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AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS ATTENDING COLLEGE: THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN LIFE STRESSORS, SOCIAL RESOURCES, AND GRADE POINT

AVERAGE

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Counseling

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

K.C. Gaehring

May 2002

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts,
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

David Carter
Judith Harrington

Chairperson Jeannette Seabery
Date April 4, 2002

AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS ATTENDING COLLEGE: THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN LIFE STRESSORS, SOCIAL RESOURCES, AND GRADE POINT
AVERAGE

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University of Nebraska, 2002

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The purpose of this study was to gather data from enrolled African American female students who have children and investigate any correlations or interactions that may be present between life stressors, social resources, and cumulative grade point average. This study found that, overall, life stressors were high, social resources were low, however, grade point average was still above average. Descriptive data analysis was calculated for measures of central tendency, variability, relationship, and relative position appropriate for interval data. Multiple regression was used to determine significant predictors of grade point average. Results show the combination of the social resources of work and family having a significant positive correlation with grade point average.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study investigated the relationships among the stable life stressors, consistent social resources, and academic performance of a sample of African American mothers attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The following introduction briefly highlights the general stressors experienced by and resources available to African American female college students. National trends regarding African American mothers and families are also discussed as well as the positive and negative impacts for African American mothers attending college.

Statement of the Problem

Through studying the different experiences of African American men and women in both historically black and white colleges, Fleming (1984) and Allen (1986) note the following four internalized reactions related to the personal and interpersonal environments of African American women in higher education: (1) African American women become less assertive when they are educated with men; (2) they sometimes believe they are less competent than men; (3) African American women lose some social assertiveness skills in black colleges, but not in all white colleges where African American men are fewer in number; and (4) African American women often suffer emotional pain, social isolation, or intensified fears about their competence, especially on predominately white campuses. These fears and negative perceptions have the potential to negatively impact not only the personal and inter-personal relationships, but also the academic performance among African American college women (Carter-Obayuwana, 1996).

The struggles and obstacles African American female students face in attempting to achieve a full and rewarding higher education experience is thought to emerge from dilemmas of race and gender as well as negative perceptions because of the stereotyped characterization of African American women (Carter-Obayuwana, 1996; Weitz & Gordon, 1993). To build on the elements of race and gender, Moses (1989) investigated stressors in the residential and social lives of African American female college students. In these personal and interpersonal domains, she noted that the quality of the social and residential life that African American women students experience often has a profound and lasting effect on their maturity, growth, and self-esteem. On the one hand, their experiences often include intense scrutiny or direct attack such as racial discrimination and sexual harassment; conversely, African American women students are often isolated, ignored, and dismissed by faculty and peers, which can lead to feelings of alienation and lowered self-esteem (Moses, 1989). To lower attrition rates, due to college and personal life stressors, it is important that students have effective coping skills in order to successfully navigate the university environment, their own personal challenges, and the global community (Carter-Obayuwana, 1996). Developing such adequate coping skills is a continuous, ongoing process. Assessing peoples' level of effective coping skills is also a process and identifying those with inadequate coping strategies can be difficult.

Ann Carter-Obayuwana (1996) studied the relationship between stress, hope, and coping. This study highlights the national phenomenon of university professionals struggling to identify students at risk of attrition before students are at risk of suspension from the university. Carter-Obayuwana (1996) views student's inability to cope with internal and external personal and interpersonal stressors as placing them at risk of

suspension. Further, the university's inability to promptly identify vulnerable students inevitably leads to less than optimum academic performance, heightened anxiety, and increased rates of attrition.

To better ensure the success of any endeavor, multiple resources need to be available. The African American family has been generally described as matriarchal and, as such, has been blamed for many of the problems faced by African Americans today such as poverty, lack of education, and crime (Sue & Sue, 1999). Unfortunately, acknowledgments of the strengths in the African American family structure may be overlooked. For the members of such family structures, there exists an extended family network that provides emotional and economic support (Sue & Sue, 1999). As a group, African Americans tend to be more group centered and sensitive to interpersonal matters, have strong kinship bonds, be work and education oriented, and have a strong commitment to religious values and church participation (McCollum, 1997).

Edds (1988) echoes the importance of human family support in coping with the traumas of college life by recommending and describing the benefits of the black sorority in three areas: namely, as a stable and enduring social outlet to counter the personal and interpersonal stressors of African American women, a refuge that offers African American women psychological strength in an often hostile university and community environment, and as a place providing comfort and purpose. Components of hope, defined as ego strength, perceived human family support, educational assets, religious/spiritual assets, and economic assets, have also been found to assist African American female college students in coping with university and personal stressors (Carter-Obayuwana, 1996).

