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STRESS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES

By

Sybil Thembekile Buthelezi

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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2000

Professor Harriette McAdoo

ABSTRACT

STRESS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES

By

Sybil Thembekile Buthelezi

The major purpose of this study was to examine sources of family stress variables: finance, gender matters, health, highest grade obtained at school, housing, legal matters, male-female relations, marital/partner relations, number of children, parenting, personal habits, personal relations, race/ethnic matters, religion, safety and work in a sample of African-American single-parents.

The population consisted of Mid-Western African-American single parents and Mexican single parents. The Ethnic Families Research Project (EFRP) selected a sample of 300 subjects, but for this study, 148 single African-Americans who met the research criteria were selected.

The mean age of the participants was 34.41 years while the mean income was $3,500. Most of the participants fall under the poverty level as defined by national minimum averages ($16,000-00 for an urban family of 4. All the subjects were single parents, 43% never married, 2.7% widowed or widower, 25% divorced and 21% separated. The gender representation in this single parenthood sample consisted of 21 males and 126 females. The majority in the sample, 32.4% had three children; 20.3% had two children and 18.9% had one child each. Only 32.4% were

working, 38% were unemployed and 14.2% were homemakers. The highest grade obtained by the majority of participants was the twelfth grade. The average grade was 12.37. The largest percent 45.9% had completed the twelfth grade, 17.8% the eleventh grade and 10.8% two year college graduates.

The data was analyzed in Michigan State University computer laboratory facilities. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programs for frequencies, and correlation was used to analyze the data. The data analysis began with descriptive statistics which gave the mean, standard deviation, variance, range and percentages of the various dependent and independent variables. A correlation was used at the .01. The 01 level of significance to examine the relationship between the sources of stress, the fourteen stress variables. All variables were significant. Inter-correlation showed correlation in thirteen variables while finance was not related to all of the others. Finance was the most stressful variable while race matters were the least stressful.

While it is expected that this study may provide additional insights into the relational factors of family stress, an examination of larger population samples would enhance the generalizability of the findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the members of my committee Drs. Harriette McAdoo, Chairperson, Gloria Smith, Julia Miller and Carl Taylor. Their scholarly contributions, support and respect that I have for them cannot be overstated.

I tender a special expression of appreciation for Dr. Harriette Pipes McAdoo, the chairperson of my committee and my professional role model. Her enthusiasm, intellectual input, moral support and her unswerving belief in me kept me engaged in this project in the face of discouragement and frustration. Her faith, friendship and warmth oiled the academic process and brought my study to its completion.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the encouragement, patience, support and understanding of my family, who have struggled with me through this whole process. I appreciate their willingness to accept the academic, economic and social challenges which our stay in the United States of America has brought them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Family stress continues to be one of the most intractable social problems facing African-American families because of increasing poverty which is associated with the decline in marriages, increase in the number of female-headed families (Rexroat, 1994; Wilkie, 1991) out-of- wedlock births (Rexroat, 1994; McAdoo, 1995), and changing family structures. Poor families face severe limitations on economic opportunities because wages and jobs are decreasing, public policies decrease funds, and institutionalized racism deprives these families of opportunities for breaking out of the trap of poverty (Darity, 1994; Aldridge, 1991). Family stress is further increased by the underfunding of antipoverty programs and the isolation of poor families in low-income, violent neighborhoods (Fitzpatrick & Gomez, 1997). As President Clinton (2000) states, two thirds of the jobs and in the suburbs and attempts must be made to bring jobs near the people by means of housing vouchers and by means of developing poor inner city neighborhoods.

Family stress in African-American families is peculiar because of the legacy of three centuries of slavery, discrimination, and the constant, if unconscious fear of unequal treatment by the majority culture. Marital formation and dissolution of African-American marriages harm the well being of

these families. The proportion of African-American 18 year olds who were married declined from 64% to 43%, while the proportion of never married increased from 20.6% to 37.4% in the early nineties (Keith, 1997). This decline in marriage is largely caused by a wide range of factors which includes Black male joblessness, legal entitlement to public assistance, pauperization of the working class and the increase in divorce (Testa and Krogh, 1995, Wilson, 1987). Vontress and Epp (1997) suggest that stress in African-Americans manifests itself in a triad of emotions and behavior which is dominated by hostility, hopelessness, and a paranoid perception of discrimination in most cross racial encounters.

The lack of decent affordable housing, the gap between income and median rents, the increase in homelessness (Butler, 1997), and also residence, socioeconomic status, income and employment opportunities are to some extent decided by race and ethnicity of families. African-American families are at the bottom of the social rung, hence their predisposition to stress. Yet no two families react in exactly the same way to the same stressors. Such variations emanate from the complexities of personal, familial, cultural and racial factors which impact families. African-American family stress variations are consistent with their cultural and familial perspectives. Though social scientists have written much about stress in families, there exists considerable room for studying stress among African-American families.

The need for this study arises from the complexities that African-American families face within the dominant White middle

class families, whose studies are often generalized to all families in the United States. This research explores variations of family stress in African-American families by a secondary analysis of data collected by a professor of the Department of Family and Child Ecology and the Institute for Children, Youth and Families. This project dealt with African-American families and Mexican-American families. Though the problems studied were much broader than stress, this study is confined to family stress in African-American families.

Purpose of the Study

The primary focus of this study is to examine family stress in a sample of African-American single parent families. The researcher examined fourteen variables which could be associated with family stress.

Other purposes of this study are to:

1. Expand the knowledge and understanding of stress in families by focusing on African-American families.
2. List variables from the highest to the lowest sources of stress.
3. Determine the relationships between the various stress variables.
4. Examine variables which are associated with stress, such as housing, finances, health, safety, personal habits, work, male-female relations, marriage, personal relationships, parenting, legal areas, race and ethnicity, gender-related issues, and religion and spirituality.

Significance of the Study

This researcher intends for this study to contribute to the theoretical foundations of family stress studies in single parent African-American families. New understanding of family stress will lead to new approaches in building family competencies which reduce stress levels and a subsequent reduction of the emotional, physical and social effects of stress.

A study of stress in African-American families would be of benefit to South African Black families as the researcher is herself a Black from South Africa, and plans to return to South Africa and conduct similar studies. The study comes at a time when researchers on stress in African-American family studies refute earlier studies on methodological grounds, as well as the insensitivity and apparent racism which has distorted findings (Allen, 1978; Herskovits, 1964; McAdoo, 1996; Nobles, 1978; Sudarkasa, 1996. Earlier studies were invalidated by sampling error, failure to consider the economic status, inability of interviewers to relate to Blacks, and the pervasive climate of bigotry and discrimination (Freeman, 1982).

Overview of the Study

Chapter 1 provides the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework and the overview of the study.

Chapter 2 consists of a historical overview of literature on African-American families and on stress in families. The

review of literature on family stress looks at both stress in African-American and other minority families as well as stress in the majority population. Varying research approaches on family stress is provided. This chapter also includes a list of independent and dependent variables, hypotheses and also a definition of concepts.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology which includes research design, sampling, description of the instrumentation, reliability and measurement issues.

Chapter 4 describes the results of correlation between source of stress and fourteen dependent variables, inter-correlation and the ranking of stress from the most stressful to the least stressful.

Chapter 5 is discussion, which includes the relationship between source of stress and variables and how the results relate to literature, and also includes what literature says about the rank order of the sources of stress.

Conceptual Frameworks

This study uses an ecological perspective as developed by Bronfenbrenner (1989) and modified by Synder, Ooms and Hutchins (1991), and Boss's contextual approach to family stress (1985). Synder, Ooms and Hutchins adhere to Brofenbrenner's ecological model but present it in a modified version of their own, Figure 1. Boss's contextual approach to family extends Brofenbrenner's model. The differences in these two models will be explained later.

Bronfenbrenner devised a four-layered system of interaction between individuals and their environments. What is crucial to this model is the interrelatedness of the levels and the elements within the levels. The cause and effect relationships are circular and not linear, with the result that there is no beginning nor end, neither cause nor effect (Montgomery, 1982). Seen in this way, one cannot isolate the sources of the stress from the eco-system and study them individually. They are influenced by the other variables in the ecosystem, and by the ecosystem itself.

Each change in the family ecosystem results in changes in the other parts of the ecosystem and a change in the final family configuration. Thus the loss of a job by the mother sends ripples running through the family stress terrain as members of the family readjust and redefine the loss according to their positionality within the family configuration. For the eldest supporting child the loss may mean that she or he has to take a second job or increase her or his working hours a week in order to cushion the family during this trying period. For the youngest child the loss of the mother's job may mean that she or he may spend a day at school without lunch as the mother provided lunch money.

What we see above is the reformulation of theories on family configurations so that there may be changes in functions, form, goals, organization, practices, rules and values as families adjust to changes. A new system lives, and with it is a new family structure with new patterns of interaction.

The Family in Context: An Ecology of Nested Systems

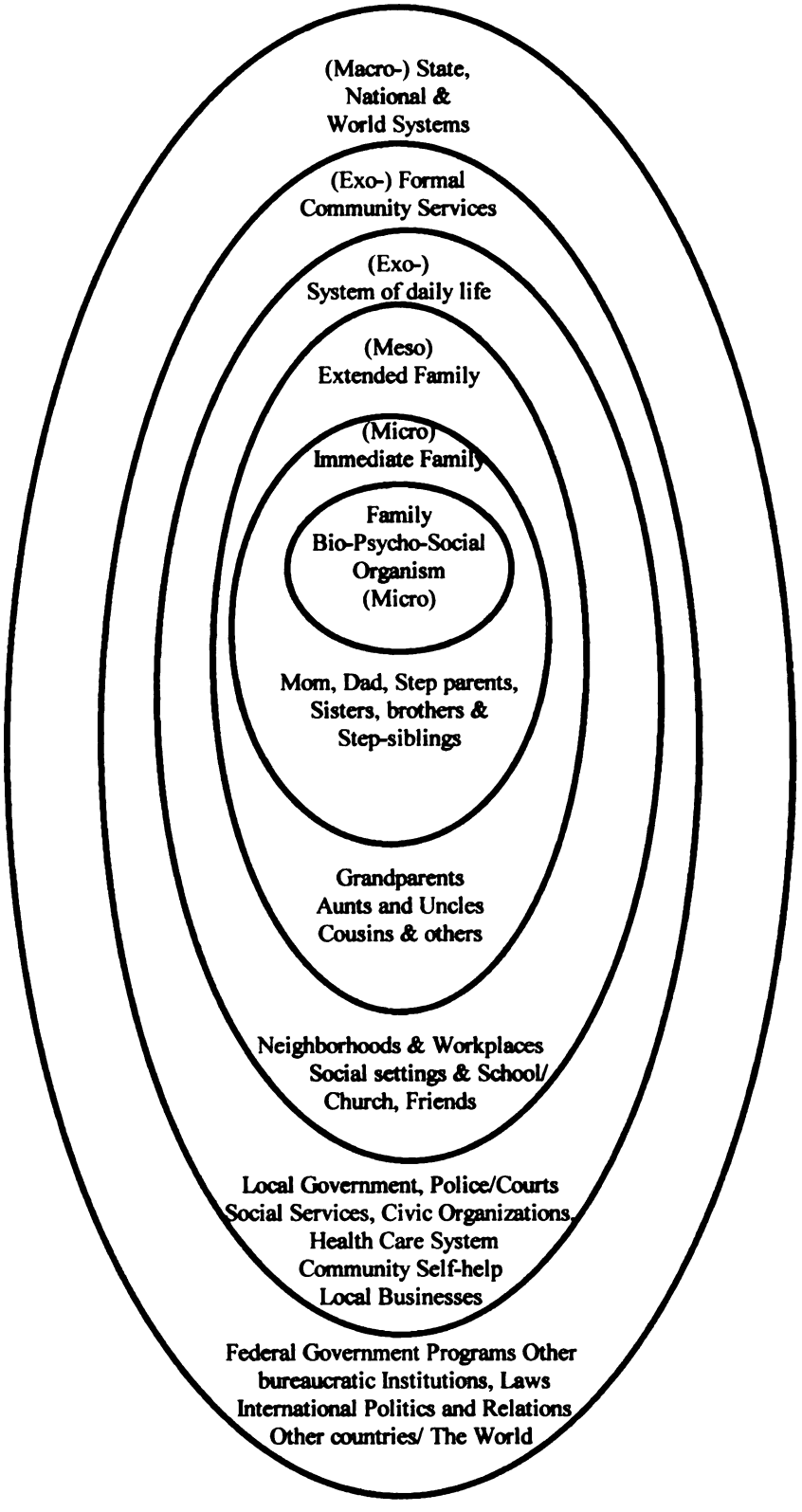

Figure 1: Adapted from and Bronfenbrenner, 1989, and Synder, Ooms & Hutchins, 1991.

Micro-level

The innermost level is the micro-level. The model suggests that stress at the microlevel may be triggered or managed by the dynamic interaction of family members who may be the mother, the father, the stepmother, the step father, the sisters, brothers, siblings or step siblings. For instance, the absence of the father exasperates the loss of a job by the mother, and the loss may become more stressful because of the presence of a pregnant teenage daughter and another daughter who may be going to college. Family stress may also arise from the personality dynamics within the family as the family deals with specific family events. How different family members perceive events, mediate these events and meet them with their adaptive responses will determine their stressfulness or stresslessness.

Meso-level

The meso-level of the framework has extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and others. These support systems are the social support, the instrumental support or counseling, active support or mothering and the material support or goods and service. The social support is:

(1) Emotional by making a person feel that she or he is cared for and loved.

(2) Esteem supportive by making one feel that one is esteemed and valued.

(3) Network supportive by giving one a place in network communication and mutual obligation.

The Exo-level

The exo-level in the system of daily life is the neighborhood, the workplace, social setting,, schools, churches and friends. Another part of the exo-system includes the formal community such as local government, services from the police, courts, social services, civic organizations and movements, health care system, community self help and local businesses. Variations of the exo-levels of African-American families result in variations in the whole ecological field of family stress. For instance, the decision taken by President Clinton to reduce the marriage penalty for the Earned Income Tax Credit, was taken at the Federal government level, the exo-level, but it will affect the other levels of the ecological field the meso-level and the micro-level.

Macro-level

The outer level, the macro-level consists of the state, the national and the world system which include the Federal Government and State programs, other bureaucratic institutions, laws, international politics and relations and the influence of the world on family interactions. The welfare system, affirmative action and the Moynihan Report are at this level.

The Boss Model

This study also uses the Boss model because it extends Hill's ABCX model (1949) by indicating that the interaction is not linear but are multidirectional. The X factor (the stress

factor) is not the effect of A, B and C, but there are times when the X factor influences A, B and C. The Boss model has an external and internal contexts. The external dimensions of the model are:

1. **Constitutional**. The biological and physical strength of the members of the family
2. **Cultural**. Canons and mores by which the family define and react to stressful situations
3. **Development**. The stages in the life cycle of both the individual and the family itself
4. **Economic**. The state of the economy of the larger environment.
5. **Historical**. The time when the event takes place.
6. **Religious**. Values and beliefs mediating stressful situations.

