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A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE MEANING OF MOTHERHOOD FOR AFRICAN
AMERICAN AND HISPANIC WOMEN WHO DO NOT HAVE CHILDREN IN THE
UNITED STATES

by

Amy M. Clark

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Sociology

Under the Supervision of Professor Julia McQuillan

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2012

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE MEANING OF MOTHERHOOD FOR AFRICAN
AMERICAN AND HISPANIC WOMEN WHO DO NOT HAVE CHILDREN IN THE
UNITED STATES

Amy M. Clark, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2012

Advisor: Julia McQuillan

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the meanings that childfree African American and Hispanic women place on motherhood and to better understand what impact these meanings may or may not have on the changing demographic of minority women who do not have children. This study used qualitative interviews and the method of phenomenology to elicit descriptions from a sample of African American and Hispanic women who do not have children. Specifically, the goal of this study was to explore how African American and Hispanic childfree women conceptualize their understanding of motherhood and to understand how these conceptualizations may impact their view of motherhood or becoming a mother. Data were collected from 17 in-depth interviews (n = 8 African American childfree women; n = 9 Hispanic childfree women) and then analyzed using phenomenological procedures. From this study six themes emerged: (1) *Strong mother influence* – Minority childfree women had a mother figure in their lives that shaped the requirements they felt women should fulfill in the motherhood role. (2) *Familial Caregiving* – Minority women without children experienced caring for children primarily within their own families or through kinship ties and neighbors that were connected to their family of origin. (3) *Purposefully Not Ready* – The meanings attributed to the role of motherhood by minority women in this study directly affected their decisions to become mothers

themselves. (4) *Motherhood is Hard Work* –Minority childfree women participating in this study framed their desire to have children in part to their perception that the tasks and duties ascribed to motherhood are labor intensive. (5) *Rules, Tradition, and “The Way it Should Be”*- A collective notion of the importance of creating “rules” for children and abiding by “tradition” is the fifth theme in this study. Women that were interviewed also discussed the importance of raising children in a nuclear family consisting of a two parent household. Statements within this theme related to the insights that the women had regarding how children should be parented. (6) *Understood Judgment* - The data revealed that African American and Hispanic women experience criticism and judgment within their families and communities for not becoming a mother. Minority women within this study also indicated that criticism was expected and did not affect their desire to have children.

DEDICATION

This Dissertation is dedicated Gary and Jan Boan for their love, strength, and giving me the most important education I have had or will ever receive.

To Charles Scott Clark for his bravery and love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When asked by my parents what they thought I would do for a living, I've been told that their standard answer was "if she could go to school for a career, that is what she would do." Second only to raising my three amazing children, nothing seems more natural to me than being a student. Earning my PhD has been a life-long goal and dream of mine which would not have been possible without the unconditional love and support from many important people in my life.

Dr. Julia McQuillan is a force of nature and challenged me in the best possible way throughout my journey. I truly believe that we were so well suited to work with each other with or without chocolate. My level of respect for you is immeasurable and without question I am a PhD quality writer because of you. I am so grateful for Dr. Kim Tyler and Dr. Helen Moore for their support not only as committee members but as faculty members who have reassured, supported, and advocated for me most likely even when I was not aware. The feedback that you have given me throughout my dissertation has truly shaped this body of work and I am eternally grateful for your knowledge and character. A special thanks to Dr. Susan Churchill whose advisement and support throughout this dissertation process was so vital to me. In our first meeting, I was so overtaken with your warmth and excitement for your discipline, and have informed many that I am so fortunate that you agreed to be a part of my committee.

My research would not have been possible without the generous financial support from the Department of Sociology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the J.J. & Eleanor S. Ogle Summer Fellowship, and The Alice Frost Howard Graduate Student Research Fellowship. Dr. Dan Hoyt is one of the strongest supporters of graduate students within his department.

The faculty, staff and administration at Clarkson College have been so supportive during my pursuit for my doctorate. A very warm and special thank you to the Department of General

Education. I am one of a very fortunate few to be able to have not just colleagues but friends. Specifically Lori Bachle, my friend, mentor, and Director. Your support was felt every day and my desk is filled with cards, food and the occasional pin cushion to remind me of your encouragement. Katie Kirkpatrick lent me her time and immense knowledge to really fine-tune my writing. Katie, you are truly selfless and so amazingly smart that I hope I am your co-working forever! Monica White, Dr. Pat Brennan, Denny Owens, Mary Balken, and Sarah Flanagan, you are wonderful co-workers and I appreciate your on-going cheer section. To my fellow graduate students at Clarkson College, specifically Dr. Jane Langemeier, the newly mastered Trish Weber and soon to be Dr. Mark White, it was the days where we could just console each other along this journey that really kept me driven throughout this process. We are very alike and to be able to sink down in my chair and whine for an hour or more was very helpful. Mark, we are frighteningly alike in a lot of ways and you inspired me on the days when I wanted to look out the window, or just feel like jumping. You only know how to succeed in what you do and I promise to encourage you as much as you have done for me so many times.

Over the past four years, I have so many people who have remained my friends when I have really not had any time to spend with them, or to be a good friend in return. Monica White, I can truly say that if it was not for your unconditional love for me and my family I would not have been able to complete this journey. From bringing me snacks, listening to my ramblings, reminding me of birthday's that you knew I would forget, you are the best friend that I do not deserve! I may not have taken you up on every opportunity that you gave me to watch my children while I typed a paper, but the fact that you offered meant more to me than anything else in the world. You know that I believe that actions speak louder than words, and you are the very best reminder of such generosity. I do not have enough words or pages in this acknowledgement

section to every repay your support of me. Mariana Fox-Johnson was fearless in providing me with information on how mothers can return to graduate school and still be good parents. You believed that I could get my PhD before I did, I'm so lucky to have had you live in my basement my dear friend. I hold a special place for my original cohort of Mike Stevens, Megumi Watanabe, Christie Wright, Kayla Pritchard, Alian Kasabian and Lina Stover. Lesa Johnson, you more than a member of my original cohort, are my sister. My husband, my babies and I all love you more than you will ever know and we will be in your life forever whether you like it or not. Watching you become this amazingly talented researcher and teacher who fights hard for everything even when you didn't think you could, has been my favorite pastime. You are fierce and I am and will always be so proud to say that I am Lesa Johnson's best friend. You have held me up so many times and now it is my turn to remind you, on a daily basis if necessary, how brilliant you are. I just love you!

Throughout all of my years of school and work, the one consistent positive feedback that I always had was "she is such a hard worker". Mom and Dad, I am absolutely everything today because of you. I pass on all the qualities that you have instilled in me to my children and I cannot think of a greater gift. You have told me so many times that you are proud of me, but I am so proud of you. It really is a badge of honor to still be asked if I am one of the "Boan girls", "Jan's girls" or "Gary's daughter". Mom and Dad, thank you also for my sisters; Chris Gress, Kim Wagner, and Connie Jo McWilliams. So many times throughout this process they have encouraged me and assisted in ways that I am sure they are not even aware. Chris, you are a fierce mom and will come to my house, get my children and take them to ride 4-wheelers, see ponies, and come to t-ball games. You are the stand-in mom for me on track and field days and preschool pick up days. You also always offer to take the kids or sometimes just do when I

needed it and I'm so lucky to have you. I love you so much and cannot ever tell you thank you enough! Steve, I don't remember life in this family without you and I am so glad, you are the best big brother I could ever have! Ash, Jess and Rob, I'm stunned by how incredible smart you all three are and how much I just love to be around you! Ashley and Jessica you are really my friends more than anything else. We have used each other for support during school and I couldn't not have raised my children without your help. They love you so much and it is because of your love for them! Rob you are the man that all the little boys in this family look up to and I can't think of anyone better to have that kind of "power". Aside from your handsome good looks, you are just a wonderful sweet person. You are each matched with three amazing people Dan, Clare, and of course, Big Luke who hold a very special place in the Clark hearts.

Kim, you are strong, so frighteningly strong! You tell me all these positive things about myself but I'm amazed by you. No one else in my life can get three children ready for school, football, volleyball, fix a fence, feed a cow, and teach a 200-level college course all before noon! Jeffy, I just love you and even though when I was in high school with big hair you would not have wanted me for a sister, but you get me anyways!! Riley, Dylan, and Tyler thank you for loving Jack, Luke and Katie. All I have ever wanted were cousins that my kids loved to be around and I am so excited (and a little scared) to watch you all grow up together.

Connie Jo, no one makes me laugh or can sing all of the TV theme show songs from the 1980's with me like you can. You have this love of life and fun that many people don't have and I don't want you to lose that. Out of the blue I would get cards from you encouraging me, and you have the biggest heart of anyone I know! I love you and your swing dancing, Survivor-loving hubby Randy. Nate and Cooper, I am so excited to see you both grow up into the sweet and caring boys you already are. Jack, Luke, and Katie love their cousins and we love you!

I would be horribly inept if I did not express my deepest thanks to Kelly Voss for loving my children every day the same way that Josh and myself do. Josh was so lucky that he ended up on your doorstep that day and that encounter was never a “red flag” to you. We love you Kelly, you made every day less difficult because I knew that my children were with you. As I just wrote that sentence, you sent me a picture of Katie next to baby Kennedy, showing me what a great day she was having when I am not there; you are my life-savior! Life as a working mom is better because of you and Josh and I will never be able to repay you. We love our Kelly!

In saving the best for last, I want to thank my fearless husband Josh and our amazing children Jack, Luke, and Kate. Josh you are fearless not just because you married me, but because you have stood by me, transcribed interviews for me, been the world’s best father, and friend to me. You have encountered many years of neglect on my part but every day I look at our kids and see you in each of them (well, maybe not Kate as much). You are funny when I need you to be funny, strong when I need you to be strong, and will dance to Vanilla Ice when I need to see the less up-tight side of you. After 12 years of marriage I love you even more now because you are so stubborn in fighting for me and our family. You reminded me what is important and told me that I could do this, when I didn’t think I could. I would have never given up because I would never want to disappoint you. You are the love of my life, the best friend I have ever had, and to quote your favorite song “everything I do I do for you” (just please do not sing it out loud!). Jack, Luke, and Kate I hope that these years of my time in graduate school become a blur to you. It was my goal to never miss a field trip, baseball game, dance recital, or guitar lesson. When I had a difficult day, each of you would remind me what was important. My heart is full because of your little smiles, laughs, and crazy strong hugs. I love you so much!

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Women in the 21st Century are delaying their entrance into marriage, obtaining graduate degrees at higher rates than men, and having fewer, if any, children than the generations of women before them (Bramlett and Mosher 2002; Dye 2008; Martin 2004; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2008, 2010) Despite such shifts, the majority of women in the United States view motherhood as important and salient (McQuillan, Greil, Shreffler, and Tichenor 2008). Conventional views of motherhood as natural and preordained have largely been shaped by White, middle-class standards (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 1998). Despite the significance of race and class, our understanding of the significance of motherhood for African American and Hispanic women who have not yet had children is limited in family sociology literature. Cultural meanings of motherhood among childfree women may vary based on social context; however, due to the lack of research in this area our understanding is limited to speculation. This dissertation seeks to understand the perspectives of childfree racial/ethnic minority women on being mothers or not being mothers. This first chapter will frame the importance of examining the meaning of motherhood for childfree African American and Hispanic women. First, I will introduce the changing demographic characteristics among women in the United States, followed by a statement of the problem in family sociology literature. Next, I will address the purpose of this dissertation and research questions guiding the research study. Finally, I will conclude with the importance of a phenomenological approach to the question of motherhood in the lives of women who are African American or Hispanic in the United States as well as the theoretical frameworks that guide this study.

Changing Demographic Characteristics

An increasing number of women today have never experienced motherhood for a variety of reasons (e.g., fertility, by choice) across all racial categories (Dye 2008). Average age of first-time mothers has risen in all racial categories, yet there remain large differences in age at first-time motherhood by race and ethnicity. Non-Hispanic white women are older (26 years) on average at the time of a first born child than the average for the U.S. population (25 years old) (NCHS Data Brief 2009). African American women (22.7 years) and Hispanic women (23.1 years) are on average younger than the overall average U.S. population for having a first born child (NHCS Data Brief 2009). Childlessness has been increasing steadily since 1976 from 35 percent to 43 percent in the past decade of women in the childbearing ages were childfree (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). In 1985, only 11% of women in the United States between the ages of 40 and 44 years did not have children; by 2004, the number of childfree women in the same age category had nearly doubled (Dye 2005). Gillespie (2000) noted that 20% of cohorts of women born in the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's would remain childfree. Despite the increased percentages of childfree women and statistics indicating ongoing delay of childbearing, most women become mothers at some time in their life (Wood and Newton 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Although the numbers of women who are delaying childbearing or are childfree continue to rise, African American and Hispanic women have the highest birth rates and the highest fertility intentions of all racial/ethnic groups in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). McQuillan et al. (2008) found that Black and Hispanic women had lower importance of motherhood scores than white women but these scholars were unable to determine whether the difference between group scores reflected differences in the meanings of the measures or actual

lower importance of motherhood ratings for minority women. Most feminist theorizing about motherhood tends to ignore how the significance of motherhood for women who do not have children may differ by race/ethnicity or social class (Collins 1991, 1994). In the past several decades, researchers have shown greater interest in the unique experiences of women without children (Belcroft and Teachman 2004). While studies have examined how women construct feminine identities for themselves in the absence of motherhood (Abshoff 2000; Gillespie 1999; Ireland 1993; Izzard and Borden 2001), others have focused on particular childless identities (Campbell 1999; Letherby 1994, 2002). In 1994, Morell claimed that the lack of recognition of women who were childfree in research literature “reinforces the notion that motherhood is *the* critical experience which both actualizes and symbolizes normality and maturity for women” (p.12). Since that time, negative stereotypes of women who delay or forgo childbearing to enter the workforce has been well documented in social science literature (Gillespie 2003; Ireland 1993; Park 2002). Bulcroft and Teachman (2004) explored theories of childlessness; these theories included the cultural norm perspective, which identifies that a shift in worldview towards greater gender equality will offer support for women who do not become mothers. Their study, however, does not consider the nuances in social acceptance for childfree minority women in social science research.

