6) limiting-testing, (7) movement away from parents toward peer groups for support, (8) sexual experimentation, (9) substance experimentation, (10) mood swing, and (11) physical and intellectual development of enormous proportions. This view presents a complex view of adolescence. It is based on behavior theory.

Another view of adolescence from a developmental perspective has been discussed by Herbert and Pillari. These authors describe adolescence in developmental periods.

The first developmental period is that of early adolescence. Early adolescence is defined by the physical and physiological changes that take place. The physical and physiological changes that take place on an average, at age twelve in girls and fourteen in boys are quite dramatic hormonal changes. Growth in all parts of the body are accelerated. The early adolescent is able to procreate but has not achieved the psychosocial development to necessary function as an adult.

The second developmental period is that of middle adolescence. Middle adolescence is characterized by the

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adolescent striving for independence. The adolescent wishes to separate from the parent and is seeking an independent identity. Early adolescence is a period wherein the adolescent strives for freedom to have one's own thoughts, feelings, values and future plans.

The third development period of adolescence is late adolescence. Late adolescence is characterized by the adolescent moving away from the family. The adolescent is spending time making plans about the future, further schooling, work and career.4

Similar to Herbert and Pillari, but with focus on the interrelatedness of adolescence with the family and parents, Scherz cites that families with adolescents can be described as living in a stage of transitional crisis characterized by confusion. There are maturation tasks that make this stage of family life cycle the major identity crisis. The middle years of adolescence frequently coincide with the middle years of the parents. The adolescent is struggling with such crucial tasks as the establishment of sexual identity, achievement in learning directed toward a vocational goal, the development of self-responsibility, making a place for outside the family, finding a new place in the family, and experimenting with values that are different from those of the parents. At the same time, the parents are also

struggling with their tasks in the sexual sphere, in achievement, in dealing with problems of emotional separation and the impending physical separation from the adolescent.5

Related Research

Much literature had been published on parenting adolescents. Today's market is flooded with guides on parenting adolescents. One view in the popular literature is often the portrayal of parenting adolescents as a laborious task of coping with rebellious and defiant behavior.6

In exploring related research regarding parent—adolescent conflict and parent adolescent relationships, a variety of factors were found. A study by Silverberg and Steinberg of 129 families involved mothers, fathers and adolescents. The findings indicated that adolescent development and the nature of parent—adolescent relationship are related to the parent's sense of self and well being as middle-aged adults. The higher the self-esteem and the higher the general life satisfaction found among the parents resulted in higher emotional autonomy in the adolescents.

A second finding by Silverberg and Steinberg revealed that mothers appeared adversely affected by conflict regarding issues such as curfew, chores, free time and style


of clothes.\textsuperscript{7}

Newman conducted a study on parent-adolescent relationships of 110 families that included the mother, the father and the oldest adolescent child. This author showed that mother and daughters expressed greater identification and experienced more satisfaction in their relationships than family members in other parent-child relationships. Newman also indicated that mothers and daughters involved each other in decision making which may contribute to their having a closer relationship.\textsuperscript{8}

Gottlieb and Chafetz focused on differences in gender in a study involving fifty college age student and at least one of their parents or guardians. These researchers found that females were willing to admit to and relate experiences of familial interpersonal conflict. Gottlieb and Chafetz's data found that parents assessed appropriate and inappropriate behavior based on sex and age. The older the child, the greater the parental demanded for the child to conform to the parents' norms. Parents reacted to the child's behavior according to the sex. What was acceptable or tolerable for males was not acceptable for girls.


The four main findings of Gottlieb and Chafetz were:

(1) In most cases, even though parents may have felt that there was a problem, they tended not to seek help until confronted with hard data, such as a person or agency outside of the house; (2) The parental socioeconomic status determined the pursuit of intervention or help resources in that the more affluent sought professional help while the less affluent tended to use severe restrictions, or assistance from the juvenile authority or clergy; (3) In familial conflict neither child or parent intended to hurt each other and usually both had minimized, hid or compromised away differences; and (4) Factors contributing the child parent conflict included psychological, social, economic, political and historical dimensions.\textsuperscript{9}

From the findings in the related research, age of the parents in addition to gender differences, was another factor that might affect the parent-adolescent relationship. Parents of adolescents are more likely to be middle-aged. Silverberg and Steinberg in a study of 129 families and their first born child between age ten and fifteen found parents have mid-life identity concerns. These identity concerns were intensified when the adolescents were seeking autonomy.

