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THE TRANSMISSION OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND SPIRITUAL VALUES BY
MIDDLE-CLASS MOTHERS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ANCESTRY

By

Janel Lorraine Dancy

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ABSTRACT

The Transmission of Social, Cultural and Spiritual Values by Middle-Class Mothers of African American Ancestry

By

Janel Lorraine Dancy

This study involved 106 middle-class, educated mothers of African American ancestry in the examination of value transmission through proverbs. Intergenerational value transmission was determined through the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale. This scale provided mean ratings of the proverbs the mothers believed, proverbs the mothers perceived that their own mothers had believed, and finally, proverbs the participant mothers desired to pass on to their children. Proverbs that espoused personal responsibility and a strong work ethic received the two top mean ratings across three generations. The top ten proverbs across three generations also incorporated the values of spirituality, caution and self-affirmation or self-respect. Seventy percent of the participant middle-class mothers top ten proverbs were the same as the proverbs they perceived their own mothers believed. Seventy percent of proverbs middle-class mothers of African American ancestry desired to pass on to their children were the same as the ones they believed. These results indicate relative stability in the values transmitted across three generations. The participant mothers indicated they would pass on to their children fewer highly ranked proverbs with spiritual values than had been included in previous generations. Marital status did not significantly affect proverb mean ratings or values passed to the participant mothers' children. This study of middle-class mothers and value transmission provides evidence that the values transmitted over three generations appear fairly stable.

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To my parents and my grandfather, thank you for your legacy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research project investigates social, cultural and spiritual value transmission among middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry. A proverbs questionnaire provided the instrument to survey the mothers in this study. Since past research on value transmission had been conducted with low-income mothers of African-American ancestry, this study focused on middle class mothers of African-American ancestry. Middle-class, in this study, was defined as having completed a four-year college.

This project sought to determine what values middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry desire to transmit to their children. Values and parenting style have been documented as possibly changing as income level rises. Peters (1997) indicated that upwardly mobile parents of African-American ancestry adapt middle-class values and attitudes toward child rearing. The current project reflected the need to more carefully document the value transmission by middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry.

Significance of the study

The goal of this study is to examine mothers' perceptions of intergenerational value transmission among grandmothers, mothers, and children. This study documents the proverbs that the mothers feel are important, and whether those proverbs indicate transmittal of values are consistent with the values that mothers report receiving from

their mothers. This study also determines whether the mothers plan to pass similar values they received from their mothers to their children

This research study is significant because it empirically explores intergenerational transmission of values across three generations by providing statistical support to validate value transmissions.

Theories Significant to this Research

The ecology of human development is the scientific study of growing human organisms and the changing immediate environment in which these live (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Microsystems are the relationships between the developing person and environmental settings such as home, school, or workplace. The mesosystem comprises the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person. The mesosystem encompasses interactions among family, school, and peer-group (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). An exosystem is a link taking place between two or more settings. Events within the exosystem indirectly influence the setting in which a person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). On the other hand macrosystem, the outer layer of the ecological environment, encompass an individual's beliefs, ideologies and behaviors as related to specific life contexts (Goodly, 1997)

Cultural-Ecology

Minority families, particularly families of African American ancestry, have often been viewed and studied as a social problem (Coll, Meyer, & Brillion, 1995). This view from a negative vantage point leads to research that begins with the premise that minority families are dysfunctional. Much of the research on African-Americans has ignored the tremendous sways of cultural and historical influences on children's socialization and

achievement. The result has been research that often reduced cultural attitudes and beliefs to relativistic terms by stating that these were not important or simply ignoring them (Slaughter-Defog, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990).

Cultural ecology is the way a population uses its natural environmental influences to affect its social institutions and cultural values (Ogbu, 1981; Coll et al., 1995). The cultural ecology perspective states that child rearing techniques serve as a mechanism for inculcating and acquiring culturally defined competencies (Ogbu, 1981). These child-rearing techniques develop into adaptive adult life skills that also serve as coping mechanisms.

To truly understand and study minority groups it is better to follow a cultural-ecological perspective. The cultural-ecological model studies families in the context of real-life situations within their environment avoiding ethnocentrism (Ogbu, 1981; Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Rather than utilize the white middle class majority's values, behaviors and attitudes as standards that inevitably result in minority family differences being judged as deficits, the cultural-ecology perspective allows a stance that observes minority families in their own milieu (Bronfenbrenner, 1985). Such stance avoids a deficit model that may posit the need to resocialize minority families to white middle-class norms. When observing families in a cultural ecology model, the significance of cultural attitudes and beliefs is placed in the context of the family (Slaughter-Defoe et al., 1990). Earlier research paradigms emphasized culture within the various socioeconomic classes. Strengths tended to center primarily in the middle and upper socioeconomic classes with little attempt to understand the various minorities and how they differed from the "norm" (Slaughter-Defoe et al., 1990).

Human ecology looks beyond the behavior of individuals to encompass functional systems both within and between settings, nested structures, and interaction between the person and the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecological perspective considers how the individual develops in interaction with the immediate social environment and the larger society (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan & Buriel, 1990). African American families have faced challenges from the larger society and developed adaptive strategies. Adaptive strategies are observable social behavioral and cultural patterns that are interpreted as socially adaptive or maladaptive within the social nexus (Harrison et al., 1990). Family ecology refers to important family functioning that is reflective of the interactions between family members operating as a social system. The family ecologies of minority children are often different than those of the majority culture (Harrison et. al., 1990). Minority families often have the task of adapting their culture to “fit” with the majority culture. The differences between minority family ecologies and majority family ecologies have the potential of differential outcomes in the development of children. The ecological challenges facing many African Americans are not temporary economic calamities, but derived challenges from a history of oppression and discrimination (Harrison et al., 1990). While confronting these challenges on a daily basis, African Americans still strive toward their specific goals and achieve accomplishments.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of social, cultural and spiritual values in Black families is necessary to better understand what factors have held Black families together during turbulent times. The Black experience in America has incorporated the harshness of slavery, the humiliation of Jim Crow laws, and obstacles in the implementation of a desegregated society. The socialization of children often meant their exposure to the caste-like status Black citizens endure (McAdoo, 1981; Peters, 1997). A key question then is how do Black parents raise their children so that scars from the indignities of a society seemingly obsessed with color are reduced?

The 1990 census reported that over 50% of African-Americans in the United States are middle-class or above based on income or education levels. Though half of the African-American population is considered middle-class there is little research that includes this subject group. The majority of the research on African-Americans examines the problems that families of limited income may experience such as poverty and drug abuse (Hill, 1997). Little is known about the positive developmental trajectories and the developmental assets that are used to raise healthy families. This research will focus on the inner values of mothers of African-American ancestry, and the values they inculcate in their children.

Education

The majority of African-Americans who have gained middle-class status were able to accomplish this feat by attaining high levels of education. With education many

families of African-American ancestry have social mobility and move from the working or lower-class to the middle-class. Women of African-American ancestry are encouraged to attend college to gain the financial independence and security that can help sustain them in the middle-class. Higginbotham and Weber (1992) found that 94% of middle-class fathers of African-American ancestry expected their daughters to attend college. Only 70% of working class fathers of African-American ancestry expected their child to attend college. Middle-class families are more likely to support their daughters' education emotionally and financially. McAdoo (1978) suggests that many families do not have the wealth to leave their children an inheritance. Rather these families will place a high priority on college attendance and professional positions to ensure that children will be able to maintain middle-class status.

Providing emotional and financial support greatly ensures that a young adult is able to attend and complete college. Higginbotham and Weber (1992) asked women of African-American ancestry if they received emotional support during their transition to college. Eighty-six percent of the women who were middle-class stated that their family gave them support, while 64% of the working class women received support from their family. Women moving from working class to middle-class status, so called Upwardly mobile women, received less emotional and financial support for college from their family than women who were already middle-class.

Education is stressed as important to most families, but the question is how much support does education really receive from the family (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992). Though many families state that children should receive high quality education, they often fail to expose their children to colleges or support them financially during college.

Yet, research supports that advancements in education have enabled African-Americans to gain higher status and better paying jobs (McAdoo, 1978). Families correlate education with higher social class and increased income (Willie, 1974). The value of education remains strong in the middle-class African-American community with education and economic affluence being closely linked.

Values

Values are defined as principles that have intrinsic worth within a social group or institution. These principles become defining elements to determine how persons in the social group or institution should act or make decisions (Sperry, 1974). O'Driscoll (1976) has observed that values point toward an individual's relationship with his or her social and physical environments. Borsodi (1965) supports that observation by emphasizing that every human action reflects values, and that each human institution is an outgrowth of a social value.

The values that children learn from their families are of incalculable importance in preparing children of African-American ancestry to cope with their unique societal role. Numerous studies have validated that parents of African-American ancestry desire to prepare their children for survival in an environment that may be hostile, racist and discriminatory towards persons of color (Peters, 1997).

Studies have demonstrated that parents of African-American ancestry may have differences, according to their social and economic class, in the values they transmit to their children (McAdoo, 1981; Frazier, 1939). For example, middle-class values of independence rather than interdependence; materialism, and a more external focus rather than internal focus have been espoused as values often increasingly embraced by African-

Americans who move fully toward middle-class status (McAdoo, 1981). In contrast, African-Americans of lower socio-economic status espouse a strong work ethic and a more internal or spiritual focus. This is not to suggest that a strong work ethic and a high spiritual focus will be absent from middle-class persons of African-American ancestry, but the middle-class has been documented as moving closer toward the individualism, materialism and external focus of American middle-class life (McAdoo, 1981). More research is clearly needed to substantiate or refute earlier studies of the values embraced by families of African-American ancestry. Middle-class families of African-American ancestry have been particularly frequently omitted or lumped indiscriminately with low-income families in value studies.

Values are varied since they reflect the numerous social and physical environments of the human condition. There are social, cultural and spiritual values. Some values point a compass toward expected behaviors toward elders or persons in authority. Other values indicate the nature of self-esteem or inner life expected of societal members. Still other values offer guidance on how to cope with life's adversities. Cook & Kono (1977) point to harmony, rhythm and soul or internal development as important values in African-American culture. Hayles (1991) emphasizes that African-American families support these values: cooperation, interdependence, acceptance of difference, strong work and achievement orientation, traditionalism, as well as respect, appreciation and utilization of elders. Immediately, the possibility of a conflict between the mainstream American middle-class value of individualism and the Afrocentric value of interdependence is apparent. Martin and Martin (1978) point out that the American middle class value system expects adults "to make it on their own". Yet, both

mainstream American culture and African-American culture have been documented as espousing work/ achievement as a central value.

Maulana Ron Karenga proposed seven principles that serve as a foundation for the African American community to build their lives upon (Logan, 1996). These values are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith. These seven values have been increasingly embraced within the African American cultural experience. A common thread connecting these values is a spirituality that builds wholesome wholeness in humans and gives family members a sense of meaning and fulfillment (Logan, 1996).

Perhaps no social and cultural value is considered more defining as distinguishing African-Americans who have fully acquired middle-class status as the value of educational achievement and attainment (Martin & Martin, 1978; McAdoo, 1981). Research is needed to further clarify exactly how middle-class persons of African-American ancestry differ in the degree of their emphasis on education. Clarification is necessary since previous research has documented that education is often considered a core African-American value (Martin & Martin, 1978). Yet, earlier studies appear to leave unclear whether African-Americans with low income embrace education tepidly or wholeheartedly, and whether their embrace of an educational value sustains well beyond the elementary and middle school years.