The internal dimension of the Boss model (1987) has the following dimensions:

1. **Sociological**. The structure and function of the family with regards to its boundaries.
2. **Psychological**. The family's defense mechanisms.
3. **Philosophical**. The family's values and beliefs.

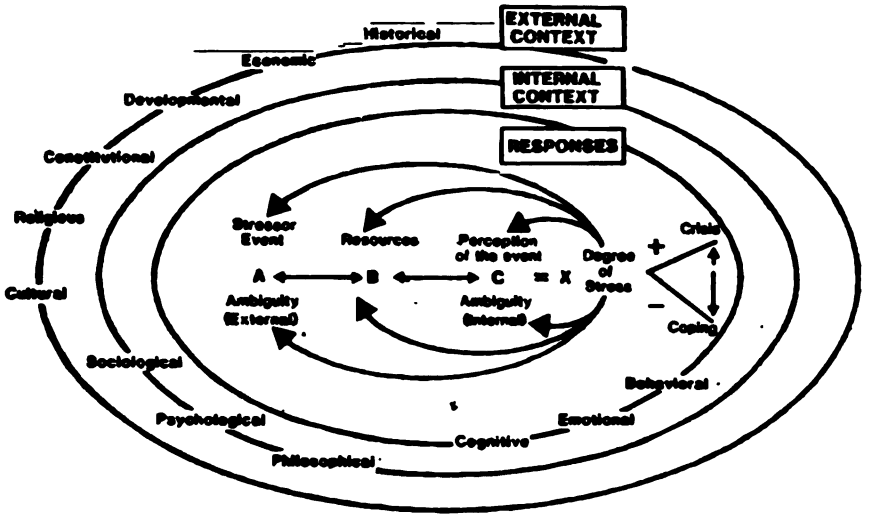

Figure 2 The Boss Model: A Contextual Approach to Family Stress (Boss, 1987)

Though Brofenbrenner's model and the Boss model have commonalties in their ecological approaches, the Boss model extends and refines some of the elements of the ecological fields. For instance, Boss introduces the developmental context which is the stage in the life cycle of both individuals and family itself. She maintains that a newly formed family of young people may perceive the event of pregnancy more positively than a mature family in which there are already six children (1987). In her constitutional context, Boss says that some people have more stamina and resilience, which influences the energy and perseverance they have to activate and maintain the coping process (Boss, 1987). Other components of the Boss model widen the ecological field, therefore, it is included in this study.

Ecological Perspective of African-American Families

The ecological perspective views African-American families within the ecosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). This approach takes into consideration current environmental factors and relations within and outside the family. It views African-American families holistically within their existential realities. The strengths, variations and weaknesses of African-American families are not attributed to single or multiple causes in an additive fashion. McAdoo (1996), Boyd-Franklin (1993, 1993) have challenged the validity of the additive linear approaches in studies of African-American families, but suggest that we examine a constellation of configurations that are hatched by an interaction of various factors. These factors may arise from the external context, which may be constitutional, cultural, developmental, economical, historical and religious, or may also arise from the internal factors which are philosophical, psychological and sociological, the latter being behavioral, cognitive and emotional responses (Boss,1987). While isolating these factors for the purpose of studying them. ecologists do not lose sight of the complexity of the relatedness of these factors. Ecologists recognize the historical impact on African-American families, but immerse the historical impact within a wider context. They present a wide range of issues to be studied in order to understand African-American families.

Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1995) maintain that recently Robert Hill (1993) with a team of scholars including Andrew Billingsley, Eleanor Engram, and Carol Stark examined research

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on African-American families. They found that the conventional treatment of African-American families tended towards the "defective model' and the exclusion of the bulk of African-American families as researchers focused on one subgroup. This team examined a number of issues such as the influence of history, culture,, social, economic, political forces, public policy and psychological dynamics such as discouragement, and self-esteem. This team adopted a holistic approach. The ecological approach as expounded by Bronfenbrenner (1989) and Boss (1986) augment the holistic approach by widening the areas of inquiry in the understanding of families. This study will therefore use the ecological perspective while extrapolating much of the findings from studies conducted by Robert Hill (1993) and the others. The range and the interrelatedness of factors in the ecological field of African-American families forms the main trust of this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter summarizes current literature on African American families, tress and researches on sources of tress in African American families.

Stress

Seyle (1956) defines stress as the rate of all wear and tear caused by life. He maintains that all life events are potential stressors and contribute to wear and tear of an individual. This wear and tear often leads to what McCubbin and Patterson (1982) called the stress-pile-up. Lazarus and Cohen (1977) define a stressor or a stressor event as one which taxes or exceeds the resources of the system. Fallon et. al., (1993) view stress as an individual's response to threat. The response may be psychological, physiological, biochemical or involve all three systems. Rabkin and Struening (1976) state that mounting stress preceded sudden accidents, athletic injuries, cardiac death, diabetes, leukemia, multiple sclerosis stress, myocardial infarctions, tuberculosis and many minor medical ailments. To these physical effects of stress may be added the emotional, psychological and social ill effects of stress. In addition, the understanding of potentially stressful variables may assist in the reduction of ill effects of stress. Family

stress is the response of family members to threats. The literature suggests that there are variations in the pattern of family member responses even when the stressors are similar in nature (Lazarus, 1977; Cooper & Marshall 1977). Keith (1997) states that stress levels differ because of two factors. Some people are exposed to more stressful life problems than others because of particular constellation of roles and economic resources. The Boss (1986) model would ascribe the differences in stress levels to a wide range of differences between individuals. The differences on the external context between individuals may be in the constitutional, cultural, developmental, economic, historical or religious make-up of the persons. The differences could also be in the internal level because of different philosophical, psychological and sociological dynamics. Others are more psychologically responsive to stress because they are less likely to have psychosocial resources. Threats are often either ambient stress or life events.

Ambient Stress

Ambient stress is the tension that arises from day to day hassles of life in the community (Fallon et. al., 1993) This includes the accumulation of stresses in the household, social and leisure pursuits, and in work environments (de Longes et. al., 1983). Though such a wide range of stress is extremely difficult to quantify (Cooper et. al., 1977), household stress has, however, been measured through expressed emotions (Vaughan & Leff, 1975) and in family burden). While home care,

interpersonal relationships, unemployment and other work related activities area major components of ambient stress, they have been less readily measured (Fallon et. al., 1993).

The major problem in studying ambient stress are the fast changing dynamics of household, social and leisure pursuits, and changing work environment and work force. For instance, the increase in the number of full-time employed men and women in dual earner couples in the labor force may have eased the economic family strains, but caused such family struggles with managing the needs of families and work in working environments that are readily not family friendly (Barnett et. al. 1994). These changing dynamics leaves the poor hopeless, lonely and isolated and enduring greater levels of stress, and hence have higher incidence of mental health Harrington, 1962).Just as Black males are many more times to be found in the prisons than White males, so too are they over represented in the state and county mental hospitals, says Darity and Myers (1995). These scholars go on to say that African-Americans represent 12% of the general American population, in 1990 Black males comprised 28.8% of all males in mental (psychiatric) hospitals.

Pioneering research on stress in the work place was conducted on males in manufacturing occupations, and was then generalized in non-manufacturing work in families. (Marshall, Barnett & Sayer, 1993); Reed, LaCroix, Karasek,). Moreover, recent studies of contemporary samples indicate that the workers of the 1990's are significantly different from their predecessors, and may, therefore, experience a rewarding or stressful aspect job that might not have been experienced in

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the past (Barnett et. al. 1994). Families of the 1990's are also significantly different from their predecessors so that there is a high probability of changes in experience in wear and tear of events and everyday life hassles.

Asmundsson (1987) maintains that the majority of working women are mothers in nuclear families, and family stress related to women at work will so differ in that single parents experience more stress since neither traditional nor egalitarian support systems are available to them. He further gives several personal factors which may determine family stress. Some of these factors are: Do both parents work? Do both parents want to work? Do both parents need to work? Are they physically well? How far is the work place? Is the work monotonous or challenging? Are they paid well? How do the parents balance the work load of the home and that of their occupation?

Life events

Life events such as death in the family, or that of a close friend, loss of a job, breakdown of relationship and divorce are more discrete family stressors. Such stressful events have a potential of becoming crises. A family crises occurs a when family's interpretation of the traumatic event leads to stress so severe that coping becomes impossible (McCubbin et. al., 1982).

A stressor event is one that produces a change in the family social system (McCubbin et. al., 1982) or an event that causes any sharp or decisive change for which old patterns are inadequate (Hill, 1949). The literature suggests that it is the

severity of the changes which make an event to be stressful. Hansen and Hill (1964) argue that the more sudden or unanticipated a stressor event is, the greater the disruptiveness or the stress. Stressor events are more quantifiable than ambient stress.

Earlier findings on stress among African-American families indicate that there is a need for further research on stress in African-American families. These findings asserted that stress was rare amongst African Americans (Bacock, 1895; Bevis, 1921; Prange and Vitols 1962). For instance, Bevis (1921) stated that "most Blacks are carefree, live in the here and now with a limited capacity to recall or profit by experiences of the past. Sadness and depression have little part in their psychological make-up. Prange and Vitol (1962) concluded that stress was part of the White man's culture because the Negro has less to lose and is less apt to lose it. As a defense against loss, he has attitudes of stoicism and subtle defiance, religiosity, and an extended family relationship; he can also projectively locate the source of misfortune outside himself. Unbiased studies on African Americans refute these assertions and have used methodologies that are consistent with family stress research in other racial groups.

Findings from unbiased studies suggest that stress is found among African-Americans though the reactions to various stressors differ between African-Americans and the majority population (O'Brien and Iannotti, 1993) much as differ between the various classes of African-Americans and between individuals within the same class. Though African Americans differ by class

it ought to born in mind that individuals within classes differ in terms all the factors that Bronfenbrenner (1989) and Boss (1986) include in their ecological fields. The ages, the histories, the constitution, the cognitive responses, the emotional responses, and the behavioral responses of people differ within each class.

African-American Families

Literature on African American is divergent in nature in that it presents the cultural ethnocentric approach led by Frazier (1939), and the cultural relativity approach championed by Herskovits (1964) and others. McAdoo (1996) notes that the cultural ethnocentric approach was dominant until the early 1970's. However, in recent years there has been a rise in prominence of the ecological theories of the families (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) which challenge the simplistic view of family structure as the sole determinant of developmental outcomes. This study adopts the ecological approach and examines a wide range of context impinging on African-American families.

Cultural Ethnocentric Perspective

The cultural ethnocentric perspective based on the work of Frazier (1939), dominated early literature on African-American families (McAdoo, 1996, Staples, 1981, Boyd-Franklin, 1989 & 1993). This approach viewed African American families as disorganized (Dodson, 1996). Frazier asserted that African-American families had no cultural ties with their African heritage, but had evolved family structures which were imposed

by customs and practices emanating from slavery. This gave rise to female-headed households and disorganized family structures consisting of blood and non-blood kin (Johnson, 1996).

The cultural ethnocentric perspective implied that African-Americans were culturally deviant, dysfunctional, inadequate, negative and pathological in contrast to White middle class nuclear families (Dilworth-Anderson, Burton and Johnson 1993). These cultural ethnocentrists viewed African-Americans within a tangle of pathologies marked by single parenthood, broken homes, high crime rate, high rate of unemployment, high incident of adolescent parenting, high incident of children out of wedlock, high infant mortality rate and high divorce rate.

The cultural ethnocentric perspective saw the remedy of African-Americans as alleviation of poverty and assimilation to the dominant culture, that of the white middle class nuclear family. The Moynihan Report of 1965 suggested that poor academic performance, lack of employment and social isolation emanated from the chaotic African American structure (Dodson 1996). Akbar (1996) tends to this cultural ethnocentric perspective when he says that the historical images which African-American families have inherited continue to sabotage many African-American efforts for true manhood and womanhood

The major flaws with this approach is its historical and cultural determinism, and its belief that African-American families are monolithic. This approach often looks at the poorest African American families and compares them to middle class White families, and then generalizes their findings to

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all African American families. Recent literature suggests that African-American families are heterogeneous because of their complex varieties of adaptive variables. For instance, the African American middle class is distinct from the African American low class although literature blurs the differences. For instance Andersen (1999) points out that the inner city poverty pockets he visited he noticed overwhelming numbers of single-parents, where fathers, uncles and older brothers were frequently incarcerated. In these pocket of poverty oppositional culture, crack culture or the code of street prevailed, and there was less respect for the law. Yet within these areas, there were decent people who never bought into oppositional culture or crack culture (Anderson, 1999). African-American middle class families do not live in the pockets of poverty described above. They move away from predominantly Black ghetto neighborhoods (Darity and Myers, 1994; Wilson, 1987). Du Bois maintained that African-Americans consisted of four classes, the first, the well-to-do; the second, the hard-working decent laborers who were getting by very well; third, the trying to work but barely making ends meet, and the fourth, the submerged tenth beneath the surface of economic viability Andersen, 1999). Cultural ethnocentric studies often concentrate on the third and fourth class and generalize their findings to all classes.

Cultural Relativity Perspective

The cultural relativists challenged the idea that African-American families were centers of tangles of pathologies and that enslavement deleted African influence on African American

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families. Much of what cultural relativists saw were vestiges of African culture (Du Bois, 1908, Herskovits (1964); Sudarkasa (1996); Boyd-Franklin (1989); McAdoo (1996); and Billingsley (1992). In examining marital records, Billingsley (1992) found that more than two thirds of the freed enslaved people were married and that families were headed by males. The current trend of female-headed families is therefore not just the result of enslavement, but results from socio-economic conditions found in African-American families (Chapman 1996). The eligibility for Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC), poverty and a shortage of African American males are responsible for the increase in female-headed households (Billingsley, 1992; Chapman 1996; Fosset & Kiecolt, 1993). African American families still experience more poverty and adverse conditions than White families even when African-American families are intact (Dodson, 1996). Many cultural relativists attribute these disparities to racism and discrimination (Boyd-Franklin 1993; Darity and Myers, 1994; Darity 1995).

Furthermore, the cultural relativists maintained that factors beyond the control of African American families, such as underemployment, incarceration of many African males, and their serving in the military make them unavailable (Billingsley, 1992) with the resultant imbalance in the ratio of males to females so that males, are less likely to marry (Darity and Myers 1994.) Males are more apt to involve themselves with multiple partners when there is an abundance in the opposite sex. Darity and Myers (1994) maintain that the declining Black male labor force participation is fully consistent with declines

in marriageability of these men. A reduction in the supply of marriageable men contribute to the growth of female-headed families or female headed households. Though referring to the whole country, Clinton (2000) captures this situation when he says that nearly one in three American children grows up in a home without a father. These children ar five times likely to live in poverty than children with both parents.