Within the African American family there exists an adaptability of family roles, strong kinship bonds, a strong work and achievement ethic, and strong religious orientation (Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray, & Hines, 1996; McCollum, 1997). Among families headed by females, the rearing of children is often undertaken by a large number of relatives, older children, and close friends. Longitudinal data reflects the positive impact of such a support system when showing that out of 1472 African American teenage mothers, 5.8 percent were enrolled in educational programs (i.e. high school, G.E.D., or college) after their first birth (Rich & Kim, 1999). Not only does the adaptability of roles provide support and encouragement, multiple roles also have the potential to provide a feeling of satisfaction.

In *Juggling: The Unexpected Advantages of Balancing Career and Home for Women and Their Families*, Fay Crosby (1991) described the advantages of multiple roles for women. She discussed ways that the stress involved in juggling roles can be reduced. Not only do most jugglers derive a great deal of pleasure from life, they, like many other women in contemporary society, feel stressed, stretched, and tired to the point of exhaustion. Virtually all women, especially jugglers, need competent support systems to cope with the multiple demands in their lives. A better national child-care policy and improved day care, as well as supportive others, can help to reduce the stress that many jugglers feel. Jugglers can build a network of adults who accept responsibility to help out, especially in times of emergency, no matter how minor (Crosby, 1991).

Among lower socio-economic class African American families, over 70% are headed by women. Concurrently, unmarried African American females account for nearly 60% of births and of these mothers, the majority are teenagers (Alford, 2000).

Members of this population vary greatly on factors such as socio-economic status, educational level, cultural identity, family structure, and reaction to racism (Sue & Sue, 1999).

Because the University of Nebraska at Omaha does not have students identify themselves as parents for any official documentation, there is no way to know how many African American mothers are enrolled as college students. However, when Harrington (1990) surveyed 150 of the University of Nebraska at Omaha non-traditional female students, from varied racial groups, she discovered that 27% had children. Although the percentage of African American women that had children was not available, 1997 national enrollment data shows a greater college enrollment trend for persons over the age of 25, those that are female, of minority background, and are likely to have children (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999).

Research Questions

This study sought to answer several questions. The following were primary questions: What are the stressors experienced by African American mothers attending college? Do stressors from various life domains impact students-as-mothers' college experience and more specifically, their cumulative grade point average? If coping strategies can alleviate stressful college experiences and in turn benefit additional life domains, could social resources alleviate life stressors and benefit academic performance? From these research questions four null hypotheses follow:

- 1) There is no correlation between life stressors and cumulative grade point average (academic performance) of African American mothers attending college.

- 2) There is no correlation between the social resources and cumulative grade point average (academic performance) of African American mothers attending college.
- 3) There is no correlation between the combination of life stressors and social resources and cumulative grade point average (academic performance) of African American mothers attending college.
- 4) There is no significant difference, on the same domain, between the life stressors and social resources of African American mothers attending college.

Secondary questions investigated referred to demographic data on how many children do African American mothers attending college tend to have, are these women married or do they fit the national trend of being single? How do African American mothers compare to their African American female peers and their university counterparts academically? Do these mothers work and, if so, how much? Progressively, where do these mothers tend to be in their college career? Are they just starting, preparing for graduation, or in the middle? How old do African American mothers attending college tend to be?

Definition of Terms

A life stressor was defined as a perceived ongoing stressful circumstance. A social resource was defined as a perceived ongoing form of support. Life stressors and social resources were both measured on the domains of finance, work, spouse or partner, children, extended family, friends, and negative or positive life events. Additional life stressor domains measured were home/neighborhood and physical health. On the same

domain, stressors and resources were distinguished from one another by specific questions. An example of a question used for the stressor domain of children was, “How often do any of the children living with you now misbehave or disobey you”? An example of a question used for the resource domain of children was, “Can you count on them (children) to help you when you need it”? Academic performance was defined in the numeric terms of cumulative grade point average (gpa). University standards define average performance as ranging from 70 – 75 %, receiving a letter grade of “C”. A grade of “C” earns 2 out of 4 points on a 4-point scale.