Spirituality and Value Transmission

Spirituality has played an important role in keeping the African-American family together. Spirituality can manifest itself as a belief of optimism and the ability to recover from hardship (Denby, 1996). This strong belief system transfers itself into the form of

parental love, support, and commitment to one's children. Religious beliefs are a way for African-Americans to find strength in a society that often demoralizes them. Studies that have been conducted show that children and young adults benefit from attending church (Belgrave, et al., 1994). One study found that fifth graders who regularly attended religious services were less likely to use drugs and alcohol (Belgrave et al., 1994); African-American adolescents reported that attending church helped them to connect with their family (Spencer & Dornbush, 1990). The church bridges the family and the larger society. Living in a competent, intact family fosters functional and adaptive societal behavior in adolescents. The family is more significant than the influence of class and/or minority status (Spencer & Dornbush, 1990). The church has played a significant role in promoting and preserving the family, and the church has also been a vehicle for spiritual renewal and solace (Denby, 1996).

The values that children learn enable them to make better decisions. Spiritual values are often transmitted through the church. Both religious services and exposure to proverb sayings offer value transmission. Since children internalize messages that are presented to them, it is important to have a positive message present.

Parenting and Value Transmission

In addition to spirituality the parenting process has a strong impact on value transmission. Parenting is the process that allows a parent or family member to transmit values to children within the established order of the family (Ogbu, 1981). Research has emphasized the important role of the parent in raising children. In the African American community the extended family often plays an equally important role in the development of children's values (Whitebeck & Gecas, 1988). Many African-American families have

kin networks funnel value transmission. Certain strategies have been useful in preserving the family unit, such as shared parenting, pride in children, and firm discipline (Denby, 1996). Shared parenting in African-American families is an important and recurring theme. The entire family, along with the non-blood kin network, supports child rearing. The African-American family functions as a collective unit where by the general orientation is that of “we” as opposed to “I” (Franklin & Boyd, 1985).

Children in the African-American community are highly valued. Parents are aware of the stigmas the child will face when they leave home. An effort is made to help the child gain high self-esteem and a sense of awareness to combat problems. In fact, African-Americans’ approach to child rearing has maintained that within the family unit a high value is placed on children and children are often elevated to esteemed positions within the family system (Denby, 1996). Fostering the value of high self-esteem aids in offsetting the ways the larger society has devalued, depreciated, and marginalized African-American people. Children also allow the family to leave their legacy by transferring traditions, beliefs, symbols, and by providing the next generation a positive foundation of what it means to be Black (Dillwork-Anderson, 1992).

A third important aspect of African-American child rearing is discipline. Discipline, in African-American families is often characterized as firm, caring and uncompromising (Denby, 1996). Staples (1994) noted that while low-income mothers used physical measures to discipline their child, it was coupled with a high dose of emotional nurturance. Discipline in African-American families is more than correcting an undesirable behavior; it is a way of socializing children about issues related to race (Denby, 1996). Staples noted in his study that African-American parents must socialize

their children to successfully understand the majority culture's values while simultaneously preparing them to know their own ethnicity (Denby & Alfred, 1996).

Peters (1985) noted that racial identity undergirds the child rearing philosophy in African American communities since the family has the task of socializing children to acquire a positive attitude toward their ethnicity. Cultural preservation begins with family preservation. McAdoo (1985) refuted claims that African-American children did not value themselves because of negative messages in society. McAdoo found that children felt competent and valued and believed they were perceived positively by their mothers.

Mothers play an undeniably important role in raising children. While value is given to children, much significance and honor is also given to mothers (Denby, 1996). When examining the meaning of motherhood in the African-American culture the theme of women-centered networks reoccurs. These networks, consisting of mothers, sisters, aunts, godmothers, and grandmothers are a staple in the African-American community. They fulfill a variety of roles ranging from nurturers and caregivers to financial provider and teacher. These roles are an indication of the self-reliance, resourcefulness, and strength that lie within mothers of African-American ancestry. Mother centered networks are an example of the strong sense of communalism that is prevalent in many African-American homes. Family support structures are kinship networks that allow for the sharing of ideas and values. These kinship networks play an important part in helping to maintain the family unit (Denby, 1996). Kinship networks are an extension of women centered networks.

Parenting Influences

During the child-rearing process values are transmitted to children, but what remains unclear is the range and form these values take within a population (Ogbu, 1981). Exactly, how do parents transmit values to their children? Studies suggest that the values that appear within a population stem from the techniques parents employ in child-rearing and ways children acquire and deploy family attributes as they get older (Ogbu, 1981).

One study, on child rearing, looked at how subsistence tasks determine idiosyncrasies and how these attributes latter influence child rearing practices (Gecas, 1976). For example a child whose parents emphasized cleanliness may become a very clean and tidy person. The value of cleanliness resides within the parent and the child-rearing practices reflect this.

A study by Kelly, Powers, & Wimbush (1992) demonstrates that cultural and environmental factors such as religious beliefs and child safety are associated with patterns in parenting. In their study of 42 low-income mothers of African-American ancestry the researchers found a range of disciplinary practices. Mothers who took the child's perspective were less likely to use assertive techniques. The study also suggests that young less educated mothers raising children alone are less involved in organized religion, place more emphasis on respect for obedience, and are more likely to use parent oriented disciplinary approaches. Mothers, who were older, educated, and married place emphasis on autonomous behavior and use a more child-oriented democratic approach (Kelly et al, 1992).

When there are two co-existing cultures, one that rewards individualism and independence and the other that rewards consciousness and collectiveness, two variant patterns of child rearing will emerge within the society at large (Ogbu, 1981). A person's culture greatly influences parenting practices. The culture helps to form values which in turn develop child-rearing practices. The adult behaviors that have provided useful societal coping mechanisms are likely to be taught covertly or overtly to the children. Children, in turn, learn to utilize these behaviors when socially appropriate. While differences are seen between cultures, child rearing practices and transmitted values also are changing even if only slightly, from generation to generation even within specific cultural groups (Ogbu, 1981). Evidence from Miller and Swanson in Ogbu (1958) shows that the early middle-class Americans tended to value self-control and self-denial. Later generations of the middle class tended to value individuality and self-confidence. This study supported the assumption that when values change so will child-rearing practices.

How do parents determine just how they will teach particular values? Parenting techniques are discovered by trial and error. When parents discover effective child rearing techniques these become standardized and encoded in the people's customs, and then transmitted into the culture for future generations (Ogbu, 1981). The transmission of child-rearing practices ensures that other parents within the culture transmit these child-rearing standardized knowledge and skills sets. Cultural ecology theory recognizes that child-rearing practices are not an irrational or random set of activities. These practices are part of a culturally organized system that evolves through generations of

collective experience in tasks that meet environmental needs (Ogbu, 1981). Child rearing tasks are methods of transmitting values to succeeding generations (Ogbu, 1981).

Transmission of Values

Examination of values transmission requires careful observation of parenting practices within a given cultural group. The socialization of children's work style, attitudes, values and behaviors comprises family value transmission (Peters, 1997). McAdoo (1973) further points out that the additional task of families of African-American ancestry is to interpret the dominant culture to the Black child, while also affirming the values of the Black community. Hence, what the family passes down, from generation to generation, are its interpretation of the beliefs of the dominant culture, as well as the family's personal values.

Though the African American community has a fountain of values, these values must be successfully transmitted to new generations. Parental attempts at value transmission may or may not be well-received by their children. A study by Bengtson (1975) shows that the correlations between parental values and children's values are often low-to-modest, ranging from .20 to .30. Studies cited in Whitebeck and Gecas (1988) suggest that when parents share the same social location or social trust with their children there will be similarities in parental and child values. Parental influence in value transmission wanes when children embrace a social direction that different from their parents (Ex. Child turned more to values of his peers who disliked schooling as opposed to his parent's value of embracing education). When parents and children inhabit the same social location, children can view parents' behavior and hear how parents express the values that they live by. Whitebeck and Gecas (1988) state that when assessing values

there are certain factors to address: 1) the type of value being considered, 2) the perception children have about parental values, 3) the age of the child, and 4) the quality of parent-child interactions.

Value Socialization

The transmission of values is affected by variables such as birth order, socioeconomic status, sex of the child, age and race. A child who is in the early elementary years may need to learn different values than an adolescent in high school. Age is important when considering value socialization, for age is related to cognitive development (Whitebeck & Gecas, 1988). In value formation, cognitive development is a prime determiner of when internalization of value can be expected. Categories of values become internalized at different developmental levels. Rokeach (1973) states that terminal values are more central to the belief system and they are socialized early. Whitebeck and Gecas (1988) found that parents' tend to socialize their personal values in their children at ages 9-11 and 13-15 years of age.

The child's perception of the parents' values is important in value transmission (Acock & Begston, 1980). How the child perceives his or her parents is a predictor of successful value transmission. Parent-child interaction plays a key role in value transmission. The quality of the interaction affects the child's propensity to adopt the parents' values, but is less effective in actual value transmission (Whitebeck & Gecas, 1988). Though the age of a child plays an important role determining whether a child can comprehend the values that a parent is trying to transmit, the respect that a child has for his or her parents factors into a child's willingness to follow the values that are being

passed down. If the child has limited respect for the parent, then what the parent has to share will go unheard.

The sex of a child also plays an important part in parent-child interaction. Parents place different expectations on boys than girls and this means parents define their relationship with their children differently depending on the sex of the child (Gecas, 1976). Socializing a child is extremely important because the parent is trying to develop the child into a competent, social and moral person. The socialization process necessitates that parents involve themselves in teaching the child right from wrong, as well as the daily activities of eating, dressing and general interaction (Clark et al, 1988). There is no simple way to socialize a child so that the values of the family are passed to the child. However, the influence of values, from school, the media and peers often take precedence so parents do feel at times that they may have less control over value transmission than they would desire (Clark et al, 1988).

Communication of Values

Clark (1988) studied the transmission of religious beliefs and practices by parents to their son. The study finds that the father's beliefs and practices are associated with the sons, but the mother's beliefs and practices are not a predicting value (Clark et al., 1988). Past research shows that sons and daughter react differently to parent's attempts to influence values. Family relationships create an atmosphere that may promote or inhibit the transmission of values (Clark et al., 1988). Parental support and control influence value transmission. Parents who are both highly supportive and controlling tend to have children whose values are similar to their own (Clark et al., 1988). Parents high in

support, but low in control tend to have children whose values differ from their own (Clark et al., 1988).

Acock and Bengston (1980) investigated the transmission of values from parents to children. Their research finds that children often do not perceive their parents' opinions accurately. They perceive their parent's opinions to be sharply divergent from their own (Acock & Bengston, 1980). This assumption of perceived versus actual values and opinions that a parent may have attributed to the generation gap. Adolescents especially are negotiating their emancipation from parents and trying to create a separate identity. They are being influenced by values and institutions of the larger adult society that may conflict with their parents' values (Acock & Bengston, 1980).

Lack of communication looms as a second factor hindering children's ability to accurately perceive their parent's values. Issues such as politics, religion and race may be infrequently discussed within families (Acock & Bengston, 1980). When the child is asked what they think their parents opinions are about various issues they cannot accurately say. Thirdly, children maybe unaware of their parents' opinions because they have been shielded from these opinions (Acock & Bengston, 1980). As an example, parents who are only partially committed to a high work ethic may hide their feeling because they want their children to work hard in school.

Transmission of Values Through Generations

Conception of desirable behavior must be transmitted from one generation to the next for cultural continuity to be maintained (Bengston, 1975). The family is the most important mechanism in value transmission, but the influence of peers, school, and other institutions has an impact on children. Bengston (1975) found that there was little value

similarity in three generations (grandparent-parent-child). This study looked at four categories of values: humanism, materialism, collectivism and individualism. Youth and elderly generations are at similar levels of humanism and materialism. Youth were the most individualistic, the grandparents were collectivistic and parents materialistic (Bengston, 1975). These findings suggest neither generational differences nor strong family similarity in value orientations. As has been previously emphasized, similar values between parents and youth can be attributed to social location rather than direct transmission of values. Core values appear highly variable from individual to individual depending on his or her unique personal biography (Bengston, 1975).