Ecological Perspective

The ecological perspective views African-American families as being within ecosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). This approach takes into consideration current environmental factors and relations within and outside the family. It views African-American families holistically within their existential realities. The strengths, variations and weaknesses of African-American families are not attributed to single or multiple causes in an additive fashion. McAdoo (1994), Darity and Myers (1994), Byod-Franklin (1993) have challenged the validity of the additive linear approaches in studies of African-American families. They suggest that an ecological perspective gives a comprehensive view of African-American families in the totality of their multifaceted ecological field.

African-American families have in recent years sloughed off distortive studies of the past which viewed these families as "pathologic and deviant simply because the women and children were without a man (Bould, 1977) or viewed them as "centers of the tangle of pathology" (Moyniham, 1975). Contemporary studies suggest that African-American families be studied within their

cultural particularistics (Allen, 1978; McAdoo, 1996; Nobles, 1978; Sudarkasa, 1996). Thus, the study of stress in this study seeks to capture and examine stress within the African-American cultural particularistics.

The cultural variant perspective of African-American families maintains that African-American families are an important sub-culture of American society, different in many ways from White families, but possessing value system patterns of behavior and institutions which are described, understood and appreciated for their own strength and characters (Peters, 1996). The current study accepts the cultural continuities but does not subscribe to the "sub-culture" connotation of the variant approach. It does not view African-American families as being sub to any family configurations. It also does not view African-American families as monolithic but accepts that class, gender, poverty, and race are some of the determinants of African -American families social formations (Heiss, 1975; Hill, 1981).

Within this cultural emblem, the current study also views stress within a constellation of class level and castelike status (Scanzoni, 1977; Ogbu, 1996), and within the support network (Hill, 1975; McAdoo, 1978). That African-American families differ from White American families is also evident when McAdoo (1996) points out that "Status differentiation unique to Blacks has been based upon the skin color, hair type, and the absence or presence of Negroid or Caucasoid facial features." For Glick (1996), differences between African-American families and other families have been "Converging,

others diverging, and others simply persisting. One of the differences is that in 1985 there were as many as 30% one-parent African-American families as were 27% married families in contrast to the other races where 11% were one-parent families and 38% were married families" (Glick 1996). Literature points out that "Due to socioeconomic and demographic circumstances, African-American women are still less likely to postpone childbirth and much more likely to have children out of wedlock. Over 60 percent of all births to African-American women were out of wedlock as compared to 17 percent among White mothers" (Novick et. al., 1989). Within these differences, stress factors are bound to differ.

Ecologists examine complex multiple-causal determinants of variations in African-American families within varying environmental factors. These varying environmental factors refute the assumption that African-American families are monolithic. The diversity in African-American families is largely determined by environmental factors which this study discusses under home, neighborhood and economic realities.

Home Environment

Although Luster and McAdoo (1994) indicate that studies involving home environment and African-American families have concentrated on single parent families, generally studies on home environment suggest that there is a correlation between familial development outcomes and the home environment. The literature provides ample empirical evidence of economic

hardship, psychological distress in parenting and socio-emotional development of African-American families. African-American homes like Americans families in found in four classes, the middle class, the hard-working well-to-do class, the working poor and the underclass.

One of the major tasks of African-American families is in assisting their children in the development of their bicultural status. DuBois (1908) described as this double consciousness, this sense of looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's self by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, -an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled striving; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The African-American middle class has a sense of importance of the fact of their Blackness, a pride in themselves and emerge through the window of opportunity to establish for themselves homes which sample good life (Coner-Edwards and Edwards, 1988). These middle class Black families have adapted some distinctive characteristics of the dominant society. They believe that they must work hard to maintain their status and must work harder to maintain it (Coner-Edwards and Edwards, 1988). Their delay of gratification enables them to build an estate or an investment portfolio or buy a dream house or travel abroad (Coner-Edwards and Edwards, 1988). They have strong work orientation, high achievement orientation, strong kinship bonds strong religious orientation and flexibility of roles Pinderhughes, 1988). Numerous scholars such as Boykin & Toms (1985); Comer &

Pousaint (1994); Hines & Boyd-Franklin (1982); Pinderhughes (1982) and Peters (1996) have written about the development of the bicultural identities of African-Americans. Families help African-Americans deal with the racism they experience because of their ethnicity and color (Billingsley, 1968; Jackson, McCullough & Curin, 1996; Nobles 1989-; Peters 1996).

The homes of the second class, the hard-working well-to-do are often not in the rich suburbs but amongst the Black ghettos. Despite living in these poor neighborhoods, this class has homes that are relatively progressive, well run and act as models for the third and fourth class. The literature indicates that children from this class act and assume the symbols of the poor classes in order to be accepted, and be seen as not acting white (Andersen, 1999; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1995). Like the Black middle class the hard-working well-to do class has a resilience which gives African-American children an amazing capacity to cope and rise above circumstances (Jenkins, 1988). This is facilitated by homes which create an atmosphere that is a healing contrast to the negative things that Black children experience everyday outside. Such homes provide children with books, pictures, music, cleanliness, order, sympathy, understanding information friendship and love (Jenkins, 1988). These decent Black families are on the decline because of the postindustrial displacement of manufacturing jobs, shifts in unskilled jobs from the central cities to the suburbs, from the rustbelt to the sunbelt and from the domestic labor markets to third world countries white (Andersen, 1999; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1995). The isolation of this class from the

influence of the Black middle class which lives in better neighborhood robs this class and its children of role models. The middle class moved to better environments for many reasons.

The homes of the working Blacks who are poor and finds difficult to make ends meet differ greatly from the classes which we have been discussed above. They live in poor neighborhoods and live from pay check to pay check. These are the people who fall under the 20 percent of families. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Economic Policy Institute maintains that the rich are getting richer while the poor get poorer (Lansing State Journal, Jan. 18, 2000). In the last decade the rich families gained 15 percent more income, while the middle class gained 2 percent and the poor families gained 1 percent (Lansing State Journal, Jan. 18, 2000). Homes of the poor Black families adapt to their poverty partially mitigating their strong achievement orientation, work orientation, and the need for providing their children with books, pictures, music and a window of opportunity. These homes are often trapped into the culture of poverty which is marked by a desire for crazy money, oppositional culture, teenage pregnancies, welfare dependency and underground economy (Andersen 1999).

Homes of the underclass, the fourth class have the worst conditions and are marked by joblessness, homelessness, family desertions and other social pathologies. The crack culture, high male mortality rates and the underground economy prevail in such homes. Andersen (1999) suggests that in these poor homes the father, the uncles and the bothers may have been incarcerated. The responses of these homes to their unwantedness

and the insensitivity of the wider community to their needs, spawns a web of debilitating familial pathologies which are responsible for the stresses and tensions within these families.

Irrespective of class, adaptive strategies in African-American families are cultural patterns which survived and were modified during slavery and during the period that followed slave emancipation. Some of these are strong kinship bonds, flexibility of family roles, and a high status placed on education, religion and work (Hill, 1975). African-American families have value systems and worldviews that are different from those of Whites. Hale-Benson (1987) described African-American value systems and world views as gestaltist, deductive, rather than inductive, people oriented, altruistic, expressively non-verbal and much focused on novelty, freedom and personal distinctiveness.

To ignore cultural differences of African-American families leads to negative interpretation of these families. Fathers in these families have often been depicted as always absent and ineffective in helping their children (McAdoo J. L., 1988). African-American mothers are said to be restrictive using greater physical punishment and being responsible for the "breakdown" and "pathology" of African-American families (Martin, 1993). Some studies suggests that these families are more severe, punitive and power assertive in their discipline of children than White parents of similar socio-economic status (McLyod, 1990). In their cultural context and African traditional values, the seeming severity, punitiveness and power assertiveness lose these attributes. Daughters from the so-

called punitive homes were found to be significantly independent, resistive, and dominant, and demonstrated unusual social maturity and adaptive behavior in a nursery school setting (Baumrian, 1992).

Neighborhood Conditions

Numerous studies indicate the impact of external environmental factors on the development of families (Boyd-Franklin, 1989 & 1992; Brofenbrenner & Ceci 1994; Garabarino & Kostelay, 1993; Luster & McAdoo 1994). African-American families often live in different neighborhoods which are determined by the status of the family. Affluent African-American families live in good neighborhoods which have good social amenities such as schools, shopping centers and supportive economic institutions such as banks and work places. These good neighborhood, however, have an adverse effect on Black families who invariably notice that white society would tolerate only so many or none in some places "nice Negro families" (Johnson, 1988)

For those African-American middle class families who identify with American dominant culture which emphasizes individualism and autonomy, they lose connections with their extended families thus cutting off nutritive supplies (Pinderhughes, 1988).

The literature states that poor African-American families often live in dense neighborhoods that are steeped in high criminal activities, poor academic performance, poor self-esteem

(Huston, McLoyd & Coll, 1994; McLoyd, 1990). African-American families are more likely to be in poor neighborhoods than other racial groups (Glick, 1996, Huston, McLoyd & Coll, 1994 Malveaux, 1996; McLoyd, 1990). Matters are aggravated by the fact that poor neighborhoods have inferior schools and other services. These environmental conditions are fertile breeding ground for stress. Kozol (1991) describes these poor neighborhoods as block after block of old, abandoned, gaping factories, the overwhelming sensation of emptiness, an industrial slum without industries. He describes North Lawndale a typical Black neighborhood as having one bank, one supermarket, 48 lottery agents, and 99 liquor stores. With only one supermarket, food is of poor quality and overpriced (Kozol, 1991). In such neighborhoods, businesses move out and gangs move in, the school are cheerless and ugly. Kozol (1991) then describes Mary McLeod Bethune School as cheerless, then Manly High School as an enormous ugly building which has a graduation rate of 38 percent. These savage inequalities (Kozol, 1991) in neighborhoods in the are largely responsible for the stressful familial pathologies .

Socio-economic Factors in African-American Families

The impact of socio-economic factors on most African-American families is determined and is largely responsible for producing single-parent African-American families. Various studies focus on African-American socio-economic factors from various perspectives. There are those studies which point to race as the major factor which triggers the overarching socio-

economic web (West,1994; Dyson,1997). Dyson (1997) says that an understanding of racial mystification helps to grasp the hidden premises, buried perceptions and the cloaked meanings of race. Other scholars, however, deny the centrality of race in the design of the socio-economic fabric of African-Americans (Crouch,1995, Steele, 1990.) These scholars place the responsibility of curving the place for African-Americans on the socio-economic ladder on their shoulders. Crouch (1995) maintains that Black American leaders in the past ignored the "decoy of race" and emerge from nowhere to somewhere; they made a way where there was no way; they moved from outside the argument into the center, and helped define its direction and determine its highest ideals. Steele (1990) maintains that personal responsibility is the brick and mortar of power, and thus personal responsibility as the brick and mortar of the Black socio-economic position.

There are scholars who raise the economic taproot as the trigger for the African-American socio-economic status, some emphasizing structural considerations (Wilson, 1987) others emphasizing behavioral considerations (Darity and Myers (1994). Wilson (1987) ascribes much of the adverse socio-economic status of African American-poor classes to the advent of the de-industrialization and the rise of the professional-cum-service economy. Darity and Myers (1994) maintain that criminal behavior such as violent crimes, competition in drug markets lead to early deaths, incarceration, labor force withdrawal, which then leads to decline in availability of marriage mates and the rise of female-headed families.

The studies that focus on race, structures and behaviors are flawed in that they focus on narrow single factors and ignore the broad range of factors that contribute individually and severally in the creation of the African American socio-economic status. This study will view the socio-economic status within the ecological emblem which rejects single factor determinism, but blends a wide range of factors to create a configuration. It is this configuration which weaves the socio-economic status of heterogeneous African-American families from the middle class to the underclass. The Black middle class displayed a pattern of increasingly solid and stable lives until the late 1950s and 1960s, thereafter succumbing to marital dissolution and instability (Darity and Myers). The decline of the availability of an African- American male with sufficient economic resources to support a family has made it preferable for an African- American female to remain unmarried. Most of these unmarried mothers collect public financial assistance (Barnes, 1983). This public assistance increases as the family increases. The size of the African -American family also depends on the education level, marital status and the urban/ rural location of the families. Two parent African- American families in most rural areas tend to have more children than two parent African- American families in urban areas. African-American families with less education tend to produce more children than those with more education (Darity, 1983). More African-American females are better educated and have more earning capacity than African-American males so that many African-American females remain unmarried and others resort to mate-

sharing (Billingsley, 1992). The educated independent African-American females experience male-female relationships which differ from those of less educated lower class females. Edwards (1988) notes that Black males emerge from their insecurities to accuse educated women of being too educated, dominating, having no respect for her man or too involved in their careers to worry about their relationships.

As noted by Billingsley (1992) and Malveaux (1988), income differentials between African-Americans and other groups adversely impact African-American families. Higher paying jobs are often reserved for White males so that education does not guarantee higher salaries for African-Americans. When both parents are employed, family income increases. The spin-off in that situation results in living in a better neighborhood, and getting to a better neighborhood means getting better schools and better services (Billingsley, 1992). Two parent families often offer better environmental conditions than single-parent families (Spurlock and Booth, 1988).

African-American Family Stress and Related Stress Factors

This study examined the literature on fourteen sources of stress such as housing, finances, health, safety, personal habits, work, male-female relations, marriage, personal relationships, parenting, legal areas, race and ethnicity, gender-related issues, religion and spirituality.

African-American Family Stress and Finances

The literature suggests that there is a relationship between family stress and finances. The better the financial situation is, the less the preponderance of stressors. Family wealth accumulation depends on saving behavior, inheritance and transfers determined by age, marital status, race, place of residence, sex and education of the parents and children (Hao, 1996). For instance, Hao states that being an African-American reduces wealth by $21,502, almost one-third of the average wealth among families with children which is $67,830. The United States Bureau of the Census (1995) indicates that there are 36.4 million Americans living below the poverty level. As residence, income, employment opportunities are decided, to a large extent by race (D'Amico & Maxwell , 1997), African-American families are in financial strains. Research shows that minorities, especially African-Americans, are segregated within the metropolitan areas (Massey & Denton, 1989, 1988) often with a high concentration of poverty (Massey, 1990). African-American women still earn 33% less than do single White women (Choi, 1995). African-American fathers face underemployment, joblessness, urban-suburban re-segregation, and the failure of urban public schools to prepare youth for post-industrial information age (Taylor, Chatters & Jackson 1997). Given these facts, this study hypothesizes that higher financial strains lead to higher stress levels in African-American families.

Finances are related to other factors which create stressful familial tensions. For instance, in dating, the security-conscious working class and middle class who seek

economic support as an instrumental striving, may select a financially secure man who cannot meet her more basic expressive need of intimate relationship (Coner-Ewards). This instrumental striving is more important to the Black lower class than to the Black middle class. Black females sometimes indicate that the man they are dating must have an A. P. T. (Apartment); a C. A. R. (car). an A. C. (air conditioner) in their A.P.T and their C. A. R. and should have or keep a J. O. B. (job). Tensions arise when mates who satisfy the instrumental need fail in the area of expressive need.. Coner-Edwards (1988) maintains that the middle class Black couples, without structural constrains of joblessness, low income, or impoverished conditions can work toward developing a high level of intimacy marked by admiration of each other, love and respect. Thus, the literature indicates that finance is related to male-female relationship as it is related to almost all the other fourteen stress-related factors being studied.