There are reasons to suspect that the meaning of motherhood for women is shaped by race/ethnicity as well as by the material realities of social class. Cultural ideologies regarding what it means to be a “good woman” or a “good mother” vary by race/ethnicity (Davila 1999; Collins 1991; Roberts 1995; Torres 1998). Amato and Gilbreth (1999) found that parental involvement and parenting style varies by race/ethnicity when comparing adolescent well-being between Blacks, Latinos, and Whites. Similarly, Edin and Kefalas (2005) found that low income

Black and Hispanic women strongly value motherhood as a means to provide an unconditional loving relationship and a sense that they are important. Although it is important to note that parenting style and beliefs are not universal, an exploration of childfree African American and Hispanic women and their understanding of motherhood is an essential piece that will enrich the current family sociology literature. Differences in the importance of motherhood for minority women may lie in the cultural model of socialization, which is prevalent among African American mothers (McAdoo 2002b). Therefore, it is likely that the subjective meaning of motherhood for women as an identity will vary by race. Lived experiences unique to women of color who are mothers are imperative to understanding differences that exist regarding the meaning of motherhood.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the meaning of motherhood among African American and Hispanic women in the United States who are not mothers. As the goal of this study is to understand the meaning of motherhood for women who do not have children, theoretical perspectives will be utilized to sensitize questions and guide the hermeneutic phenomenology research lens. Survey researchers have assumed that most women have intentionality thought about having children, however as noted by McQuillan, Greil, and Shreffler (2011), many women are ambivalent regarding their decision to have children. There remains a need to understand the meaning of motherhood from the perspective of women who do not have children, particularly among African American and Hispanic women who typically have very high rates of fertility.

Research Questions

Qualitative research utilizing phenomenology allows for an exploration of the meaning of motherhood for women who are not mothers. Theoretical perspectives that will guide this study are rational choice perspective, intersectionality and social network theories. These perspectives will raise particular questions regarding expectations for women and the likely difference in the importance of motherhood based on race and social class. The central research question is what is the meaning of motherhood for African American and Hispanic women who are not mothers?

The four sub-questions include:

- 1) What images of motherhood do participants see from their upbringing?
- 2) What type of previous experience do childfree women have in terms of caring for children?
- 3) What qualities do women identify as “ideal” motherhood?
- 4) Are women who are childfree pressured by others to become mothers?

Significance of the Study

This study aids in understanding mothering experiences and influences for women without children and how meanings may differ by race. McQuillan et al. (2008) found that Black and Hispanic women had lower importance of motherhood scores than White women but were unable to determine whether the difference between group scores reflected differences in true scores or differences in the applicability of the measure for different subgroups. Because the items measuring importance of motherhood reflect both indicators of identity (e.g. “Having children is important to my feeling complete as a woman”) and indicators of a good life (e.g. “I think my life will be or is more fulfilling with children”), and because the relative importance of these indicators for the experience of motherhood may vary by race/ethnicity, it is possible that

the measurement of the importance of motherhood reflects the experiences of some subgroups of mothers better than others.

Race/ethnicity, social class and sexual orientation have been shown to shape mothering experiences and influence the meanings that mothers can assign to them (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Lamphere, Zavella, Gonzales, and Evans 1993; Lewin 2010). An intersectionality perspective suggests that there are “motherhoods” that are likely to have different meanings based on race/ethnicity and social class. Employment, education and economic resources could facilitate, hinder, or be unassociated with motherhood depending upon norms based in history and cultural expectations. African American and Hispanic women are raised in traditions that integrate paid work and mother work (Lamphere et al. 1993; Marks et al. 2008; Rothman 1989). In the U.S., parenting is often privatized, but traditions that presume that extended family, neighbors and members of networks will contribute to raising children through acting as “other mothers” could both increase and decrease pressure to have children and to value motherhood (Collins 1991; McAdoo 2007; Stack and Burton 1993). Even women who had not thought about having children often experience pressure to value motherhood from family or friends, either through direct requests from potential grandparents or more subtle indicators through others having children (McMahon 1995).

The economic and emotional effects of racial discrimination likely play a role in shaping the meaning of motherhood for African American and Hispanic women. Racism and the intersection of race/ethnicity and class contribute to higher burdens on African American mothers compared to white mothers (Coard et al. 2004; McAdoo 2007; Peters 1985). In providing a first person account or subjectivity regarding how mothering experiences are perceived and give meaning to African American and Hispanic women, this study will present a

nuanced picture of motherhood for women who are often unaccounted for in social science literature.

Overview of the Dissertation

My study will serve as a doctoral dissertation in the Department of Sociology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Thus far, chapter one discussed the significant demographic changes related to women who are delaying the age of first born children or remaining childfree. Differences in these trends exist by race/ethnicity, yet few scholars have investigated how minority women who are not mothers view the significance of motherhood. Therefore we cannot know if not having a child is a positive or a negative experience for women. I employ hermeneutical phenomenology to examine the lived experience of African American and Hispanic women who are not mothers and their meaning of motherhood. Phenomenology focuses on describing the meaning and experiences of participants rather than the interpretations of the researcher (Moustakas 1994). Hermeneutical phenomenology will provide a rich description and an understanding of the common lived experiences of the participants in this study (Creswell 2007).

Chapter two will provide a description and assumptions of the theoretical lens utilized in this study. A comprehensive literature review of current and past research in family sociology related to motherhood and variations in ideology between African American and Hispanic women will be presented. Consideration of research regarding childless women will also be presented. Finally I will discuss the theoretical perspectives guiding this qualitative dissertation.

Chapter three will describe the research methodology for this qualitative study. Participant selection, recruitment efforts and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures

will be discussed. The research procedures are presented, including data collection of in-depth interviews and data analysis strategies.

Chapter four will present the six theme clusters that emerged from the in-depth interviews. Theme clusters that emerged and will be discussed are: *strong mother influence*; *familial caregiving*; *purposefully not ready*; *motherhood is hard work*; *rules, tradition, and “the way it should be”*; and *understood judgment*.

Chapter five presents the essence statement of the phenomenon being presented as well as a discussion of the findings and limitations of this study.

Chapter six will discuss the implications of this study within the context of family sociology. A brief review of the literature pertaining to motherhood and minority women will be discussed in the context of the findings of this study.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will summarize research regarding the ideology of women and motherhood as well as present paradigms that will inform this particular study. First, I will discuss contemporary findings on the cultural ideologies and demographic trends surrounding motherhood for women. Second, I will present data on workforce participation for racial/ethnic minority women. Third, I will discuss motherhood in the context of African American and Hispanic families. Increasing rates of women without children suggest the need to understand the meaning of motherhood in women's lives. Finally, I will discuss the theoretical perspectives that inform the research focus and guide this study.

Cultural Ideologies and Trends in Motherhood

Feminist scholars have argued that expectations of what a good mother is create unattainable gendered expectations for women (Crittenden 2001; Douglas and Michaels 2005; Hays 1996; Lareau 2003; Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Ulrich and Weatherall (2000) assert that pronatalist ideology perpetuates the belief that women's worth and social value are tied to motherhood. Cultural norms and ideals among racial and ethnic groups vary, yet the expectations of "good mothering" remain unyielding. Russo (1976) argued that a devaluation of motherhood would have negative consequences on the overall status of all women. Roberts argued in 1995 that White middle and upper-class women in the United States are bound more closely to the cult of perfect mothering, while African American and Hispanic women are readily assumed to be hyper-fertile, single mothers. Nearly a decade later, Lareau (2003) suggested that "concerted cultivation" is dominant in wealthy families regardless of race/ethnicity, whereas less structured, informal activities are common in the lives of working class families. Yet lack of economic

resources to enable intensive motherhood does not necessarily mean that poor women value motherhood any less (Assave 2003). More recently, Edin and Kefalas (2005) found that motherhood was central to the lives of low income African American and Hispanic women because, it provided a sense of importance and a consistent relationship. Although pronatalist pressures could influence the desire to become a mother, research has identified that the unrealistic expectations of motherhood could also explain why more women are not having children.

Douglas and Michaels (2005) discuss the idealized, pro-maternal media that has bombarded U.S. society in the past several decades. They identify various marketing strategies that the media utilizes to shape not only how mothers feel about the relationships they have with their children, but also how women feel about themselves. Douglas and Michaels argue that society recognizes “real” women as being truly enlightened only when they make the selfless decision to become “moms.” Autonomy, as well as the opportunity for women to control their own destinies, is distorted within the “new momism” perspective (Douglas and Michaels 2005). The very practices that embody good mothering assume that women are self-directed and self-fulfilled as mothers. The White middleclass ideal of intensive mothering, regardless of additional roles that women occupy in or out of the workforce, dictates that the needs of children assume top priority (Hays 1996). Despite the lack of empirical evidence, Hays (1996) describes the motherhood mandate ideology of “intensive mothering” which is “child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive parenting” (p. 46). Yet this model of mothering assumes economic resources for extracurricular activities to foster educational attainment and growth. Collins (1991) argues that Black women long ago rejected the notion of exclusive, intensive mothering and research on women of Mexican origin found

similar attitudes toward work and motherhood (Segura 1994). African Americans understand being a “good” mother to include being a strong breadwinner and a role model who emphasizes self-reliance and independence (Collins 1991). Noting the difficulties in unwinding the intersections of race, gender, and class, Reich (2005) identifies that social class is not an asset that trumps race for minority mothers. What is the benefit of motherhood for minority women? Edin and Kefalas’ (2005) ethnography of low-income mothers identifies that, as less educated minority women are increasingly having children outside of marriage, children are viewed as a route to adulthood and a means for providing emotional support.

Demographic shifts in family composition have yielded growing interest in single-parent families. Female-headed single parent homes are not unique to African American families. Currently, slightly more than half of all African American family households are headed by a single parent (Cherlin 2010). Single-parent mothers bear the financial, emotional, and behavioral burden in providing for their children. As African American women are less likely to be married, they face additional stigma in the context of single-parenthood (Ceballo 1999). As the fastest growing minority population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2010), Cherlin (2010) notes that during the past decade, Hispanics overtook African Americans as the largest minority group (2010). Hispanic households, including Mexican-origin households, are more likely than non-Hispanic White households to live in extended families (Landale, Oropesa, and Bradatan 2006). Additionally, there is a growing interest in “care work” research, which studies “transnational families” in the United States. Transnational families are foreign born Hispanic women who have entered the United States to take caregiving jobs for American families, but have left their own children in their home countries (England 2005). Although there is shared

experience of discrimination among Hispanic and African American women, other aspects of culture and history affecting the meaning of motherhood likely vary between groups.

Minority Women and Paid Labor Participation

Feminist scholars have written extensively on the topic of work and motherhood. Women's participation within the United States paid workforce has increased significantly with mothers of young children returning to or entering employment (Spain and Bianchi 1996). There is growing acceptance of mothers in the workforce (Blunson and Reed 2005; Etaugh and Moss 2001; Marks et al. 2002). Employed mothers however, describe the challenge of combining motherhood and employment with few structural supports (Crittendon 2001; Kulakac, Buldukoglu, Yilmaz, and Alkan 2006). Mothers who violate the ideology of intensive mothering by being engaged in paid employment must contend with others' judgments of their parenting and their own feelings of ambivalence and guilt about leaving their children (Arendell 1999; Hertz and Ferguson 1996; Walzer 1997). Blair-Loy (2003) asserts that employers of highly educated women demand that women demonstrate commitment by making work the central focus of their lives thus directly placing family needs in conflict with employment status. Inflexibility between work demands and family life strain the requirement of women to perform intensive mothering while attempting to establish a career. Non-employed mothers additionally face social stigma to the extent that stereotypes of housewives capture cultural perceptions of the role of mothers as low in status (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Most women (75%) with dependent children under the age of 18 and 60% of women with children under the age of 6 are in the paid labor force (Bachu 1997; Boushey 2008). Well over half of all mothers of infants are employed, and married mothers' employment falls just short of that of unmarried mothers' (Bachu 1997; Boushey 2008).

Many studies are focusing on young respondents in an attempt to view what the future of motherhood will look like. Gerson (2009) found that among young women, the notion of participating in the workforce and capturing the breadwinner role was seen as an aspect of good mothering. It is possible that the mystique of motherhood exists until the actual mothering role begins. McQuillan et al. found that while there is no evidence that valuing motherhood is in conflict with valuing work success among non-mothers, for mothers there is a positive association for valuing both motherhood and work success (2008). Research providing such evidence offers explanations of how women who are mothers view the impact of work on their parenting, yet are such considerations similar for women who do not have children?

McMahon assessed in 1995 that motherhood was important in “doing femininity” and that such personal sacrifice elevated the social value of women. Managing the multiple ideals of motherhood has, however, been associated with difficulties in maintaining a work-family balance among women who enter or return to the paid work force (Blair-Loy 2003; Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Research has focused on the different stresses associated with motherhood that exist for employed and non-employed mothers among respondents who are primarily White and middle-class. Gerson conducted a study in 2009 on resistant employment structures (e.g. “greedy” work institutions) and intensive mothering pressures. Her research concluded that conventional gender ideology has left women feeling unable to cope with both economic strain and declining parental morale (Gerson 2009). Consisting of mostly White, middle class women, her sample left many questions with regards to race/ethnic differences unanswered.

Few of the studies in feminist literature consider the unique challenges or media stereotyping that mothers who are minorities face. Historical construction of mothering among slave women as discussed by Davis (1993) identifies that few Black women could be full time

mothers, but a portion of upper class White women could make motherhood a full time vocation. Many have urged that in an era of multiculturalism, recent research efforts fail to acknowledge that African American and Hispanic women are unique and have a more difficult time reaping the social status benefits of motherhood (Hertz and Ferguson 1996; Patterson 2000).