The ability to successfully transmit a previous generations values to children is often hindered by the economic circumstance that the family lives in. Many African-American families hold the dominant American ideal values, but have conduct that may be considered nonnormative (Iversen & Farber, 1996). Numerous poor Black men, over the years, have held the American belief about the value of work, but as each generation was unable to find meaningful employment, they developed “shadow values” to help cope with the frustration and failure (Iverson & Farver, 1996).

The values of the poor are similar to those of the middle-class, but the connection between values and economic outcomes is not direct and often not attainable by the poor (Ellwood, 1989). As families of African American ancestry are able to move from low-income to middle-class, changes take place with the values and attitudes they may have (Peters, 1997). When a family anticipates moving into middle-class status, they will often identify with the middle-class, change parenting styles, and place more importance on education for the child (Peters, 1997).

Studies often fail to differentiate the various types of African American parents that exist. A middle income parent with a college degree has access to resources unavailable to a low-income parent. Middle-class African American women are often more frequently exposed to magazines, literature, and history on African Americans than working class women (Higgenbotham & Webber, 1992). Parents who are highly educated and have had wide cultural exposure can pass broader experiences on to their child. Parents who have led more narrowly defined lives may give their child more limited information because of the limited parameters of their existence, not because they want to withhold information from the child (Galejs & Reas, 1986).

Socialization of Children

Adaptive responses to ecological challenges have shaped the family ecology of African Americans. The family ecologies of African American children differ from majority children and influence socialization. While, the mechanism to transmit values is the same for both the majority and minority group, ethnicity plays an important role in socialization (Harrison et al., 1990). The socialization process of African American families incorporates shared group patterns of values, social customs, perceptions, behavioral roles, language use, and rules of social interactions (Harrison et al., 1990).

Many minority children are socialized to think feel, and act in ways that involve the development of a cooperative view of life (Harrison et al., 1990). Individuals see themselves as an integral part of their family and the larger social structure. This value contrasts with Western ideals of competition, autonomy, and self-reliance. A study by Sims (1978) in Harrison found that African American children were more willing to share their toys and possessions when a request was made in the context of the group. It

was assumed that the children were affected by the expected group norm that sharing and cooperation would be done with other group members. Minority children are more likely to be exposed to discontinuities between the family ecologies and school environment than majority children. The discontinuity between home, neighborhood, and school can facilitate the development of situational problem solving among young persons. Minority groups have adaptive strategies that developed as a response to ecological challenges (Harrison et al., 1990).

Adolescent minority youth are aware of the values of the majority culture and its standards of achievement and beauty (Spencer & Dornbush, 1990). Adolescents' cognitive skills allow them to assess how they are perceived by the majority culture. An adolescent's awareness of minority status is qualitatively different from that of a child (Spencer & Dornbush, 1990). Young children often think that race and gender can change as they grow. Adolescents are beyond this stage; their cognitive maturity allows them to interpret cultural knowledge, and their social network is much broader than that of a child. In addition, compared to children, adolescents are increasingly literate, have access to the media, and are more mobile (Spencer & Dornbush, 1990). Minority adolescents who are middle class still experience prejudice and discrimination, however. Middle class status does allow parents to sometimes counter the effects of prejudice and discrimination, but there is no way to fully avoid the stereotypes (Spencer & Dornbush, 1990).

Adolescence is a crucial period of identity formation. Minority adolescents often have a more difficult struggle with identity when enveloped by values and standards of the main-stream culture. As children, African American adolescents may have learned

that Black is beautiful, but they conclude as an adolescent that white is powerful (Spencer & Dorbush, 1990).

African American cultural foundations include distinctive patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that buffer the impact of discrimination. African Americans have a unique personal orientation that manifests itself by attention to social cues, subjective meanings attached to words, preference for social distance and use of non-verbal communication (Slaughter-Defoe et al, 1990). Many African Americans operate, involuntarily, as members of a caste-like system. Having experienced racism African Americans may distrust institutions because they often fail to deliver promised resources. African Americans also more frequently experience a “job ceiling” regardless of the educational attainment (Slaughter-Defoe et al., 1990). While young Blacks know that Blacks with more education achieve usually greater success in mainstream America, youth still reject education for two reasons. One, they will have to “act white” to achieve, and second, individuals in their families have not been rewarded for their achievement despite their education (Slaughter-Defoe, 1981).

The culture a child experiences sets the tone for human problem solving and the inferencing a particular culture believes justifiable (Slaughter-Defoe, 1990). The child learns to think as his culture defines thinking. Though some research has implied that African Americans lack middle class values and skills that are necessary for achievement (Slaughter-Defoe, 1990), and African American culture breed’s low intelligence and lower order thinking. Such research has generally ignored, Human Development models that would incorporate the positive impact of culturally based strategies on children’s socialization and development. When the influences of cultural strategies are eliminated

in the consideration of children's development, cultural attitudes get reduced to relativistic terms (Ogbe, 1981).

Status Mobility

Every population has a theory on how one should perform to succeed and gain social and economic mobility. This theory of "how to make it" is shared as cultural knowledge. In the African American community education is viewed as a key to success that will allow for opportunity and social mobility. In the African American community it was at one time stressed that a women should marry a man with education because education is highly valued as an available resource that allows for African Americans to gain opportunity. Upward mobility is more complex for women than for men because many women gain their social standing through their mates. African American women's social status is linked to the number of eligible Black men. When there are few eligible Black men the women's social status suffers (Hill, 1994; McAdoo, 1981).

Kohn (1969) argues that social class is not the distinguishing identifying factor in the examination socialization patterns of families. Rather, the core values, life-style goals, and family mobility aspirations become direct links to families', education or social class level. When the focus shifts from income level to core values and goals, the implication is clear that African American women with income to limited to give them middle class economic foot holes, can still embrace core middle class values and aspirations.

In the African American community people who have acquired skills to achieve social mobility become models whose attributes parents admire and apply to their child rearing (Ogbu, 1981). As children get older they actively seek to acquire the values of

the people who have gained social mobility. Child rearing practices are based upon how members of society attain achievement (Ogbu, 1981).

Child rearing is future oriented because it prepares children to perform cultural tasks that an adult is able to achieve. People's beliefs about how to raise children is based on their notion of how to succeed (Ogbu, 1981). The study of families should include the interests of society and its influences on child rearing (Ogbu, 1981).

Acculturation

African Americans place emphasis on collectivism and group identity. Their development is constructed within the context of their community. McAdoo (1993) asserted that families of color want to instill in their children a feeling of positive warmth and respect for their culture and history. African American parents are well aware of the discrimination with which a child contends. Boykins and Toms (1985) stated that these children deal with three different realms of experience: mainstream America, African American cultural heritage, and lastly the minority experience.

Socialization of African American children often includes enhancing the African American consciousness and identity of children so that they will have pride within themselves. Family and the community come together to provide children with care, protection, and guidance (Cole et al., 1995). Children's effective learning of obedience and respect is encouraged and represents their earliest contribution to family maintenance and cohesiveness. Disciplinary practices of parents in low-income settings are often viewed as harsh, but some theorists point out that factor as necessary due to the consequences of growing up in dangerous neighborhoods (Kelly et al., 1992).

The African American family ranges in socioeconomic status, values, education and degree of acculturation to the norms of mainstream America (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). While individual Black families vary there is, within and between groups, commonalities. Parents and teachers often focus on socializing children to be “human beings” only and not place emphasis on the identity process (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Regrettably, schools may often reflect the values and beliefs that permeate racial stereotyping and prejudice. On the contrary the child-rearing practices of the African American community frequently buffered African American children from attended or unintended identity distortion by the consistency in the inculcation of expected and traditional African American beliefs and values (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990).

It is often hard for minority youth to develop clear identities when they are often confronted with conflicting values, those of the larger society and those of their own community (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Minority children are expected to transcend their own cultural background and incorporate aspects of the dominant culture into their lives (Cole et al., 1995). Young children’s expectations and opportunities for acculturation are mediated by their parents and family. How the family deals with acculturation impacts the parenting style and the role of the extended family (Cole et al, 1995). As the child grows they are exposed to the dominant cultural values and behaviors through media, school etc and are often expected to adapt to these cultural norms (Cole et al., 1995). African American mothers systematically expose their children to a bicultural world through religious activities, musical events; social networks and

dolls (Cole et al., 1995). The activities or messages help children learn that it is acceptable to be part of a minority group and feel positive about themselves.

Proverbs

A research tool for determining social, cultural and spiritual values within a societal group is proverbs. Proverbs are common in all cultures because the cogent, pithy nature of these short sayings carry cultural truths that prove easy to remember. Proverbs gain their life from the elders in a community who pass these sayings on to their children and grandchildren. These sayings are part of a wider category of short, popular cultural statements that may sometimes be called maxims, adages, epigrams or apothegms. All of these types of sayings have in common the characteristics of brevity and instructiveness. A proverb is further characterized by its moral and ethical tone, and is “widely heard on the lips of all segments of a community” (Dancy and Wynn-Dancy, 1994, p. 98). Page and Washington (1987) have pointed to proverbs as the coding of the collective experience of a societal group. The pithiness of proverbs makes them ripe for generational transmission of personal and social values.

McAdoo and McWright (1994) have indicated that proverbs may point to the following social, cultural and spiritual factors: black family values, morality identification, self-preservation, coping skills and ancestry linkage. Perhaps, a key factor in the success of proverbs in value transmission is the subtle “slipping in” of the sayings without the younger generation’s full awareness that they are being “taught” (Troll, 1983). The easy repetition of proverbs means that these bits of wisdom on coping, morality and survival skills will often be heard dozens of times during a child’s upbringing. Proverbs foster the connectedness of one generation to the next. Because of

their prevalence and ease of remembrance, the middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry in this research project are likely to have been readily exposed to numerous proverbs, and have likely aided the transmittal of cultural and spiritual values by repeating these sayings to their own children. A research project utilizing a proverbs questionnaire should reveal core values middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry espouse.

Summary and Expected Outcomes

Proverbs have universal significance in cultures. These pithy statements of moral truths provide wisdom transmitted through generations about social, cultural and spiritual values. The repetition of proverbs provides a subtle means to sear children's consciousness with personal and social behavioral tenets. This proposed research project included 106 middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry. Approximately 215 surveys were distributed. The research question investigated was whether these mothers passed to their children the same values through proverbs that the mothers' mothers transmitted to them. The Page, Washington and McAdoo Proverb Scale served as the research instrument. Quantitative statistics was utilized to analyze the links between the proverbs and values that participant mothers desired to transmit to their children.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The values reflected in the proverbs with which middle class mothers of African American ancestry most strongly agree will be similar to the traditional African American values found in the literature by Denby (1996).

Hypotheses 2: The proverbs that middle class mothers of African American ancestry most strongly agree will be significantly related to the proverbs that their mothers had passed down to them.

Hypotheses 3: Women whose mothers had some higher education agreed with proverbs significantly different from those of women whose mothers have no higher education.

Hypotheses 4: The proverbs with which middle class mothers of African American ancestry most strongly agree will be positively related to the proverbs the mothers plan to pass on to their children.

Hypotheses 5: Mothers who are single place emphasis on different values than mothers who are married.

Hypotheses 6: The proverbs that mothers want to pass on to their children are significantly different for women who are in single headed households than mothers in married households.

Chapter III

Methodology

Participants

There were 106 respondents from the 215 surveys that were distributed. The participants included both single and married women of African American ancestry, and each participant had at least one child between the ages of 5 and 18. All of the mothers had completed at least four years of college, and all participants resided in Southeastern Virginia. Of the 1,400,000 persons residing in Southeastern Virginia 400,000 are African Americans (Census Bureau, 1990). Approximately 29% of the Southeastern population is African American or slightly less than 3 out of 10 persons.