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

The number of enrolled, undergraduate, African American females at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) for the Spring 2001 semester was 233. A total number of enrolled African American mothers at UNO was not available. Therefore, an attempt to randomly sample the total population of African American female mothers at the University of Nebraska was not possible. The sample population was confined to a single urban commuter university; therefore, study results will be most applicable to additional members of the population attending the same university. Generalizability of the results will also be limited due to the use of a small sample size ($N = 20$) and volunteer subjects. The hypothesized relationship between life stressors, social resources, and grade point average was assumed to be linear, which is important for statistical data analysis. As with the nature of all correlational research, causality was not determined between life stressors, social resources, and academic performance (grade point average). Life stressors and social resources are considered stable life contexts.

Significance of the Study

As with any student, sensitivity to the individual's needs helps retain students and assist in students' success (Terrell & Wright, 1988). By investigating the relationship between life stressors, social resources, and grade point average, a better understanding of the collegiate experience of African American mothers enrolled as students can emerge. It is not known if this is a growing undergraduate population. Historically, however, when little knowledge was available, research was used to expand the current understanding. This introduction briefly discussed African American women and what some of the identified stressors are that they tend to face while attending college. African American mothers, the general circumstances they endure, and the social supports that help them juggle multiple roles were also highlighted. Relevant theory and previous research findings for African American mothers attending college is reviewed in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Research plays an important role in both the development and the refinement of theory (Terenzini, 1994). Though some theories have evolved from informal observation and logic, most student development theories have been based on research specifically designed to determine what factors are important in development, how development occurs, and what environmental conditions facilitate development (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). This chapter discusses relevant theories and previous research involving the relationships between stress, social support, and success in higher education for African American females and particularly mothers.

Theoretical Background

Conditions such as challenge and support, involvement, marginality and mattering, and validation have all been shown to impact college student development and success both positively and negatively. The amount of challenge a person can tolerate is a function of the amount of support available (Sanford, 1966). Adult students, such as single mothers, already face many challenges when they choose to enter college. They are in need of support to succeed in their educational endeavors. If the university environment fails to provide such support or if the students do not obtain the available support, the additional challenge of taking classes combined with the stresses of work and family life may be too great, leading students to drop out of college (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Astin (1984) argues that for student learning and growth to take place, students need to actively engage in their environment, and student affairs

professionals and educators need to create opportunities for involvement in and out of the classroom to occur.

Marginality can be defined as a sense of not fitting in and can lead to self-consciousness, irritability, and depression. Due to being one of a few students with children, not living on campus, and differences in ethnic background, an African American mother might feel marginalized on a predominately Caucasian, traditional college campus. Feelings of marginality often occur when individuals take on new roles, especially when they are uncertain about what a new role entails (Schlossberg, 1989). If an African American female was experiencing motherhood, for the first time, while also trying to adjust to a new educational setting, she would have more than one new role to learn. For members of minority groups, marginality is often a permanent condition (Sue & Sue, 1999). Schlossberg (1989) suggests that when individuals feel marginal, they worry about whether or not they matter to anyone. Schlossberg defines mattering as the belief, whether right or wrong, that we matter to someone else. Concurrently, Schlossberg (1989) stresses that institutions of higher education need to help people feel like they matter and when working with adult students, such as African American mothers, recognize their need to feel they matter before encouraging campus involvement.

In a study examining the experiences of students in college, Rendon (1994) discovered that whereas traditional students expressed few concerns about being academically successful, nontraditional students (those from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds) were often doubtful of their academic ability. Active intervention in the form of validation was needed to encourage non-traditional students to become

involved in campus life and to enhance their self-esteem (Rendon, 1994). Rendon (1994) defined validation as an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that foster academic and interpersonal development. Students who were validated developed confidence in their ability to learn, experienced enhanced feelings of self-worth, and believed that they had something to offer the academic community (Rendon, 1994). Validation can occur in a variety of settings, including the classroom, student organizations, or the community. Validating agents can be instructors, classmates, student affairs staff, relatives, friends, or other people who are significant to the student in some way (Rendon, 1994). The need for validation is likely to apply to adult students, whom are often first-generation college students experiencing many doubts about their ability to succeed (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

In perceptual models, definitions of the environment are related in some fashion to the individual student's perception and interpretation of the external world, whether behavioral or psychosocial. While each student's perceptions are subjective and particular to that individual, in the aggregate these perceptors theoretically become and define the culture or environment in which the individual lives and that is presumed to influence in various ways that individual's psychosocial development in a range or areas (Moos, 1976; Rodgers, 1989). The influence of the roles as student and mother could be drastically different, from one student to the next, depending on the individual perception of those roles by the African American female. Being a mother could be perceived as a stressor or resource, as well as being a college student. Although being an individual/internal perception, external factors could possibly still have an influence on how these roles are perceived.