African American Women and Motherhood

Notions of motherhood as well as what constitutes “good mothering” varies not only by employment status but additionally by distinctions of race and ethnicity. Cultural norms and ideals vary by race/ethnicity, yet all cultures value motherhood. Depression levels among mothers in both minority groups and lower social classes are twice those of mothers having more resources (Marmot and Wilkinson 2006). Black women are less likely to be married and face additional stigma in the context of single-parenthood (McLanahan and Percheski 2008). Roberts (1995) argues that White middle and upper class women in the United States are bound more closely to the cult of perfect mothering, while Black women are readily assumed to be deviant mothers and their children are viewed as less socially valuable. Does this same pattern exist nearly two decades later?

Past research on minority mothers has suggested that the value placed on motherhood is influenced by the realities of women's' lives in racialized systems. For example, Edin and Kefalas (2005) found that Black and Hispanic women highly value marriage and children, yet view motherhood as more attainable in neighborhoods where few marriages remain intact. Collins (1990) strongly argues that Black women long ago rejected the notion of exclusive, intensive mothering and research on women of Mexican origin found similar attitudes toward work and motherhood (Segura 1994). Historical construction of mothering among slave women as discussed by Davis (1993) identifies that motherhood as a primary vocation did not exist for

Black women. Attitudes towards motherhood among the African American population are rarely separated from the primarily white middle-class respondents who report feelings of being overwhelmed at juggling the many demands of work and family life. Barbara Katz Rothman (1989) discussed the concept of “motherworker” in her book, “Recreating Motherhood”, as an emerging role that women who are both employed and raising children struggle to perform. Yet as Patricia Hill Collins notes, work and family have rarely functioned as a dichotomous sphere for women of color (1994). African American women have rarely served only in the housewife role because economic discrimination has dictated that they work outside the home. Even in the context of a married or cohabitating family relationship, African American couples are not newcomers to work-family integration (Marks et al. 2007). African American families have a longer tradition of egalitarian marriages than white families, and African American mothers tend to have more power than White mothers in their marriages (McAdoo 2007). Although potential positive effects may arise for women in a matriarchal household, consideration must be given to the economic and emotional affects of racial discrimination. Differences in what some researchers have identified as “caregiving burden” are unrelated to work-family balance but are instead the result of the lack of social resources available to mothers, social support networks, and contextual or background factors (Aneshensel, Pearlin, Mullan, Zarit, and Whitlath 1995; Pearlin 1989).

Because African American and Hispanic women have higher employment expectations and face more negative judgment when they have children, it is unclear how women without children understand motherhood. Differences in the importance of motherhood for African Americans may lie in the cultural model of racial socialization, which is prevalent among African American mothers to contend with the discrimination they believe their children will

experience (McAdoo 2002b). Racial socialization is identified as the manner in which African American mothers raise physically and emotionally healthy children who are Black in a society in which being Black is perceived negatively (Peters 1985). Coard and colleagues (2004) suggest that racial socialization is more prevalent among African American mothers who are raising children in inner cities where the likelihood of adverse economic conditions is high. Has racial socialization had an impact on the meaning of motherhood for minority women?

African American mothers often equate the role of motherhood as a charge to instill values surrounding the importance of kinship ties, independence and education in their children (Hill 2001; Hill and Sprague 1999). Minority mothers are confronted with unique expectations and many African American mothers identify education as an important opportunity to confront racism. Research has debated the myth that African American mothers are not interested in being involved in their children's educational attainment (Jackson and Remillard 2005). To the contrary, several studies have identified that educational achievement is a highly culturally valued goal among African Americans regardless of class (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, and Draper 2002; Hill 2001; Suizzo, Robinson, and Pahlke 2008).

Hispanic Women and Motherhood

As one of the fastest growing minority populations in the United States, the term "Hispanic" is a label that identifies a very heterogeneous group (Borak, Fiellin, and Chemerynski 2004). Consequently, any statement regarding the prevalence of Hispanic households headed by women would mask this great diversity. Similarly, to claim that one ideological viewpoint of motherhood exists for Hispanic Latina women would also be an overgeneralization. The family is highly valued in the Hispanic culture and viewed as sacred (Bengston 2001). Studies have shown that generally there is cohesion among family members, and extended family or friends

are often viewed as members of the family (Skogrand, Barrios-Bell, and Higginbotham 2009). Skogrand et al. (2008) note that children are sometimes viewed as more important than the marriage relationship among Hispanic families. Extended family assisting with caring for children in the parents' absence is more prevalent in Hispanic families in comparison to white families and Hispanic children are typically not left with child care providers (Skogrand et al. 2008). Many studies formulate research questions around Hispanic family patterns (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, and Freeman 2010; Landale and Oropesa 2007). Hispanic families, however, are extremely diverse and little is known about the perception of motherhood among the various groups.

As both women and immigrants, Hispanic mothers face challenges that put them at increased risk for lower socioeconomic status as well as stressors that are associated with acculturation into the United States (Escobar, Nervi, and Gara 2000; Heilemann, Coffrey-Love, and Frutos 2004). Ornelas et al. (2009) found that Mexican-American mothers experience a high rate of economic and social stressors which could be attributed to difficulties in acculturation. As Hispanic families began to move into communities in the Midwest and Southeast portions of the United States, mothers within those families reported feelings of social isolation as well as limited access to resources (Horwitz, Briggs-Gown, Storfer-Isser, and Carter 2007). Depression levels among mothers in minority groups and lower social classes are twice those of mothers who have sufficient resources (Goldsteen and Ross 1989).

Childfree Women

Desire to fulfill the motherhood mandate have implications for general well-being in women who are unable to have children. The number of childfree women continues to increase (U.S. Census Bureau 2010) yet motherhood has been and remains central to the identity of most

adult women (McQuillan et al. 2008). In spite of this increase, women who do not have children continue to lack visibility (Ireland 1993) and are often viewed as deviating from the dominate culture's mandate to mother (Ainsworth 1996; Gillespie 2003; Ireland 1993). It is necessary to explore the types of childless or childfree women as well as how such definitions were derived. Previous discourse regarding women who did not have children identified that the term "childfree" describes women whose lives represent an "active and fulfilling choice" alternative to motherhood (Bartlett 1996). Gillespie (2003) more recently argued that identifying women as "childless" suggests a loss or "deficiency" in contrast to Bartlett's earlier suggested terminology. Women who are perceived as not having made the conscious choice to refrain from motherhood are often labeled as infertile, childless, involuntary, or sterile (Bulcroft and Teachman 2004). Alternatively, women who have chosen childlessness are labeled as voluntary or childfree.

Morell (1994) identifies that describing women who have chosen to not have children is difficult as "each term is politically and analytically problematic" (p. 21). Categorizing a woman as a "nonmother" or "childless" communicates what does not exist (a child or a mothering experience). Women who do not have children either voluntarily or involuntarily have been identified as "others" according to Letherby and Williams (1999), often with pity offered to those who are unable to have children, and attributes of selfishness placed upon voluntarily childless women. Morell extends this notion by adding that "childfree" is a term that women wish to "rid themselves" of children. She asserts that the term "not-mother" is not only negative, but could easily be seen as being hostile to children (1994). Rich (1976) initially began this discussion by identifying that "we have no familiar ready-made name for a woman who defines herself, by choice, neither in relation to children nor to men, is self-identified, who has chosen herself" (p. 249). She ascertains that terms such as "childless" focus on what a woman "is not"

instead of defining a woman by what “she is.” I deduct that the negative focus on women who do not have children is a reflection of attitudes of men and women regarding the function of women as mothers.

Research has addressed how women who are not mothers construct feminine identities (Abshoff 2000; Gillespie 2003; Ireland 1993; Izzard and Borden 2001). In 1990 Lauritzen identified that childless women in American society represented an unenviable social anomaly, in which childlessness is disapproved of and those who are childless are stigmatized as selfish and uncaring. Recent publications have identified that childless women are in fact, seen by others as dysfunctional, selfish, deviant, and lonely (Gillespie 2003; Letherby 2002; Park 2002). Given the increasing prevalence of non-motherhood status and growing acceptance of childlessness, particularly among younger generations (Koropeckyj-Cox and Pendell 2007; Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001), such assumptions remain surprising.

Women desiring to remain childfree endure the social stigma and pressure that comes from voluntarily opting for a life with no children in a society that highly values the role of motherhood. Pronatalist cultural discourses establish motherhood as a template of femininity, therefore women who voluntarily choose to not comply with this idea unfeminine, deviant, selfish, psychologically flawed (Gillespie 2003). Several participants in Gillespie’s 2003 study noted that the desire for freedom and leisure were both attractive outcomes of being childfree. Identifying the sacrifices that motherhood demanded as a reason for their choice to be childfree, women in Gillespie’s research are conscious of the intensive mothering expectations. Furthermore, as Gillespie suggests, women who reject motherhood as a normative female gender marker are forming alternative and positive feminine identities.

Theoretical Perspectives of Motherhood

The theoretical framework for this study calls upon three theories that examine the material and emotional meanings associated with motherhood. Two of these theories, rational choice and social network theory, view the costs, rewards and support that the status of motherhood has on women as unique. The third, intersectionality, identifies the importance of considering race, class, and gender when assuming benefits of motherhood status is universally positive. Early studies extended the literature in identifying that the act of mothering is shaped by the historical context as well as the interlocking mechanisms of intersectionality (Collins 1994; Stack and Burton 1993), yet more recent theoretical discussions have been limited in their categorization that such issues as work and family are mutually exclusive activities for all women (Barnett and Hyde 2001; Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins 2004).

Rational Choice and Intersectionality Theory

Rational choice theories propose that the importance of motherhood focuses on the costs of having children as well as the perceived rewards (Becker 1991; Morgan and King 2001). Many scholars note that combining employment and motherhood has many costs for women (Crittenden 2001; England 2005); however, the majority of respondents in these studies are White and middle class. The lack of diversity among the sample does not allow inferences with regards to differences in stress related to work-family balance for women based on their race and ethnicity. Working motherhood is not a new phenomenon for African American mothers, therefore the stress associated with maneuvering job and household tasks may be more salient for White women. Potential rewards for motherhood from a rational choice perspective may vary as well. Support in old age, affection, social approval, social capital and marital stability may only be prized among women who are White and middle-class and thus inconsequential to minority women. Identifying costs of motherhood among Hispanic women is rarely discussed. Due to the

reverential view of children in the Hispanic family, it is crucial to gather culture specific information from mothers to assess the perceived cost of parenting.

Rational choice theories have been criticized, however, for underemphasizing the role of intersectionality and placing emphasis on individual choice. Intersectionality posits that race, gender, class, and sexuality are socially defined categories whose meanings are conditional upon historical context. Considering the intersectionality of race, social class, and gender status assist in framing the qualitative methodology of phenomenology as well as develop a theoretical link between the meaning of motherhood and perceived differences among African American and Hispanic women in varying social class backgrounds. Intersectionality theory identifies the multiple variable influences that such social characteristics have on individual experience and understanding across groups. Recently researchers have begun to integrate intersectionality theory to identify how minority women construct the notion of motherhood. For example, Scottham and Smalls (2009) found that caregivers emphasize different messages to their children based on their racial identity. Emphasizing the importance of education and providing their children with tools to function independently in an environment that is potentially hostile and discriminatory are potentially parenting practices that again, are unique to minority women.

Consideration of social class within intersectionality theory is an important and influential element to parenting. While the supportive and communal nature of the extended family could assist women in their roles as mothers, Hispanic and African American mothers continue to experience greater unemployment than White mothers (Hull, Kilbourne, Reece, and Husaini 2008). Reliance upon extended family members for financial support or child care may be a small aspect of support provided. Few studies operationalize specific types of assistance that extended families or friend kinships provide to single mothers. Identifying how the negative

effects of lower socioeconomic status are buffered by assistance from extended family among African American and Hispanic families could provide additional information regarding the rewards of such supportive networks.

In comparison to White mothers, African American and Hispanic women have higher rates of poverty, less education, and are less likely to have health insurance (Falcoín et al. 2001). Mirowsky and Ross (2005) have identified that groups with the highest levels of education are more likely to have higher paying jobs, develop a greater sense of personal control, and are subject to less economic hardship. Poverty and ability to meet the basic and secondary needs is a social factor that is of critical importance and explain variances in the meaning of motherhood. This is a phenomenon that is a result of the combined effects of dependent children, low levels of educational attainment and to a large extent, institutionalized discrimination. Examining the interconnection of race and social class among women who are not mothers is vital to understanding how different meanings of motherhood influences parental socialization, intergenerational relationships, and possibly fertility intentions. As kinship and extended family networks vary among women based on racial identity, identifying the influence of such systems across racial groups requires a close inspection of social network theory.

Social Network Theory

Social network theory has been utilized to identify strengths in kinship and social networks among minority groups and has been successful in explaining the importance of social ties, specifically among women (Berkman and Glass 2000; Small 2008). Assistance exchanged through social relationships, such as kinship ties or close communities, provides social support, an often important resource for minority women. The presence of support from friends or kinship ties may reduce the impact of financial and social stressors on mothers' emotional well-being.

Support systems act as self help groups that allow mothers to share on issues that may be affecting their overall well-being and access advice (Duncan 2005; Small 2008).

Being that perceived social support could assist with coping, it is important to note how social networks may vary among mothers with different racial backgrounds. Social ties are determined by the neighborhood in which the family live, and in the case of minority women who have a higher likelihood of living in inner cities, and prior research identifies that people in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods experience social isolation (Rankin and Quane 2000; Wilson 1987). There exists a complex pattern of family and social relationships among Hispanic, African American and White mothers. Strom, Storm, and Beckert (2008) reported that White mothers and women in general report greater conflict with parents, boyfriends and siblings compared to African American and Hispanic mothers. Another important finding is that the White mothers report close relationship with boyfriends and other friends more often than Hispanic mothers (Strom et al. 2008). Furthermore, White mothers are more able to disagree with close relative and friends without necessarily rupturing their relationship. Hispanics, on the other hand, report spending more time with families than friends. Moreover, Hispanic mothers reported fewer family problems than African American and White mothers (Strom et al. 2008). These data show the importance that Hispanics attach to the family as a support system. These findings highlight the importance of social network theory in further evaluating how women's social ties could also impact their meaning of motherhood.