African-American Family Stress and Gender Related Issues

The literature suggests that gender related issues in African-American families emanate from the nexus of African traces and the American experiences within the historical context (Gutman,1976; Ladner,1986, McAdoo, 1996; Sudarkasa,1987). Though little systematic progress has been made to integrate African-American women's unique experiences into a theoretical perspective that systematically explains the development of their roles as women in America (Higginbotham,1984), assumptions can be made that their family

stress factors are also unique. For instance, punitive fertility regulations aimed particularly at mothers receiving help from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program was gender-related. Reformers who framed such measures ascribed the increase in poverty and alleged immorality of poor sexually out of control women who were bearing children for the purpose of obtaining a welfare check (Murray, 1994; Wilson, 1995).

Stress and gender related factors amongst African-Americans may be viewed from a Black male perspective and the female perspective. Socially-defined male role requires men to appear achieving, emotionally inexpressive, objective, striving, tough and unsentimental (Alridge, 1991).Schoen (1995) maintains that at all socio-economic levels, Black men hold more traditional beliefs about the role of women than do White men, while Black women and White women hold similar views. He further states that Black men, relative to White men, are likely to expect more in terms of role behavior while being to offer less in terms of economic benefits. Among the traditional marriage exchange Black men are less advantageous to Black women than to White women, hence the familial tensions. Much of the Black male deviant socialization is responsible for the Black male behavior. Staples (1982) maintains that the powerful role models the Black males see for themselves are Black pimps, hustlers, drug dealers, and street corner men within their communities; they see Black athletes and entertainers, soldiers and prisoners as outside their communities. While White males hope that Black women will develop as attractive sex objects with a social class, power and status comparable to those of

subjected White women, it concocts a peculiar dehumanization and subjugation for Black men (Lemelle, 1995). Lemelle (1995) goes on to say that Black males pose a threat for White males as entertainers, laborers, military competitors, sexual competitors and sports competitors-hence their being relegated to the bottom at all class levels. These crippling attitude towards Black males has a crippling effect on Black families and result in the estrangement of Black men from family life (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan).

Black women shoulder more responsibility for child rearing while Black women suffer from the double bind of being Black and being women. Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1995) indicate that women in general, and Black women in particular, remain at the bottom of the economic ladder. These authors continue to say that a Black woman would have to be married to three poor Black men simultaneously- to achieve an average family income. Of necessity Black women cannot afford to cling to traditional roles of women though the literature indicates that Black men opt for traditional roles (Schoen, 1995) and they expect women to be submissive. In her book, *Successful Women. Angry Men: Black lash in the Two-Career Marriage,* Campbell (1987) gives cases of familial role conflicts. There were cases of men who complained that their spouses spent more time in their careers and had no time for their husbands or complained that their spouses were too assertive and claimed to know too much. On the other hand some spouses complained that their husbands were seldom around when their spouses and children needed them. Even

when they were at home, they were psychologically unavailable. The need for male affirmation tends to label achieving women as domineering and castrating of men (Spurlock, 1988). Staples (1970) indicates that the Black men's wide range of choices afforded them the latitude of screening out strong Black women, thus shunting strong Black women to single-motherhood.

What the reformers call the culture of single-motherhood in African American families is in reality a "Pandora Box" associated with almost all of the fourteen factors being examined in this study. Finances, housing, health and male-female relationships and in one way or another related to single motherhood, which is gender-related. Grandmothers who often help in reducing African-American family stress are often trapped in low-paying jobs with no hope of upward mobility. They may not be able to provide for financial aid, but there are many ways in which help may be exchanged; sometimes it is important to have a shoulder to cry on (McAdoo, 1995).

African-American Family Stress and Health

Given the facts of the financial strains arising from poverty with its attendant joblessness, poor housing, homelessness, unsatisfactory neighborhoods, low education African-American families do not enjoy the best in health matters. The life expectancy is about 64 years for Black man; 70 years for White men; 73 for Black women, and 76 for White women (Poussaint, 1982) He goes on to say that Black males have a higher age-adjusted death rates for cancer, heart disease, cirrhosis of the liver, strokes, accidents and lung disease than

White males, White female and Black females. About 45 percent of police killings in recent years has been Black males, and the suicide rate of young Black men has doubled since 1960 (Poussaint, 1982).

Ebony (March, 1998) states the main killers in Black communities are heart disease, cancer, stroke aids, accidents, homicide diabetes, pneumonia and influenza, asthma and bronchitis and infant mortality. Aids is the leading killer for young African-Americans, 25-44 while for late teens up to early 20s the biggest danger is homicide-often at the hands of another African American (*Ebony*, March, 1998). Suicide ranks high for African-Americans from their teens to 40 years. The death of middle aged to elderly African-American women from coronary heart disease is more than 70 percent than that for Whites (*Ebony*, March, 1998). *Ebony* (1998) goes on to say that Blacks have almost as twice as many strokes as Whites; Black men have the highest rate of prostate cancer in the world. Mortality rates have been falling for Black men but not as rapidly as for Black women says Darity and Myers (1995). This result in a decrease of the relative supply of men and an increase in Black female-headed-families. Darity and Myers (1995) maintains that the rise in female-headed families has been swift.

Poverty is the greatest child killer in the affluent United States. More African-American children die each year from poverty than from traffic fatalities and suicide combined (Edelman, 1986). Low wages and unemployment rates s and minimal child support is responsible for the poverty. Though research

had indicated in 1991 that a working single mother with two children and child care expenses would require at least 9 dollars an hour, most available jobs for the unskilled paid about half that amount. The minimum wage has not reached 9 dollars 9 years after 1991. Hill (1993) suggests that the largest growth in female-headed households in recent years has been among college educated Black women who have better economic opportunities. Jaynes and Williams (1987) point out that middle class Black families have one third of the wealth of middle class White families, thus giving them fewer resources to fall to in hard times. Guttentag and Second (1983) argue that the poverty of prenatal health care and child care among Blacks is largely responsible for the unfavorable sex ratio. This invariable affects their access and participation in health care activities.

One of the underlying causes of this unhealthy state is what Vontress and Epp (1997) call a collective psychology characterized by a volatile triad of emotions and behaviors, dominated by hostility, hopelessness, and a paranoid perception of discrimination in most cross-racial encounters. These are however endogenous consequences which are caused by exogenous socioeconomic changes that are not under the control of Black people and their community leaders (Darity and Myers, 1995). African-Americans were about one third more likely to die from heart disease than Whites (United States. Department of Health and Human Services, 1992). Numerous researchers state that hostile persons are at risk for coronary heart diseases and other life threatening illnesses (Barefoot, 1992; Kiecolt-Glaser

& Glaser, 1988; Mussante et. al., 1992; Smith, 1992). Diamond (1982), Johnson (1988), Scribbner (1995) and Seyle (1987) argue that pervasive hypertension in African-Americans is caused by suppressed hostility. Elevated blood pressure is also caused by the same source (Alexander, 1987).

As chronic stress has a devastating immunological consequences on the human body, it is not surprising that researchers ascribe much of the psychosomatic diseases of African-Americans to their suppressed rage. These include allergies (Davies, 1972), stroke, headaches (Alexander, 1987; Seyle, 1978), the common cold, insomnia (Seyle1978), and sexual dysfunction (Lucas,1978; Seyle, 1978). That the HIV dead rate for African men is three times than that of Whites and that for African-American women nine times than that of White women (Vontress & Epp, 1997) is indicative of poor health conditions for African-American families. *Ebony* (March, 1998) suggest that regular medical check-ups, change in life styles and changes in nutrition may minimize a lot of health threats. These changes include a reduction in the eating of fatty foods, embarking on regular exercises and avoiding life-threatening habits such as unprotected sex, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse. Ebony (1998) only deals with endogenous causes of ill-health and ignores the exogenous causes which emanate from discrimination, racism, and the resultant socio-economic ills of being Black in America.

Hill (1992) maintains that 40 % of the nation's total commercial hazardous waste landfill capacity are located in three predominantly Black and Hispanic communities, and also

mentions ten metropolitan areas where more tan 90% of the black population lives in uncontrolled toxic waste sites. He says that these places are Atlanta, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Memphis New York, Memphis, Oklahoma City, Seattle and St. Louis. Kozol expresses the hazardous places occupied by African-Americans by saying, assemble all the worse things in America- gambling, liquor, cigarettes and toxic fumes, sewage, waste disposal, prostitution- put all together. Then you dump it on Black people. Kozol describes the waste water emitted from the sewage plant as a marshland in which children play if they are not playing on creekbed which smokes by day and glows by night because it receives discharges from chemical plants and metal plants in past. Such health hazard have their toll amongst African-American families resided in above-mentioned areas.

African-American Family Stress and Highest Grade Obtained by Parents

The highest educational level attained influences all the stress factors being investigated. For instance, Caldwell (1989) asserts that increased education decrease the value of having many children through two mechanisms. First, the law requiring school attendance replaced the hours that children spent working with hours that children spent at school. Children therefore became an economic burden rather than a contribution to the family economy. Second, increased education decreased the social support for traditional family relations that encouraged large families.

The highest educational levels attained by African-Americans are blighted by underachievement and poor achievement orientation marked by a drop-out as high as 50% to 60% in some cities, and particularly among urban, low income families (Ford, 1993). Many social variables play a role in the educational achievement of African-American students. One of those factors is growing up under pressures of racism, discrimination, prejudice and a welter of social injustices (Kozol, 1991; Ford, 1993). The chances of attaining high or maximum levels of education are slim for most African-American families as they are in the lower socioeconomic strata, positions that lower their chances for school success, and their motivation or orientation to achieve (Ford, 1993). Though African-American families place a premium on education, their achievement desires are undermined by institutional racism and the harsh facts that a Black persons success in the educational and work worlds is dependent on factors outside of his or her personal attributes, knowledge skills, and efforts (Hines and Boyd-Franklin, 1982).

The attrition of African-Americans can be ascribed to academic preparation of Black students for higher education; the availability of family resources and access to institutional financial-aid resources, and institutional barriers to access, enrollment, and retention (Lang, 1992). In higher education access and success to higher educational levels have been hampered by segregation in elementary and secondary schools, increasing college cost, inadequate assistance to unprepared students and lack of commitment to equal opportunity by institutions of higher education (Orfield and Paul, 1988). These

factors induce family stress on African-American families whose family members have to contend with these barriers. The situation is made worse by the deterioration of inner city schools.

Family Stress and Housing in African-American Families

The poorer the family is, the more difficult its housing situation becomes, Kaufman, 1997). The American Housing Survey (AHS) (1995) states that there are 14.8 million families living below the poverty line and another 18.7 million near-poor families. African-American families are far more likely to be poor, and thus face housing affordability problems and homelessness. African-women, who are overrepresented in single motherhood are the poorest segment of the population, and have greater difficulty in getting out of poverty (Trevino, Trevino, Stroup and Ray, 1990). Female-headed families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population (Burg, 1994; Nord & Luloff, 1995).

The poor are often renters. Renters comprise 35% of all families but comprise 59% of all poor families (Kaufman, 1997). The literature suggests that decent housing is not available or affordable for poor families so that many poor families are forced into inadequate, sometimes even dangerous living conditions (Kaufman, 1997). Low wages and high rent impairs housing arrangements for African -American families. Butler (1997) cites cases of women getting $312 per month from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) when the rent is $450, and others getting $362 a month when $278 goes to the rent.

Socio-economic factors rather than racial discrimination seem to play a major role in housing differentiation. Yet some have argued that racial residential segregation, and discriminatory practices in housing and mortgage markets might be partly responsible for disparities in home-ownership and housing. Differential socio-economic pressures have created chocolate cities and vanilla suburbs (West, 1993)

Family Stress and the Legal Area in African-American Families

The legal area has numerous legal devises that were aimed at ameliorating the conditions in poor families. Some of these provisions are the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Bride fare which control's women's childbearing choices, Learnfare which aids school going children, then Children's Defense Fund which helps with child care, Medicaid, President Clinton's Health Security Act of 1994 and the Personal Responsibility and Work opportunity Act of 1996.

The literature indicates that most of these provisions are inadequate and inefficacious in solving the problems they were meant to solve. For instance, Fitzpatrick and Gomez (1997) state that the mean decrease in value of the AFDC benefits was 42% from 1969 to 1994. In 1994 the mean monthly payment per family was $378 and the mean value of monthly food stamps coupons per family was $69. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 is likely to punish poor families to a greater extent (Fitzpatrick and Gomez, 1997). Child care assistance provisions are underutilized because many poor families were

not aware of child care aid, and eight states had more than 10,000 children on the waiting list for child care assistance. AFDC was repealed in August 1996 and it was replaced but the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). In 49 states and 357 metropolitan areas, the entire maximum TANF grant does not cover fully the cost of an apartment priced at the fair market rent (Kaufman, 1997). It would therefore seem likely that the legal area will have negative stressful effects for most African-American families.

Some of the intriguing legal practices impacting Black families pertain to child support and dissolution of marriages. In an attempt to shift the burden of child support from the state to the delinquent fathers, a racially uneven outcome emerged from this decision (Darity and Myers, 1994) in that Blacks and low-income White fathers were more likely to receive the sanction of imprisonment while the rest received warnings. When there were wages to be assigned, the money went to the welfare agency instead of the mothers (Darity and Myers, 1994). These writers indicate that the threat for imprisonment or wage assignment works against the possibility of creating stable and economically two-parent households as fathers get the incentive to flee from their children and their mothers. The divorce settlements involving Blacks perpetuated poverty and pauperized the Black middle class in that a typical child support was less than $400, regardless of the economic status of the husband until 1985 (Darity and Myers, 1994).

African-American Family Stress and Male-Female Relationships

Male-female relationships in African-American families are to a large extent determined by such factors as the Black joblessness, Black men imprisonment and unequal sex ratio. African-Americans have a difficult time establishing and maintaining their relationships (Dickson, 1993). Dickson (1993) cites lower marriage rates, higher divorce and separation rates, and lower remarriage rates as evidence of the difficulty. It is estimated that 25% of African-American women will never marry, nearly three times the rate for White women (Baca Zinn and Eitzen, 1993). The separation rate is also higher for African-American. In 1980, 16% of African-American women between the ages of 18 to 44 were separated compared to 4% of White women in the same age group (Cherlin, 1981).

Male-female relations are largely shaped by structural imperatives and those emanating from within African-American families. Structural determinants include the reduction of manufacturing jobs, the increase in the low level white collar jobs with the resultant decline in the Black working class, an expansion of the Black underclass, and the unstable middle class (Billingsley, 1988). Couple these structural changes with the cultural value shifts which require individualism, self realization, and fulfillment. These value-shifts make it more difficult to trust or make a commitment (Dickson, 1993). According to Pinderhughes these value shifts brought about:

1. The undermining of African values and cultural patterns of affiliation and collaterality, and left Black Americans without unified cultural guidelines for managing conflict.
2. Adaptive values of strength and toughness, which, under stress can slip into behavior calculated to defend against powerlessness.
3. High tolerance for conflict, contradiction and confusion.
4. American middle class values that emphasize power, money, possession, ownership and mastery.