Moos (1979) focuses on the social climate's influences on the people who inhabit it. Social climate is considered to have three broad dimensions: a relationship dimension (which involves the inter-personal relations among the people in the environment), a personal development dimension (the growth opportunities afforded by the environment), and a system maintenance and change dimension (which relates to behavioral expectations within the environment, the control it exercises over its occupants, and the manner in which it responds to change). Each of these three dimensions has the potential to instigate stress and offer support (Moos, 1979), leaving the African American mother either feeling encouraged by her community or not supported. An additional source of support for African American mothers attending college could be the higher education institution at which they are enrolled.

A longitudinal model of institutional impact given by Tinto (1987) seeks to specifically explain the college student attrition process. Building upon the work of Spady (1978), Tinto theorizes that students enter a college or university with varying patterns of personal, family, and academic characteristics and skills, including initial dispositions and intentions with respect to college attendance and personal goals. These intentions and commitments are subsequently modified and reformulated on a continuing basis through a longitudinal series of interactions between the individual and the structures and members of the academic and social systems of the institution (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

Satisfying and rewarding encounters with the formal and informal academic and social systems of the institution are presumed to lead to greater integration in those systems and thus to student retention (Tinto, 2000). The term integration can be

understood to refer to the extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal structural requirements for membership in that community or in the subgroups of which the individual is a part. Academic and social integration may describe a condition (that is, the individual's place in the academic and social systems) or an individual perception (that is, the individual's personal sense of place in those systems). Negative interactions and experiences tend to reduce integration, to distance the individual from the academic and social communities of the institution, promoting the individual's marginality and, ultimately, withdrawal (Tinto, 1987). This concept presents a risk for African American mothers if they enter higher education with feelings that they don't belong.

Previous Research Findings

Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth was used to examine the phenomenon of later life education among women who first gave birth as teenagers (Rich & Kim, 1999). The analysis also considered racial-ethnic differences in patterns of educational attainment. The findings suggest that later life education among teen mothers is an important and understudied phenomenon. The results from the first part of the analysis show that nearly one-fifth of the teen mothers from the sample (N=4728) were enrolled in educational programs at some time between the ages of 25 and 36 years, with African Americans being somewhat more likely than Caucasians to have been enrolled. This enrollment resulted in increased educational attainment for a significant proportion of mothers (946/4728), which in turn significantly reduced the educational gap between teen mothers and women who delayed their first birth (Rich & Kim, 1999).

The results from the second part of the analysis reinforce the significant later life educational activity among teen mothers. In particular, by the 7th year after the first birth, 39 percent of the mothers had increased their levels of education. Of these mothers, 69 percent had obtained high school diplomas, 27 percent had gone beyond the high school diploma/GED and completed 1 or more years of college, and 4 percent had completed additional years of college.

Not only are African American mothers obtaining education, they are receiving the attention of educational researchers. In a pre-test/post-test control group experimental research design, Andrews (1997) studied 105 African American single college mothers enrolled in two historically black universities in Southeast Texas. The result of this study indicated that the single college mothers who participated in a self-improvement growth experience workshop exhibited significantly higher self-esteem scores than did single college mothers who did not participate. The age of single college mothers had no influence on their self-esteem scores, however, the longer length of the time before these single college mothers returned to college did produce a significant negative effect on their School Academic self-esteem scores (Andrews, 1997). A possible remedy to the length of time African American mothers are not enrolled in college would be to improve the campus climate.

The College of St. Thomas is one of the first of a growing number of higher education institutions to study the climate for women and one of a few to enlarge the project to include an examination of the climate for women of color (Welch, 1992). In 1988, at the suggestion of the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees, the President of the College of St. Thomas requested that the Vice President for Student

Affairs examine the campus climate for women and minorities. Results from quantitative and qualitative data showed the overall need for hospitable, nurturing, and equitable environments throughout campus, in order to recruit and retain women and people of color (Welch, 1992).

Denise Wilbur (1992) stresses the importance of a welcoming campus atmosphere so that minority women can be recruited to and retained on a college campus. While in accordance, Barbara Mathews (1992) stresses the importance of a campus community developing networking and support for women of color. A comprehensive institutional assessment can explore the perceptions of the campus community and provide important information to inform future policy decisions (Welch, 1992). However, if an institutional assessment is not possible, continuous data collection should be sought from various student populations (Stabb, Harris, & Talley, 1995).