Summary

Motherhood is a popular area in sociology research, yet generalizations about the meaning of motherhood fail to properly consider race. Despite considerable research on mothers, we have limited information on the meaning of motherhood for women without children,

particularly non-White women. McQuillan et al. (2008) show that Black and Hispanic women have lower importance of motherhood scores than White women, but they also have higher numbers of children and are more likely to be mothers. What does this suggest about the meaning of motherhood in women's lives that could differ by race ethnicity? This qualitative dissertation seeks to address the gap in the research literature by creating a rich picture of the meaning of motherhood among heterosexual African American and Hispanic women without children.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes qualitative research procedures and methodologies used to explore the meaning of motherhood for African American and Hispanic childfree women. I identify and define my research methodology, hermeneutic phenomenology, within the qualitative research paradigm and explain the appropriateness of the research design. Data collection strategies, including in-depth semi-structured interviews will also be discussed in this chapter. Finally, I will discuss the data analysis procedures used in this study as the strengths and limitations of the current methodology.

Research Design – Interviews

Creswell (2007) indicated that qualitative research is subjective and may be used to interpret or assign meaning to a phenomenon. He delineated five approaches to qualitative research: Narrative, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Ethnography, and Case Study. Of these qualitative approaches, phenomenology “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell 2007:57). Phenomenology, as defined by Moustakas (1994) includes the interrelationship between the circumstances of the shared phenomena and individuals, which constitutes an experience. Moustakas ascertains that, “In accordance with phenomenological principles, scientific investigation is valid when the knowledge sought is arrived at through descriptions that make possible an understanding about the meanings and essences of experience” (p. 84). This interrelationship constructs perspectives or perceptions of the lived experience. Findings from recent qualitative studies that have utilized phenomenology as a research lens, have produced detailed findings of the essence of lived

cultural, religious, and social phenomena (Dupuis et al. 2011; Lucero 2010; Norris, Allotey, and Barrett 2010; Pagis 2010). I chose a phenomenological approach because this will help me understand the meaning of motherhood from women's perspectives – my main goal. Two approaches in phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen 1990) and empirical or transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas 1994) employ the method of reflection in a logical, systematic, and coherent analysis of the participants' descriptions. Understanding the essence of their interpretation of the meaning of motherhood is well suited for this research agenda in accordance with Patton (1990) who identifies that the goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is to conduct a method of "inquiry [which] asks the question, 'What is the structure and essence of the experience of this phenomenon for these people?'"(p. 69).

Qualitative research is subjective and, as indicated by Merriam (1991), may be used to interpret or assign meaning to a phenomenon. A qualitative design is the most appropriate approach for answering questions in areas of study where the voice of the group has been unexplored (Cohen 2000). Merriam claims that six assumptions surround qualitative research and supports them in the following ways: First, the researcher focuses on process over outcomes or products. In this study, the central focus was to understand the meaning of motherhood by employing a qualitative research lens of phenomenology. Second, qualitative researchers are concerned with meaning, more particularly how people make sense of lived experiences, an assumption that directly addresses the primary research question by attempting to understand the meaning of motherhood for African American and Hispanic women who do not have children. Interviews were conducted with participants who met the selection criteria to gain an understanding of their meanings of motherhood among women who do not have children. Third, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Interviews and

information interpretations in this phenomenon were conducted and analyzed solely through myself as the primary researcher for this study. Fourth, qualitative research involves in-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews obtained for this study were primarily conducted in the form of face to face in-depth discussions with the participants in their home or work place when appropriate. Three of the interviews utilized for this dissertation were conducted by telephone and recorded digitally for later analysis. Fifth, qualitative research is descriptive. I transcribed the interviews verbatim and took field notes to observe non-verbal communication. Finally, qualitative research is inductive. Following the transcription process, data were analyzed and interpreted to form an understanding of the meaning of motherhood for African American and Hispanic women who do not have biological, adoptive, or step-children.

This study is grounded in elements of postpositivism and constructivism, two worldviews found in phenomenology (Creswell 2007). Postpositivism utilizes a series of logical steps, multiple perspectives of participants, and builds upon elements of reductionism. Moustakas (1994) describes that phenomenological studies involved asking participants two broad general questions involving what they have experienced in terms of the phenomenon and the context that surround participants' experiences related to the phenomenon. The general interview protocol utilized in the course of the interviews is provided in Appendix D. Interview questions utilized in this study were broad and relied upon the participants' lived experiences and interpretations to describe meaning, which is a cornerstone of constructivism.

Participant Selection

Criteria for participant selection was based upon four primary conditions: 1) all participants must be women who are over the age of 25; 2) women must self-identify as African American or Hispanic; 3) women in the study cannot have adopted, biological, or step-children;

and 4) be heterosexual. Age at first birth for women has risen by 3.6 years, from 21.4 years in 1970 to 25 years in 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). By stipulating that women in this study be 25 years or older, my intention was to seek women who share the experience of not being a mother in an age demographic where it may be assumed or presumed that they have the desire to enter motherhood as discussed in Chapter 2.

Recent publications regarding lesbian mothers and factors influencing decisions to parent or not have made efforts to recruit participants across class and racial categories (Lewin 2011; Mezey 2008) therefore this study will attempt to address the remaining gap with regards to African American and Hispanic heterosexual women. Polkinghorne (1989) recommended that researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. Given the multiple interviews in combination with observations, a large amount of data may be collected without need for a larger sample if the participants speak at length about their experiences (Morse 2000). I conducted 17 in-depth interviews. Of these participants, 8 women were African American, and 9 women self-identified as Hispanic.

Table 1. Sample Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	African American Women (n=8)	Hispanic Women (n=9)
Age		
25-30	*	2
31-40	4	6
41-50	4	1
Marital Status		
Single	6	3
Married	2	5
Divorced	*	1
Cohabiting	*	*
Parents Marital Status		
Single	3	3
Married	2	5
Divorced	2	1
Cohabiting	*	*
Income		
< \$25,000	1	1
\$26,000-\$39,000	3	4
\$40,000-\$59,000	2	2
\$60,000-\$79,000	*	1
> \$80,000	1	*
Unknown	1	1
Education		
Highschool	1	*
Some College	2	4
Bachelors Degree	2	3
Graduate Degree	2	2
Unknown	1	*

I recruited participants through the use of flyers requesting participation; I also utilized community contacts or “gate keepers” who provided access to women who met the above criteria (Appendix C). Flyers were posted throughout local churches and community centers which were located in predominately African American or Hispanic neighborhoods. Professional colleagues and peers were also provided with flyers in an effort to gain additional access to a wider network of childfree women. Cornelius (1982) recommends increasing representativeness by recruiting from a wide geographical area, therefore participants were not be limited by their location. Telephone interviews were conducted with participants who either lived in another region of the country, or were unable to meet face to face due to time constraints. Participants were required to make the initial contact with the researcher directly through e-mail or telephone. Women willing to be interviewed and who met the inclusion criteria then selected a mutually agreed upon meeting time and location that allowed for privacy and ability to allow for the conversation to be audio recorded. Attrition was not an issue as the interviews were conducted over a short period of time and none of the participants chose to withdraw at any point.

Protection of Human Subjects

I sent the proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the on-line IRB form submission via NUgrant at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and granted approval on April 15th, 2011 (Appendix A). All participants were provided with an informed consent to participate (Appendix B) and could have withdrawn from the study at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by changing names to pseudonyms. The pseudonyms were used in all written records. Only the researcher has access to the actual names and contact information of the participants. All records associated with the study will remain in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office for a period of 3 years after completion of the data analysis. Participants

received a monetary stipend of \$20.00 for participating in the study. Monetary support for this project was provided by the Alice Frost Howard Graduate Student Research Fellowship which was awarded to this project from the Department of Sociology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in May of 2011.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following approval of the study by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, flyers were posted and sent through e-mail to various community agencies, local church groups, and educational institutions. A purposeful sampling strategy was employed for this study resulting in the recruitment of 17 participants (n = 8 childfree African American women; n = 9 childfree Hispanic women). This study specifically utilizes the purposeful sampling strategy of comprehensive sampling as the entire sample was selected based upon a common set of criteria (Schumacher and McMillian 1993). Selection criteria included individuals who met all of the following requirements: 1) were 25 years of age or older; 2) identify as African American or Hispanic; 3) have no biological, adopted, foster, or step-children (previously or currently); and 4) identify as heterosexual. Interviews were conducted between April and August of 2011 at an agreed upon location where confidentiality could be ensured. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were approximately 30 to 60 minutes in length and were audio recorded. In-depth telephone interviews utilizing the same interview protocol were conducted for two of the participants due to their inability to participate in a face to face interview and verbal consents were obtained and audio recorded in these instances. Written consent for participation in the research study was obtained from participants. I took notes during the interviews noting body language, environmental details when appropriate, and other relevant

non-verbal aspects of the participants. Creswell (2007) recommends taking field notes to enhance the quality of data obtained.

Campbell and Wasco (2000) posit that to effectively facilitate the disclosure of information, the interviewer and participant should share similar identities and experiences. As the primary researcher and sole interviewer for this project, I am a middle-age White female with three children. It is important to acknowledge the differing characteristics in the interviewer and the participants as the effects of a researcher's identity on the participants in qualitative research has been a source of controversy among qualitative researchers. Riessman (1987), provided a compelling illustration of the importance of racial-ethnic dynamics in interview studies by suggesting that "[cultural] barriers to understanding are particularly consequential, for they reproduce within the scientific enterprise class and cultural divisions between women that feminists have tried so hard to diminish" (p. 173). Rosalind Edwards (1990) argues that understanding and acknowledging differences in racial-ethnic positioning will construct a more productive basis for engaging in the qualitative interview across racial ethnic groups. In fact, several sociological studies on the topic of motherhood that have become important in family sociology have been completed by researchers whose race was different than the participants in their study (Edin and Kafalas 2005; Hays 2004; Lareau 2003). Prior to beginning the interviews with the participants, I discussed my interest areas of motherhood and family and identified that my motivation for this study was to interview women whose unique perspectives as minorities are rarely highlighted in social science literature.

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed utilizing Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method. In the first step of Colaizzi's method of analysis, written transcriptions of each interview are performed. Transcriptions were reviewed initially to develop an overall sense of the data. It is

through this step that I more fully understand the participants' lived experiences. Extraction of significant statements or phrases from the interviews that are important and relevant to the phenomenon is the second step. Formulating meanings for each significant statement is the third step in data analysis. Moustakas (1994) suggests that it is in this step the participants experience the phenomenon becomes clear. Colaizzi (1978) observed that this is the most difficult step as the formulated meanings need to reflect the statements underlying information without distorting the original description. In the fourth and fifth steps, I grouped statements to formulate meanings into clusters that represent similar themes and created an exhaustive description of the phenomena. In the sixth step I condensed the exhaustive description into a concise statement that encompasses the essence, which in this study would be the meaning of motherhood for the women in the study. Finally, in the seventh step I validated the information by verifying with the participants if the concise statement encompasses the essence of their experience. I utilized two methods of validation; 1) I sent participants a copy of their transcription to make additions or corrections and 2) I sent each participant the "essence statement" to identify if it is a true understanding of their meaning of motherhood. Twelve of the 17 participants responded and no corrections to the transcripts were requested.

Extracting Significant Statements

Colaizzi's second step entails the extraction of significant statements or phrases from the participants' transcripts that are relevant to the phenomenon. Each statement that was extracted related to the meaning of motherhood. Examples of significant statements included:

- "I don't want to be my mom, my mom was working all the time and um she knows this, this is not a secret to her, she knows that I feel like I was cheated, uh, of a mother."

- “As the older sibling and cousin in a Latin family, you kind of take on the caregiving role. So if there were younger children around me, which their inevitably were because there were hordes and hordes of cousins, and they would be dropped off, dumped off, to be babysat by me, so yes.”
- “I’ve never been the type of person who is like “I have to have a baby”. I’ve never really understood that but I kind of get it now and I’m not sure if it is because of my age and I might be getting too old to have them (children).”
- “I am trying to keep my head above water with my jobs and taking some classes. And it will take me forever to be done, or at least it feels like it. I think it would be hard to have kids and have a dream or a goal of your own, especially as the mom because you have to help them with their goals.”
- “I think for most of my friends it’s (motherhood) wonderful, but a hell of a lot of work.”
- “There is this understanding that in my family, you should want to have children. I think that if I had kids, my friends would kind of be nodding their heads like yep, we knew it, we knew you really did want to have kids.”

From the 17 transcripts, I extracted 171 significant statements which I entered into an Excel database and placed on index cards.

Formulating Meanings

Once the significant statements were placed on the index cards, I read through the statements many times then wrote an identified meaning statement on the back of the original significant statement card. Moustakas (1994) identifies this process as the development of the structural description or “how” the phenomenon is experienced by the participants. Meaning

statements were then inserted back into the interview transcriptions to ensure that the original intent was not altered. Examples of significant statements and interpretive meanings include:

- Statement – “They always need to be entertained and it’s just a lot of pressure. If it was just changing diapers, sure I can do that, but to have the responsibility to teach them about how to be a nice girl, or a good boy, that is pressure.”

Interpretive Meaning – Raising children entails many exhaustive elements that are overwhelming

- Statement – “I think that the one thing that I worry about the most is what can I financially do for a child? Not just that there is enough food and diapers but can I contribute to their college education.”

Interpretive meaning – Parenting is more than meeting basic needs, its ensuring a prosperous future.

Colaizzi (1978) observed that formulating meanings to reflect the underlying information in each statement without distorting the original description is the most difficult step. Ensuring that each statement had the appropriate meaning was not rigorous but challenged my subjectivity in interpreting the participants meaning. Considering the high number of significant statements that I began to extract, I had to be very cautious that the comments I analyzed were actually about the studied phenomenon. Although some of the statements were interesting to me, they were not necessarily relevant to the participants understanding of motherhood. I had to read carefully to extract statements relevant to motherhood rather than comments of interest only to my experience as a mother.