The majority of women surveyed were married (68%), while one-fourth of the remaining sample (25%) were divorced, widowed, or never married. Most of the women worked in the field of education (50%), while other mothers were in the field of business (18%), social work (12%), health services (9%) or other areas (11%). Most of the mothers resided in four person homes (38%), or three person homes (27%), and they often owned their own home (82%). In summary, the majority of participants in this study were married middle-class women home owners of African American ancestry with at least four years of college as educators. Table 3.1 gives the demographic characteristics for the 106 participants.

Table 3.1**Demographic Characteristics for 106 Middle-Class Mothers of African American Ancestry**

Characteristics	%	
<hr/>		
<u>Current Marital Status</u>		
Single	32	
Married	73	
No answer	6	
 <u>Grandmothers (Mothers' Mothers) Education</u>		
No higher education	41	
Higher education	33	
No answer	32	
 <u>Social Status Growing-Up</u>		
Lower class	36	
Working class	60	
Middle class	3	
No answer	1	
 <u>Income of Participants' Households</u>		
0-30,000	6	
31,000 -69,000	45	
70,000- 90,000	49	
	100	
<u>Number of People in Household</u>		3.80

Research Instrument

The research instrument included two sections: a demographics questionnaire and a Proverbs Scale. The Proverbs Scale (PS) incorporated both 15 traditional proverbs from the Page and Washington Proverb Scale (1987) and 15 contemporary proverbs from the McAdoo Proverb Scale. The Page and Washington (1987) study sampled single mothers of African American ancestry from a low-income housing development who had

an average income of \$6,860. The majority of the participants reported in the Page and Washington (1987) study had a high school education up to a 12th grade education.

The combination of the Page and Washington (1987) proverb scale and the McAdoo Proverb Scale, contained 30 traditional and contemporary proverbs that assessed the beliefs of African-American adults. These combined scales are referred to in this study as the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale (PWMPS). In this investigation the PWMPS ascertained three proverb indexes: (1) The proverbs the participant mothers espouse (2) The proverbs the grandmother (mothers' mothers') espoused, and (3) The proverbs the mothers desire to pass on to their children (McWright, 1998). The proverbs were rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 = strong disagreement with the truth in the proverb and 5 = strong agreement with the truth in the proverb). The mothers indicated proverbs they believed truthful. They then completed an index about proverbs that their mothers had passed on to them, and finally, participant mothers completed an index of the proverbs that they desired to pass on to their own children. Participants' acceptance or rejection of the truth-value of a proverb was a way of measuring the mothers' value system.

Past research using the Page and Washington Proverb Scale has focused on single mothers of African American ancestry who were low-income (Page & Washington, 1987). The study herein utilizes the same traditional proverbs, but extends the sample group to college educated middle income mothers.

The proverbs used in this study were divided into groupings according to the values attributed or represented by the proverbs with (Page & Washington, 1987 Titleman, 1996 and Denby, 1996). The values and attributes represented by the proverbs

groupings are: (a) self-determination, (b) hope and spirituality, (c) caution, (d) morality, (e) racial identity, and (f) family. Table 3.2 gives the six sets of values and attributes represented in the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale.

Table 3.2

Values and Attributes with Representative Proverbs from the Page, Washington and McAdoo Proverb Scale

Self-Affirmation

Pretty is as pretty does
If you don't think anything of yourself
Better to be envied
It's a poor dog that won't wag tail
Don't let no one make you ugly

Hope/Spirituality

Darkest before the dawn
Things will get better
Hope springs eternal
One can not live by bread alone
Cleanliness is next to Godliness
Can't see the valley

Caution

You reap what you sow
What goes around comes around
Don't count chickens before they hatch
Look before you leap
Welfare causes dependency
Good man is hard to find
A good woman is hard to find
No free lunch

Racial Identity

Blacker the berry
sweeter the juice
All my best friends are Black
Kill black before it grows

Family

Hand that rocks the cradle
rules the world
Mothers raise their daughters
and love their sons
Blood is thicker than water

Morality

Men won't pay if they can
get the milk for free
Easy to fall in love with a
rich person as a poor one
All people are created equal
All men are dogs
All women are bitches

Procedures

Each participant mother received the Page, Washington and McAdoo Proverb Scale (PWMPS) to complete without any imposed time limitation. Prior to completing the Scale, each participant also received a consent form that explained the purpose of the study and the rights of participants, including how confidentiality would be maintained. Participants were informed that data would be utilized only for research purposes that in no way would identify them. Snowball sampling was used to distribute surveys. Snowball sampling is a sampling technique where participants refer others to the study (Hill, 1994). Churches, school, and parents' organizations served as distribution sites for the majority of the surveys.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analyses techniques such as T-tests and rank order were utilized to determine if there was consistency between the values participant mothers desired to pass on to their children and the values participant mothers had received from their mothers. The statistical procedures ranked proverbs to determine which proverbs would most likely be passed on to the next generation. Statistical analyses also provided information about which proverbs had limited impact on transmission of values by middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry.

Chapter IV

Results

Hypothesis 1: The values and attributes reflected in the proverbs with which middle class mothers of African American ancestry most strongly agree will be similar to the traditional African American values found in the literature by Denby (1996).

Using the Likert Scale the participant mothers' proverb belief scores ranged from 4.69 to 1.15 with 5 representing strong agreement with a proverb and 1 representing low agreement. The proverbs' rankings were organized into a table of means. The mean measures give a relative position of a particular value to the total hierarchy of values. In this case, the mean measures for each proverb provided each proverb's average ranking based on a sample of 106 mothers.

The participant mothers' top ten most highly valued proverbs were: (1) Reap what you sow ($M = 4.69$); (2) What goes around, comes around ($M = 4.62$); (3) One cannot live by bread alone ($M = 4.50$); (4) If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will ($M = 4.46$); (5) Look before you leap ($M = 4.43$); (6) You can't see the valley if you don't climb the hill ($M = 4.30$); (7) Don't count your chickens before they hatch ($M = 4.25$); (8) Don't let no one make you ugly ($M = 4.16$); (9) The darkest hour is before the dawn ($M = 4.13$); (10) Things will get better by and by ($M = 4.12$). These proverbs represent values and attributes related to ambition, self-respect, family and identity (Page & Washington, 1987; McAdoo, 1991), traditional values and attributes of African American culture. These values and attributes supported by middle-class mothers of African American ancestry, based on their proverbs selections, appear to corroborate Denby's

(1996) findings that traditional African-Americans affirm deep spiritual values, family ties, racial pride, and healthy self-expression.

The four lowest mean ranking proverbs were: (1) A good women is hard to find these days ($M = 2.55$); (2) All men are dogs ($M = 1.65$); (3) Black is something to kill before it grows ($M = 1.38$); (4) All women are dogs ($M = 1.15$). The proverbs represent disrespect and negative racial identity.

Table 4.1 Rank Order of Means with Standard Deviations of Proverb Ranking by African-American Middle Class Mothers'

Proverbs	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
You reap what you sow	1	4.69	.56
What goes around, comes around	2	4.62	.59
One cannot live on bread alone	3	4.50	.72
If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will	4	4.46	.84
Look before you leap	5	4.43	.71
You can't see valley if don't climb the hill	6	4.30	.82
Don't count your chickens before they are hatched	7	4.25	.98
Don't let no one make you ugly	8	4.16	.98
The darkest hour is just before the dawn	9	4.13	.88
Things will get better by and by	10	4.12	.87
Blood is thicker than water	11	4.10	.83
Hope springs eternal	12	4.05	.94
No such thing as a free lunch	13	4.01	1.07
Cleanliness is next to Godliness	14	3.95	1.07
All people are created equal	15	3.92	1.33
Men won't pay if they can get it for free	16	3.69	1.05
Pretty is s pretty does	17	3.67	1.09
It's a poor dog that won't wag its own tail	18	3.52	1.00
The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world	19	3.34	1.15
Some of my best friends are Black	20	3.29	1.36
Welfare causes dependency	21	3.12	1.24
Blacker the berry, sweeter the juice	22	3.05	1.02
It's easy to fall in love with a rich or poor person	23	3.09	1.12
A good man is hard to find these days	24	2.96	1.33
Better to be envied then pitied	25	2.88	1.07
Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons	26	2.80	1.31
A good women is hard to find these days	27	2.55	1.36
All men are dogs	28	1.65	.96
Black is something to kill before it grows	29	1.38	.90
All women are bitches (dogs)	30	1.15	.60

Hypothesis 2: The proverbs with which middle class mothers of African American ancestry most strongly agree will be positively related to the proverbs that their mothers had passed down to them.

The first step of analysis was to ascertain which of the proverbs from the Page, Washington and McAdoo scale the participant mothers reported their mothers' believed . Mean ranking was used to determine the highest-ranking proverbs. The second step of the analysis was to compare the proverbs that the participant mothers' mothers had passed down to the participant mothers' own proverb beliefs. Table 3 provides the rank order of means with standard deviations of proverb rankings of African American middle class perceptions about which proverbs their own mothers (grandmothers) believed and had passed on to them.

The top ten proverbs that mothers received from their mothers were: (1) You reap what you sow ($M = 4.61$); (2) What goes around comes around ($M = 4.52$); (3) Don't count your chickens before they hatch ($M = 4.46$); (4) Blood is thicker than water ($M = 4.16$); (5) If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will ($M = 4.01$); (6) Look before you leap ($M = 3.93$); (7) Cleanliness is next to Godliness ($M = 3.91$); (8) Things will get better by and by ($M = 3.88$); (9) One cannot live by bread alone ($M = 3.88$); (10) Men won't pay if they can get it for free ($M = 3.64$). These proverbs suggest values and attributes of self-affirmation, morality, spirituality and caution (Page & Washington, 1987; McAdoo, 1991). The top ten proverbs in this group also reflect the values of responsibility and hard work and affirm family ties.

The low ranking proverbs represent ones the mothers in the study felt their own mothers would be least likely to believe and desire pass on to them. The five lowest

ranked proverbs in this category were: (1) Better to be envied than pitied ($M = 1.77$); (2) Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons ($M = 1.73$); (3) All men are dogs ($M = 1.56$); (4) Kill Black before it grows ($M = 1.10$), and (5) All women are dogs ($M = 1.01$). Middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry did not believe that their mothers affirmed proverbs that espoused negative images of men, women or Black persons, or that implied that mothers love sons differently from daughters.

Table 4.2

Rank Order of Means with Standard Deviation of Proverb Ranking of Mothers' Perceptions of Proverbs Grandmothers Believed in (N=106)

Proverb	Rank	M	SD
You reap what you sow	1	4.61	.94
What goes around, comes around	2	4.52	1.03
Don't count your chickens before they are hatched	3	4.46	1.09
Blood is thicker than water	4	4.16	1.27
If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will	5	4.01	1.39
Look before you leap	6	3.93	1.35
Cleanliness is next to Godliness	7	3.91	1.49
Things will get better by and by	8.5	3.88	1.47
One cannot live by bread alone	8.5	3.88	1.41
Men won't pay if they can get it for free	9	3.64	1.61
All people are created equal	10	3.56	1.66
The darkest hour is just before the dawn	11	3.49	1.63
There is no such thing as a free lunch	12	3.45	1.60
Don't let no one make you ugly	13	3.20	1.73
Hope springs eternal	14	3.16	1.56
Pretty is as pretty does	15	3.14	1.70
You can't see the valley if you don't climb the hill	16	3.05	1.58
Blacker the berry sweeter the juice	17	2.67	1.72
It's a poor dog that won't wag its own tail	18	2.41	1.69
A good man is hard to find these days	19	2.38	1.57
The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world	20	2.08	1.43
A good woman is hard to find these days	21	1.96	1.42
It's easy to fall in love with a rich or poor person	22	1.92	1.28
Welfare causes dependency	23	1.89	1.43
Some of my best friends are Black	24	1.82	1.37
Better to be envied than pitied	25	1.77	1.21
Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons	26	1.73	1.32
All men are dogs	27	1.56	1.17
Kill Black before it grows	28	1.10	.57
All women are bitches	29	1.01	

Hypothesis 3: Middle-class women of African-American ancestry whose mothers have had some higher education ranked proverbs significantly different from those middle-class women of African-American ancestry whose mothers had no higher education.