\textsuperscript{9}David Gottlieb and Janet Chafetz, "Dynamics of Familial, Generational Conflict and Reconciliation," \textit{Youth and Society} 9 (December 1977): 217-218.
Silverberg and Steinberg's study further showed that mothers, upon seeing their daughters reaching independence, reevaluated their own life choices; personal commitments, and life situations.\textsuperscript{10}

Montemayor, in a study of 64 adolescents, presented another factor of the parent adolescent relationship that may contribute to conflict. The relationship between parent adolescent conflict and the amount of time adolescent spent with parents and peers was examined. These findings reported that adolescents were equally involved with peers and parents. Time spent with parent included completing household chores, shopping and eating. Time spent with peers included entertaining and talking.

Montemayor's study further cited that females may have some conflict between parents and peers. His finding suggested that females pursued more interpersonal competence, which was achieved with peers rather than with parents.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Single Parenting And Ethnicity}

In exploring related research regarding parent adolescent conflict and parent adolescent relationship there is an abundance of literature on single African American


parenting but little was found on the African American single parent-adolescent factor.

Research by Fine, Schwebel and Myers on the adaptation to single parenthood among Black middle class adult mothers indicated that there are those who advocated a more Afrocentric World view. The Afrocentric World view was defined as more spiritual, communal, and interpersonal.

According to Fine, Schwebel and Myers, the Afrocentric World view is, "less achievement oriented", materialistic and individualistic than the alternate Eurocentric perspective. Those with the Afrocentric perspective had higher self-esteem, less depression and anxiety and were more satisfied with being mothers.\(^{12}\)

Data from this study supports the argument that holding an Afrocentric as opposed to Eurocentric belief system is positively associated with the nature of the adjustment to the single mother experience. This was measured by the Belief Systems Analysis Scale (BSAS). The results of the factor analysis of the scale conveyed that the following constructs were assessed: (1) optimism, (2) holistic orientation, (3) idealized order, (4) internal sense of worth, and (5) spirituality. Holders of an Afrocentric World view were more optimistic, had a more holistic

orientation, and an internal focus of control; they were more spiritual and considered self-worth to be intrinsic in being.

Brehrnstedt, Freeman and Smith conducted a study on parent-child conflict with 1,002 adults that included Blacks. They reported that Blacks are less likely to acknowledge their children's autonomy than other ethnic groups in the sample. This study cites that Blacks are more traditional and less secular because of their religious and other cultural experiences than other ethnic groups. The adult perspectives were examined in the areas of education, privacy, appearance, religion, economics, sexual conduct, access to media, political participation, public responsibilities, and social participation.\textsuperscript{13}

When examining single mothers and their adolescents, the results from Fine, Schwebel and Myers also indicated that single mothers were less well adjusted than those from two-parent families. These authors documented psychological distress associated with single motherhood, but did not provide evidence that single-mother families are pathological or dysfunctional as in views of Moynihan.\textsuperscript{14}


Jacobsen and Bigner in a study, Value of Children (VOC), found that African American single parents are generally more positive about parenting. African American single parents have generally less access to life satisfactions in other areas such as occupation, education, and leisure. Therefore, African American single parents turn to their role as parent. This role is a constant and reliable source of satisfaction. The findings also indicated African American single parents derived life satisfactions from their families, friends, church, and occupation. These authors suggested that what may be happening here is a relative search for satisfactions.\(^\text{15}\)

Research in the area of parent-adolescent relationships confirms the theories found on adolescents. Adolescence is the period when children separate and gain a self-identity from parents. Studies in the area of parent-adolescent relationship cite several factors involved in separation and parent adolescent conflict. Some of these studies suggest factors may include sex differences, the ages of the parents and time spent with the parents and peers.

Overview Of The Major Theoretical Orientation

Research findings, Herbert and Pillari defined adolescence as a period of growth and change. This growth and change is normal for adolescent development. It is when the adolescent separates from the parent and establishes his or her own identity. This disengagement process is usually not accomplished without strain and stress in the family.

This research is guided by the theoretical model of Developmental Theory. The development theory by Pillari that shapes this study explains that developmental changes are generally systematic, organized changes, and the entity or thing that changes could be a culture, a society or group, or an individual.