Theme Clusters

Colaizzi's fourth step requires grouping each formulated meaning into clusters that represent similar themes. I analyzed the formulated meaning statements and assembled them into similar categories or themes. I then compared each of the six themes that emerged from the formulated meanings to the original transcripts for validation purposes. Theme clusters that emerged were: strong mother influence, familial caregiving, purposefully not ready, motherhood is hard work, rules, tradition, and "the way it should be", and understood judgment.

Table 2. Themes and Sample Significant Statements and Interpretive Meanings

Theme	Interpretive Meaning	Sample Significant Statement (Translated)
<i>"She did so much!": The Strong Mother Influence</i>	Mother was strict but perception was unconditional love.	"My mom was very busy and she was strict. I guess she had to be, it was really just her and all us kids. She didn't have the time for us to be runnin' around all crazy, we need to mind her. Yeah, she was tough as nails, but she loved us and we knew that."
<i>Familial Caregiving: A "glimpse into being a mom"</i>	Cared for many family members but never perceived this as babysitting.	"I never did babysat or those kinds of things but I really, definitely cared for family members like staying at home or taking them to school. I did that as an Auntie."
<i>Purposefully Not Ready</i>	Education and career are current goals and so are priority. Children currently not an option because they mothers should set them as priority.	"I am trying to keep my head above water with my jobs and taking some classes and it will take me forever to get done, or at least it feels like it. I think it would be hard to have kids and have a dream or goal of your own. You have to help them with their goals."
<i>Motherhood is Hard Work</i>	Tasks of motherhood are expansive and overwhelming.	"They always need to be entertained and it's just a lot of pressure. If it was just changing diapers, sure, I can do that. But to have the responsibility to teach them about how to be a nice girl or a good boy, that is pressure."
<i>Rules, Tradition, and "The Way it Should Be"</i>	Discipline and structure is very important. If I become a parent, they will be well-behaved.	"So I'm very traditional and um, structure, discipline is very important to me. And it's really funny to me, I mean I even think about that cause you know, I go out to the stores and stuff and I see how some children misbehave. I mean children misbehave but the things that are done they just cause attention to themselves and I just think my child would not be doing that."
<i>Understood Judgment</i>	Family would not pass judgment for not becoming a mother, but it is expected that society would judge.	"My mom wouldn't be surprised if I didn't (have kids) but I know that I would always get questions of when and why I didn't have any (children)."

Statement of the Essence

An essential aspect of phenomenological research is to reduce the culmination of significant statements and subsequent theme clusters into a statement of the essence of the experience. Chapter 5 addresses the sixth step in Colaizzi's method of analysis by condensing the significant statements, interpretive meaning, and theme clusters into a narrative description of the "essence" of the phenomenon that all of the participants have experienced.

Participant Verification

Colaizzi's seventh and final step in this method of data analysis entails providing the participants of this study with the statement of the essence in order to verify the information. Each participant was contacted via the e-mail address that was provided to the researcher and asked "What aspect of your experience have I omitted"? Comments from 12 of the 17 participants were obtained and following is a sample of the remarks received:

- "I think you summed this up nicely"
- "You seem to be right on track"
- "Looks good, I would agree"
- "This is perfect"
- "Couldn't have said it better myself"
- "My thoughts exactly"
- "I really identify with the first part, right on!"
- "Seems clear to me"

Role of the Researcher

Essential to phenomenological methodology is acknowledging the researcher's connection to the phenomenon that is being studied. Positioning oneself within qualitative

research allows for critical self-reflection and acknowledgement of the source of the researcher's interest and possible bias (Hatch 2002; Lincoln and Guba 1985). I position myself as a mother of three children who has struggled at times, to understand the complexities of having a career and desiring to become a mother. Research on the topic of motherhood has become a popular niche in sociology and yet efforts to quantify the experiences of motherhood or the meaning with which women ascribe to becoming mothers themselves seem to lack depth. As a White, middle class woman I see a gap in the literature with regards to minority women, specifically women who are childfree. In questioning what motivates women to become mothers and the meaning that is placed upon motherhood, I strongly feel that such a dialog cannot exist if not all women are a part of the discussion. Having been privy to areas of society where many mothers congregate (preschool functions, play dates, and birthday parties), I can attest that women do not openly or honestly share their meaning of what motherhood represents. Additionally, women who are childfree are considered ignorant of what motherhood entails, yet judged should they decide to not become a mother. This juxtaposition is not only fascinating to me, but has driven my desire to interview childfree minority women and include them on all levels of the conversation.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This dissertation focuses on 17 participants, all of whom are minority heterosexual women and have no children. Participants in this study were not known to each other or connected to each other in any way, yet shared similar experiences as they aged into adulthood as childfree women. Through the in-depth interviews with these women, I was able to identify six theme clusters that emerged from the participants associated meanings. Significant statements and formulated meanings can be found in Appendix E

Theme One: "She did so much!": The Strong Mother Influence

Participants had varied family of origin experiences with regards to parental marital status. Although three of the participants were raised by women who were not their biological mothers, all 17 participants identified having a mother figure in their lives that was influential in their upbringing. During my time with the participants I heard numerous descriptions of "hardworking" biological or other mother figures. Renee reflected on the close relationship that she felt she had with her mother stating that "she (mother) has a very strong personality and now I think I am a strong personality." Brenda believed her mother was "a very, extremely strong woman" and admitted that although she was a "hard worker, one of the things I now know from my family values is the, there's not the touchy feely but it has all shown in other ways." Mary, a 29 year old college student explained a similar type of relationship that she had with her own mother stating,

My mom was very busy and she was strict, whoa was she strict. I guess she had to be, it was really just her and all us kids. She didn't have the time for us to be

runnin' around all crazy, we need to mind her. Yeah, she was tough as nails, but she loved us and we knew that.

Raised by a mother who she identified as a "typical preacher's wife" Robin explained that her mother was "very much passionate with her relationship with God, so she felt like it was important for her to be the kind of wife and mother that He wanted her to be, that was outlined in the Bible." Robin was the only participant who, although acknowledged that her family was "very close" and that her mother had "many roles" and "demands", described her stay at home mother as "submissive".

Throughout the interviews as questions relating to perceptions of motherhood arose, many of the women in the study would frequently acknowledge how it appeared their own mothers struggled with the demands of work and family. Specific details related to the relationship that the women felt they had with their mothers varied but, was often influenced by their mother's employment. A majority of the women in this study were raised by women who were employed outside of the home. Recalling that their mothers "worked a lot" or "all the time" resonated with many of the women. Shelli, a 40 year old African American woman became quite emotional during our discussion of her relationship with her mother admitting that "I think she loved her children, but she also wanted more for us too."

During my interview with Jessica, a 37 year old Hispanic woman with nine siblings, she seemed bewildered by all the "tasks" her mother did when she was a child.

She did so much! I feel tired thinking of all she did and it wasn't just because she had 10 of us to watch over. She did odd jobs to help with the bills and cooked for my grandparents who were diabetic, she never sat down. I couldn't do that. I

don't want to do that. I mean, I am glad she did because I watched that and saw how it all got done, but at the same time, I knew I didn't want to have to do it all.

Hortensia was one of the three women in this study that were born outside of the country but moved to the United States to live with an Aunt whom she has called "mom" since the age of

13. She described the arrangement by saying:

My mother was a working woman, she was just really busy and had a really hard time with work schedules and traveling to take care of a child, so I was raised by my mother's oldest sister. She was my aunt but I call her mom, I've always called her mother.

Similar to Hortensia, Anna was raised outside of the United States yet later relocated for school and identifies with two families in her life; a host family in the United States that she remains very connected to and her biological family. Although Hortensia acknowledged that her mother's employment outside the home had obvious impacts on her upbringing, Anna remarked that her relationship with her biological mother was negatively impacted by her mother's career.

I don't want to be my mom, my mom was working all the time and um, she knows this. This is not a secret to her, she know that I feel like I was cheated uh, of a mother. When she was there, she was the ideal mom. She didn't have time that often. I think I am bitter about my teenage years because even if she had time, she would bring work home. Not saying that she was horrible as a mom, but I don't want to be my mom. I made a decision not to go to law school because one day I am going to have children and I want to be there for them. I want to be there for my children.

Echoing the desire to not “want to be my mom”, Wanda, an African American woman raised by a single mother discussed her own desires to be a mother but also acknowledged how her career impacts her decision.

I wanna have kids some day and I want to be there for them. I wanna be, um available knowing that I still have everything against me because I work hard and I don't work normal hours and my biggest fear is to be a bad mom. Not saying my mom was bad, but I don't want to be my mom. I want to be there for my children.

Alecia, a 33 year old Hispanic women somberly explained that she “regrets how much she (her mother) had to work.” As our conversation regarding the ideal version of motherhood began, Alecia explained that her mother “is the perfect version of an ideal mom” but added that “she was and still seems tired from having to do everything that a mom does.” Later in our interview, Alecia admitted that “watching her, all she did, makes it seem like being a mom now would be the hardest job in the world.”

To summarize, the participants in this study all had mother figures in their lives that were not only pivotal in providing them with an initial image of motherhood, but also shaped the connotation of what the motherhood role entails.

Theme Two: Familial Caregiving: A “glimpse into being a mom”

One of my primary research questions was aimed at identifying the types of experiences that these women had caring for children. Although all of the women have chosen to not have children of their own at this point in their lives, a majority of the participants had cared for children, primarily within their own families. Newlywed Serena, a 31 year old Hispanic professional laughed as she described her experiences in caring for children.

As the older sibling and cousin in a Latin family, you kind of take on the caregiving role. So if there were younger children around me, which their inevitably were because there were hordes and hordes of cousins, and they would be dropped off, dumped off, to be babysat by me, so yes, I would say I have a lot of experience in taking care of children!

Mary identified a similar history in caring for children within the Hispanic community that she was raised in stating:

You know we, our families have a lot of kids and in South O [Omaha] you all take care of one another. I remember thinking of Church almost like a daycare that I worked at. I helped with kids there, when I went home, and with the neighbor kids too. Everywhere I went when I was young, yeah there were a lot of kids.

Kinship ties and family connections to the “neighborhood” provided these women with ample opportunities for caregiving. While some of the caregiving being done by the women in this study could be considered “babysitting”, few mentioned receiving any payment for their work. Alecia notes that although she always felt that she came from a “big family” in reality she only had one sister. Extended family members and neighborhood friends were “always around.” At one point Alecia recalled sharing a bedroom with a girl that was the “daughter of my mom’s friend who was having some kind of trouble, so she just stayed with us for a couple of months.” Alecia, being the older of the two girls commented that she was the one who would “make sure she got to school and helped with homework.” When asked if this seems peculiar to her now looking back on this situation, Jessica’s only response was “not really, I was fine with it.”

Caring for children that were not blood relatives was a common theme among the participants of this study. Penny, a 30 year old Hispanic woman recounted being very involved with caring for children when she was young.

Mostly I watched neighbor kids or my mom's friends who needed someone to help out with their kids either after school got out or if they had to go somewhere and didn't want to take their kids too. I don't remember making money for it though, but I did do a lot of that.

Renee and her husband have decided to not have children but explain that "when my siblings began having children we would help with babysitting for them, when they come over we take them for the entire weekend." Others participated in caregiving for their families but more out of necessity than convenience for their immediate family. Talia explained that because her mother "worked two jobs" she was "in charge of everyone at home" when she was old enough. Nicole echoed this sentiment and reflected that she "was raised in a house full of kids." She adds that because she was the "only girl" she "helped with the smaller one [children] a lot." Thinking back to her experiences in caring for children and being the youngest sibling of five, Leigh stated, "I never did babysat or those kind of things but I really, definitely cared for family members like staying at home or taking them to school. I did that as an Auntie."

Throughout our interview, Brenda, a college professor in her 40's discussed the role she had in her niece's lives. Although she described her sister as being a capable parent, her involvement with her nieces extended beyond her role as their "Aunt".

Those are like my girls. My nieces have been my closest role to motherhood. My mom and myself helped my sister. And so even the youngest (niece); people

thought she was my daughter. Even to this day she calls me mom, one of her mom's that kind of thing.

For Brenda, being involved extensively in the lives of her two nieces was significant enough that she felt as though she had experienced many similar issues that women do when they become a mother. When asked "how important is having children", Brenda commented that caring for her nieces throughout their lives has altered her own decision to have children.

So, how important is it for me to have children? I think I am still struggling with that answers. I definitely know that the fact I have my nieces is playing a part, a big part in my decision. Because if they weren't I would feel a little different, I think I would want my own kids more.

Throughout my interviews, one women's role in the life of her nephew seemed to have a considerable influence on her connotation of motherhood. After her sister in-law died from a car accident when her nephew was just 5 years old, Mary felt as though she taken on many of the responsibilities that a mother has. She noted that her relationship with her nephew has altered her decision to become a parent.

So my nephew was 5 years old when that happened and from that moment on, my mother and I basically helped raise my nephew. So he, uh, he went through a really rough time and got into alcohol and that sort of thing. So between my mom and I, we were basically the only ones who were there for him during that time.

That has been my "glimpse into being a mom". It's not that I don't love my nephew but it was hard for awhile. That, trying to fill that role was hard, there is so much more to do then you would ever realize.

Actively participating in caregiving within the family provided some of the women with a glimpse into motherhood that allowed them to see the positives of not having children of their own. Wanda, a 40 year old African American receptionist spoke very frankly about the caregiving assistance she gave to her family,

I think I wasted a lot of time caring of other people when I was young. I like having time to go and do whatever I want now. When my sisters are complaining about never having time because of all of the things they have going on, I know that I am on the right track. I am too selfish and I know if I ever feel like having kids around, there are plenty of houses I can visit and when it gets a little too crazy, I can go home to my nice, quiet house.

Nicole, who recently divorced from her husband of 5 years, explained that although she and her ex-husband decided early on to not have children, his feelings changed as his brothers began to start families:

I couldn't believe that he wanted children just because his brothers were having them. I was so completely different than that. Being around cousins and nephews, sisters and neighbors never made me feel like "oh I want this, I would love a big family". I wanted to travel, go places and do things that my friends and my sisters couldn't do because they had big families. I thought we both wanted that.