Familial tensions arising from these value shifts sends ripples of stress in male-female relationships.

Male-female relationships are also affected by causes which are found within African-American families. Unequal sex ratios is one of them. There are more Black men in prison than in college (Cockburn, 1989), more than 35% of Black males in United States cities are drug or alcohol abusers; more than 18% of Black males drop out of high school, more than 50% of Black men under the age of 21 are unemployed; 46% of Black men between 16 and 62 are not in the labor force; approximately 32% of Black men have incomes below the poverty level; the homicide rate of Black men is six times higher than for White males (Dickson, 1993). The dwindling eligible number of African American males is further decreased by African-American men who prefer White women over African-American women. McAdoo (1993) maintains that Black middle-class females are under greater stress because of a wide variety of factors such as low birth/sex ratio, high incarceration rate, early death, and homosexuality.

Spurlock (1988) discuses male-female relations from a woman's perspective. She suggests that a sense of the woman's self, becomes very organized around being able to make, and then maintain affiliation and relationships. For many women the threat of a disruption of an affiliation is perceived as a total loss of the self. Chodorow (1974) concurs with this and further adds that the earlier patterns of relationships serve as patterns of behavior observed in women; that of caring and taking care of others. While masculinity is defined through separation, femininity is defined through attachment so males have difficulty with relationships where else females tend to have problems with individuation (Gillligan, 1982)..

It would appear that education becomes very important as a status requirements amongst Black middle class community (Spurlock, 1988). Emotional gratification seems a key factor amongst women who are financially secure (Staples, 1973, Coner-Edwards and McAdoo, 1985) Women above the age of 30 years of age stressed the importance of effective behavioral qualities such as open communication; younger women prefer people who are intelligent, stable has a positive self-concept (Spurlock, 1988). Over one-half, 52% of the 6,157 respondents indicated that Black men were not supportive in their relationships. Of those who reported that Black men were supportive there instances of equal partnerships, shred responsibility (Spurlock, 1988).

In giving a male-female relationship from a male perspective, Edwards (1988) suggests that this relation is impacted by the legacy of historical experience of Blacks,

especially the negative impact of slavery, racism, poverty on self-esteem identity, roles, and quality of relationship. The author also states that among lower-class Black males lack of access to resources, job opportunities and education impedes their establishing masculine identity as provider of their families. He goes to say that come to him to talk about their anger, anxiety, depression, esteem issues, fears, frustration and guilt These men had a a castration fear, the fear that they would not be seen as strong. As boys theses men heard a lot of exaggeration, fantasies and lies about men' sexual experience which often resulted in theme underrating themselves. Some of the complaints that Edwards (1988) encountered were my wife is controlling, dominating, humiliates me, treats me like a child. Is more educated or is more independent. Others were the wife's decrease in sex or criticism of sexual performance, her disrespect. It would seem that disturbances that which interfere with intimacy in relationships are:

1. Tendency to use stereotyping
2. Difficulty dealing with anger
3. Inability to appreciate and handle complexity of each other, and failure to allow
4. One's child and
5. One's adult self fully into relationship (Edwards, 1988).

This assessment of male-female relationships is instructive in dealing with broader issues impacting middle class Black families.

African-American Family Stress and Marriage

The literature depicts a depressing picture for African-American women because of the decline in marriages, the increase in divorces and also an increase in single motherhood. More than half of the children under the age 18 live with their mothers alone (McAdoo, 1995). Inadequate standard of living, homelessness, joblessness and role overload simmers in single motherhood. This has detrimental consequences on the stress levels of the family members. Kielcolt and Fossett (1995) indicate that Black men as members of the scarcer gender, tend to develop higher expectations and make more demands on their partners while Black women, as members of the more abundant gender will be pressured to lower their expectations of partners or risk doing without a partner. Schoen (1995) indicates that Black females are experiencing a marriage squeeze

Spurlock and Booth (1988) maintain that troubled marriages are quite prevalent among the African-American middle class families and are common stressors. Separation or divorce stirs up stressful financial problems as families lose their two income earnings. Both the mother and the father cling to their former middle class status which demand certain status symbols such as a house in the right area, right personal habits, cars and clothes although their separation or divorce may have curtailed their financial support to such status symbols

Marriage affects other family stress factors because married men live longer, drink less, take fewer risks, are more satisfied with life, and have higher incomes, educational

attainments, and labor force attachment than unmarried men (Daniel, 1994; Goldscheider and Waite, 1991). The marital status is more important than fatherhood in explaining income and labor force outcomes. These outcomes have a bearing on stress levels. For instance, male unemployment makes it difficult for African-American women to get suitable husbands. McAdoo (1995) states that mothers who parent alone are confronted with multiple role demands, financial issues, and child rearing concerns that require social support and resources with the result that an inadequate standard of living and role overload have been found to be a significant predictor of stress in single mothers.

Akbar (1996) suggests that the decline in African-American marriages emanate from the vestiges of slavery which violated marriage ties. He maintains that slavery gave unlimited control and full possession of an African-American woman's person, forbidding her, on the pains of death, to resist him, he dragged her to his bed. He further asserts that the virtues of protecting, supporting and providing for one's offspring, which are the cornerstone of fatherhood were discouraged on the plantation. An African-American woman was expected to be receptive to the sexual exploitation of the slave master, his relatives or his friends (Goodell, 1853). Compelling evidence, however, refutes Akbar's contention. Blassingame (1972) and Genovese (1974) indicate that African-Americans had monogamous marriages, nuclear families and egalitarian marriages in slave communities. That the decline in marriage in African-American cannot be ascribed to slavery as Akbar claims. That claim is also not supported by the trends in this decline. In 1930 about

94% African-American women married, in 1950 the estimate was 74% in 1992 it was estimated that fewer than three out of four Black women would marry compared to nine out of ten (Tucker and Michell-Kernan, 1995). The problem with Akbar's views is that he tends to be too narrow by imposing the historical determinism on all social formations amongst African-American while the literature suggest that a wide range of factors are collectively involved all social formations.

African-American Family Stress and the Number of Children

The literature suggests that the number of children in African American families is influenced by numerous factors, most of which are the stress factors being investigated in this study. The influence of the educational level has already been mentioned. In addition, when there are three or more children, at least one is a preschooler, the mother's labor supply decreases significantly with African-American mothers of low education.(Lehrer,1995). Older children depress labor supply when their number is three or greater (Lehrer,1995). The full-time employment probability decreases in response to children and the probability of non-participation in the labor force rises (Lehrer,1995). The implications for non-participation in labor force invariably result in financial and emotional strains associated with job loss.

The stress created by the number of children depends on the social support and the distribution of the care-giving. The impact of daily parenting hassles and difficulties increase with the number of children. The effect of the number of children may

be disruptive, restrictive, and they may be economic, emotional and social as they increase with increase in the number of children. An increase in the number of children means an increase in the demands on time and a decrease in freedom for the parents. As primary caregivers, mothers experience more stressful children management than fathers. Increases in the number of children, in the husband's income and in the age of the marriage lower divorce probabilities while an increase in the wife's income increases the probabilities of divorce (Becker, Landes and Michael, 1977).

African-American Family Stress and Parenting

Stress in African -American families parenting activities arises from a wide range of issues such as unavailability of wealth to pass on to the next generation, heavy emphasis on education, coping with poverty and racism and the vicissitudes of extended family or kin networking. The extended family cushion the family members from family stress through involvement with kin in the reciprocal exchange of goods, services and through emotional and moral support. In this way parenting is less stressful as it is shared. The disruption of the extended family as a result of movement of family members to far off places creates strains as families adjust and devise mechanisms for coping with the geographical mobility.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors, skin recognition (McAdoo, 1978); environmental recognition (Nitz, Ketterlinus, & Brandt, 1995) personality awareness, interest-concern and Afrocentricity impact parenting and family stress in African-

Americans. The skin recognition distinguishes the family members, assigning to them a place in society. Parents have to prepare their children for the effect that their skin color will have in terms of self-esteem , stereotypes and self-validation. African-Americans parent within a hostile environment which simmers in abuse and discrimination attributed solely to the color of one's skin. McAdoo (1978) says that it is more difficult to raise children who have pride in their ethnic group concepts when the group is perceived in a negative manner by the wider society. The same writer also reveals that African-American children tend to be out-group oriented in racial matters, preferring being white- hair, skin color, and life style during preschool and early childhood years. They, however, become own-group oriented later. Parenting under such circumstances invariably becomes stressful for most parents, who wish that their children would be judged by the content of their minds and character instead of being judged by the color of their skins. This ideal seems elusive as Michael Eric Dyson (1996) says that race rules in America while West (1994) says it matters. It matters ad rules even mundane issues as standard of beauty. Dyson says that the viewed Black bodies as ugly, disgusting and bestial. This encouraged self-hatred, hatred of other Blacks and the tendency to aspire towards the otherness in appearance. Parenting children and instilling in them love for themselves and their fellow African-Americans must be difficult.

As parents, some single women have developed three types of coping strategies, structural role definition, personal role redefinition and reacting role behavior (McAdoo, 1986). In

structural role re-definition the mother re-defines expectations for herself, her children and her employer. She may tell her employer that she cannot be able to stay until 5:30 p.m. as she has to pick her child from the baby-sitter. In personal role redefinition the mother may decide to redefine her own roles. She may decide to quit her job and go on welfare so that she will look after her children. In the case of reacting role behavior the woman becomes a "super mom" juggling various roles to the best of her abilities. This coping strategy is the most stressful.

Among low income Blacks, children have a stabilizing effect on marriage while the opposite is true for Blacks with high incomes (Hatchett, Veroff and Douvan, 1995). These writers continue to say that it intriguing that children may be the cause for a stable marriage among the lower socio-economic status Black couples while the presence of children is destabilizing amongst more affluent couples. They suggest that children interfere with spousal bonding and are seen as economic and social burden among upwardly striving Black couples. Viewed against the broad range of socio-economic pressures faced by the affluent Black couples, evidence rejects the narrow explanation for the children being a destabilizing factor. The affluent class experiences these pressures more than the poor classes because of their position in the hostile environment. Their money and achievement do not offer them immunity against discrimination. Chester Pierce (1988) says that they are more vulnerable to thwarted hopes generated by the control of energy, space, time, and the mobility of Blacks while producing a

feeling of degradation, and erosion of self-confidence, and self-image. Thwarted hopes and battered identities though rampant among Black Americans (West, 1994), are more poignant among affluent Black Americans invariably impact their parenting activities. West (1994) mentions being passed by ten taxis in Manhattan and the tenth taxi stopping for a White women and also mentions being stopped by police on a charge of trafficking cocaine and being stopped three times in ten days in Princeton on a charge of driving too slowly on a residential street with a speed limit of 25 miles per hour. West is a parent. How much of parenting care and concern does such repeated racial harassment leave on affluent Black parents?

Parenting of the elderly add to the tensions of African-America families because 96% of the elderly live with their daughters and only 3 to 4% are institutionalized (Johnson, 1988). The growing elderly populations among African-American middle class poses some challenges for caring for their elderly. Because the elderly are held in high esteem among African-Americans, they would rather keep their elderly with their families than turn to institutions. Add to this that self treatment has been the main means of cure in Black communities (1988). The informal networking helps in easing the burden of caring for the elderly.

African-American Family Stress and Personal Habits

Personal habits in African American families glide into a stressful terrain when these emanate from the wishes of "doing your own thing", from liberal attitudes, attraction to fads,

proving that we have arrived, or as a way of coping, feeling better and dealing with stress (Lonesome, 1988). Lonesome maintains that substance abuse and chemical dependency represent a major threat to Black Americans in general (Lonesome, 1988). He states that in the early 20th century liquor for Blacks lost its power as a symbol of social oppression and instead became associated with urbanity, sophistication and freedom from oppressive Southern norms. Yet, literature indicates that there is high rate of abstention amongst Blacks, especially women, and especially in Southern and rural areas(Lonesome, 1988). Household surveys indicate lower alcohol use among Black Males than among White males (Darity and Myers, 1995). Amongst Blacks alcoholism, drugs and religion are means of coping with powerlessness, and the first two are cited as causes of familial instability (Hatchett, Veroff and Douvan, 1995). Drinking and drugs withdraw Blacks from productive labor markets and institutionalize them in jails, mental hospitals and prisons (Darity and Myers, 1995)

Unwed fathers have lower educational attainments, are likely to drop out of school, more likely to express ambivalent attitudes about the value of work, more likely to have been charged with adult crimes, and more likely to be unemployed (Nock, Stephen, 1998). Some of these unwed fathers pursues women as "game" whose goal is conquest. Sexual conquests are signs of status for such men. Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan's (1995) findings were that non-marriage was not a function of not believing in marriage. Though Black men were concerned about economies barriers to marriage, they did not believe that there

were enough suitable women (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan's, 1995). The same writers indicate that Black men, more than Latino have wider choices than Latinos and look across the color line because they do not believe that there are enough women for them amongst African-Americans.

Some of the personal habits related to stress are that African-Americans are more than half of those arrested for murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault, which is five times the rate for Whites (United States Department of Justice, 1985). The homicide rate was 10 times greater for African-American males ages 15 to 44 than for whites males and five times for African-American females than White females (United States Department of Justice, 1983). These adverse personal habits are associated with what William Julius Wilson (1987) called the "Black underclass syndrome spawned by black-on-black and female-headed households which reinforce each other, and what Cornell West (1994) called a walking nihilism of pervasive drug addiction, alcoholism, homicide, and suicide. Hill (1992), however, ascribes these ills to the glamorization of drugs and violence, and the easy availability of guns.

One of the personal habits which leads to the breakdown of family life and community organization is what Hill (1992) calls I-ism. He refers to individuals breaking away from groups, groups which give long term agendas, meaning and social values to individuals within the group. Couple this I-ism with hyper-masculinity, competitiveness, toughness and aggressive manipulation of their environment among Black males then you have self-destructive behavior (Hill, 1992). For the middle

class Blacks, biculturality enables them to remain attached to their groups while interacting with other groups. Pinderhughes (1988) suggests that these lifestyles mean living perpetually with conflicting values, never integrating them as Whites can. She goes on to say that these conflicts have compounded Blacks' involvement in the non-Black world and by the distance created between them and their non-upwardly mobile kin. She also mentions the problems of children from isolated middle class families who grow up with a narrow understanding of the Black self which relies on societal stereotypes.

African-American Family Stress and Personal Relationships

Personal relationships in African-American families are influenced by a bewildering array of models, and by multiple and diverse messages about how they should behave in their personal relationships. Child-parental relationships, gender attitudes of individuals, and inter-group relationships and interracial relationships affect personal relationships in manners that impact family stress in various ways which are culturally defined. Some of the attitudes stem from the belief in male availability. Seventy percent of Blacks women believe that there is a shortage of Black men and Black women were least likely to express a desire to marry because of structural consideration (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan, 1995).