This study contributed to the University of Nebraska at Omaha's institutional assessment and the general field of counseling by collecting data on a particular sample of African American mothers attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha. In chapter three, the design and method for collecting and analyzing data is described.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Participants

Participants included 20 volunteer subjects who were African American, female, parenting at least one child, and enrolled as undergraduate students at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Non-controlled variables included age, marital status, and number of children. University records do not identify parental status of enrolled students, so identification of whether subjects qualified occurred through self-identification and volunteering for the study. Recruitment of subjects occurred with the assistance of the Office of Multicultural Affairs at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Advertising of the study and the request for participants were posted throughout the administrative office on designated poster boards. Student organizations such as the local chapter of the National Council of Negro Women, the African American Organization, and a group of multicultural scholarship students were visited for the purpose of announcing and explaining the study and to provide instructions for interested volunteers.

Research Design

The research method utilized for this study was a correlational design that explored the relationship between life stressors, social resources, and cumulative grade point average. A single cross-sectional study of volunteer subjects was used. Each participant completed a standardized self-report inventory. Inventory results were paired with grade point average, and multiple regression was used to analyze data and determine correlational statistical significance. This design was used because it allowed the participating mothers to report their perceptions (using multiple examples) of constant

stressors and resources, while providing a viable way to correlate variables that would otherwise be non-numeric.

Instrument

To assess various stressors and support resources, the Life Stressors and Social Resources Inventory – Adult Form (LISRES-A) was used (see Appendix A). Authors Rudolf and Bernice Moos (1994) designed the assessment to provide an integrated picture of an individual's current life context including stable life stressors and social resources. Through using this inventory, data was gathered on the stressors of African American mothers attending the University Nebraska at Omaha as well as any social resources available to assist them in coping with identified stressors. Permission to use the LISRES-A inventory was provided by the publisher: Psychological Assessment Resources, Incorporated.

LISRES-A has 16 measurable scales: nine life stressor scales which include physical health (PHS), home/neighborhood (HNS), financial (FINS), work (WKS), spouse or partner (SPS), children (CHS), extended family (FAMS), friends (FRS), and negative life events (NLE), and seven social resource scales: financial (FINR), work (WRS), spouse or partner (SPR), children (CHR), extended family (FAMR), friends (FRR), and positive life events (PLE). This inventory was normed for healthy adults as well as psychiatric, substance abuse, and medical patients to be administered individually or in a group. LISRES-A was suggested to take 30 minutes with internal consistency reliabilities ranging from .77 - .93 for the Stressor scales and from .50 - .92 for the Resource scales.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Office of Multicultural Affairs. Informed consent allowed the researcher to use data from the inventory as well as verbal authorization to review academic transcripts for cumulative grade point average and was obtained before subjects completed the instrument. Participants' names were used to identify completed inventories and grade point averages for the purpose of correlational analysis. Participants provided demographic data by completing a small section at the top of the LISRES-A inventory answer sheet (see Appendix B). Cumulative grade point averages were obtained through the University of Nebraska at Omaha student information system (SIS). Only the primary investigator had access to collected data.

Administering of the inventory was done individually in a private conference room provided. Instructions for completing the inventory were explained by the researcher, and participants were encouraged to ask questions if anything on the inventory was unclear. Some participants requested a review with the researcher of their individual inventory results. For these cases, the researcher spent approximately 15 minutes explaining the inventory profiles to the mother. No further contact was initiated on the part of the researcher for the purpose of the study.

Data Analysis

Demographic data gathered on the sample from the LISRES-A was analyzed according to descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency (i.e. mean, mode, and standard deviation). Raw scores for each of the sixteen variables were converted to standardized "T scores" by using the Life Stressor and Social Resource Profiles provided

by the inventory publisher (see Appendix C). The standardized scores and numeric grade point averages were the numbers used for correlation analysis.

Multiple regression analysis was used to identify significant predictors (independent variables) of grade point average. Using a stepwise multiple regression, allowed single as well as multiple predictors of grade point average to be identified. Three regression analyses were conducted. The first regression analyzed the correlation between the life stressor variables and the cumulative grade point averages of the participants. The second regression looked for any relationship between the social resource variables measured and the cumulative grade point averages. Finally, the third regression analyzed the complete model, testing for correlation between all stressor and resource variables and cumulative grade point average. To increase the reliability of the regression results, only four variables with the most significant Pearson R correlations were used in the regression analysis.

To determine if the mothers' stressors and resources, of the same domain, were significantly different (i.e. the stressor of children different from the resource of children) paired sample t-tests were conducted. Domains tested were the paired stressor and resource variables of finance, work, spouse/partner, children, family, friends, and negative/positive life events. The results from all the data analysis are reported in chapter four.