During our interview, Nicole remained confident in her decision to not have children yet noted that this was not the primary cause of her recent divorce.

Theme Three: Purposefully Not Ready

Women within this study varied in their desire to have children. One consistent theme among all of the participants that emerged was that their decision not to have children up to this

point has been intentional. For Nicole, “the thought of being pregnant before I was ready, had things in line, scared me to death.” Leigh, a 40 year old African American woman identified that she put a “great deal of thought” into family and career planning noting,

I’m purposefully not ready, not trying, not wanting kids right now. There are things I want to do, get done. I think it is important to have kids but I know there are things that I have to get done first. I think it is so much more than providing food and shelter. I want to be able to provide insurance and education for my children too.

Wanda echoed the importance of not having children without “putting a lot of preparation into it.” She adds:

I think that the one thing I worry about the most is what can I financially do for a child? Not just that there is enough food and diapers but can I contribute to their college education. Having a good, educated mom is important. But to what degree that to could vary. But I don’t think that can bring better qualities as a parent. I think that opens up opportunities and even finances for a household which I think are important.

Jennifer described her desire to have children “at some point” but feeling that “it is very important for me to get prepared for that, educate myself first.” Shelli identifies that the importance of having children “has changed tremendously” for her as she became older. She admits that becoming a mother was “not a priority” for her, however, “now that I am settled in, I am in a place with my job where I do not have to be on the road as much so I am more open to the idea of having a kid.” For Mary, she does not feel that having children will outweigh the rewards that she will receive once she completes her bachelor’s degree. Mary concluded that she

“might have a bit better of a job than my mom did, or at least I am going to, but why would I want to give that up to have babies.”

Many of the women were motivated to intentionally not have children due their desire to pursue their own educational or career goals. Renee, an African American lawyer now in her early 40's recalled that during periods of time when her friends and family were having children, she was busy with her educational pursuits.

For myself, I guess I don't rate the importance of having children very high. I would say in college and throughout my 20's, what is probably my prime child-bearing years, I was in the classroom in one way or another. I went from my bachelors to masters to my law degree and once I got into my 30's I was focused more on career and less on motherhood.

Penny, a non-traditional college student, is driven to complete her bachelor's degree while working a full-time job. She illustrates that her current goals are her priority.

I am trying to keep my head above water with my jobs and taking some classes and it will take me forever to get done, or at least it feels like it. I think it would be hard to have kids and have a dream or goal of your own. You have to help them with their goals.

All of the women that were interviewed in this study commented that they had considered becoming a mother at some point. While few quickly dismissed the idea of having children, Anna, a graduate student born in Columbia admitted that “deciding when to have children” was “overwhelming” for her. Previously turning away from law school due to the time constraints that it would put on her “future family”, Anna is in the midst of her PhD studies and recently

married. She admits that she is considering having children but also identifies some of her reservations:

It makes me nervous and very scared too. I will have to become a responsible human being because I can't have a bottle of wine even if I want to. I have to be responsible, like if something happens to this kid, I have to drive it to the hospital and you have to be the mother. I don't have to think of those things now, I do whatever I want now. I am fearful of paying for childcare and I know that is expensive, so how are we going to do all this?

Desiring to continue in her career Hortensia has considered how she would manage both work and motherhood. She explained that she feels that there “is a traditional role (with motherhood) but I also have some changes to that role because I am traditional in raising children however I am a career woman so that changes things.” Each of the women interviewed for this study provided justification for their desire to delay or forgo becoming a mother. Many of the women had similar thoughts about the “careful thought that should be put into becoming a mom.” Fully aware of what she feels are the “priorities” for any woman who wants to be a mother, Mary commented:

I hate to see moms that take their kids to bars or are never around for their kids. I know some girls in my neighborhood that have kids, but they are not mothers. They don't make their kids a priority and I think you have to be unselfish to be a good mom.

Brenda, a nursing instructor echoed the notion of pursuing her goals before considering having children. During our interview Brenda seemed to struggle with finding time to have

children. As her educational aspirations were achieved, she identified that there were always other “tasks” that took precedence over having children.

Because I was focused with my career, when I got done with my bachelor’s degree, and I had all these other tasks I wanted to do, I think I was already in my thirties. I would get something completed then say “ok, what’s my next task” and before I knew it, it was like several years have passed. Time goes really fast.

Another important aspect noted by a few of the women in this study relating to their intentional delay of motherhood, derived from what was identified as “lacking the desire” or not having “that biological need” to have children. Shelli described a “fleeting moment” when she had considered having children at some point in her life, but stated that she “never had that strong burning desire telling me that this is the right time.”

Hortensia admitted that although she and her spouse had discussed the possibility of starting a family and many of her friends are having children, she does not have the same “urge”.

She explains:

I have always wondered what makes women tick, to want to have a child. I’ve heard women say “Oh my biological clock is ticking”. Its “ticking” so I know I am supposed to have this child? I have never felt that. I have never had this desire or sat down and thought. I mean sometimes when I see a women with a child in a stroller and I think that’s totally adorable and its cute when I see parents, both a mom and a dad at a park somewhere or at a public function. I just think how sweet, wouldn’t that be nice. You know I can kind of picture myself there but I never sit down and consciously think about it.

Serena similarly questioned her lack of desire in becoming a mother. Although she discussed during the interview that her recent marriage has sparked a great deal of discussion regarding having children, she noted:

I've never been the type of person who is like "I have to have a baby". I've never really understood that but I kind of get it now and I'm not sure if it is because of my age and I might be getting to old to have them? I'm not saying I'm never going to have kids, I just don't feel that thing that I think you feel when you want to have a kid.

Talia's decision to delay motherhood, perhaps indefinitely, is a decision that "seems more natural" to her than actually becoming a mother. She explains:

I guess I don't see myself as being as maternal as say, my sister is. So, I mean she is an awesome mom and there are things she does that there is no way I could do. I would like to think that I am smart enough to know that I don't want or need any of that going on in my life.

Participants in this study all identify that their choice to delay having children or forgo motherhood entirely is intentional noting the importance of education or career with a few of the women lacking the desire to become mothers entirely.

Theme Four: Motherhood is Hard Work

Of the four sub-questions relevant to this study, participants were asked to identify qualities that would be attributed to an "ideal" mother. The fourth theme emerged from the answers and perceptions provided by all of the women who were interviewed regarding their perception of motherhood and "ideal" mothering. Many of the women interviewed discussed the many "roles and tasks" that women perform as mothers. Serena mentioned that she becomes

“exhausted at the thought” of becoming a mother expressing that she believed “for most of my friends it’s wonderful, but a hell of a lot of work. Hard work, like I don’t know how many women do it.”

For some of the women interviewed, motherhood was described as a “balancing act” and needing to “juggle” many of aspects at once. Shelli, a single African American woman identified that she feels that “a lot of characteristics is that the mother is trying to be both the mother and the father” and “proactive” in their children’s lives. She goes on to say that “we don’t see couples in my community raising children, we see women and that’s a lot of pressure.” Anna similarly agreed that she believes that “mothers are struggling, it is the struggle to find balance.” During our interview, Anna seemed to waiver on her own desires to have children as she discusses what she sees are other tasks involved in mothering:

They always need to be entertained and it’s just a lot of pressure. If it was just changing diapers, sure I can do that, but to have the responsibility to teach them about how to be a nice girl, or a good boy, that is pressure.

During our interview Mary discussed the realities of motherhood that she saw from observing her friends and other women in her neighborhood.

I guess that is why I am worried, so many girls that I went to school with always felt like they could do both, have kids and work or go to school, and they dropped out, got welfare. They couldn’t do both and I don’t know why they ever thought they could. A lot of things I see that mothers are busier now. I don’t think they get to spend as much time with their children as they once did. I think that a lot of time they are not raising the kids like they did in the past. It’s a lot of daycare and school and that type of thing.

Many of the women interviewed expressed the concern they had with the implications of becoming a mother in their “already crazy busy life.” As a single African American woman, Wanda discussed that she was “quite happy with life the way it is” without children. Identifying herself as successful in her career she reflected back on a time when women did not primarily work outside the home and were “full-time moms.”

But no one can do that now. How could anyone be perfect when you don’t have the time to do one thing well? I guess that really is why I don’t have kids, or at least yet.

Hortensia and her spouse have considered having children however she expressed doubt about becoming a mother stating “I’ve told him (spouse) that I don’t think I can be everything to one person or people, like kids. It scares me.” Through observing her sister, Talia, a African American woman in her 40’s expressed her doubt that she would want to take on the motherhood role. She explains that she believes that being a mother represents the following:

Drop or stop anything or everything to be with their child when needed. Providing the time and the energy and the effort to care for them and watch them learn. Its 24/7 all the time, I can’t imagine. Like even watching my sister do the little things like feeding them, bathing them, getting them ready for supper, getting them ready for bed, homework, like all of those activities that take so much effort but are just activities of daily living. I think people overlook those things. You know she gives up everything to care for those kids and my sister works the night shift and she works on 4 hours of sleep to make sure that her kids have everything they need to be sure that they are taken care of.

Brenda's experience in caring for her nieces also introduced her to the "reality of what you have to do as a mom." Brenda discussed that her notion of "motherhood has changed" and adds:

I think balance, I think balance is really overall the issue, I mean time goes into balance. I think, I remember having the girls (nieces) for a couple of weeks and taking them to school, and then going to the school to pick them up. My schedule was my job and then after school program and make sure you get them by the time so you can pick them up and then making sure you get the normal motherhood issues that people I mean that was difficult. Then you get home and then make sure they get time for homework and make sure they get to bed and you know all that... that was the hardest time, really hard work.

Consistently, participants expressed the feeling that motherhood is complex and overwhelming as illustrated in the following statement: "whether I want children someday or don't want them what I know for sure is that I better be ready. It's a 24/7 job that I've seen not be taken seriously because you have to do so much, that is scary to me and I've never thought that raising a child is an easy thing to do, ever." Jessica, a married Hispanic woman discussed her consideration of raising children of mixed race in the United States and the added complexity that would have on her role as a mom:

And don't think that we (participant and spouse) haven't discussed how difficult it will be to still raise children who have two parents who are ethnically diverse, especially here (in the Midwest). I know that people think it is getting better for couples and their children but I was raised with one very strong set of beliefs, very Catholic, very traditional. My husband and his family have a culture entirely

separate from mine and I want to respect that. And that's really it, it falls to the mom to make sure that happens doesn't it? That the children are well rounded and I guess I've always seen that as the mom's job. That freaks me out a little.

Anna discussed similar concerns. Recently married, Anna was born in Columbia and discusses the added complexity of raising children with her spouse David, a Midwestern white male.

I am fearful about the double culture situation, how will I raise my kids as a minority in this country because I grew up in Columbia so I did not feel like a minority ever, but then I am here and I am. And so how am I going to keep this, my kids identity so when people talk about being Latino, yes, I have grown to be a Latino proud to be Latina, proud to be a role model to a bunch of people but um, I, their dad will be white, is white, so why can't they just claim their whiteness as much as their Latina, it is not going to be their choice and it sucks to think about that.

Although Jennifer has been raised in the Midwest for the majority of her life, she explained how the two cultures have differing views on preparing for motherhood. She explains:

When I go home to Mexico they have a different view then I do now. Just the way that, culturally, I live as an American now so I am going to read about becoming or being a mom and that isn't done where I am from. You don't read about how to be a mom, you just know. I don't know so I am going to read.

Jennifer's acknowledgement that motherhood is not "second nature" to her may illustrate how her acculturation into the United States has changed how she will prepare to become a

mother. Regardless of the intent to become a mother themselves, women in this study perceived motherhood as “difficult” and “demanding”.

Theme Five: Rules, Traditions and “The way it should be”

Of the themes that emerged throughout the data collection process, the collective notion of the importance of “tradition” and that there are not enough “strict moms” or as Serena described “tiger moms” to properly discipline children was a surprising finding. A few of the women that were interviewed also discussed the importance of raising a child in a nuclear family which for them translated into a two parent household. Meaning statements within this theme cluster related to the insights that the women in this study had regarding how children should be parented. Questions provided to the participants focused on their perceptions of motherhood and the resounding discussion that emerged from all of the women in this study were at one point centered on the need for mothers to be “tougher” on their children. Serena explained:

I’m very concerned with things like manners and being around his (spouse) side of the family. There is a lot of “well, kids will be kids”, but I think there should be expectations for children. I’m talking about being more of a tiger mom, you know like respecting the children you are raising and asking for their opinion to a point. But it is an opinion. Like, I know you want to eat chicken nuggets and tator tots everyday but too damn bad, you have to eat a vegetable.

A desire to raise “nice” or “good” children was emphasized by many of the women in this study. One participant stated “I think that is more important to not just want to raise a kid, but that in the end you genuinely like the kid that you have raised.” Alecia explained that she does “not have a preconceived notion” that raising children of her own will be “fun and wonderful all the time.” She stated that “for the first 6 years of having a child she is planning on

being “really tough, strict, and protective.” Hortensia had very similar convictions regarding how she would want to parent.

So I’m very traditional and um, structure discipline is very important to me. And it’s really funny to me, I mean I even think about that cause you know I go out to the stores and stuff and I see how some children misbehave. I mean children misbehave but some of the things that are done they just cause attention to themselves and I just think my child would not be doing that.

Penny’s hesitation with becoming a parent seemed to center on her fear of having “unruly kids”. Unsure that she will ever desire to become a mother she identified an ideal mother as “really strict, like take no prisoners strict.” When asked to expand on this though she identified:

For me, it's been children are too playful in a way. I mean sometimes, the hardest part for me was when I needed them to sit still. Like “I need to bathe you or we need to eat, let’s sit and eat”. That for me was really difficult and like I never really understood you know, “why are you acting this way, you are supposed to eat, you are supposed to bathe, why are you acting this way?” We need to do this one thing now and that for me was extremely challenging when I would babysit or taking care of someone’s child. How do you control a child?