Middle-class mothers of African American ancestry whose own mothers had no higher education did not rank the proverbs they perceived their mothers believed significantly different from those of middle-class mothers in the study whose mothers had some higher education. Results of t-Test, including Levene's test of Equality of Variance indicated that only 7 out of 29 proverbs were ranked significantly different between the two groups or only 24%. Participant mothers who indicated that their own mothers had some higher education ranked "You reap what you sow" ($M = 4.66$) as the highest ranked proverb. Participant mothers whose own mothers had no higher education ranked "You reap what you sow" ($M = 4.61$) as their highest proverb.

The top five proverbs for women whose mothers had higher education were: (1) You reap what you sow ($M = 4.66$); (2) Don't count your chickens before they hatch ($M = 4.44$); (3) What goes around comes around ($M = 4.34$); (4) Things will get better by and by ($M = 4.03$); and (5) Look before you leap ($M = 4.00$). These proverbs represent the values of responsibility and hard work, caution and spirituality.

The top five proverbs for women whose mothers had no higher education were: The top highest ranked proverbs for the middle-class women whose mothers had no higher education were: (1) You reap what you sow ($M = 4.61$); (2) What goes around comes around ($M = 4.51$); (3) Blood is thicker than water ($M = 4.50$); (4) Don't count

your chickens before they hatch ($M = 4.40$), and (5) If you don't think anything of yourself no one will ($M = 4.24$). These proverbs represent caution, spirituality and family.

When statistical tests were conducted comparing middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry whose mothers' had some higher education with middle-class mothers whose mothers lacked higher education, seven proverbs proved to be significant. Blood is thicker than water ($p < .01$), All people are created equal ($p < .01$), Kill Black before it grows ($p < .01$), The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world ($p < .01$), Cleanliness is next to Godliness ($p < .05$), Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons ($p < .02$), and Better to be envied than pitied ($p < .05$). These proverbs represent family, racial identity, spirituality, and equality.

In summary, educational level of participant mothers' mothers (grandmothers) did not significantly affect the majority of proverbs the women in this study indicated they believed in. Only seven proverbs on the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale produced significantly different rankings related to educational level (higher education vs no higher education) of the participant mothers' mothers.

Table 4.3

Relationship of Grandmothers' Exposure to Higher Education and Participant Mothers' Proverb Rankings (N= 106)

Independent Variable	Grandmothers Without higher edu. (N=41)		Grandmothers With some higher edu. (N=33)		F	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
What you sow	4.61	.95	4.66	1.00	.026	—
What goes around	4.51	1.00	4.34	1.36	2.05	—
Blood is thicker	4.50	1.06	3.69	1.49	8.46	<.01*
Count your chickens	4.40	1.10	4.44	1.22	.109	—
Anything of yourself	4.24	1.28	3.91	1.44	.721	—
Cleanliness	4.08	1.37	3.34	1.73	6.97	<.05*
Things get better	4.03	1.40	4.03	1.40	2.98	—
Bread alone	3.98	1.42	3.46	1.54	1.14	—
Men won't pay	3.88	1.52	3.41	1.74	2.33	—
Leap	3.83	1.41	4.00	1.39	.206	—
All people	3.58	1.81	3.72	1.42	9.13	<.01*
Make you ugly	3.54	1.69	2.88	1.80	.891	—
Darkest hour	3.40	1.53	3.28	1.78	2.88	—
Free lunch	3.30	1.65	3.72	1.53	.879	—
Hope	3.23	1.48	3.16	1.59	.394	—
Pretty is	3.00	1.71	3.58	1.68	.159	—
Can't see valley	2.88	1.51	3.25	1.9	.075	—
Poor dog	2.53	1.69	2.31	1.71	.001	—
Good Man	2.42	1.52	2.25	1.61	.020	—
Blacker the berry	2.63	1.69	2.69	1.87	3.08	—
Good Woman	2.10	1.45	1.75	1.27	2.96	—
Rocks cradle	1.90	1.28	2.53	1.70	9.05	<.01*
Black friends	1.82	1.27	2.00	1.61	2.12	—
Easy to fall in love	1.73	1.06	1.97	1.28	1.03	—
Welfare	1.70	1.24	2.06	1.61	3.16	—
Raise daughters	1.68	1.33	2.13	1.63	5.25	<.01*
Men are dogs	1.63	1.29	1.53	1.05	1.21	—
Better envied	1.60	1.08	1.97	1.36	4.24	<.05*
Kill Black	1.02	.16	1.25	.98	9.21	<.01*

* = Significant difference

** = Levene's Test of Equality of Variance for Independent Samples t-Test

Hypothesis 4: The proverbs with which middle class mothers of African American ancestry most strongly agree will be positively related to the proverbs these mothers plan to pass onto their children.

The first step of analysis was to ascertain which proverbs from the Page, Washington, and McAdoo scale middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry wished to pass on to their children. Table 4.3 reflects the rank order of means with standard deviations for proverbs middle-class mothers of African American ancestry wish to pass on to their children. A comparison of the mean rankings in Table 4.1 with the mean rankings in Table 4.4 indicates that middle-class African-American mothers wished to have their own children learn many of the same proverbs the mothers had themselves embraced. Mean ranking determines the highest ranked proverbs. The second step of the analysis was to determine the values and attributes reflected in each of the proverbs middle-class mother of African-American ancestry desired to pass to their children with the with the proverb beliefs discussed by Page and Washington (1987), McAdoo (1991) and Titelman (1996).

The top ten proverbs that middle-class mothers of African American ancestry desired to pass on to their children were as follows: (1) You reap what you sow ($M = 4.67$); (2) What goes around comes around ($M = 4.60$); (3) If you don't think anything of yourself no one will ($M = 4.52$); (4) Look before you leap ($M = 4.39$); (5) One cannot live by bread alone ($M = 4.34$); (6) Don't count your chickens before they hatch ($M = 4.29$); (7) You can't see the valley if you don't climb the hill ($M = 4.09$); (8) Don't let no one make you ugly ($M = 4.08$); (9 tied) All people are created equal ($M = 4.04$) and (9 tied) Blood is thicker than water ($M = 4.04$); (10) Things will get better by and by ($M = 3.98$). These proverbs represent values and attributes of spirituality, family ties, self-respect, and

hope (Page & Washington, 1987; Titelman, 1996). In addition, these proverbs advocated the benefits of cautious behaviors supplemented by hard work to meet ones responsibilities.

The five proverbs the middle-class mothers in this study were least likely to pass their children were: (1) A good women is hard to find ($M = 2.02$); (2) Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons ($M = 1.93$); (3) All men are dogs ($M = 1.32$); (4) Black is something to kill before it grows ($M = 1.10$); and (5) All women are bitches ($M = 1.04$). Middle-class educated mothers of AAA had little desire to pass on proverbs that related to low self-worth, disrespect toward others or negative stereotypes of Blacks, women or men.

In summary, middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry, based on Page, Washington, and McAdoo Scale, were most inclined to transmit to their children values reflective of responsibility and hard work spirituality, positive family ties, caution, self-respect and hope, while rejecting the transmission of proverbs that mirror low-esteem or disrespect of others.

Table 4.4

Rank Order of Means for Proverbs Middle-Class Mothers Desire to Pass Down to Their Children (N-106)

Proverbs	Rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
You reap what you sow	1	4.67	.61
What goes around comes around	2	4.60	.79
If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will	3	4.52	.89
Look before you leap	4	4.39	.94
One cannot live on bread alone	5	4.34	.91
Don't count your chickens before they hatch	6	4.29	1.13
You can't see the valley if you don't climb the hill	7	4.09	1.27
Don't let no one make you ugly	8	4.08	1.42
All people are created equal	9.5	4.04	1.35
Blood is thicker than water	9.5	4.04	1.14
Things will get better by and by	10	3.98	1.21
There is no such thing as a free lunch	11	3.96	1.29
Cleanliness is next to Godliness	12.5	3.85	1.40
The darkest hour is just before the dawn	12.5	3.85	1.26
Hope springs eternal	13	3.81	1.34
Men won't pay if they can get it for free	14	3.46	1.58
Pretty is as pretty does	15	3.39	1.48
It's a poor dog that won't wag its own tail	16	3.01	1.54
The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world	17	2.63	1.36
Welfare causes dependency	18	2.55	1.52
It's as easy to fall in love with a rich or poor person	19	2.46	1.36
Better to be envied than pitied	20	2.32	1.24
Some of my best friends are Black	21	2.24	1.47
A good man is hard to find these days	22	2.20	1.42
Blacker the berry sweeter the juice	23	2.14	1.25
A good woman is hard to find these days	24	2.02	1.34
Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons	25	1.93	1.20
All men are dogs	26	1.32	.77
Black is something to kill before it grows	27	1.10	.57
All women are bitches (dogs)	28	1.04	.19

Hypotheses 5: Middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry who are single will have rated proverbs significantly different from middle-class mothers who are married.

The fifth tested hypothesis whether single middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry would register significantly different values from the sample's married middle-class mothers. Table 4.5 provides five the proverb rankings of the two sets of mothers single and married. Only four proverbs provided significant differences: (1) All men are dogs ($M = 1.51$ – married; $M = 1.94$ – single; $p < .01$); (2) One cannot live by bread alone ($M = 4.44$ – married; $M = 4.65$ – single; $p < .05$); (3) Cleanliness is next to Godliness ($M = 4.03$ – married; $M = 3.77$ – single; $p < .05$); (4) Pretty is as pretty does ($M = 3.59$ – married; $M = 3.84$ – single; $p = .05$).

These results indicate that though single middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry and their middle-class married peers may differ in the ratings they give, these differences are generally non-significant except in few instances. Of 30 proverbs surveyed, 26 produced non-significant differences between the middle-class single and middle-class married mothers of African-American ancestry. Married and single middle-class mothers agreed on 87% of the proverbs on the Page, Washington, and McAdoo Scale.

Table 4.5

Proverb Rankings From the Page, Washington, McAdoo Scale of Middle-Class African-American Mothers According to Marital Status.