Chapter 4

Findings

This study explored multiple questions investigating whether there are significant relationships between life stressors, social resources, and academic performance (determined by cumulative grade point average). Quantitative data collected through the administering of the LISRES-A inventory was used to measure nine life stressor variables believed to be constant and seven social resource variables, also believed to be constant. The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings of the research study, which include demographic data, regression analysis, as well as paired sample t-test results.

Demographic Results

The sample included 20 of the 26 (77%) African American mothers identified for the study. The remaining six mothers had originally committed to participating but due to responsibilities of school, family, and overall hectic schedules, were unable to complete the inventory. Members of the sample ranged in age from 18 – 39, with a mean age of 26 and had multiple modes of 19 and 32 (see Table 1). The majority of the sample (12/20) reported parenting one child at home, with the second highest (5/20) reporting having two children in the home (see Table 1). Number of credit hours earned ranged from 8 – 153 with a mean of 75.35 and a standard deviation of 50.25 (see Table 1). A large gap also existed between cumulative grade point averages of the mothers ranging from 1.136 – 4.000 on a 4.000 grading scale. The mean grade point average for the sample was 2.91885 with a standard deviation of 0.713323 (see Table 1), showing the mothers performing slightly below the overall university undergraduate gpa ($X=3.03$) and above the total undergraduate African American female enrollment ($X=2.74$).

Table 1: Demographic Statistics

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mode
Age	18-39	26	6.4	19 (3), 32 (3)
Number of Children	1-4	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	1 (12)
Credits Earned	8-153	75.35	50.25	125 (2)
Cumulative GPA	1.136-4.000	2.91885	.713323	3.120 (2)

N = 20

When looking at the frequency of marital status, 60% (12/20) of the sample were never married, while 20% (4/20) were married, 10% (2/20) were divorced, 5% (1/20) were separated, and another 5% (1/20) widowed (see Table 2). Almost the entire sample reported being employed (18/20), with (8/20) working part-time and (10/20) working full-time (see Table 3).

Table 2: Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid d	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
m	4	20.0	20.0	30.0
n	12	60.0	60.0	90.0
s	1	5.0	5.0	95.0
w	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

d = divorced m = married n = never married s = separated w = widowed

Table 3: Employment Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ft	10	50.0	50.0	50.0
ne	2	10.0	10.0	60.0
pt	8	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

ne = not employed pt = part-time employment ft = full-time employment

Regression Results

Due to the small sample size, to enhance the reliability of the regression results, the four variables with the strongest Pearson R correlation were used in the regression analysis. Listed in Table 4 are the correlation results for all of the variables measured in this study analyzed against gpa.

Table 4: Pearson R Correlation Results

Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (1-tailed)
PHS	0.175	0.230
HNS	0.201	0.1975
FINS	0.043	0.4285
FINR	0.211	0.1855
WKS	-0.010	0.4835
WKR	0.428	0.030
SPS	-0.012	0.480
SPR	0.085	0.361
CHS	0.326	0.0805
CHR	-0.167	0.241
FAMS	0.099	0.3395
FAMR	0.402	0.0395
FRS	0.019	0.4685
FRR	0.261	0.133
NLE	-0.373	0.0525
PLE	-0.016	0.473

N = 20

Based on the results of the correlational analysis, variables CHS, WKR, FAMR, and NLE were used for further regressional data analysis. The first null hypothesis for this study states there is no correlation between life stressors and cumulative grade point average of African American mothers attending college. Table five reflects the regression results of testing for a correlation between the life stressor variables of children (CHS) and negative life events (NLE) and the cumulative grade point averages (gpa) of the participants. Listed with the variables are the corresponding t-values, correlation coefficients, and the significance levels for each.

Table 5: Life Stressor Predictors of Grade Point Average

Variable	T-value	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
CHS	1.820	0.378	0.086
NLE	-2.022	-0.420	0.059

The table shows the stressor of children variable (CHS) having an insignificant correlation coefficient of 0.378, with a significance level of $p < 0.086$. This coefficient suggests that no relationship exists between the stressor of children and academic performance. However, the positive correlation does mean that for the mothers who participated in this study, as the level of stress surrounding their children went up, so did the level of their academic performance (gpa), although not significantly enough to allow the prediction of academic performance. While the life stressor of negative life events (NLE) is only marginally significant, $p < 0.059$, with a correlation coefficient of -0.420 ; it suggests that as the occurrence of negative life events decreases, the academic performance of the mothers increases. Therefore, with none of the measured life stressor

variables demonstrating a significant relationship with grade point average, the results allow for the acceptance of the first null hypothesis.