According to Pillari not all changes are developmental ones. The non-development changes are random, unorganized, and unsystematic. Such events can cause more stress than developmental events. If the person has not expected it and therefore, was not prepared for it, the person may need special help in adapting.18

Secondly, this researcher's study is guided by relationship theory by McAdoo wherein African American


18Ibid
families are viewed from a perspective that recognizes the cultural variations, functionality, and validity of African American family lifestyles. The African American parent-child interaction employs a culturally relevant approach.

African American parent-child relationships may be affected by the constraints America society places on the family. African American parents must encourage the development of the skills, abilities, and behaviors necessary to serve as competent adults in a racially oppressive society.¹⁹

**Definition of Terms**

The operational definitions that guided this study are cited below:

**African American** - The Social Services specialists in child protective services and the Parent and Teacher Association representative identified the single mothers as Black or African American. An African American is identified as a Black American of African descent.

**Conflict** - For this study conflict is the discontentment between mother and daughter. The conflict is characterized by the mother's attitude regarding her relationship with her daughter. Some of the descriptive characteristics are as follows: (1) resent child, (2) disagreement regarding curfews, telephone usage and, (3) anger towards child.

Contentment - The satisfaction the single African American mothers feel toward their relationship with their adolescent daughters. Some of the descriptive characteristics are as follows: (1) enjoy their children, (2) think the children are terrific, and (3) get along well with their children.

Parent - The caretaker of an adolescent child, whether by birth, legal adoption or informal adoption, denotes parent. A caretaker who perceives herself as the adolescent's mother and resides with the adolescent.

Relationship - This concept refers to a connection between daughter and single mother wherein the two perceive each other as mother and daughter. The mother is viewed as the parent and authority figure by the adolescent. The adolescent is viewed as dependent upon the mother and the mother is responsible for the adolescent's day-to-day welfare.

Responsibility - For this study responsibility is the chores to be completed by the adolescent daughters and attitudes of the single parents towards their adolescent daughters achieving autonomy. Some of the descriptive characteristics are as follows: (1) washing dishes, (2) shopping for the family, and (3) level of trust.

Single Working Mother - A female caretaker who has at least one adolescent daughter and who is gainfully employed in the home or outside of the home. The mother must receive some wages for employment or labor.
**Single Non-Working Mother** - A female caretaker who has at least one adolescent daughter and who is not receiving any wages for labor or employment.

**Statement of the Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses will be tested:

1. There is no statistical significant difference between single working African American mothers and single non-working African American mothers with reference to conflict with their daughters.

2. There is no statistical significant difference between single working African American mothers and single non-working African American mothers with reference to contentment with their daughter.

3. There is no statistical significant difference between single working African American mothers and single non-working African American mothers with reference to responsibility with their daughters.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

This was a descriptive study which employed a correlational design. The comparative design compared two groups. The two groups were: (1) African American single working mothers and (2) African American single non-working mothers in their relationships with their daughters. The two groups were compared in terms of their viewpoints regarding conflict, contentment and responsibility with their adolescent daughters.

SAMPLING

A population of African American single mothers participated in the study. The mothers had to be parenting at least one adolescent daughter in the age range of eleven through eighteen. The population was selected by convenient sampling. The sample was selected from three population groups of single mothers who were available and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

One group was selected from the cases of Service Workers in a public service agency in Atlanta, Georgia. The Protective Services Workers selected from the cases those families that were identified as Black single parents with at least one adolescent daughter, between the ages of 11
through 18. Permission to utilize cases to identify the mothers was obtained from the administration of the Child Protective Services Unit. (Appendices A&B)

The second group of participants were selected from a Parent Teacher Association in a high school located in the South Fulton County area of Metropolitan Atlanta. Additional single mothers were contacted based on the recommendation of those participants from the above two groups. All participants were identified as Black or African American by being of African descent.