For a few of the women in this study that have chosen to forgo motherhood entirely, they too reflected upon the importance of being a mother in a “traditional family” which translated into a nuclear family consisting of two parents. Brenda identified that time was not the only factor in deciding to not have children. Once considering different fertility options, Brenda explained that she has placed a lot of thought into what other “task” she needed to complete

before having a child. Raised by a single mother, Brenda's desire to have children has been influenced by her desire to marry and be a co-parent.

You know I don't think I even thought about it (having children) for years and years. I think it's just recently that I am thinking about it. I think I definitely thought it would just happen. Things would just fall into place that also goes with the husband. Of course that's what I wanted, a husband in the family so since I didn't have a husband and I didn't feel that I needed to have that decision made. But then over the past ten years, I would say I've played around with the thought of um, would I want to have a child on my own and seeking and getting um, you know what the options are, seeing what all the different things are. I decided I don't want to do it (having children) without a husband that was really a requirement for me.

Robin, a single African American woman who was raised in a two parent household discussed her own decision regarding motherhood:

I actually, in my thirties, thought about adopting. Early thirties. And it was something I spent quite a bit of time praying through. I just really felt that I would not feel right about taking a child's opportunity to be raised by two parents. And I know there are plenty of single parent homes and that those parents did a great job with their children. It just, I think that I felt at the time that I would feel like I was depriving them of something if I had adopted them. An opportunity for two parents to be involved with raising a child.

In conclusion, the women in this study have not only envisioned motherhood for themselves but the manner in which they would raise their children. Although the women in this

study varied in marital status, none identified a desire to parent alone. Creating a family with a co-parent, grounded in “rules” and “discipline” were stated as important.

Theme Six: Understood Judgment

Women in this study varied in age however all identified that they have and will be “judged” for not becoming a mother. Few of the women expressed frustration about this notion however, explaining that they “understood” why they are questioned about their choice to delay or forgo becoming a mother. When asked if she felt she has or would be judged for not becoming a mother, Anna stated “for not becoming a mother, people will judge me, heck I judge me for not becoming a mother.” Over the age of 30 and having been raised in a very traditional Hispanic family, Serena adds:

I am already practically geriatric by Mexican standards and um by really everyone’s standards by this point, all of my friends are married and having children. There is this understanding in my family, you should want to want to have children. I think that if I had kids my friends would kind of be nodding their heads like yep, we knew it, we knew you really did want kids.

Jennifer similarly explains that since she has been married for nearly 4 years “in my Hispanic community the first question is “are you pregnant now”. It’s like “not yet” and then of course I get “well, when then?” It’s more funny than anything else.” A sense of familiarity came over Leigh when asked about being judged by family, friends or her community. She identified that she “understands why they judge me, I’m getting old for children in their mind”. She adds:

I think there is and always has been this judgment on women who do not become mothers. There has been like this association between like, there must be

something wrong with you if you don't want to have kids. Like there is some sort of motherhood gene, motherhood clock that you are not hearing ticking. That you are somehow selfish or self-involved or too career oriented. I think they think that women are supposed to be moms and if they are not there is something wrong with them. Men don't get that.

Jennifer admitted her frustration that her husband does not receive the same level of judgment for not yet having a child. She feels she understands why the double standard exists, stating:

I get questions about having kids but he (spouse) doesn't, that is so annoying but I get it. It's almost "impressive" if men go through life and don't have kids. I know that sometimes I question why old ladies never had kids either.

As the youngest participant in this study, 27 year old Mary has already had discussions with her mother regarding her family planning future.

When I did talk to my mom more about it, you know back then when I was younger things seemed so traditional and she still will ask "when you have children, will you stay home and not work as much?" So she thinks of it as she thinks I should be staying home to raise a family and I mean nowadays I see women being very successful and raising families and still being able to work and have families. Women are just a little more free to work and carry on normal life and still be "mother". I know she asks because my friends have 2 or 3 kids by now, but I'm not ready.

Judgment regarding their childfree status was experienced outside of the women's families. In discussing her family, Talia remarked that instead of judgment, she feels that her

siblings “are jealous because we go on trips. My husband and I travel and we kind of do whatever we want.” Talia adds that she and her husband “have that discretionary income that is not going towards kids’ college fund or activities.” Talia’s humor turns to frustration when asked if her co-workers would or have judged her for not having children.

Yes absolutely! I think for not becoming a mother, um I would say particularly in my employment, I am judged. I think I am judged differently now. It really does feel like you are penalized for not having children. Um, because the people who have children have the ability to have time off whenever they need it. “My kid is sick or my kid is getting out of school early or “my kid is doing this or that”. It seems to me like there is just so much emphasis put upon it. This very family focused kind of environment. I know I get certain assignments because I will be here and I don’t have kids that pull me away.

Alecia identified that her co-workers have “stopped asking” her when she and her husband are going to have children. Her concern is not that she is being judged by her coworkers but rather that “they seem to now leave me out of conversations about their children, their families’ altogether.” When asked if she was upset by this, she explains:

I kind of get it, I don’t have children so how would I know or why would I care about why the 6 year old cries on his way to school or the baby can’t sleep at night. I do have brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews though. It’s not like I can’t relate. But I am not angry because if I had children and I had a concern or wanted advice I would go to the other parents in the office, not the girl with no kids, so I get it.

Brenda shows little concern as well stating “you know sometimes I don’t even know how to answer about not having kids because you know it’s like my circumstances, I don’t have a husband.” Although Brenda's frustration with the frequent questions she receives from family and friends regarding her motherhood status is clear, similar to the other women in this study, she acknowledges that her childfree status is contentious.

Chapter 5

DISCOVERING THE ESSENCE

The purpose of this study was to understand the meaning of motherhood among African American and Hispanic women in the United States who are not mothers. Identifying the overarching common experiences of the participants within a phenomenological study is known as uncovering the “essence” of the phenomenon being explored (Creswell 2007). In this chapter I will provide the essence statement of the meaning of motherhood for the African American and Hispanic childfree women who participated in this study. Additionally, consideration of the theoretical frameworks that informed this study will be discussed in relation to the findings.

The Essence Statement

All of the women in this study were guided in the meaning of motherhood through the relationship that they had with their own mothers or a strong mother figure that was identified as “mother”. A majority of the women were raised by mothers who were employed outside of the home. Noting their mothers were “hardworking”, the women also described that they witnessed their mothers “struggling” to balance the demands and roles they had. By observing their own mothers, the women in this study were made aware of the many tasks they felt were apart of motherhood. Women in this study also noted not only having caregiving experience, but predominately caring for members of their family, extended family, or kinship networks. Familial caregiving emerged as a strong contributor to understanding the functions involved in caring for children. Although none of the women interviewed had children of their own, a majority had acknowledged that they had considerable experience in caring for children, acknowledging that this “glimpse into motherhood” influenced their connotation of motherhood.

Such experience provided a framework for their interpretation which emerged in Theme Four, “Motherhood is Hard Work”. Participants in this study acknowledged that the perceived demands of becoming a mother did influence their decision to not have children up to this point. Many spoke of their hesitation to have children because of the amount of work that is involved in caring for children. All perceived that they would have to re-prioritize many aspects of their current life to become a mother, indicating that children would need to become the priority. A rearrangement of their current lifestyle to place a child as the first priority was a source of concern for the women in this study. Often citing educational or career pursuits as their current priority, women in this study had intentionally chosen to delay or forgo becoming a mother. Although all felt that they have been “judged” by family, friends, or co-workers for not becoming a mother, the women in this study stated that they “were not surprised” by that and even understood why others would pass judgment on them for not becoming a mother.

Finally, the women interviewed for this dissertation had strong opinions regarding the need for mothers to be “strict” and raise well behaved children. Creating a structured environment with an emphasis on “tradition” and “discipline” was an important component of motherhood for the participants. While nearly half of the participants were raised in single parent homes, none of the women in this study desired to parent a child alone. The essence of the meaning of motherhood is defined by the women in this study as important, virtuous, and difficult.

Theoretical Interpretation

As identified in Chapter One, the theoretical perspectives of rational choice, intersectionality, and social network theories have been chosen to inform the findings of this study. According to rational choice theory, individuals are motivated by self interest and in turn

make decisions based upon a rational evaluation of the rewards and costs associated with behavioral choices (White and Klein 2008). Grossbard (2005) utilized the rational choice theory to support her findings that changing attitudes about marriage and family are influenced by women's employment status and education. She asserted that according to rational choice theory, humans are purposive and goal oriented, therefore women who have educational or employment aspirations are more likely to prioritize those goals over having children due to the economic and social benefits. Similarly Park (2005) employed rational choice theory in arguing that men and women rejected parenthood because of its perceived costs. Significant statements extracted from the interviews for this study identify that although none of the participants of this study were mothers, all had weighed the rewards and costs of motherhood.

Consistent with the notion that the actor is actively involved in the decision making process, Theme Three, "Purposefully Not Ready", depicts the careful thought and consideration that women in this study took into account in delaying or forgoing motherhood. As one participant acknowledged putting a "great deal of thought" into her career and family planning, another described that she and her spouse would not have children without "a lot of preparation." Potential rewards and costs of motherhood were also discussed by the participants and emerged in meaning statements for Themes One, Two, Four, and Five. Rewards refer to a perceived benefit to one's interest. Many of the women in this study described that obtaining educational and career goals were immediate rewards that were prioritized over motherhood. For those who desired to have children in the future, obtaining "financial security" prior to becoming a mother was deemed important. Similarly Theme Five, "Rules, Tradition, and "The Way it Should Be" illustrated that a few of the women in this study strongly desire to become mothers, however are willing to forgo motherhood because of the importance that they place upon raising children in a

"traditional" two parent home. Theme Four, "Motherhood is Hard Work" expressed the perceived costs of motherhood conveyed by the participants. Anna's observation that "mothers are struggling" and fulfilling the many duties of raising children is "pressure" were perceived "costs" involved with motherhood.

Social network theory has become a popular framework in recent motherhood studies (Duncan 2005; Mikelson and Demmings 2009; Small 2009). Kinship and social networks have been found to be important resources for minority women as discussed in Chapter 2. Exploring how social ties affect the meaning of motherhood for childfree minorities informed specific interview questions that were utilized during the interviews with the participants of this study (Appendix C). Theme One, "The Strong Mother Influence" illustrates that family influence, specifically mother figures involved in the participant lives were highly valued and pivotal in shaping the participants meaning of the motherhood role. A few of the women in this study were raised by kin who they identified as "mother". Consistent findings relating to the role of kinship in influencing the meaning of motherhood was found in the significant statements within Theme Two, "Familial Caregiving". Childfree women in this study formulated meanings of motherhood through their experiences in caring for children that were predominately apart of their family and/or kinship networks. Noting the close relationships she had with her nieces, Brenda acknowledged that she felt as though she had participated in "the role of mother at times" and that having done so had her "see how tough it was" because she was "so close to it".

As hypothesized in Chapter 2, social ties did impact the meaning of motherhood for women in this study. Through observing friends and family that were becoming mothers, women identified the "challenges" they felt that motherhood entailed as depicted in Theme Four, "Motherhood is Hard Work". Witnessing many of her friends become mothers was "eye-

opening" for Mary who acknowledged that she "saw how they struggled to try to do it all, have a job and kids" which affirmed her choice to delay having children until she feels she has reached her career goals. Noting that she was very close with her sister, Renee felt that she "could never do" all of the duties she observed her sister manage as a mother of two and employed full time as a nurse. Family, friends, and kinship ties among the childfree women in this study were a source of information regarding their understanding of the motherhood role.

Intersectionality theory identifies the multiple variable influences that such social characteristics have on individual experience and understanding across groups. Recently, the use of intersectionality as an analytic tool in theorizing the cumulative effects of race, social class, and gender has been questioned due to the lack of "defined intersectional methodology" (Nash 2008). Others have argued that inclusive consideration of race, social class, and gender are imperative noting the impact that intersectionality has had on how gender is discussed (Levine-Rasky 2011; Shields 2008). It was hypothesized in Chapter 2 that maneuvering employment and motherhood may be more salient for White women due to the fact that working motherhood is not a new phenomenon for minority women. Theme Four, "Motherhood is Hard Work" contradicts this notion. In fact, the minority women in this study specifically considered how motherhood would impact their educational and career aspirations, noting that having children would place strain upon the other tasks in their lives. Shelli, a single African American women in her 40's explained that many of her family and friends were "doing it alone" as single mothers and she was "overwhelmed" at the thought of incorporating the role of motherhood into her life and career. Mary, a single Hispanic woman in her late 20's observed other women in her neighborhood "have kids and work or go to school", making the observation that she did not feel as though women were spending as much time with their children as they had done so in the

past. Such a reflection indicates that although historically minority women have long combined the duties of work and motherhood, women in this study did see the stresses related to work-family balance. Considering the demands of balancing paid employment with the duties of motherhood were salient reasons for minority women in this study to delay or forgo motherhood.

Social class, as a central axis of intersectionality, has primarily been identified through one's socioeconomic status. Shields (2008) debates the notion that socioeconomic status is the primary element of social class. She argues that one's social identity has a profound influence on the experience and beliefs of women. Employment as a measure of social class has a profound impact on shaping social identity (Kirk 2009). Although all of the participants in this study were childfree minority women who were employed, the socioeconomic status of the women varied. As identified in the essence statement, although motherhood was valued, it was also deemed to be demanding when combined with their pursuit of higher education and/or employment. Women in this study were more influenced by their prioritization of pursuing current educational and career goals than becoming mothers. For the women who intended on becoming a mother at some point, "financial security" was an important aspect in their "preparation to have kids". Significant statements that emerged in Theme One "Strong Mother Influence" illustrated that having mothers who were employed influenced the perceptions of work-family balance for the women in this study.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Feminist theorizing regarding motherhood in the United States has previously overlooked how variations in the meaning of motherhood may differ by race/ethnicity. Although there is a wide body of literature that examines the experiences and negotiation of motherhood for minority women (Edin and Kafalas 2005; Miller 2007; Marks and Houston 2002; Reid 2002), participants of these studies are primarily mothers. Although Shaw (2010) recently conducted a phenomenological study of childfree women, the three participants for that study were all White middle class women. Previous qualitative research studies that have explored the meaning of motherhood for minority women who are childfree are missing from the literature. This phenomenological study provided a rich description of the meaning of motherhood for African American and Hispanic childfree heterosexual women who were all over 25 years of age. My findings emerged from qualitative interviews with 17 women over a six month time period. This final chapter will compare previously ascertained notions of motherhood for African American and Hispanic women in light of findings from this study. This dissertation contributes to the understanding of the meaning of motherhood for childfree minority women that is currently missing from the social science literature and the significance of the findings and limitations of the study will be examined. Finally, recommendations for future research will be presented.