The following null hypothesis (#2) states that there is no relationship between the social resources of African American mothers attending college and their cumulative grade point average. Table six reflects a separate regression analysis of the correlation between the social resource variables of work (WKR) and family (FAMR) and gpa, which identified neither of the variables as significant predictors of academic performance (gpa). Listed are the two social resource variables analyzed, the appropriate t-values, correlation coefficients, and determined significance levels corresponding to each.

Table 6: Social Resource Predictors of Grade Point Average

Variable	T-value	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
WKR	1.291	0.308	0.214
FAMR	1.092	0.261	0.290

As with the first regression analysis, both variables were found to be statistically insignificant. The correlation coefficients of 0.308 for WKR and 0.261 for FAMR at a significance level, $p > 0.05$, suggest that there is no relationship between the resources of work (WRK) and family (FAMR) and academic performance (gpa) and, therefore, allows for the acceptance of this study's second null hypothesis.

To test the third null hypothesis of this study, both the life stressor and social resource variables were analyzed to determine if a relationship exists between the combination of stressors and resources with gpa. Table 7 reflects the regression analysis of the collapsed life stressor (CHSNLE) and social resource (WKR FAMR) variables

showing that when the variables are analyzed together, the combined resources of work and family have a significant positive relationship with academic performance.

Table 7: Combined Life Stressor and Social Resource Predictors of GPA

Variable	T-value	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
WKR FAMR	2.141	0.485	0.047
CHSNLE	0.042	0.010	0.967

The results shown in Table 7 further show that even though the social resource variables of work (WKR) and family (FAMR) were, individually, found to not have significant relationships with academic performance (gpa), the combined/collapsed data of the two variables suggests a positive relationship with academic performance with a correlation coefficient of 0.485 at a significance level, $p < 0.047$. These results suggest that as the combination of the level of resource and support from work and family increases so does the academic performance of African American mothers attending college, therefore, allowing for the rejection of the third null hypothesis of this study.

Both the life stressor and social resource regression analysis with gpa suggest that there is no single predictor of academic performance for each. To determine if the life stressors and social resources of the mothers from this study were statistically different from each other, meaning the level of stress and level of resource for the same variable were distinctly different, a paired sample t-test was conducted. When the stressor domains were paired with resource domains of the same name (i.e. stressor of children paired with resource of children), paired T-tests found significant differences between the variables of finance, spouse, children, and family (see Table 8).

Table 8: Life Stressors and Social Resources Paired T-test Results

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 FINS - FINR	14.80	16.644	3.722	7.01	22.59	3.977	19	.001
Pair 2 WKS - WKR	-.79	14.926	3.338	-7.77	6.20	-.236	19	.816
Pair 3 SPS - SPR	21.73	18.437	4.123	13.10	30.35	5.270	19	.000
Pair 4 CHS - CHR	23.29	13.659	3.054	16.89	29.68	7.625	19	.000
Pair 5 FAMS - FAM	11.85	16.900	3.779	3.94	19.76	3.136	19	.005
Pair 6 FRS - FRR	.85	16.047	3.588	-6.66	8.36	.237	19	.815
Pair 7 NLE - PLE	.35	24.132	5.396	-10.94	11.64	.065	19	.949

These results suggest that the level of stress and level of support the mothers perceive to be present/constant is significantly different for the identified domains. The level of stress and level of resource for the domains of children (CHS/CHR) and spouse (SPS/SPR) were found to be almost completely different from each other with a probability level of $p < 0.00$. Resource and stressor related to finance were also extremely different, $p < 0.001$. While the stress and resource of family was identified as slightly less different than the domains of children, spouse, and family; it also was significantly different, $p < 0.05$.

Multiple regression was used to examine any existing relationship between any of the 16 inventory domains and the cumulative grade point average of the participants, as well as determining which domains combined were predictors of grade point average (gpa). Results from the data analysis found that, for this particular sample, there is no significant correlation between life stressors and academic performance for African American mothers attending college. Results, however, do suggest a positive correlation between the combined social resources of work and family and academic performance.