From the two lists totaling 48 single mothers, telephone contacts were made inviting the mothers to participate. Home visits were made to the single mothers who did not have telephones to ask for participation. The surveys were then administered in their home, to those who agreed to participate. Out of a list of 34 single mothers from the Child Protective Services cases 16 agreed to participate and out of 14 from the Parent and Teacher Association 13 agreed. A total of 29 agreed to participate. After the questionnaire was administered, the non-working parents were separated from this group to make the comparison. All participation in the study was strictly voluntary.
DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

A questionnaire, "Index of Parental Attitudes" by Walter H. Hudson, was administered to gather data. The purpose of the scale was to measure a parent's relationship with a child.\(^{20}\)

The questionnaire, (Appendix C), was adjusted by the researcher to measure mother-daughter conflict. Ten items were added to the questionnaire to measure more specifically mother-daughter conflict. The questionnaire consisted of 35 items and two sections. The first section consisted of demographic information designed to establish the characteristics of the sample. The second section consisted of the Index of Parental Attitudes questionnaire which was adapted with added items to gain more information regarding what issues that may impact the mother-daughter relationship. Items 2, 5, 4, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 24 measured contentment. Items 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35 measured conflict. Items 3, 21, 22, 28, 29, and 30 measured responsibility.

Data for the study was collected in the homes of participants during a period from February 24, 1992 to March 5, 1992. The questionnaire was self-administered. The researcher was available for assistance when needed. The questionnaire was accompanied by a brief explanation

regarding the nature of the research study and thanking the participants for their cooperation.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The method of analysis was correlation design. The data analysis was concerned with the basic distributional characteristics of the variables involved in the study which included the demographic variables, contentment variables, conflict variables, and responsibility variables. The T-Test was employed to measure the degree of variation among sets of scores. The level of significance was determined at the .05 level. Frequencies and percentages were utilized for analysis of data.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented on demographic data and on single working and single non-working mother and adolescent daughter relationship. The specific hypotheses discussed under single working and non-working mother and adolescent daughter relationship include:

1. There is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American Mothers with reference to conflict with their daughters.

2. There is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers with reference to contentment with their daughters.

3. There is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers with reference to responsibility with their daughters.

Demographic Data

The demographics in this study are presented by (1) age, (2) marital status, (3) ages of the adolescent daughter, (4) number of children (5) education and (6) employment status.
**Age** - The respondent ages, ranging from 24 to 40+, are stated in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Age of Respondents in Frequency and Percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24-30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that from age range 24-30 there were 2 (or 6.9%) respondents. In the age range 31-35 there were 10 (or 34.5%). In the age range 36-40 there were 13 (or 44.8%). In the age range 41 and above there were 4 (or 13.8%). The typical respondent was from age 36-40.

**Marital Status** - The marital status of the respondents included; (1) single, never married, (2) separated, (3) divorced, and (4) widow. The marital status data is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Marital Status of Respondents in Frequency and Percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 reveals that 14 (or 48.3%) respondents were single, never married. Eight (or 27.6%) respondents were separated. Seven (or 24.1%) respondents were divorced and no (or 0%) respondents were widowed. The typical respondent was single, never married.

**Age Group** - The adolescent daughters. The adolescent daughters of the respondent's ranged in ages from 11 to 18 as stated in Table 3.

**Table 3 - Age Group of the Adolescent Daughters of Respondents in Frequency and Percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages of Adolescent Daughters</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that for respondent's daughters from ages 11-14 there were 14 (or 38.9%). Respondent's adolescent daughters in the age range 15-18 were 15 (or 41.7%) which was the majority.

**Number of Children** - The number of children for the respondent's ranged from 1 to 7 as stated in Table 4.

**Table 4 - Number of Children of Respondents in Frequency and Percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 indicates that 7 (or 24.1%) respondents had 1 child. Seven (or 24.1%) respondents had two children. Ten (or 34.5%) respondents had 3 children. Three (or 10.3%) respondents had four children. One (or 3.5%) respondent had 5 children and one (or 3.5%) respondent had seven children. The typical respondent had three children.

**Education** - The respondents educational level was reported in terms of: (1) Less than high school, (2) High school graduate, (3) Some college, and (4) College graduate as stated on Table 5.
Table 5 shows 9 (or 31.0%) respondents have less than high school education. Eight (or 27.7%) respondents have a high school education. Seven (or 24.1%) respondents have some college education and five (or 17.2%) respondents are college graduates. The typical respondent had less than high school education.

Employment Status - Respondents were employed or not employed as stated in Table 6.

Table 6 - Employment Status in Frequency and Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows that 13 (or 44.8%) respondents were employed. Sixteen (or 55.2%) were not employed. The typical respondent was not employed.