Significance of the findings

As discussed in Chapter 2, motherhood has been hailed as a valued position by the majority of women in the United States (McQuillan et al. 2008) yet the number of women who have never experienced motherhood continue to rise (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Researchers

have speculated that cultural ideologies of motherhood may impact the decision to become a mother (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Marks and Houston 2002), yet few have addressed if these ideologies of motherhood are similar for childfree minority women. My findings suggest that childfree minority women value motherhood and have formulated their meaning of motherhood through their relationships with strong mother figures as well as early caregiving experiences with family and kinship ties. A majority of the women in this study were raised by mothers or mother figures who were employed. Witnessing the struggle in balancing work and family commitments influenced the participants' prioritization of becoming a mother but did not lessen their value of the motherhood role. Depictions of women "struggling" and "juggling" paid employment and motherhood supports the perceived price of motherhood (Crittenden 2001). Although social class varied among the participants in this study, Theme 3 "purposefully not ready" summarized the overarching desire of the women to pursue educational and/or career goals prior to becoming a mother. Scottham and Smalls (2009) argued that female minority caregivers hold a strong reverence for instilling the importance of education in their children. Are the women in this study a product of this phenomenon? I argue that women in this study valued motherhood, yet prioritized their educational and career pursuits above becoming a mother.

Contrary to arguments that African American and Hispanic women have rejected the notion of exclusive, intensive mothering (Collins 1990; Segura 1994), women who were interviewed in my study have given a great deal of thought to the role of motherhood and how becoming a mother would fit into their lives. Two of the themes, *motherhood is hard work* and *rules, tradition, and "the way it should be"* highlight that the meaning of motherhood for childfree minority women include a belief that becoming a mother signifies a reprioritization of

one's goals to ensure that raising a child takes precedence. Women in the Edin and Kefalas (2005) ethnography valued marriage so highly that they were not willing to enter into it lightly. Similarly, participants of my study weighed the costs of motherhood and chose to delay or forgo motherhood until parenting became their main priority. Although this notion supports Hays' (1996) description of "intensive mothering", the women interviewed for this dissertation stressed the importance of "strict" mothering grounded in discipline and family tradition. As noted previously, many of the women in this study reported the desire to become a mother at some point in their life. Important prerequisites for motherhood included financial stability as well as raising a child in a two-parent home. Although demographic shifts in family composition have yielded a growing interest in single-parent families, my findings indicate that women perceived raising a child in a traditional, two parent home as an important aspect of motherhood. For the few participants who have chosen to forgo motherhood due to their single marital status, fear of being stigmatized as a single parent was not their rationale. Instead, childfree minority women who were interviewed viewed the desire to co-parent in a "traditional family" as non-negotiable.

There is mixed support for the dominant belief that motherhood is viewed as an essential identity. Theme four, *motherhood is hard work*, illustrated that educational and career aspirations were important priorities for childfree minority women. Motherhood, although strongly desired by many of the women, was not viewed as an essential status that they must achieve. Raising children of their own was viewed as another role or position that they hoped to experience at some point. Theme six, *understood judgment*, demonstrated somewhat contradictory information. All of the women in my study acknowledged that they have and will be judged for not becoming a mother from family, friends, or society. Such criticism was both anticipated and accepted by the majority of the women. By accepting that others would pass judgment on them

for not becoming a mother indicates that the women acknowledged that a majority of society still views motherhood as an essential identity. I posit that childfree minority women do value motherhood and identify that society also highly values mothers; therefore, they anticipate that others will judge them for not achieving this status.

In a recent analysis, McQuillan et al. (2008) determined that among mothers, valuing motherhood is not in conflict with valuing work success. Interestingly, when discussing their observations and feelings associated with their mother's manipulation of work and family, my findings indicate that women did see employment as negatively impacting the motherhood role. On the contrary, women in my study did not interpret their career and educational goals to be in conflict with their future desire to become a mother when discussing their individual pursuits. Similar to the findings of Park (2005), women viewed their delay of motherhood as necessary to pursue their educational and career goals.

African American women who are mothers have acknowledged the importance of incorporating racial socialization in raising their children (McAdoo 2002b). Although research regarding this cultural model is sparse for Hispanic mothers, childfree African American and Hispanic women in my study specifically acknowledged that as mothers, they would be responsible for the racial socialization of their children as identified in Theme four, *motherhood is hard work*. The unique challenges that minority children face were acknowledged by the women in this study therefore informing that racial socialization is incorporated into the meaning of motherhood for minority childfree women. Overall, findings of the current study contribute to the understanding of the meaning of motherhood by giving voice to childfree African American and Hispanic women.

Limitations

Although the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the meaning of motherhood for African American and Hispanic women, recruitment of participants for this phenomenological study limits generalizability to the larger population. My findings are based on a small sample of minority women who resided in the Midwest and were predominately well educated limiting the generalizability of the findings. Although the majority of women in my study were working class, income levels varied. Many of the participants noted that they were raised in a single-parent headed household, yet family of origin income information was not gathered. In utilizing the theoretical lens of intersectionality, noting potential shifts in social class transitions from childhood would have been beneficial in further understanding if change in income altered the meaning of motherhood for these women.

Nuanced experiences of women vary based on race and ethnicity. Including childfree women who self identified as either African American or Hispanic both limits inclusivity to women of other minority groups and creates speculation as to if African American and Hispanic women have shared experiences on the basis of being of a minority status. Incorporating many forms of data from participants, such as drawings, pictures, and personal writings have been utilized in phenomenological studies and may have provided a more in-depth view of the meaning of motherhood for childfree African American and Hispanic women. Although field notes were taken and incorporated into the description of the data, it has been noted that phenomenological research should integrate more than one additional source of information during the data collection phase (Creswell 2007). Finally, some respondents may have been reluctant to discuss their negative views of motherhood due to social desirability bias. Furthermore, due to constraints on time and resources, I was unable to hire translators to broaden

the participant sample to non-English speaking. Future qualitative studies with women of Hispanic decent should not exclude them based on translation limitations.

Despite these limitations, the data presented in this dissertation inform our understanding of how childfree minority women interpret the meaning of motherhood. Moreover, the data presented in this dissertation gives voice to a population that is often ignored, bridging the gap that exists in the current literature regarding motherhood.

Future Research

The findings of this study have several implications for future research. Providing the narratives of African American and Hispanic childfree women allow implications to be made regarding a population that is often neglected in motherhood research. It is important to continue to seek out other minority populations that are underrepresented in social science literature. As quantitative researchers postulate meanings with regards to motherhood and design standardized questions, it must be contemplated that interpretations of "the importance of motherhood" may vary in meaning between racial groups. Similarly, consideration of women's current priorities, educational goals, and career aspirations may alter their perception of "importance of motherhood". I argue that childfree minority women do not feel motherhood is less important than white women, but have a nuanced view of motherhood based upon their current life priorities.

Another direction for future research is to utilize longitudinal data to analyze the family trajectory of childfree minority women. Many of the women in my study indicated that they desired to become mothers at some point. Follow-up interviews with initially childfree women who have either remained childfree or become mothers is important to examine if their meaning of motherhood changes throughout the life course or when becoming a mother. Intergenerational

studies allow for comparisons to be made not only across different age groups, but also within families. Women were influenced in their view of motherhood by a strong mother influence who was a part of their lives. Having the opportunity to interview adult mothers and daughters who are also minorities regarding the meaning of motherhood would allow for comparisons to be made within the family of origin. The findings from my study sensitize culturally-informed research. Research that focuses on the personal narratives regarding motherhood and incorporates a diverse population samples deepen our understanding of how racial groups formulate meanings.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL LETTER



April 15, 2011

Amy Clark
Department of Sociology

Julia McQuillan
Department of Sociology
706 OLDH, UNL, 68588-0324

IRB Number: 20110411716EP
Project ID: 11716
Project Title: The Meaning of Motherhood Among African American and Hispanic Women

Dear Amy:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46). Your project was approved as an Expedited protocol, category 6 & 7.

Date of EP Review: 04/14/2011

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 04/15/2011. This approval is Valid Until: 04/14/2012.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

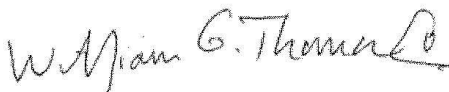
- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by

completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,



William Thomas, Ph.D.

Chair for the IRB



APPENDIX B
IRB CONSENT FORMS



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB# 11716

Identification of Project: The Meaning of Motherhood Among African American and Hispanic Women

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this study is to explore the meaning of motherhood among African American and Hispanic women who are not mothers. In particular, this study will explore the perception of motherhood and how your upbringing has influenced your understanding of the motherhood role, your parental aspirations, and identify any barriers that you feel you face as a woman in society to have children. By agreeing to participate, you are agreeing to participate in a 30-60 minute in-depth interview that will be audio taped. You must be a woman of at least 25 years of age, self-identify as African American or Hispanic, and not have any biological, adoptive, foster, or step-children.

Procedures:

Participation in this study will require approximately 30-60 minutes of your time and will be audio taped. It is required that this interview take place in a private surrounding to ensure the confidentiality of the information that you are providing and that only the interviewer and participant are in attendance at this interview.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. In the event that the sharing of information regarding your family history should cause emotional discomfort, psychological treatment is available on a sliding fee scale at the UNL Psychological Consultation Center, telephone (402) 472-2351. Any psychological treatment sought is however, at the expense of the participant.

Benefits:

You may find the experience of participating in this research interesting and enjoyable. The information gained from this study may help us to better understand the meaning of motherhood among women who do not have biological, adopted, or step-children.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for three years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in social science journals or presented at social science meetings but all identifying information will be replaced with pseudonyms and ID numbers in the place of real participant names. The audiotapes will be erased after transcription.

Compensation:

You will receive a \$20.00 cash stipend for participating in this study after completion of the interview.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the investigator at any time, office phone, (402) 552-6128, or after hours (402) 314-7336. Please contact the investigator:

- if you want to voice concerns or complaints about the research
- in the event of a research related injury.

Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 for the following reasons:

- you wish to talk to someone other than the research staff to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant
- to voice concerns or complaints about the research
- to provide input concerning the research process
- in the event the study staff could not be reached,

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ Check if you agree to be audio taped during the interview.

Signature of Participant:

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Amy M. Clark, MSW, Principal Investigator
Julia McQuillan, PhD., Secondary Investigator

Office: (402) 552-6128
Office (402) 472-6616

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT FLYER



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENT!

Would you be willing to participate in a study regarding the Meaning of Motherhood?

The purpose of this study is to explore the meaning of motherhood among African American and Hispanic women who are not mothers. In particular, this study will explore the perception of motherhood and how your upbringing has influenced your understanding of the motherhood role, your parental aspirations, and identify any barriers that you feel you face as a woman in society to have children.

To qualify for participation in this study you must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Be an African American or Hispanic women*
- 2) Have NO biological, adopted, foster, or step-children (previously or currently)*
- 3) Be 25 years or older*

Willing participants in this study will participate in a 30 to 60 minute face to face interview with the researcher regarding your family history and your feelings regarding the motherhood role and expectations of motherhood. The interviews will be audio recorded for research purposes.

If you choose to participate all information will be kept confidential. All participants in this study will receive a \$20.00 cash stipend for their participation in the interview.

If you know of anyone who may be willing to participate in this study, please pass on this announcement to them.

If you should have any questions or would like to participate in my study, please contact me either by e-mail or phone provided below.
Thank you for your help!

Amy M. Clark, MSW
Principle Investigator
402-552-6128

clarkamy@unlserve.unl.edu

Julia McQuillan, PhD., Secondary Investigator

Office (402) 472-6616

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Qualitative Interview Protocol
In-depth Preliminary Interview Questions

Hi there. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today about your thoughts on motherhood. My name is Amy Clark and I'm a PhD Graduate Student in Sociology at UNL. Just as a reminder, I am going to audio record our conversation today as we outlined in the consent form. I am looking forward to learning more about you through this conversation. I am talking to several women about motherhood and will combine their thoughts and ideas into a research report. Everything that you tell me today will be kept confidential. This means that I will not use your name or any information that will let people know that you are the one that told me what you said. I am only here to learn more about the meaning of motherhood among women who are not mothers themselves. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewee Code _____

Interviewer _____

Date/Time of Interview _____

Questions:

I would like to begin by asking you about your family.

- Who took care of you when you were growing up? (*Ice-breaker*) Please tell me about that person/those people? Do you have any brothers and sisters? Do your brothers or sisters have children? (*Family history*)
-

Now I would like to ask you some questions about motherhood.

- Have you had experiences taking care of children?
- What do you think are the best things about taking care of children?
- What are the worst things about taking care of children?
- How important is having or raising your own children – being a mother – for your life?
- How much have you thought about caring for children or motherhood?
- Have you talked to other women about caring for children or motherhood?
- Do you think most people have similar ideas about caring for children and being a mother?

- Are your ideas about motherhood similar to other women you know?
- Are your ideas about motherhood similar to ideas that you see in movies, television, etc?
- Is there someone that you identify, either in the media or personally, that you feel represents the “ideal mother”
 - Probe: What specific qualities make this individual the “ideal” mother?
- Would people you know judge you for becoming a mother or not becoming a mother?