Personal relationships also related to higher extended-kin involvement which of late is being weakened by the increasing polarization between middle-class and working-class Blacks (Anderson, 1993; Wilson, 1987). The literature, however,

indicates that grandmothers are still involved in raising their grandchildren and taking over primary responsibility. Personal relationships are stronger in the working-class than in the middle class. Unmarried Black women are more likely than Whites to live with relatives outside the parental household which creates for them extensive personal relationships (Nitz, Ketterlinus, & Brandt, 1995). There is frequent socializing within these personal relationships and premarital fertility pulls them more closely into the personal relationship net. This networking may be stressful given the rising rate of premarital fertility and poverty among African-Americans. Poverty affects personal relationships in that these relationships are strengthened by exchange of advice, services and goods (Nitz, Ketterlinus, & Brandt, 1995).

Race, class, gender and age also impact personal relationships in various ways. For instance, personal relationships between Blacks and Whites may be complicated by class, gender, age and place of residence. Personal relationships between an inner city Black male and a White suburban female may be marred by their respective peer connections. The Black inner city peers may not approve of the relationship while the White suburban peers may also frown on the relationship partly because of race or because of class. It is hard to extricate the intersection of race, class and gender in the formation of personal relationships.

Akbar (1996) argues that most of the pathological personal relationships stem from slavery. He says that even today too many frustrated young African-American women choose to

become breeders in their search for an identity. Many of them abuse their children or make them spoiled irresponsible pimps by indulgently protecting them against the cruel world. African-American men seek to be men through physical exploit, sexual exploits and even violence. There is, however, compelling evidence which refutes Akbar theses and call for a broad encompassing study of the ills of Black families. Spurlock (1988) depicts the complexity and the heterogeneity of Black families and their personal relationships by saying that Black represent a wide age range, as well as a range of physical characteristics and varied health history. They are married or single, divorced or widowed, in positive relationships or in conflict studded relationships while others are currently or episodically devoid of companionship because of fate happenstance or choice.

Mothers provide the first intimate relationship with their children. The intimate relationship suffers when economic instability, disruption of affiliation and relationship generate stresses for a mother. Most women therefore expect financial support for their minor and college-age children, and emotional support and gratification (Spurlock, 1988). Invariably the foundations of relationships established by the parent-child relationships tend to carry over to relationships established later in life. For instance, an abandoned daughter may enter a relationship with fear that she may be abandoned or that relationships are treacherous slippery and painful (Spurlock, 1988).

African-American Family Stress and Race or Ethnicity

Like class and gender, race and ethnicity cut across a wide spectrum of family stress related factors such as health, highest educational level, housing and work related matters. Its manifestation is, however, more pronounced in some factors while it is less pronounced in others. For instance, race is more pronounced in housing discrimination although it is aggravated by poverty, poor education and joblessness or low paying jobs (Darity and Myers, 1995; Wilson 1987) Race, has in the past implied that racial difference implied cultural inferiority or absence, thus regarding Black men as either submissive, dependent, emasculated shadows of men or violent or destructive beasts and Black women as seductive wenches, traitorous mammies, and emasculating matriarchs. (Stevenson, 1995). Much of the racial injustice emanated from this maldefinitions of African-Americans.

The size of the Black population generates either white perception of threat or greater self-segregation tendencies on the part of the Blacks. Discrimination in employment may result in different incomes which influence the ability of Blacks in buying more expensive housing in the suburbs (Clark, 1993). They are then forced into the inner cities with their inferior schools, inadequate police protection from an abundance of criminal elements. Race plays a part in the self-fulfilling phenomenon which impacts the teachers' stereotypic cultural perceptions on the expectations of African-American students' academic performance (Rowser, 1994). These issues lead to numerous family stress factors among African Americans.

Race is configured, conditioned, distorted and shaped by such factors as class, gender and sexuality as it grows, mutates, and transforms and redefines itself within changing complexities of social formations. It could be enlightened, subtle, covert or overt. Whatever its complexion is, race and racism are associated with family stress. Spurlock and Booth (1988) indicate that economic status does not guarantee immunity from stress in general, and race related stresses in particular. They cite a highly educated Black woman whose racist work environment stifled her voice by means of slights and put-downs. Her distress was aggravated by her child who reported that her teacher had said that Black people cannot follow directions, that is the reason for that child not making mistakes. These writers also refer to blatant racism of some of the "big ten" universities.

West (1994) suggests that race matters most in the assault on African-American families. One of the questions he poses is, "Can genuine human relationship flourish for Black people in a society that assaults Black intelligence, Black moral character, and Black possibility?" The accumulated effect of White supremacy leaves wounds and scars on the Black populace (West. 1994) fractured pride (Pierce, 1988) and mistrust of the system of justice (Anderson, 1999, West, 1994 and Pierce, 1988.) Pierce (1988) suggests that all African-Americans should have a strong theoretical grasp of racism in order to dilute the crippling stress created by racism. Blacks who were fortunate enough to have parents and others teach them how to cope with

racism have a distinct advantage because they may redefine the rules and possibly the game they must play (Dudley, 1988).

African-American Family Stress and Religion

Ellison's (1997) investigation finds that church participation and perceived religious socialization positively impact family role performance, subjective family closeness and satisfaction with family life. Much research has been done on the support systems in African-American families, systems that come from relatives and from non-relatives. The church is one of the non-relatives dimensions of the social support. From the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) data researchers look at support networks among older adults (Taylor, 1988; Taylor & Chatters, 1991), women (Coleman, Antonucci, Adelman & Crohan, 1987), single and married mothers (Jayakody, Chatters & Taylor, 1993). Religion can be an important way of coping especially if shared by the spouses though a wife's church attendance and increased marital stability disappears when premarital factors, particularly economics ones, are introduced (Hatchett, Veroff and Douvan, 1995). Blessingame (1972) credited the impact of Southern religious organizations on the survival of certain familial norms.

Dyson (1996) suggests that the Black church is the visible womb of Black culture and fought racist oppression by becoming the headquarters of militant social and political action in Black communities. It was Black religion which produced Nat Turner, Henry Highland Garnet, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner,

Elijah Muhammad, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcom X and hundreds of other religious leaders who challenged White supremacy and influenced Black lives and White lives in America. Religion helps Blacks to overcome pain, live through it, to get around it, and to prosper in spite of it (Dyson, 1996). African Americans usually affiliate with a church at an early age and then develop life-long associations with it. These associations provide support systems in live events and in all situations which require support. Beale (1997) states that high religiosity mediates some of the adverse effects on families such as negative effect of job dissatisfaction and effects of general role overload. The literature therefore suggest that the higher the religiosity the lower the stress level although McAdoo (1995) points out the women who are very stressed have the greatest religiosity.

Family Stress and Safety in African-American Families

Many African-American families are forced into inadequate, sometimes even dangerous conditions (Kaufman, 1997, Kozol, 1991). Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes was an example of such dangerous places. Though only .5% of Chicago's population, it accounts for 11% of the city's murders, 10% of its aggravated assaults, and 9% of its rapes (Taylor, Jackson and Chatters, 1997). Some of the fundamental causes of such violence are what Vontress and Epp (1997) call rage or lashing out in protest, unrest, or excessive violence at some real or perceived indignity dealt by the majority culture. The indignity stems from living in a violent, pitiless nation, hard calculating

whose moments of generosity are only brief intervals in a ferocious narrative of life country (Grier and Cobbs, 1968) These writers continue to say the US is a nation which chooses simultaneously to exclude all Black men from their favored labor force, and to deny them one thing America has offered every other group- unlimited growth with ceiling set only by ones. native gifts (Grier and Cobbs, 1968). It is perhaps these indignities which makes the Labor Department estimate that fully three-quarters of all Black males can expect at some point to be arrested (Darity and Myers, 1940).

African-American families are subjected to historical hostility which produces a set of heightened alertness or heightened readiness, preparing the African American against the daily threats to existence in the form of discrimination, poverty and street crime (Vontress and Epp, 1997). Some young Black males are drawn out of the legitimate labor markets into the criminal labor markets. Street crime is so rife in dangerous areas that in Chicago an analysis of 1,035 high school and middle school students revealed that 39% of the students had seen shooting, 35% had seen stabbing, and 46.5% had been the primary victims of violence (Taylor, Jackson and Chatters, 1997). Individuals in poor urban enclaves may murder those like themselves to project their own self-hatred on to others; they may vandalize to displace the frustration of a constricted existence (Poussaint, 1983). The absence of safety in many areas of African-American lives seem to indicate high stress levels in these families.

Family Stress and Work in African-American Families

The literature suggests that family stress in African-American families emanates from the overall workplace discrimination which may be unequal pay for equal work and unequal work despite equal qualifications (Bloom and Killingworth, 1992). Gill observed that wage differentiation may also be caused by different quality of schooling (1990).Taste models of employer discrimination predict that an employer with taste for discrimination are willing to pay a premium for white workers over equally productive or, similarly, pay less than equivalent whites to receive the same net product (Hirsh, Barry T. and Schumacher Edward J., 1990).

The wage differential is dependent on the number of discriminatory employers and the number of Blacks. When the number of discriminatory employers and the number of Black employers are small there will be no wage differential. As the size of the Black labor force increase, employer discrimination will lead to a decrease in relative Black wages and an increase in the relative white wages. For the Blacks such situations will be stressful.

When the employee discrimination comes from preference of some White employees not to work with Blacks, White employees receive a premium to work with Blacks. This premium increases with the proportion of Black workers (Hirsh and Schumacher, 1990). Consumer preference also leads to wage differential when the size of Black workers and that of consumer preferences is not small. Another model of discrimination is the language model. In this case Blacks' communication patterns are penalized

in the labor markets while Black who acquire majority language patterns are rewarded. Discriminated Blacks are forced to crowd in low paid jobs that most Whites dislike. Crowding increases the labor supply while depressing wages for both Blacks and Whites. African-American families in such crowded situations experience numerous stress factors. Even in the army Blacks are over-represented in the infantry, and the gun crews, service and supply occupations, and clerical jobs and rarely placed in the technical specialist occupations(Darity and Myers).

Other factors associated with family stress are employment demands such as long hours and numerous responsibilities, conflict between family members about parenting roles, coupled with strains associated with loss of job or other difficulties at work (Andersen and Leslie, 1991). While society accepts the sharing of work within the two-provider family structure, this is by no means totally expected (Andersen and Leslie, 1991). Women in multiple roles cope by lowering their standards for housework, and accepting that they are not perfect in all the roles they had to fill (McLaughlin, 1988).

Akbar (1996) suggests that work is stressful to African-Americans because a legacy of slavery. He says that work came to be despised as any punishment. Work became hated as does any activity which causes suffering and brings no reward for the doer. Even today, the African-American slang expression which refers to job as "slave". Work is depressing because it is viewed as a badge of disparagement, it is approached unwillingly and out of necessity says Akbar (1996). He further asserts that many African-Americans have developed a variety of habits to

avoid work, such as reliance upon gambling, and other get-rich schemes. This view is flawed in that it blames the victim and relies much on historical determinism. It is a view akin that which is held by Black intellectuals who blames the ills of Black families on the human capital, personal responsibility that Blacks bring to the work situation (Sowell, 1971,: Steele, 1990). Human capital maintains that workers get low incomes as are results of low wages. Low wages result from low productivity jobs which are the result of having lower ability or skill level (Darity and Myers, 1994). Black families would therefore have to blame themselves for bringing lower ability or skill levels. This view is refuted by many scholars who maintained that the complexities of Black problems are far flung than human capital suggests (Darity and Myers, 1994; Darity and Myers, 1995; Pierce, 1988; West, 1993; Wilson, 1987).

Pierce (1988) maintains that stress in work the place emanates from the confusion that Blacks have in their work places. They do not know whether they are tolerated or accepted. They are confused about the supportive effort of individual Whites versus the destructive actions by Whites as a collective. They are confused about when, where and how to resist oppression, versus when, where or how to accommodate it. Pierce (1988) further asserts that the stress is created by the collective majority's tendency to trivialize and attenuate Black males relative to Black females, and also by promoting interethnic and intraethnic rivalries. For instance, the establishment would place a Caucasian Hispanic in a supervisory or spokesperson position over Colored Hispanic and Blacks. To

sum up her observations on work stress, Pierce says that Blacks must work hard- they must work hard for less reward, recognition and status . They must realize that they may be displaced summarily if their presence inconveniences a person of the dominant group. They must realize that their problem is not that they are too active and bold, but that they are too passive and timid, and that they need to elaborate multiple options in order to cope with universal color-related job stressors.

Exogenous Stressful Episode From the Larger Environment

Black families in America are not insulated from the stresses of the larger communities which are daily bombarded by a barrage of stress inducing experiences such as an escalation of children who kill, the integrity of the family which is failing in many homes, collapsing educational standards, out of control crime and violence, raising drug abuse, pornography, feminization of poverty and AIDS (Huckabee and Grant. 1998). The web site (1-2-2000) on alcoholism indicates that 1 out of 10 American women in the peak of reproductive years, 18-24 drinks; that 2 or more drinks a day could jeopardize her unborn child and that a third of alcoholic deaths are from suicides or accidents such as drowning. It further states that one in four American youngster age 10 to 18 are at serious risk of becoming involved in abuse or alcohol and other drugs; that offspring of alcoholics are three times to four times likely to develop alcohol problems than offspring of non-alcoholics, regardless of the environment in which they are raised.

The web (1-28-2000) on widening income gap for families indicates that the earnings for the fifth of American families rose less than 1% between1988 and 1998 but jumped 15% for the richest fifth. During the 10 year period, the income for the poorest rose from $110 to $12,990 while for the richest it increased by $17,870 to $137,480. The widest gap was in New York where the poorest fifth earned $10,770 while the richest fifth earned $152,350. While the unemployment rate has been significantly low , below 5% in recent years, African-Americans and Hispanic women have experienced significant decline in unemployment and a significant decline in underemployment rates (QWES, 1999). QWES also states that save for the African-Americans, the unemployment gaps remain as wide as they were in 1989.

That the government is aware of the economic constrains facing American families is attested by President Clinton's State of the Union Addresses (Clinton, 2000) of the last three years. In his last State of the Union Addressthe president stated that America needs 21st Century revolution to reward work and strengthen families- by giving every parent the tools to succeed at work, and at the most important work of all-raising their children. To achieve that, families are going to receive support from Earned Income Tax Credits and by reducing the marriage penalty for the Earned Income Tax Credit. The president asserts that the parents and families cannot reap the rewards of the economic boom as long as men and women do not get equal pay for equal work. He further states that tens of millions of Americans live from paycheck to paycheck, two thirds of new jobs

are in the suburbs so that there is a need for working people to live close to their work laces. The president is aware that one in three American children grows up in a home without a father. These children are five times likely to live in poverty than children with both parents. Thus the country has doubled child support collections since 1992 and tough measures are being proposed for child support. Since 1993 the Family and Medical Leave Act has helped millions and millions of Americans to care for new born babies or ailing relatives without losing their jobs.