Summary of Demographic

The demographic findings revealed that the typical respondent ranged from ages 36-40. The marital status of the majority of the respondents was single, never married. The respondents reported 14 adolescents daughters in the age range 11-14 and 15 adolescent daughters in the age range 15-18. The number of children in the family ranged from 1 to 7. The typical number of children was 3 (or 34.5%). The typical respondent had less than high school education. The findings revealed 13 of the respondents were employed and 16 of the respondents were not
Parent Adolescent Relationship

The findings of the Index of Parental Attitudes (IPA) are presented according to conflict, contentment and responsibility. The individual items in each area (conflict, contentment and responsibility) were combined to give a composite score for single working and single non-working mothers.

The findings are presented according to Group I - Single working African American mothers and Group II - Single non-working African American mothers.

Hypothesis 1 states that there is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers with reference to conflict with their adolescent daughters.

The T-Test analysis of the findings showed $t=1.70$, $df=26$, $p<.101$. See Table 7.

Table 7 - T-Test Analysis of Conflict by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>$X$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group I</td>
<td>33.6154</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II</td>
<td>42.1250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results indicated that there is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers with reference to conflict with
their daughters. Based on these results the null hypothesis is accepted. Hypothesis 2 stated that there is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mother with reference to contentment with their adolescent daughters.

The T-Test analysis of the findings revealed $T=1.22$, $df=26$, $P<.235$. See Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8 - T-Test Analysis of Contentment by Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results revealed that there is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mother with reference to contentment with their daughters. Based on these results the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 3 stated that there is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers with reference to conflict with their adolescent daughters.

The T-Test analysis of the findings showed $t=.01$, $df=24$, $P<.991$. See Table 9.
Table 9 - T-Test Analysis of Responsibility by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>X</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group I</td>
<td>14.9231</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II</td>
<td>14.9375</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results showed that there is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers with reference to responsibility with their adolescent daughters.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses the findings, limitations of the study and research directions for future researches.

Interpretation of Findings

The demographics indicated that the respondents tended to be in the 36-40 age range. This finding is congruent with Silverberg and Steinberg in an earlier study which indicated that parents of adolescents have a tendency to be middle age. The marital status of the respondents revealed the highest percentage as single, never married which is consistent with the growing number of single African American mothers.

The age group of the adolescent daughter was close in numbers, 51.7 percent in the age range of 15-18 and 48.3 percent in the range of 11-14. The number of children in the family highest percentage, 34.5 percent showed three children. The overall results in the number of children showed families were smaller, 19.4 percent and 19.4 percent with 1 and 2 children, respectively. The larger families revealed 2.8 percent and 2.8 percent with 5 and 7 children, respectively.
The two other demographics were education and employment. The highest percentage of the respondents had less than a high school education. The highest percentage of the respondents were unemployed. These two findings are consistent with Jacobsen and Bigner that the Black single parent has generally less access to life satisfactions in areas of occupation and education.

The present study findings indicated that there is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers with reference to contentment with their adolescent daughters. The mean score for contentment of single working mothers was 13.3077. The mean score for contentment of single non-working mothers was 15.6875. This may suggest that there is a societal influence on adolescent behavior. Societal influences include medial exposure and peer relationship which may affect adolescents in single similar ways. Therefore the attitudes of single working mothers and single non-working parents are similar in reference to contentment.

The present study findings indicated that there is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working mothers with reference to conflict with their adolescent daughters. The mean score for conflict of single working mothers was 33.6154. The mean score for conflict of single non-working mothers was 42.1250. This may suggest that single working mothers may
spend the same amount or more quality time with their adolescent daughters as non-working mothers spend with their daughters. Another factor could be the influence of peer on the adolescent daughters. The adolescent daughters of both group may spend much of their time with peers, thus not impacting on the single working and single non-working African American mothers in a significantly different manner.

The results of this study revealed that there is no statistical significant difference between single working and single non-working African American mothers with reference to responsibility with their adolescent daughters. The mean score responsibility for single working mothers was 14.9231. The mean score of responsibility for single non-working mothers was 14.9375. This may suggest that the adolescent daughters of both groups of single mothers are school age and spend approximately the same amount of time in school and interacting with peers, thus allowing the same amount of time to be responsible for chores.