Proverbs	Married (N=71)		Single (N=32)			
Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Reap you sow	4.65	.59	4.77	.50	3.50	—
What goes around	4.58	.64	4.69	.47	3.22	—
Anything of yourself	4.49	.82	4.38	.91	.093	—
Leap	4.48	.75	4.31	.59	1.50	—
Bread alone	4.44	.80	4.65	.49	4.91	<.05
Count your chickens	4.31	.91	4.09	1.12	.508	—
Can't see valley	4.27	.91	4.40	.56	3.88	—
Make you ugly	4.20	.99	4.13	.94	.194	—
Things get better	4.10	.84	4.19	.97	1.65	—
Blood is thicker	4.10	.87	4.13	.75	1.31	—
Darkest hour	4.06	.92	4.28	.77	.975	—
Cleanliness	4.03	1.01	3.77	1.23	4.98	<.05
Hope eternal	4.01	.99	4.16	.82	.384	—
Free lunch	3.99	1.09	4.03	1.03	.291	—
All people	3.97	1.34	3.77	1.33	.003	—
Men won't pay	3.67	1.06	3.77	1.06	.031	—
Pretty is	3.59	1.18	3.84	.88	4.12	.05
Poor dog	3.56	.99	3.45	1.06	.325	—
Rocks cradle	3.31	1.20	3.42	1.06	.229	—
Black friends	3.19	1.45	3.55	1.15	1.47	—
Welfare	3.07	1.27	3.22	1.21	.001	—
Easy to love	3.06	1.16	3.16	1.05	.077	—
Blacker the berry	3.04	1.01	3.10	1.06	.195	—
Better envied	2.90	1.12	2.80	.96	.379	—
Raise daughters	2.69	1.34	3.09	1.20	1.53	—
Good woman	2.60	1.39	2.48	1.31	.153	—
Good man	2.86	1.30	3.16	1.39	.322	—
Men are dogs	1.51	.75	1.94	1.27	.322	<.01
Kill Black	1.32	.82	1.52	1.09	2.19	—
Women are bitches	1.13	.63	1.22	.75	1.76	—

Hypotheses 6: The proverbs that middle-class African-American mothers who are single household heads desire to pass on to their children are significantly different values from women in married households.

The statistical comparison of the proverbs that single versus married middle-class women of African-American ancestry desire to transmit to their children revealed strong agreement between the two cohorts of mothers. Again, only four proverbs of 30 produced significant agreement between single and married middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry.

Table 4.6 gives rankings of the proverbs the two sets (single versus married) of middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry desire to pass on to their children. The following proverbs from the Page, Washington, McAdoo Scale were the top five proverbs married middle-class mothers of African American ancestry desired to pass on to their children: (1) “You reap what you sow” ($M= 4.66$), (2) “What goes around comes around” ($M= 4.58$), (3) “If you don’t think anything of yourself, no one will” ($M= 4.53$), (4) “One cannot live by bread alone” ($M= 4.36$), (5) “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch” [tied for 5] ($M= 4.33$); (5) “Look before you leap” [tied for 5] ($M= 4.33$).

Single middle-class mothers of AAA indicated their desire to pass on the following top five proverbs to their children: (1) “You reap what you sow” ($M= 4.70$), (2) “What goes around, comes around” ($M= 4.65$), (3) “Look before you leap” ($M= 4.50$), (4) “If you don’t think anything of yourself, no one will” ($M= 4.48$) and (5) “Don’t let no one make you ugly” ($M= 4.34$).

Three of the top five proverbs were identical for both married and single middle-class mothers of African American ancestry. In summary, married and single middle-

class mothers of AAA had 87% agreement on the proverbs they wished to pass on to their children. Marital status did not significantly affect proverb selection.

Table 4.6

Comparison of Proverbs Ranking of Married Middle-Class Mothers of African American Ancestry with Single Middle-Class Mothers of African American Ancestry. The Mean Rankings Represent Proverbs the Mothers Desire to Pass on to Their Children.

Proverbs	Married (N=72)		Single (N=32)		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
What you sow	4.66	.65	4.70	.53	.672	—
What goes around	4.58	.85	4.65	.66	.630	—
Anything of yourself	4.53	.84	4.48	1.03	.270	—
Live by bread	4.36	.91	4.30	.95	.026	—
Count chickens	4.33	1.13	4.17	1.15	.100	—
Leap	4.33	1.00	4.50	.80	1.38	—
All people	4.12	1.31	3.80	1.45	1.48	—
Blood is thicker	4.04	1.22	4.03	.96	1.94	—
Can't see valley	4.00	1.37	4.30	.99	2.72	—
Make you ugly	3.97	1.56	4.34	1.04	5.51	<.01
Things get better	3.95	1.22	4.07	1.20	.067	—
Cleanliness	3.88	1.40	3.73	1.41	.001	—
Free lunch	3.85	1.34	4.19	1.18	2.19	—
Darkest hour	3.82	1.30	3.93	1.20	.281	—
Hope eternal	3.81	1.36	3.90	1.21	.514	—
Men won't pay	3.46	1.62	3.53	1.48	1.44	—
Pretty is	3.24	1.53	3.74	1.32	2.37	—
Poor dog	2.96	1.60	3.21	1.40	1.28	—
Rocks cradle	2.58	1.40	2.80	1.27	.571	—
Better envied	2.44	1.31	2.07	1.01	.571	<.01
Easy to fall in love	2.36	1.29	2.73	1.48	1.71	—
Black best friends	2.27	1.50	2.21	1.42	.914	—
Good man	2.15	1.45	2.35	1.36	.123	—
Welfare	2.11	1.53	2.87	1.48	.549	—
Blacker the berry	2.10	1.27	2.27	1.23	.191	—
Good woman	2.10	1.41	1.87	1.20	1.29	—
Raise daughters	1.92	1.24	2.00	1.11	.388	—
Men are dogs	1.28	.75	1.42	.81	1.71	—
Kill Black	1.14	.68	1.00	.00	5.27	<.0
Women are bitches	1.06	.23	1.00	.00	8.07	<.001

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study addressed the generational transmission of values through proverbs by examining proverb ratings of middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry (AAA). These mothers also noted perceptions of their own mothers' proverb ratings, and finally, they rated the proverbs they desire to pass on to their children. These proverbs, based on the Page, Washington, and McAdoo Scale provide a three generational view (grandmother to mother to child) of value transmission.

Research has demonstrated that events within a historical time period influence family ecological systems. Mothers seek to pass on to their children appropriate values to cope with the vicissitudes of daily living, as well as outside forces that impede upon the family. For African American families race has been a constant factor that mothers have needed to interpret to each succeeding generation of African-American children. This study seeks to determine whether over three generations there has been much change in the values mothers espouse and transmit.

As a second major focus, this study sought to determine if social class significantly affects value transmission. Will the values of the middle-class mothers in this study resemble the values of the earlier Page and Washington (1987) study of low-income mothers? Also, how does marital status impact value transmission? Will single middle-class mothers affirm values that differ from married mothers? Finally, does the level of mothers' mothers' (grandmothers) education influence the values transmitted? Will grandmothers with some college education be perceived to have espoused different

values from grandmothers who have no higher education? First, we will discuss Hypothesis 1 that the values and attributes of participant mothers would strongly agree with the traditional African American values described by Denby (1996).

Hypothesis 1: The values and attributes reflected in the proverbs with which middle-class mothers of African American ancestry most strongly agree will be similar to the traditional African American values found in the literature by Denby (1996).

Results of the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale administered to 106 middle class college educated mothers of African American ancestry supported the hypothesis that these mothers embraced traditional African American values including spirituality, family ties, racial pride, and healthy self-expression. Of the 13 of 30 proverbs that participant mothers' agreed or strongly agreed with the values the proverbs espoused, four rather clearly affirmed spiritual virtues. Proverbs linked to spiritual values that received a mean return over 4.0 follows: (1) "One cannot live on bread alone" ($M=4.5$). This proverb suggests that individuals may need to call upon a "higher power" than self, and that while bread feeds the physical body individuals need more than physical substance to live a fulfilling life; (2) "The darkest hour is just before the dawn" ($M=4.13$). This proverb suggests faith that a better time will follow one's sorrows and hardships, and when matters are at their worse, individuals need to believe that the "light of morning" or better time is near; (3) "Things will get better by and by" ($M=4.2$). Closely related to the spiritual value reflected in the previous proverb ("Darkest hour before the dawn"), this proverb affirms the hope of a better tomorrow; and (4) "Hope springs eternal" ($M=4.05$). The later proverb symbolizes the never ending desire among African Americans that their conditions will improve. Faith and hope are firmly held spiritual

values in the African American community. The inclusion of these four spiritually linked proverbs among the 13 proverbs participant mothers ranked strongly as ones they affirmed indicated continuing support for spiritually, a traditional African American value.

Denby (1996) reported that African Americans traditionally support family ties. One of the 13 proverbs receiving a mean rating of 4.0 or above affirmed family ties. The proverb, "Blood is thicker than water" ($M = 4.10$), suggests that remaining close or connected with family members is more important than maintaining ties with non-family members

Racial pride in the African American community is closely intertwined with enhancing self-esteem. Two of the 13 proverbs that received an average mean rating of 4.0 or higher reflected encouragement of individuals toward strong self-esteem that can enhance racial pride. "If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will" ($M = 4.46$) encourages self-respect. Self-respect can promote racial pride. Another proverb, "Don't let no one make you ugly" ($M = 4.16$) also encourages individuals toward healthy self-respect. Both of these latter two proverbs suggest independent thinking and encourage individuals to refrain from negative behaviors.

Racial pride is also reflected in proverbs with which participant mothers indicated they disagreed. Participant mothers disagreed with the proverb "Black is something to kill before it grows" ($M = 1.38$). Educated, middle-class mothers of African American ancestry rejected the negative racial stereotype embedded in this proverb. They also rejected negative stereotypes about men ("All men are dogs". $M = 1.65$), as well as negative stereotypes about women ("All women are bitches" $M = 1.15$). Nor did the

participant mothers believe that women of fine quality are in short supply (“A good woman is hard to find these days”) $M= 2.55$. Generally, the educated middle-class mothers of African American ancestry in this study preferred proverbs that reflected healthy self-respect and positive racial pride over negative stereotypes. Reframing from negative behavior reflects positively on the African-American community so positive behavior can promote racial pride.

In summary, college educated middle-class mothers of African American ancestry affirmed the traditional African American values of spirituality, family ties, racial pride and healthy self-expression in 7 of the 13 proverbs that received a mean rating of 4.0 or higher. These results suggest that middle-class mothers of African American ancestry do embrace the traditional values cited by Denby (1996).

It is important to note proverbs that educated middle-class mothers of African American ancestry espoused that differed slightly from the Denby (1996) traditional values. Four of 13 proverbs that received a mean rating of 4.0 or higher reflected the participant mothers affirmation of the values of responsibility and hard work. In fact, the highest ranked proverb (“You reap what you sow” $M= 4.69$) suggests that individuals must assume responsibility for their own actions. The second highest ranked proverb (“What goes around, comes around” $M= 4.62$) also reminds individuals that they are responsible for their own outcomes and that responsible behavior should bring positive outcomes, while irresponsible behavior will likely produce negative outcomes. It seems hardly surprising that these participant mothers of African American ancestry who have been diligent in their goal to become educated and who are primarily homeowners would strongly embrace responsibility and hard work as important values as reflected through

their proverb selection. Two other proverbs among the 13 proverbs with mean ratings above 4.0 also affirmed hard work and responsibility. The proverb “You can’t see the valley if you don’t climb the hill” ($M = 4.30$) alludes to the hard work in reaching a goal (“the hill to climb”) and the reward (“seeing the valley”) that await those who persevere. The proverb “There’s no such thing as a free lunch” ($M = 4.01$) also implies that hard work is to be expected in life. The inclusion of the proverbs four proverbs that reflect responsibility and hard work among the 13 proverbs with mean ratings over 4.0 indicated that educated, middle-class mother of African American ancestry espouse these values. This finding is hardly unexpected for participant mothers who mainly grew up in working class and lower income families, but have reached college graduation, home ownership, middle-class status by probably tremendous perseverance and responsible behavior.

Finally, two proverbs of the 13 proverbs, with mean ratings of 4.0 or above affirm cautious behavior. The two proverbs, “Look before you leap” ($M = 4.43$) and “Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched” ($M = 4.25$) both suggest that individuals should weigh decisions carefully and be sure all factors are in order before a prize is claimed or celebrated. Participant mothers may be reflecting on African Americans’ caution in dealing with a society where mistrust and skepticism has often been embedded in communication across racial groups.