To improve the economic base of the poor, the government established the Welfare to Work Partnership which in 1999 included 10, 000 companies (Clinton, 1999). The government proposed to attract jobs to the inner cities and rural areas by means of tax credits, loan guarantees support for developmental banks, empowerment zones and 100,000 more vouchers for affordable housing. Habitat for Humanity has helped hundreds of families to get housing. To support the new economy the president proposed tax credits, affordable students loans, with more work-study grants, more Pell grants and connecting every classroom and library to the Internet. He further proposed that school stop social promotion so that no child must graduate from high school if he or she cannot read. Summer schools were to be made mandatory for the students who have mastered the basics. New teachers should be required to pass performance examinations, and all teachers should know the subjects they teach (Clinton. 1999) .

Though the crime rate has declined, Congress proposed to add 100,000 community police, Congress reconsidered the gun law legislation, the gun crime prosecutors rose by 16% in recent years Clinton, 2000) . The president was alarmed that the gun death rate of children under 15 in the United States of America was 9 times higher than in other 25 industrialized nations. The literature indicates that family disruptions increase the prevalence of unsupervised teenage peer groups, which in turn increases crime rates (Sampson and Groves, (1989). Huckabee and Grant (1998) assert that the current epidemic of violent juveniles man only be a tip of the iceberg They say that children are on the forefront of the social maelstrom because they grow up surrounded by cruelty, destructiveness, detachment and perversity. These pathologies are attested by the 400% rise in the number of illegitimate children, a quadrupled divorce rate a 320% rise of domestic violence, a quintupled rate of abandoned children and a 200% rise of teenage suicide. African-American families are part of this hostile environment that Huckabee and Grant (1998)depict.

One of the exogenous meso-level and exo-level impact to African American families is the conditioning of belief that the entire African-American race is subhuman (Huckabee and Grant, 1998). These writers suggest that America has transformed an entire generation of American into potential killers. Already numbed by the violence- saturated by popular media, American children's sensitivity to the value of life has been eroded even more by their legal and institutional contract with killing: abortion. These writers maintain that abortion has grown into a

$500-million-a-year industry and an estimated $10-billion-a-year world wide. I n the United States today, four out of every ten children conceived are aborted, which amounts to 4,000 abortions a day (Huckabee and Grant,1998).

Other writers suggest that America has a pattern of disrespect which evidenced by an epidemic of disrespect, profanity, road rage, the grammar of contemporary hostility, gratuitous gore, graphic sexuality, casual carnage and desensitized issues of moral concern (Huckabee and Grant,1998). These writers state that an average teenage boy in America spends as much as twenty-eight hours a week killing, maiming,, and destroying-a s well as punching, shooting, and stabbing; flying, driving and navigating, climbing, plumbing, and slogging-through their beloved video games.

African-American families are part of the environment depicted above. They are not insulated or immune from the family-destroying impact. As Wilson (1987) stated that American can change America if they fix the family, this suggests that most of these anti-family scenarios depicted above will be minimized by giving more attention to American families.

Research Questions

The research questions seek information on fourteen dependent variables: housing, finances, health, safety, personal habits, work, male female relations, marriage, partner or spouse, personal relationship parenting, legal areas, race and ethnicity, gender related issues and religion or spirituality.

The research questions are:

1. What are the most and the least stressful sources of stress?
2. What is the relationships among the dependent variables housing, finances, health, safety, personal habits, work, male female relations, marriage, partner or spouse, personal relationship parenting, legal areas, race and ethnicity, gender related issues and religion or spirituality gender related matters?

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

The major objective of this study is to examine the relationship between stress and housing, health, male and female relations, personal habit, personal relations, parenting, safety, legal matters, financial matters, race, religion and spirituality and work among African Americans of 20 through 60 years of age. This chapter deals with a discussion of (a) sample and setting, (b) subjects, (c) instrument, (d) procedure, (e) hypothesis and treatment of data used in the study.

Research Design

This study used descriptive statistics to determine stress levels of the source of stress variables such as finance, health housing, male-female relations, legal matters, parenting personal habits, personal relations race or ethnic affiliation, religion, safety and work. These were ranked starting from the most stressful to the least stressful. An inter-correlation was run to examine the relation between the source of stress variables. The last part of the study examined the relationship between the level of income and stress.

Data Collection

Data for this study was drawn from the Ethnic Families Research Project (EFRP) data set. Three hundred Mid-western African-American parents and Mexican-American parents were selected as a sample for the project. Single parents were selected from the sample of 300. Research attendants from the Department of Family and Child Ecology and the institute conducted the interviews for Children, Youth, and Families at Michigan State University. UCHRIS approval was obtained for these studies.

It was explained to the participants that their participation was voluntary, that they could refuse to answer any question and that they could withdraw from the project when they were no longer willing to participate. Interviews lasted for three hours, and the participants decided whether they wanted a single session of three hours or preferred two sessions of an hour and a half each. As a token of appreciation, participants received $25 after the three hour participation.

The participants were assured of confidentiality, but it was necessary to take their signatures and social security numbers in order to make sure that they had received the money. As a three year follow-up, participants were requested to give names, addresses, and phone numbers of two persons who could be contacted in case the respondent moved to another place.

Research Questions

1. What is the rank order of sources of stress variables when starting with most stressful and ending with the least stressful?
2. What is the relationship between the source of stress variables?

Sample

The population from which the subjects were drawn consisted of Mid-western African-American parents and Mexican parents. The Ethnic Families Research Project (EFRP) selected a sample of 300 subjects to participate in this project. The project began in 1995 and continued for five years. But for this study, 148 African-Americans who met the research criteria were selected, i.e. those who were single. The demographic tables present the analysis of this sample: gender; distribution of ages; marital status, number of children, working status, highest standard of education, religion, religiosity, importance of religion, religious beliefs since a child, and whether religion was encouraged/discouraged for a child.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Subjects

Characteristics	n	%	M
Sex			
Male	21	14.2	
Female	126	85.1	
Missing	1	.7	
Total	148	100	
Marital Status			
Married	25	16.9	
Never married	65	43.9	
Widow/er	4	2.7	
Divorced	25	16.9	
Separated	21	14.2	
Living with partner	6	4.1	
Missing	2	1.4	
Total	148	100	
Income All Sources			
Under $6,000	44	29.7	
$6,000-$8,999	28	18.9	
$9,000-$11,999	14	9.5	
$12,000-$15,999	16	10.8	
$16,000-$19,999	16	10.8	
$20,000-$24,999	7	4.7	
$25,000-$29,999	6	4.1	
$30,000-$49,999	11	7.4	
Over $70,000	5	3.4	
Missing	1	.7	
Total	148	100	
Mean			3.510

Table 1 shows that the mean income was $3.500. This indicates that most of the participants fall under the poverty line as defined by national averages $16,000 for an urban family of 4. Of the sample, 29.7% had income of less than $6,000; 18.9% were between $6,000 and $8,9999, and only 7.4% had incomes between $30,000 and $49,999. The

majority of the subjects, 43.9% were single being never married, 2.7% widowed or widower, 16.9% being divorced, 14.2% being separated, and 4.1% were living partners. The male/female representation in the single parenthood sample consisted of 21 males and 126 females. Both the incomes and the decline in marriage in these data were consistent with literature cited in Chapter II, (Akbar, 1996; Billingsley, 1988; Butler,1997; Dickson, 1993; McAdoo, 1995; Spurlock and Booth.1988).

As indicated on Table 2 only 32.4% of the subjects were working, 38.5% were unemployed, and 14.2 being housewives/homemakers. The highest grade obtained by the majority of participants was the twelfth grade. The average grade was 12.37. The twelfth grade graduates were 45.9%, the one year college had 6.1%, and the two year college graduates had 10.8%, and high school and three more years were 2% while BS or BA were 7%. The majority of the sample, 32.4% had 3 children; 20.3% had 2 children, and 18.9 had 1 child each. Those who had more than three children were 14,2%, had 4 children; 6.8%, had 5 children; %.4, had 6 children 5.4% while 2.0% had seven children.

Table 2 Demographic Characteristics of Subjects

Characteristics	n	%	M
Work Status			
Preschool	3	2.0	
School	4	2.7	
Working	48	32.4	
Unemployed	57	38.5	
Retired	10	6.8	
Housewife/Homemaker	21	14.2	
Dropout	1	.7	
Other	1	.7	
Missing	2	1.4	
Total	148	100	
Highest Grade			
First grade	1	.7	
Fifth grade	1	.7	
Ninth grade	6	4.1	
Tenth grade	14	9.5	
Twelfth grade	68	45.9	
HS & 1 yr. college	9	6.1	
HS & 2 yr. college	16	10.8	
HS & 3 yr. college	3	2.0	
BA or B.A	1	.7	
Other	1	.7	
Missing	2	1.4	
Total	148	100	
Number of Children			
1	28	18.9	
2	30	20.3	
3	48	32.4	
4	21	14.2	
5	10	6.8	
6	8	5.4	
7	3	2.0	
Total	148	100	
Mean			2.94

Table 3 Religion of Subjects

Characteristics	n	%	M
Religion			
Catholic	4	2.7	
Muslim	1	.7	
Jewish	1	.7	
Protestant	8	5.4	
Baptist	80	54.7	
Methodist	4	2.7	
Evangelical	4	2.7	
Other	32	21.6	
No religion	14	9.5	
Total	148	100	
Mean			6.25
Religious Intensity			
Not religious	13	8.8	
Somewhat religious	81	54.7	
Very religious	52	35.1	
Missing	2	1.4	
Total	148	100	
Importance of religion			
Not important	4	2.7	
Somewhat important	46	31.1	
Very important	98	66.2	
Total	148	100	
Religious Beliefs Since a Child			
Less	20	31.5	
About the same	72	48.6	
More committed	55	37.2	
Missing	1	.7	
Total	148	100	
Encourage/Discourage Child			
No affiliation	16	10.8	
Actively discourage	5	3.4	
Yes, but not particularly	36	24.3	
Actively encourages	90	60.8	
Missing	1	.7	
Total	148	100	

Table 3 on page 84 shows that he Baptist had 54.7% affiliation, undesignated churches had 21.6%while the Catholics, the Methodist and evangelical had 2.7% each. Table 4 above shows that only 9.5% of the sample were not affiliated to any religion. The sample was 54.7% somewhat religious, 35% very religious, and 8.8% not religious. Table 4 shows that respondents who regarded religion not important were 2.7%, somewhat important 31.1%, and very important 66.2%. Thirty seven percent were more committed to religion than they were in their childhood, those whose commitment was the same were 48.6%, and those who were less committed then31.5%. The data also show that 60.8 actively encourage the child's religion while 3.4% actively discourage child' religion.

The dependent variables in this study were sources of stress, which were finance, gender related matters, health , housing, legal matters, male-female relations, parenting, personal habits, personal relations, race or ethnicity, religion, safety and work.

Instrumentation

The study used the Ethnic Families Research Project (EFRP) survey research instrument (Appendix C). This instrument was administered by trained interviewers, who were graduates students from the Department of Family and Child Ecology. The first part of the instrument was a letter of introduction for the interviewer (Appendix A) and the letter (Appendix B) directed to the participants,

setting out the conditions of participation in the project, and also acting as a consent form for the respondent.

The instrument is divided into 2 sessions. Session 1 had 249 questions while section 2 has 367 questions. Session 1 sought information about the participant's age, education, income. ethnic affiliation, family structure, composition, living arrangements, gender, parent's occupation, proverbs, significant life events and social class. Part of Session 1 has the respondent's feelings. This section about feelings opens with questions 188, 189, 190 and 192 and closes with question 206. The opening questions provide context or the ecological field which leads to a better understanding of the gist of this study which are questions 192 to 205, the source of stress questions.

Question 188 says that people have periods when things are going pretty well and times when things don't go so well. What has it been like for you this past year?

1	2	3	4
Low/depressed			excellent year

This question covers what the Boss Stress model regards as a historical context of stress. Respondents have to choose where they feel they have been in the past year.

Question 189 is, If you have been feeling low or depressed, tell me about it.

Question 190 is, What do you do when you feel down? Please respond yes (1) or no (5) to the following. You may have more than one answer. (K) Place * to one most used.

A._____ I very seldom feel down.

B. _____ Nothing.

C. _____ Sometimes or often use alcohol/ marijuana/ other drugs.

D. _____Talk to close friends or relatives.

E._____ Seek help from outside, for example, a religious person.

F._____ Seek help from mental health personnel, for example a psychologist or counselor.

G._____ Physical activity.

H. _____Work harder.

I. _____ Other, please specify.

J._____

The closing question on feelings is, Have there been major changes in your family since 1988, or other important issues we have not asked about?

1 _____ Yes

2 _____ No

If yes, please specify

(b) _____

_____

As indicated earlier, the focus of our study are question 192 to question 205. The questions are, On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest, score each source of stress.

192 _____ Housing

193 _____ Finances

194 _____ Health

195 _____ Safety

196 _____ Personal habits

197 _____ Your work

198 _____ Male-female relations

199 _____ Marriage, partner or spouse

200 _____ Personal Relationship

201 _____ Parenting

202 _____ Legal matters

203 _____ Race or ethnicity

204 _____ Gender related issues

205 _____ Religion or spirituality

The responses to these questions will be the focus of the study.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by the use of Michigan State University computer laboratory facilities. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program for frequencies, regression, correlation was used to

analyze the data. The data analysis began with descriptive statistics which gave the frequencies, mean, standard deviation, variance, range and percentages of various dependent variables. The analysis ranked the source of stress variables starting from the most stressful and ended with the least stressful. The inter-correlation examined the relationship between the twelve variables, finance, health, housing, gender related matters, legal matters, male-female relations parenting, personal habits, personal relations, race or ethnicity, religion, safety and work.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine, rank and determine the relationships among related 14 stress variables, finance, gender related matters, health, housing, legal matters, male-female relationships, parenting, personal habits, personal relationships, race, or ethnicity, religion and spirituality, safety, and work. This chapter analyzed data extracted from the questionnaires in order to answer the research questions presented in Chapter III.

Ranking of the Stress Variables

Table 4. Ranking of Source of Stress Variables

Variables	Rank	n	Mean	SD
Finance	1	147	6.05	3.52
Parenting	2	146	5.67	3.14
Health	3	142	4.91	3.6
Housing	4	147	4.83	3.56
Safety	5	141	4.74	3.74
Work	6	144	4.72	3.64
Male-female relations	7	147	4.52	3.44
Personal habits	8	147	4.46	3.39
Personal relations	9	146	4.37	3.27
Marriage/partner	10	114	3.79	3.46
Legal matters	11	146	3.58	3.34
Religion	12	146	3.31	3.44
Gender related matter	13	146	3.10	3.09
Race	14	146	2.92	3.07

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1994).

This first question asked and it made the ranking of variables possible:

1. What were the most stressful and the least stressful sources of stress among the following sources of stress, finance, gender related matters, health, housing, legal matters, male-female relationships, parenting, personal habits, personal relationships, race, or ethnicity, religion and spirituality, safety, and work? Rank the source of stress variables.