The researcher could not find another study which examined the relationship between parent-adolescent conflict of single working and single non-working African American mothers. Franklin, a Black researcher cited there is a lack of comprehensive knowledge on Black adolescents making conclusions in this area difficult. Inferences about parent-adolescence conflict among African American must be
drawn from the general literature.

The conclusions of the findings indicate that single working and single non-working African American mothers experience similar issues with their adolescents. Overall, this may indicate that both groups of mothers may spend approximately the same amount of time with their adolescent daughters. The adolescents daughters of both groups are of school age. The working mothers are returning home from work approximately the same time the adolescents daughters have returned from school. There is a similar relationship in responsibility. The adolescent daughters are home during the same hours, thus having time to complete or not complete similar chores.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size of the study was small with a total of twenty-nine respondents. The geographical areas from which the respondents came were in Fulton County and are not equally representative of the total population in the greater metropolitan area of Atlanta. The findings apply to a population of single African American mothers from two different areas of metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia only. The findings of this study can only be generalized to the sample. Another limitation is that mother-daughter conflict was explored from the views of the mothers without the views of the adolescent daughters.
Collapsed data of composite scores did not reflect analyzed differences among the variables of conflict, contentment and responsibility. This quantitative findings may be questionable when they are viewed qualitatively. The analysis of the data did not measure the difference between single working mothers in terms of specific items within the variables of conflict, contentment and responsibility. Thus, the lack of qualitative measures was another limitation.

**Research Directions**

The population of single African American mothers is on the increase, therefore more studies should be conducted on this topic. More variables should be utilized, especially perceptions of the adolescent daughters should be compared with that of their single mothers.

This study could be replicated using the same type population of working and non-working mothers with a larger sample and by measuring the mother's perceptions of specific relationship items within these variables of conflict, contentment and responsibility.
CHAPTER SIX
IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Single African American mothers continue to increase in numbers. There has been some controversial theory about these families, mainly female headed households are dysfunctional. There needs to be culturally specific theory found in all schools of social work that relate to the single African American family. This theory needs to examine the strengths of African American families as founded by such researchers as Billingsly and McAdoo. These authors recognized that there are different family structures among African American Families; and that the single parent family is not synonymous with dysfunction. The typical respondent in this study was single and never married.

Social Workers who work with African American families might benefit from being more knowledgeable about family structures, cultural variations, functionality, and validity of African American lifestyles. Social Workers must be sensitive to how African Americans must adapt to a racially oppressive society that places emphasis on education and employment skills for entering the employment market. The majority of the respondents in this study had less than high
school education and were unemployed. The study showed that there was no statistical significant difference between single working African American mothers and single non-working African American mothers with reference to conflict, contentment and responsibility with their daughters. This lack of quantitative differences may indicate these families have developed coping and adapting skills for survival in the larger society regardless of their employment status.

Along with being culturally competent in working with African Americans, an added dimension is single motherhood. Social Workers could be knowledgeable about issues and concerns associated with single motherhood. A more comprehensive knowledge base could aid in developing more depthful assessments of single mothers. These mothers often have the dual role of parenting even though this study showed no statistical significant difference between single working mothers and single non-working mothers with reference to responsibility with their daughters. These findings may indicate that these mothers might have had good support systems. A good support system whether extended family, neighbors or friends, is an invaluable source to single mothers.
Social Workers must be aware of these support systems and utilize them in working with single African American mothers. Another source of support in the African American single parent arena is the paternal family. Even though the father may not be a source of consistent support, the paternal relatives may service as sitters, or mediators in parent-adolescent conflict. The paternal family can serve as a temporary home to an unruly adolescent.

Social Workers should be sensitive to single African American mothers adjustment to motherhood. A study by Fine, Schuebel and Myers supported the argument that holding an Afrocentric belief system is positively associated with adjusting to the single mother experience. Findings in this study showed there is no statistical significant difference between working single and single non-working African American mothers with reference to contentment with their daughters. Social workers may help single mothers examine an Afrocentric world view which may help improve self-esteem and sense of worth.