In conclusion, regarding Hypothesis 1 according to the PWMPS, educated middle-class mothers of African American ancestry did espouse the traditional African American values of spirituality, family ties, racial pride and healthy self-expression as reported by Denby (1996), but these mothers also strongly affirmed the values of

responsibility and hard work. They believe in being cautious and soundly reject negative racial and gender stereotypes.

Hypothesis 2: the proverbs with which middle-class mothers of African-American ancestry most strongly agree will be positively related to the proverbs that their mothers had passed down to them. An examination of the results of the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale supports the hypothesis that the proverbs affirmed by middle-class, college educated mothers of AAA are positively linked to the proverbs they perceive their mothers passed down to them. Participant mothers included 7 of their own mothers' top ten proverbs in their highest ranked proverbs. This indicates 70% agreement on the highest ranked proverbs between the earlier generation of mothers and the present generation of mothers.

A closer examination of the participant mothers' mothers (grandmothers) proverb mean rankings of 4.0 or higher on the Likert Scale is revealing. College educated middle-class mothers selected the identical proverbs as their mothers as the two highest ranked proverbs. These two proverbs reflect the values of responsibility and hard work ("You reap what you sow" – $M=4.61$ and "What goes around, comes around – $M=4.52$). The mean rankings are the participant mothers' mothers perceived mean values. Participant mothers also believed that their mothers passed down the values of caution ("Don't count your chickens before they are hatched" – $M=4.46$), family ties ("Blood is thicker than water" – $M=4.16$) and self-affirmation ("If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will" – $M=4.01$).

It is particularly interesting that, though proverbs that reflect spirituality appear in the mothers' mothers (grandmothers) perceived top ten proverbs, none of the proverbs

reflecting spirituality were in the mothers' mothers (grandmothers) perceived top ten proverbs, none of the proverbs reflecting spirituality were in the mothers' mothers (grandmothers) top five proverbs. Spirituality proverbs generally received mean ratings between 3 and 4 indicating a neutral response or positive, but less than strong agreement. Proverbs in this category included (1) "Things will get better by and by" ($M= 3.88$), (2) "One cannot live by bread alone" ($M= 3.88$), (3) "The darkest hour is just before the dawn" ($M= 3.49$) and (4) "Hope springs eternal" ($M= 3.16$). Through the participant mothers believed their own mothers would be neutral or positive, but not strongly so about the proverbs reflecting spirituality the participant mothers rated a proverb reflecting spirituality higher than their own mothers. The proverb, "Man cannot live by bread alone" had a mean rating of 4.5 from the participant mothers, but only a 3.88 mean rating as perceived by the mothers' mothers.

The mothers' mothers had also valued family ties more than their daughters. One of the mothers' mothers perceived top five proverbs was "Blood is thicker than water" ($M= 4.16$). This proverb does not appear in their daughters' top ten ranked proverbs. Family ties may be more fragile in the modern mobile society of the college educated, middle-class mothers of AAA.

The mothers' mothers (grandmothers), like the participant mothers had perceived low mean ratings for proverbs with negative stereotypes about Blacks, men or women (i.e. "All men are dogs" – $M= 1.56$). Negative stereotypes were rejected across both generations.

In summary, the proverbs which middle-class, college educated mothers of AAA most strongly agreed were positively related to the proverbs they perceived their mothers

had passed down to them. Participant mothers embraced 70% of their mothers perceived top ten proverbs.

Hypothesis 3: Middle-class women of African American ancestry whose mothers have had some higher education ranked proverbs significantly different from those of middle-class women of African American ancestry whose mothers had no higher education.

Middle-class women of African American ancestry whose mothers had some higher education ranked 22 of 29 proverbs on the Page, Washington, and McAdoo Proverb Scale similar to the participant mothers whose mothers had no education. Only seven proverb rankings were significantly different. The women with less educated mothers gave significantly higher ranking to the proverb “Blood is thicker than water” ($M = 4.50$) than women with mothers with some college education ($M = 3.69$). These results suggest that family ties may possibly hold greater value among women whose mothers had less education. Women whose mothers had less education also ranked the proverb “Cleanliness next to Godliness” ($M = 4.08$) significantly higher than women whose mothers had some higher education ($M = 3.34$). This proverb combines responsibility with spirituality in the biblical tradition of Martha, who cleaned her home for the Master’s visit.

On the other hand, women whose mothers attended college significantly ranked higher the proverb “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world” ($M = 2.53$). The women whose mothers had no higher education had a mean of 1.90 for that proverb. Perhaps women whose mothers attended college had a greater sense of their own self-importance or power in shaping destiny.

Though both groups gave low rankings to the proverb “Kill Black before it grows” the women whose mothers had no college education ranked this proverb even lower ($M = 1.02$). Mothers whose own mothers had some higher education ranked this proverb with a M of 1.25. Neither group of mothers affirmed negative racial stereotypes illustrated by this proverb.

In summary, the education of the mothers’ mothers did not significantly affect proverb rankings for 75% of the proverbs on the Page, Washington, McAdoo Scale. An interesting significant difference was that the women with less educated mothers were more likely to rank the proverbs about cleanliness and spirituality higher than the women with more educated mothers.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 compare value transmission over three generations. These values were determined from the results of the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale administer to 106 participants mothers. The mean ratings are based on the Likert Scale.

Hypothesis 4: The proverbs with which middle-class Mothers of African-American ancestry most strongly agree will be positively related to the proverbs these mothers plan to pass on to their children.

Results of the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale indicated that the proverb with which middle-class, educated mothers of AAA most strongly agreed were positively related to the proverbs these mothers planned to pass on to their children. Seventy percent or seven of the top ten proverbs mothers in this study espoused were also ones they desired to pass on to their children. This indicated that similar values are being transmitted between the current generation of educated middle-class mothers to their

children. These values include responsibility and hard work, self-affirmation or self-respect, caution, and spirituality.

Proverbs encouraging a strong work ethic and the assumptions of responsibility for one's outcomes that were strongly supported by mothers as desirable to pass onto their children were: (1) "You reap what you sow" ($M = 4.67$), (2) "What goes around comes around" ($M = 4.60$), and (3) "You don't see the valley if you don't climb the hill" ($M = 4.09$).

Middle-class, educated mothers also want their children to continue to remain a cautions. The proverbs reflecting caution among the top ten they wished to pass to their children were: (1) "Look before you leap" ($M = 4.39$) and (2) "Don't count your chickens before they hatch" ($M = 4.29$). The transmission of cautious behavior suggests that middle-class, educated mothers of AAA still feel that their children may be vulnerable in American society with its vestiges of prejudice and racism.

These mothers also desire for their children to have some degree of spirituality. The proverb "One cannot live by bread alone" ($M = 4.34$) points to the mothers' belief that their children will need to recognize a "higher power" than the physical body. Interestingly, only one of the top ten proverbs mothers desired to pass on promotes spirituality while three proverbs in the top ten emphasized strong work ethic and espoused the importance of assuming responsibility for one's actions. This suggests that spirituality remains an important value among middle-class, educated mothers of AAA, but may be slightly less important in the future. The middle-class mothers had affirmed a larger number of proverbs with underlying spiritual values in their personal top ten proverbs. The mothers had overall indicated they affirmed the following proverbs: (1) "It

is always darkest before the dawn” (2) “Things will get better by and by”. Faith and hope underlie these proverbs. Though the mothers desire to pass on the value of spirituality to their children, the highest ranked proverb with a spiritual reference (“Once cannot live by bread alone”) is generic and non-specific in spiritual context. It lacks the specificity of denoting faith or hope that the proverbs the mothers personally embraced imbued.

What values did middle-class, educated mothers of AAA desire to pass on to their children that were not in the top ten proverbs the mothers indicated they believed?

Middle-class mothers desire to restore the importance of family ties. They would like to pass on to their children the proverb “Blood is thicker than water”. Perhaps, they feel the need to embrace a heritage that remains fragile in a mobile society and return to the emphasis on family ties. The proverb “Blood is thicker than water” had been transmitted in the earlier generation by older mothers to their daughters, but had weakened during the daughters generation. Perhaps the daughters desire to recap the strength of family ties in their children’s generation.

Awareness of their civil rights may have propelled middle-class mothers in this study to also desire to pass on a proverb that espouses racial dignity, “All people are created equal.”. Middle-class mothers may feel that in a mobile, integrated society, their children will need a reminder through this proverb of their self-worth.

In summary, middle-class educated mothers of AAA desired to pass on 70% of the top ten proverbs with which they strongly agreed. The results of this study support the transmission of the similar values of responsibility subsumed in a strong work ethic, self-affirmation or self-respect, caution and spirituality. However, there may be more limited emphasis on spiritual values in the values these mothers are passing to the next

generation. On the other hand middle-class mothers of AAA may desire to reinstate emphasis on family ties that become muted in their own generation.

Hypothesis 5: Middle-class mothers of African American ancestry who are single will have rated proverbs significantly different from middle-class mothers who are married.

Only four proverbs of 30 were rated significantly different by single middle-class mothers of AAA compared with married middle-class mothers. This means that 85% of their proverb mean ratings were non-significantly different.

What follows is a closer examination of the four proverbs that produced significantly different mean ratings. Though they did differ significantly in the rating of the proverb “all men are dogs”, both single and married mothers universally viewed this as a negative proverb about men that they did not espouse ($M = 1.51$ – married; $M = 1.94$ – single). The single middle-class mothers did rank this proverb higher but still gave it a rating less than 2.0. On the other hand, married middle-class women in the study ranked the Cleanliness proverb quite high ($M = 4.03$ – married) compared with the moderately high rating single middle class mothers gave that proverb ($M = 3.77$). The value of spirituality, though, remains strong for both middle-class married and single mothers of African-American ancestry. Though the single mothers rated the proverb “Man cannot live by bread alone” (single – 4.65) significantly higher ($p < .05$), the married middle-class mothers also rated this proverb high ($M = 4.44$ – married). Both married and single mothers’ proverb ratings indicated they rank spirituality as an esteemed value.

In summary, single, middle-class mothers of AAA do not rate proverbs significantly different from middle-class married mothers. Both groups affirm similar values as measured by the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale.

Hypotheses 6: The proverbs that middle-class mothers of African American ancestry who are single household heads desire to pass on to their children represent significantly different values from women in married households.

Results indicated that the proverbs middle-class mothers of African American ancestry who are single household heads desired to pass on to their children proverbs that represented values almost identical to the ones women from married households desired to pass on. Single and married middle-class mothers had non-significant differences on 26 of 30 proverbs on the Page, Washington, and McAdoo Scale.

Both groups rated “You reap what you sow” ($M= 4.66$ for married mothers’ $M= 4.70$ for single mothers’ as the proverb they most desired to pass on to their children. Both single and married middle-class mothers rated the proverb “What goes around, comes around” ($M= 4.58$ for married mothers, $M= 4.65$ for single mothers) as the second highest ranked proverb to pass on to their children. These proverbs embody the value of a responsible work ethic. Middle-class mothers of African American ancestry were often raised in working class and lower class homes, and they have often expended tremendous personal effort to receive an education and reach middle-class status. They seem to desire that their children also subscribe to this value.

Married and single middle-class mothers significantly disagreed on only four proverbs to pass on to their children. These proverbs deserve closer examination. The proverb “Don’t let no one make you ugly” received a stronger rating from single, middle-

class mothers ($M= 4.34$) than married, middle-class mothers ($M= 3.97$). Perhaps mothers who are single feel more strongly about building self-affirmation into their children. Though both groups rated the proverb “If you don’t think anything of your self, no one will” as one of the top five proverbs, they desired to pass on to their children. Single middle-class mothers may desire an “extra boast” of self-esteem for their children.