As can be seen from Table 4, Finance was the most stressful variable, and had a mean of 6.05 while Race was the least stressful with a mean of 2.92. Parenting had a mean of 5.67, Health had 4.91, housing 4.83, Safety 4.74, Work 4.72, Male-female relations 4.52, Personal habits, 4.46, Personal relations 4.37, Marriage/partner 3.79, legal matters 3.58, .Religion 3.31, and gender related matters. This ranking order is in keeping with those scholars (Wilson, 1987, Darity and Myers, 1995, West 1994) who regard structural economic constrains such as de-industrialization of the Northeastern cities and Midwestern cities, mechanization of agriculture in the South and subsequent joblessness as the greatest cause of the disorganization of African American families. That race is the least stressful, with a mean of 2,92 also suggests that race does not rule as Dyson (1996) and Black liberals (West, 1994) assert. Race is not the major issue, but it matters (West, 1994). Ranking, however, measures the intensity of the family

stress and leaves the measurement of the extensiveness of the stress factor to inter-correlation.

Parenting follows Finance with a 5.67 because of the changing cultural dynamics spawned by the structural economic changes whose market forces contribute to the disorientation and confusion of the American youth. Isolated from the labor market, devalued by alienating ideals if Euro-American beauty, and targeted by an unprecedented drug invasion, the Black youth exhibits high crime rates, teenage pregnancies and other traits which make parenting stressful (West, 1994).

Health, housing and Safety and also high with their respective means of 4.83, 4.74 and 4.72 because these three are related to Finance. Male-female relations, personal habits and personal relations are moderately stressful with their respective means of 4.52, 4.46 and 4.37. Variables that have a low stress factor were Marriage/partner, Legal matters, Religion, Gender related matters and Race with their respective means of 3.79, 3.58, 3.31, 3.10 and 2.92.

The Interrelationships Between Variables

The interrelationships among variables was determined by asking the second research question which was:

1. What were the relationships among the dependent variables, Finance, Gender related matters, Health, Housing, Legal matters, Male-female relationships, Parenting, Personal habits, Personal relationships, Race, Religion , Safety, and work?
2. Gender related matters, housing, race and work were related to 13 variables.
3. Health, legal matters, male female relationships, marriage, parenting, personal habits, personal relationships, and safety were related to 12 variables.
4. Religion was related to 11 variables.
5. Finance was related to only 6 variables. It was related to Health, Legal Matters, Marriage/partner. Persona habits, Personal relations Religion and Safety.

In terms of the extensiveness, the most stressful variables were gender related matters, housing, race, and work which were related to all variables, i.e. 13 variables, while Finance was the least stressful. Health, Legal matters, Male-female relationships, Marriage, Parenting, Personal habits, Personal relationships, and Safety followed, and were related to 12 variables. Religion was also high in extensiveness with 11 related variables. Finance was the least stressful I terms of extensiveness as it was related to only 6 variables.

Both the intensity and extensiveness were of the family stress were examined and the result showed that intensity and extensiveness do not converge. It was significant that the correlation between Finance was not as intense as correlation was with other factors such as Legal matters. Legal matters had a correlation of .006 with Marriage/partner, .001 with parenting and then .000 with 11 other stress factors while Finance had a significance of ,051 with Race, .038 with Work, .022 with Male-female relations, .016 with Parenting, .006 with Gender related matters and .04 with Housing.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The goals of this study was to examine stress factors amongst African-American single parent families, determine which were the most stressful factors, the medium stressful factors and the least stressful factors in terms of the intensity of the stress. Further, the study also examined the interrelatedness of the stress factors and ranked them.

The goals of the study were met and all factors examined were related to stress though their intensity and extensiveness varied. That Finance was the most stressful with a mean of 6.05. was in keeping with the literature which suggests that being African-American-American reduced wealth by $21.5 (Hao,1996); places African-Americans in financial strain because employment opportunities, income, and residence are determined by race (D'Amico & Maxwell, 1997).

That Parenting followed finance with a mean of 5.67 was consistent with the literature which suggested that parenting was made stressful because African-Americans' bi-cultural identities (Boykin & Toms,1985; Comer & Pousaint, 1994; Hines & Boyd-Franklin,1982; Peters, 1988 and Pinderhughes, 1982). It was also because of what Du Bois (1908) called the twoness, an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder

As indicated on Table 4 Health followed parenting with a mean of 4.91. This was consistent with the literature which suggests that given the facts of the financial strains arising from poverty with its attendant joblessness, poor housing, homelessness, unsatisfactory neighborhoods, low education African-American families do not enjoy the best in health matters. One of the underlying causes of this unhealthy state is what Vontress and Epp (1997) call a collective psychology characterized by a volatile triad of emotions and behaviors, dominated by hostility, hopelessness, and a paranoid perception of discrimination in most cross-racial encounters.

Housing was also high with a mean of 4.83. This finding was consistent with the literature which suggests that the poorer the family is, the more difficult its housing situation becomes, Kaufman, 1997). The American Housing Survey (AHS) (1995) states that there are 14.8 million families living below the poverty line and another 18.7 million near-poor families. African-American families are far more likely to be poor, and thus face housing affordability problems and homelessness. African-women, who are over-represented in single motherhood are the poorest segment of the population, and have greater difficulty in getting out of poverty (Trevino, Trevino, Stroup and Ray, 1990).

Safety was high with a mean of 4.74. This was consistent with the literature which suggests that many African-American families are forced into inadequate, sometimes even dangerous conditions (Kaufman, 1997). Though only .5% of Chicago's population, it accounts for 11% of the city's murders, 10% of

its aggravated assaults, and 9% of its rapes (Taylor, Jackson and Chatters, 1997). Some of the fundamental causes of such violence are what Vontress and Epp (1997) call rage or lashing out in protest, unrest, or excessive violence at some real or perceived indignity dealt by the majority culture.

Work was high with a mean of 4.72. This was consistent with the literature which suggests that family stress in African-American families emanates from the overall workplace discrimination which may be unequal pay for equal work and unequal work despite equal qualifications (Bloom and Killingworth, 1982), different quality of schooling (Gill, 1990). The stress may be caused by pay discrimination (Hirsh, and Schumacher , 1990).When the employee discrimination comes from preference of some White employees not to work with Blacks, White employees receive a premium to work with Blacks Consumer preference also leads to wage differential when the size of Black workers and that of consumer preferences is not small Whites (Hirsh and Schumacher, 1990). Another model of discrimination is the language model. In this case Blacks' communication patterns are penalized in the labor markets while Black who acquire majority language patterns are rewarded. Discriminated Blacks are forced to crowd in low paid jobs that most Whites dislike. Crowding increases the labor supply while depressing wages for both Blacks and Whites (Hirsh and Schumacher, 1990).

Male-female relations were high with a mean of 4.52. This was consistent with the literature which suggests male-female relationships in African-American families are to a large

extent determined by such factors as the Black joblessness, Black men imprisonment and unequal sex ratio. African-Americans have a difficult time establishing and maintaining their relationships (Dickson, 1993). Dickson (1993) cites lower marriage rates, higher divorce and separation rates, and lower remarriage rates as evidence of the difficulty.

Personal relationships were high as a source of stress with mean of 4.37. These personal relationships in African-American families are influenced by a bewildering array of models, and by multiple and diverse messages about how they should behave in their personal relationships. Child-parental relationships, gender attitudes of individuals, and inter-group relationships and interracial relationships affect personal relationships in manners that impact family stress in various ways which are culturally defined.

As a source of stress, the Marriage/ partner bordered between high and moderate with a mean of 3.79. This was not consistent with he literature which depicts a depressing picture for African-American women because of the decline in marriages, the increase in divorces and also an increase in single motherhood. More than half of the children under the age 18 live with their mothers alone (McAdoo, 1995). Inadequate standard of living, homelessness, joblessness and role overload simmers in single motherhood. This has detrimental consequences on the stress levels of the family members.

The Legal matters were moderate as the source of stress with a mean of 3.58. The literature suggest that there are numerous legal devises that were aimed at ameliorating the

conditions in poor families. Some of these provisions are the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Bride fare which control's women's childbearing choices, Learnfare which aids school going children, then Children's Defense Fund which helps with child care, Medicaid, President Clinton's Health Security Act of 1994 and the Personal Responsibility and Work opportunity Act of 1996.

Religion as a source of stress was moderate with a mean of 3.31. This was consistent with the literature. Ellison's (1997) investigation found that church participation and perceived religious socialization positively impact family role performance, subjective family closeness and satisfaction with family life.

Gender related matters were moderate as source of stress with a mean of 3.10. The literature suggests that gender related issues in African-American families emanate from the nexus of African traces and the American experiences within the historical context (Gutman,1976; Lodner,1986, McAdoo, 1988; Sudarkasa,1987). Though little systematic progress has been made to integrate African-American women's unique experiences into a theoretical perspective that systematically explains the development of their roles as women in America (Higginbotham,1984), assumptions can be made that their family stress factors are also unique.

As a source of stress, Race was the least stressful with a mean of 2.92. This was, however, not consistent with the literature which suggests that like class and gender, race and ethnicity cut across a wide spectrum of family stress related

factors such as health, highest educational level, housing and work related matters. Its manifestation is, however, more pronounced in some factors while it is less pronounced in others. For instance, race is more pronounced in housing discrimination although it is aggravated by poverty, poor education and joblessness or low paying jobs. Race is configured, conditioned, distorted and shaped by such factors as class, gender and sexuality as it grows, mutates, and transforms and redefines itself within changing complexities of social formations. It could be enlightened, subtle, covert or overt. Whatever its complexion is, race and racism are associated with family stress, though the least stressful in the findings of this study.

The second question examined the relationship among the dependent variables, finance, gender related matters, health, housing, legal matters, male-female relationships, parenting, personal habits, personal relationships, race, or ethnicity, religion and spirituality, safety, and work. Only three variables, gender related matters, housing, race and work were related to 13 variables and thus the most stressful in terms of their extensiveness. This was consistent with the trend that gender and race are the cause discrimination which is unequal pay for equal work, and unequal work despite equal qualifications (Bloom & Killingworth, 1982).

Health, legal matters, male female relationships, marriage, parenting, personal habits, personal relationships, and safety were related to 12 variables, thus placed on the

second category, yet near the top. Religion was related to 11 variables and was relatively extensively highly stressful. That finance was related to 6 variables and was extensively least stressful. That was not consistent with the literature. Only 32.4% of the sample worked; 38.5% were unemployed, 14.2 were housewives/homemakers and 6.8% were retired. Though literature had suggested that finance was related to all variables, finance was not related to health, legal matters marriage, personal habits, personal relationships, religion, and safety.

Conclusion

This study revealed how important it is for researchers on family studies or on social formations to look at broader issues in their interrelatedness or within broader ecological fields. Bronfenbrenner's (1989) and Boss (1987) ecological models captured a wide range of factors which collectively, configurally and individually contributed in creating stress among African-American families. The study revealed the weaknesses of studies which explain social formations amongst African-Americans through a single prism of racial determinism of historical determinism. Though Race and slavery may have left some legacies in the social formations of African-Americans, blowing these issues out of proportion is flawed.

To say that Race rules (Dyson, 1996) is as flawed as to say that Race does not exist (Clough,1996; Steele,1990). The study showed that Race matters (West, 1994) within a constellation of factors which influence one another as they respond to the social dynamics that are also recreated and

reshaped by human agency. As Boss (1987) indicates, the responses of the human being are tempered by their individual and collective philosophical, psychological and behavioral temperaments. Thus, the human agency is not monolithic. African-American families are therefore monolithic. They come in different classes, and within each class there different individual family trend, but above all within each family, there also variations caused by the variations of the constitutional make-up of family members within varying historical periods. Thus, the newly wed during Reagan's time will not respond in the same way after 20 years period of marriage.

For me, as researcher from South Africa, where superficial beliefs raise Race as the fulcrum of our social ills, this study showed that there was more to social formations than Race. The demise of apartheid may reduce Race as a factor of our social ills, but the country simmers in an escalating crime rate, teenage pregnancies and disorganization of African families. Finance was the most stressful in the study. This factor is perhaps the taproot of the ills of South African families. A study of this kind would be beneficial for South Africa.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction

Richard M. Lerner, Director
Institute for Children Youth and Families
Suite 27 Kellogg Center
Michigan State University
East Lansing
Telephone (517) 353-6617 Fax (517) 432-2022

Hi,
I am _____ from Michigan State University. We understand that your child _____ is currently receiving special education services from the _____ school district. I am part of the research team that is trying to learn what it is like for families to raise children with special needs. The general findings of the entire project will be shared with you, other families, teachers, social workers, and other professionals.

I will be asking you several questions about your experiences as a parent, and what life is like for you and your children. We hope to use this information so that existing programs might be improved in the future to meet the needs of families like yours. Some of the questions address personal matters, such as money and problems we face as parents and persons of color, It's very important that you feel comfortable with us and the questions. Therefore you may refuse to answer any question and may stop the interview at any time. This interview is strictly confidential. At no time will we talk about individual families or children.

In total, this interview will take about three hours. You can choose to do the first part today which will take about one and half hour appointment OR we can do both parts today. We understand that your time is valuable, so we would like to thank you in advance for your participation with this interview. As a token of our appreciation, a cash/participation gift of $25-00 will be given to you when we have completed the second part of the interview. We will need your signature and social security number to verify that you received the money. We will also need to follow up on your family experiences over the next three years. At each of these times you'll receive cash/participation gift. Thank you once again.
Rev. 10-26-95.

APPENDIX B

Letter of Consent

Richard M. Lerner, Director
Institute for Children Youth and Families
Suite 27 Kellogg Center
Michigan State University
East Lansing
Telephone (517) 353-6617 Fax (517) 432-2022

Dear Participant

This interview is being conducted by faculty from the Department of Family and Child Ecology and the institute for Children, Youth, & Families at Michigan State University. The Purpose of this project is to try to develop an understanding of the social, emotional, and educational concerns and stress that are faced by people like you which have children with special needs.

We will be talking to people from African-American and Mexican American families over the next four years. In addition to talking with you today, we will be talking to you in future at a time and place convenient to you. Your involvement is strictly on a volunteer basis. You may decide at any point in time to no longer be involved in these interviews. All information that you provide will be confidential. Neither you or any member of your family will be referred to by name in any of the files. We will use this information and the information obtained from others who participate in these interviews to write a report. These reports will be available to you if you would like to review them.

We would appreciate greatly your agreement to participate in this project. Please indicate your willingness to participate by signing and dating the lines below.

I agree to participate in the project tilted: "African-American and Mexican-American Families of Children with Special Needs." This research is being conducted by the Institute for Children, Youth, and Families at Michigan State University. I understand the nature of the project, the nature of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I can terminate my participation at any time during the course of the project.

Signed _____ Date _____

rev 10-26-95

APPENDIX C

Source of Stress

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest, score each source of stress.

192	Housing	199	Marriage, partner or spouse
193	Finances	200	Persona relationship
194	Health	201	Parenting
195	Safety	202	Legal matters
196	Personal habits	203	Race or ethnicity
197	Your work	204	Gender related issues
198	Male-female relations	205	Religion or spirituality

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