The literature has revealed that among middle income single parents Black and White, there did not appear to be a difference regarding their satisfaction of being a parent. Therefore, Social workers might help single mothers, both working and non-working explore an Afrocentric World View. This might help the mothers to examine their self-esteem and self worth from a non-maternalistic point of view.
A final implication of this study for social work is in the area of practice based research. This research could examine specific description characteristics within the variables in this study and intervention strategies utilized in assisting mothers and their daughters. The quantitative finding on contentment, conflict and responsibility may be questionable when it is viewed qualitatively. When viewed qualitatively, the specific items among these groups might show a difference and therefore indicate a need for innovative approaches to parent-adolescent conflict. This might provide for a better understanding of the quality of the relationships and conflicts between mothers and their adolescent daughters.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES
MEMORANDUM

TO: Mrs. Alvia Boone, Casework Supervisor Senior

FROM: Bobbie T. Wing, Student
       Clark Atlanta School of Social Work

This memorandum is to confirm my earlier request for permission to utilize case records in the Child Protective Services Unit, Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services, to conduct research on parent adolescent conflict. To carry out this study, only those cases that are identified as Black or African American single mothers with at least one adolescent daughter between the ages 11 through 18 will be selected. In collecting the data, I will telephone or personally visit each single mother asking her voluntary permission to participate in the study.

Thank you for your assistance and I look forward to your response confirming your permission for me to undertake this study.

mad/
MEMORANDUM

TO: Bobbie Wing, Student
    Clark Atlanta University, School of Social Work

FROM: Alvia Boone, Casework Supervisor Senior

RE: Response to Request for Using CPS Records for Research Project

Permission is granted for you to utilize identified CPS Records, Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services, to conduct research on Parent-Adolescent conflict. The only stipulation is that case names and other identifying data not be revealed due to the agency policy regarding confidentiality.

/mad
My name is Bobbie T. Wing and I am a graduate student at Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work. I am conducting a research project on parent-adolescent conflict of single mothers and their adolescent daughters between the ages of 11 through 18. If you have more than one adolescent daughter, please choose only one for this questionnaire. Your cooperation in filling out this questionnaire and participating in this research project is appreciated. The results are confidential and will be used only for scholarly research. Please do not put your name on the questionnaire. Thank you.

Section 1 - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please place a check (X) by your answer or write an answer.

1. What is your age?
   ______1.

2. What is your marital status?
   ______1. Single, never married
   ______2. Separated
   ______3. Divorced
   ______4. Widow

3. What is the age of your adolescent daughter?
   ______1.
4. How many children do you have?
   _____1. One
   _____2. Two
   _____3. Three
   _____4. Four
   _____5. Over Four, please specify ______________________

5. What is the highest grade/school you have completed?
   _____1. Less than high school
   _____2. High school graduate
   _____3. Some college
   _____4. College graduate

6. Are you employed?
   _____1. Yes
   _____2. No

7. Do you work full time or part time?
   _____1. Full time
   _____2. Part time

SECTION B - INDEX OF PARENTAL ATTITUDES (IPA)

This section is designed to measure the degree of contentment you have in your relationship with your child. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can by placing a number beside each one as follows.

1 = Rarely or none of the time
2 = A little of the time
3 = Some of the time
4 = Good part of the time
5 = Most or all of the time

_____ 1. My child gets on my nerves.
_____ 2. I get along well with my child.
_____ 3. I feel that I can Really trust my child.
_____ 4. I dislike my child.
5. My child is well behaved.
6. My child is too demanding.
7. I wish I did not have this child.
8. I really enjoy my child.
9. I have a hard time controlling my child.
10. My Child interferes with my activities.
11. I resent my child.
12. I think my child is terrific.
13. I hate my child.
14. I am very patient with my child.
15. I really like my child.
16. I like being with my child.
17. I feel like I do not love my child.
18. My child is irritating.
19. I feel very angry toward my child.
20. I feel violent toward my child.
21. I feel very proud of my child.
22. I wish my child was more like others I know.
23. I just do not understand my child.
24. My child is a real joy to me.
25. I feel ashamed of my child.
26. My teen daughter and I mostly disagree on the amount of time she spends on the telephone.
27. My teen daughter and I mostly disagree on her curfew.
28. My teen daughter has the responsibility of washing dishes.
29. My teen daughter has the responsibility of cleaning a part of the house.
30. My teen daughter has the responsibility of shopping for the family.
31. I worry about my teen daughter running away.
32. I worry about my teen daughter getting pregnant.
33. I worry about my teen daughter using illegal drugs.
34. I worry about my teen daughter getting suspended from school.
35. I worry about my teen daughter dropping out of school.