Neither married nor single middle-class mothers desired to pass on to their children proverbs with negative stereotypes about Blacks, men or women. Yet, single middle-class women were significantly less likely to rate these proverbs above a rating of 1.0. The two proverbs that single middle-class mothers’ were significantly less likely to rate as ones they wished to pass on to their children were: (1) “Black is something to kill before it grows” and (2) “All women are bitches (dogs)”. Both reflect negative stereotypes about Black and women.

Generally speaking, single, educated, middle-class mothers desire to transmit essentially the same values through proverbs as married educated middle-class women. Both groups embrace proverbs that espouse a responsible work ethic, self-affirmation or self-respect, spirituality and caution.

Summary

This study involved 106 middle-class, educated mothers of African American ancestry in the examination of value transmission through proverbs. Integrated value transmission was determined through the Page, Washington, McAdoo Proverb Scale mean ratings of the proverbs the mothers believed, proverbs the mothers perceived that their own mothers had believed, and finally, proverbs the participant mothers desired to pass on to their children. Table 5.1 provides a comparison of the top five proverbs across

three generations, and Table 5.2 provides a comparison of the values and attributes these proverbs represented across three generations.

Across three generations proverbs that espoused personal responsibility and a strong work ethic received the two top mean ratings (“You reap what you sow” and “What goes around comes around”). The top ten proverbs across three generations also incorporated three values and attributes of spirituality, caution and self-affirmation or self-respect. Though the participant mothers perceived that their own mothers believed strongly in the proverb “Blood is thicker than water”, the participant mothers did not include this value of family ties among their top ten proverbs. Yet, they included family ties among the top ten values they desired to pass on to their children.

Seven out of ten or 70% of the participant middle-class mothers top ten proverbs were the same as the proverbs they perceived their own mothers embracing. Also, seven out of ten or 70% of proverbs middle-class mothers of African American ancestry desired to pass on to their children were the same as the ones the participant mothers believed. These results indicate relative stability in the values transmitted across three generations. The participant mothers indicated they would pass on to their children fewer highly ranked proverbs with spiritual values than had been included in their generation or in their own mother’s generation. Proverbs that denote cautious behavior crossed all three generations, possible reflecting the continued wariness that persons of African American ancestry in American society. Marital status did not significantly/affect proverb mean ratings or values and attributes passed to the participant mothers’ children. Middle-class mothers in this study affirmed traditional African American values reported by Denby

(1996). This study of middle-class mothers and value transmission provides evidence that the values transmitted over three generations appear fairly stable.

Table 5.1 Comparison of Top Ten Proverbs Across Three Generations

Mothers' Top Ten Proverbs	Grandmothers' Top Ten Proverbs	Children's Top Ten Proverbs
You reap what you sow	You reap what you sow	You reap what you sow
What goes around	What goes around	What goes around
Cannot live by bread alone	Don't count your chickens	If you don't think anything
If you don't think anything	Blood is thicker than water	Look before you leap
Look before you leap	If you don't think anything	Cannot live by bread alone
Can't see the valley	Look before you leap	Don't count your chickens
Don't count your chickens	Cleanliness next to Godliness	Can't see the valley
No make you ugly	Things will get better	No one make you ugly
Darkest before dawn	Cannot live by bread alone	All people created equal
Things will get better	Men won't pay if it is free	Blood is thicker than water
		Things will get better

Table 5.2 Comparison of The Values Represented in the Top Ten Proverbs Across Three Generations

Mothers' Top Ten Values		Grandmothers' Top Ten Values	
Responsibility and Hard Work (M= 4.69)		Responsibility and Hard Work (M= 4.61)	
Responsibility and Hard Work (M= 4.62)		Responsibility and Hard Work (M= 4.60)	
Spirituality	(M= 4.50)	Caution	(M= 4.46)
Self-Affirmation	(M= 4.46)	Family Ties	(M= 4.16)
Caution	(M= 4.43)	Self-Affirmation	(M= 4.01)
Responsibility and Hard Work (M= 4.30)		Caution	(M= 3.93)
Caution	(M= 4.25)	Spirituality	(M= 3.91)
Self-Affirmation	(M= 4.16)	Spirituality	(M= 3.88)
Spirituality	(M= 4.13)	Spirituality	(M= 3.88)
Spirituality	(M= 4.12)	Morality	(M= 3.64)
<hr/>			
Children's Top Ten Values			
<hr/>			
Responsibility and Hard Work		(M= 4.67)	
Responsibility and Hard Work		(M= 4.60)	
Self-Affirmation		(M= 4.52)	
Caution		(M= 4.39)	
Spirituality		(M= 4.34)	
Caution		(M= 4.29)	
Responsibility and Hard Work		(M= 4.09)	
Self-Affirmation		(M= 4.08)	
Morality		(M= 4.04)	
Family Ties		(M= 4.04)	
Spirituality		(M= 3.98)	

APPENDICES

Demographics

I. Family Structure

2. How many people live in your household? _____

Please list all the people who live in your household and how they are related to you.

3	4	5	6	7
Relation to the Respondent	Sex M/F	occupation	Grade	Age of Child

8. What is your current family status? Respond yes (1) and no (5) to **ALL** that apply.

Never married_____

Divorced_____

Married_____

Widow_____

Separated_____

Living with a partner_____

9. What is your current living situation? Do you

Rent a house or apartment____

Live with family members in a home they own or rent____

Live/own condo____

Own your own home____

Other____

I. Education

Check all that apply

	10. You	11. Your spouse or Partner	12. Your mother or primary caregiver
Completed High school			
GED			
Vocational, trade Or business school			
Attended some College (State number of years)			
Completed College			
Graduate or Professional school			
No formal Education			
Don't Know			

13. Do you work outside the home? Yes No
14. If yes full-time or part-time?
15. What is your profession? _____
16. What is the income level for your household?
- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Less than 30,000_____ | 70,000-89,000_____ |
| 31,000-49,000_____ | Over 90,000_____ |
| 50,000-69,000_____ | |
17. Would you consider yourself
- Middle class____
- Upper class____
18. What would you consider your parent's status when you were growing up?
- Lower class____
- Working class____
- Middle class____
- Upper class____
19. Did you grow up the majority of your life in a
- single parent home____
- two parent home_____

Proverbs

These are proverbs that one often hears. Please indicate YOUR AGREEMENT with each of the following by scoring each proverb from 1 thru 5 using the following scale:

A. Proverbs you believe in

5= strong agreement with the truth in the proverb.

4= agreement

3= neutral

2= disagree

1= strong disagreement with the truth in the proverb.

- ___20. It's a poor dog that won't wag its own tail.
- ___21. Don't let no one make you ugly.
- ___22. You can't see the valley if you don't climb the hill.
- ___23. Don't count your chickens before they are hatched.
- ___24. The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.
- ___25. Pretty is as pretty does.
- ___26. What goes around, comes around.
- ___27. The darkest hour is just before the dawn.
- ___28. All people are created equal.
- ___29. If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will.
- ___30. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.
- ___31. Better to be envied than pitied.
- ___32. Cleanliness is next to Godliness.
- ___33. Blood is thicker than water.
- ___34. One cannot live by bread alone.
- ___35. There is no such thing as a free lunch.
- ___36. Things will get better...by and by.
- ___37. You reap what you sow.
- ___38. Some of my best friends are Black.
- ___39. A good woman is hard to find these days.
- ___40. It's as easy to fall in love with a rich person as a poor one.
- ___41. Look before you leap.
- ___42. Hope springs eternal.
- ___43. Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons.
- ___44. All men are dogs.
- ___45. Black is something to kill before it grows.
- ___46. A good man is hard to find these days.
- ___47. All women are bitches (dogs).
- ___48. Welfare causes dependency.
- ___49. Men won't (buy the cow)/pay if they can get (the milk)/ it for free.

**Please indicate which proverbs you would like to hand down to your
Child/Children:**

You may use any number between 1 and 5:

5= Will pass on

4= Will probably pass on

3= May pass on

2= Will probably not pass on

1= Will not pass on

- ___50. It's a poor dog that won't wag its own tail.
- ___51. Don't let no one make you ugly.
- ___52. You can't see the valley if you don't climb the hill.
- ___53. Don't count your chickens before they are hatched.
- ___54. The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.
- ___55. Pretty is as pretty does.
- ___56. What goes around, comes around.
- ___57. The darkest hour is just before the dawn.
- ___58. All people are created equal.
- ___59. If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will.
- ___60. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.
- ___61. Better to be envied than pitied.
- ___62. Cleanliness is next to Godliness.
- ___63. Blood is thicker than water.
- ___64. One cannot live by bread alone.
- ___65. There is no such thing as a free lunch.
- ___66. Things will get better...by and by.
- ___67. You reap what you sow.
- ___68. Some of my best friends are Black.
- ___69. A good woman is hard to find these days.
- ___70. It's as easy to fall in love with a rich person as a poor one.
- ___71. Look before you leap.
- ___72. Hope springs eternal.
- ___73. Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons.
- ___74. All men are dogs.
- ___75. Black is something to kill before it grows.
- ___76. A good man is hard to find these days.
- ___77. All women are bitches (dogs).
- ___78. Welfare causes dependency.
- ___79. Men won't (buy the cow)/pay if they can get (the milk)/ it for free.

Please indicate proverbs that your mother passed down to you.

You may use any number between 1 and 5

5= Did pass down

4= Probably passed down

3= May have passed down

2= Probably did not pass down

1= Did not pass down

- ___80. It's a poor dog that won't wag its own tail.
- ___81. Don't let no one make you ugly.
- ___82. You can't see the valley if you don't climb the hill.
- ___83. Don't count your chickens before they are hatched.
- ___84. The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.
- ___85. Pretty is as pretty does.
- ___86. What goes around, comes around.
- ___87. The darkest hour is just before the dawn.
- ___88. All people are created equal.
- ___89. If you don't think anything of yourself, no one will.
- ___90. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.
- ___91. Better to be envied than pitied.
- ___92. Cleanliness is next to Godliness.
- ___93. Blood is thicker than water.
- ___94. One cannot live by bread alone.
- ___95. There is no such thing as a free lunch.
- ___96. Things will get better...by and by.
- ___97. You reap what you sow.
- ___98. Some of my best friends are Black.
- ___99. A good woman is hard to find these days.
- ___100. It's as easy to fall in love with a rich person as a poor one.
- ___101. Look before you leap.
- ___102. Hope springs eternal.
- ___103. Mothers raise their daughters and love their sons.
- ___104. All men are dogs.
- ___105. Black is something to kill before it grows.
- ___106. A good man is hard to find these days.
- ___107. All women are bitches (dogs).
- ___108. Welfare causes dependency.
- ___109. Men won't (buy the cow)/pay if they can get (the milk)/ it for free.

Consent Form

My name is Janel Dancy and I am a Master's student in Family & Child Ecology at Michigan State University. You are invited to participate in a study on what values mothers with African-American ancestry transmit to their children. I am conducting this research as part of the requirements for my Masters Thesis. I hope to learn what values Black mothers want their children to have and what values they have received from their own mothers. You are a possible candidate for this study because you are a mother with children between the ages of five and eighteen. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire is a series of questions about proverbs that you believe hold value or not. The questionnaire should take between 30 to 40 minutes to complete.

If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue your participation at any time. When you sign your name to this paper you are indicating that this form was read by you (or to you). You are indicating your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire. You may withdraw at anytime after signing this from, should you choose to discontinue participating in this study by telling me. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowed by law. No names will be used when reporting research findings. All subjects will remain anonymous. Per request, results can be made available to participants.

If you have any questions please ask me. If you have any additional questions later Janel Dancy (517) 324-4142 or Harriet McAdoo, the supervisor of

my thesis (517) 432-3320, will be happy to answer them. If you have questions about participants' rights as subjects of research please contact David Wright at (517) 355-2180.

Your signature

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