Using paired t-tests, additional analysis determined significant life stressor and social resource differences for the domains of finance, spouse/partner, children, and family. These results allowed for the acceptance of this study's null hypotheses one and two and the rejection of null hypotheses three and four. Conclusions and implications for future research based on the results and observations of this study are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

Summary

This study set out to investigate the relationships between life stressors, social resources, and grade point average of African American mothers attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Results indicate that there is no significant correlation between life stressors and academic performance but that a significant positive correlation does exist between the combination of the social resource variables work and family and academic performance. Significant differences also exist between the perception of stress and perception of resource for the domains of spouse/partner, family, children, and finance. Overall, the mothers from the study had high life stressor profiles, low social resource profiles, and above average gpa.

Discussion

Demographics

The majority of the mothers from the sample were employed, under the age of 25, parenting only one child, and not married. With multiple modes of 19 and 32, African American mothers attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha are traditional and non-traditional in age. These mothers are also non-traditional in their accomplishments. The sample's gpa ($X = 2.91885$) was slightly lower than the overall university undergraduate gpa ($X = 3.03$), while being slightly above the total African American undergraduate female enrollment's gpa ($X = 2.74$). This is a positive trend for a couple of reasons. By non-traditional age mothers achieving academic excellence in college, the message is sent to other mothers that maintaining multiple roles is possible; while the

traditional age mothers cast doubt upon the stereotype that young mothers are irresponsible and are to blame for society's welfare epidemic.

The mothers further demonstrate their abilities by maintaining the multiple roles of parent, student, and employee. By managing these roles, the mothers from this study once again defy a stereotype; the stereotype that single mothers continue to have children they cannot afford to support. Almost all of the mothers that participated in this study had only one child and worked full time. Not only are these mothers currently supporting their children but by being enrolled in college, they are establishing the long-term future of their children. These demographic findings give a new paradigm for faculty, staff, and society as a whole to use when considering what an African American mother "looks like."

Life Stressors

After ranking the means of all the 16 domains, the top three were the stressors of children, negative life events, and finances. The mothers that participated in this study reported, via the inventory, varied experiences and perceptions of their lives as mothers and college students. The majority of the mothers (15/20) had higher life stressor profiles than social resource profiles, yet their grade point averages suggest high academic performance. This phenomenon reflects the Yerkes-Dodson Law (Matlin, 1997), which has shown that there exists an optimum level of performance that is a direct function of stress level. When too little or too much stress is present, low performance levels are produced. However, a certain amount of stress is necessary for optimum performance to occur (Matlin, 1997). Although the negative correlation between the life stress of negative life events (NLE) and gpa was found to be only marginally significant, $p < 0.059$,

this result does initially demonstrate that as significant stress, such as a negative life event, is decreased, academic performance increases.

Social Resources

Social resources may not rank in the top three highest domain means, however; they are ranked in the next four, with positive life events being the highest. Finding ways to stay positive and cope is a suggestion given to anyone trying to juggle dual roles and multiple responsibilities. Having positive life events to remember and be empowered by is a great resource. The mothers from this study had above average grades, were working, and raising at least one child. Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998) argue that if the university does not provide support, the additional challenge of taking classes on top of work and family, might lead the student to drop out of college. The mothers from this study, however; appear to be juggling work, family, and school remarkably. Crosby (1991) would explain this phenomenon by identifying active support systems in the mothers' lives. From the current study, the resources of support identified as having a positive influence on the mothers' academic performance were work and family.

Sue and Sue (1999) have identified that the African American matriarchal family can provide emotional and economic support to its members. Results from the current study reflect Sue and Sue's (1999) position by finding a positive correlation between the resource of family and academic performance, possibly demonstrating that the support perceived by the mothers from their families, enables their academic success. The combination of the stressor of children and resource of work was also found to have a positive correlation with academic performance. Attending to bills is a responsibility, and some would say a "stressor," of being a parent. The majority of people work to pay

their bills. It would make sense then that if a mother has a job that she perceives as a resource, due to a pleasant environment or flexible hours, she would have another source of support and have the opportunity to focus on school instead of a job that created additional stress.

Recommendations for Future Research

Over 11% (26/233) of the total undergraduate African American females enrolled with the university identified themselves as mothers for this study. Future research will build on this study by using a larger sample from multiple universities. This will enhance the generalizability of the results and provide more universities with data particular to their institutions. Between-group variance could also be analyzed to review any significant differences between the life stressors and social resources of mothers from different universities.

It is very possible that the variable of children not only provides mothers with feelings of happiness but also provides a source of motivation. Qualitative interviewing could explore the possible explanation for how the combination of the resources of work and family can predict academic excellence despite how as individual variables they do not significantly predict performance. Elements of responsibility, attitude/perception toward being a parent while in college, and motivation should be examined.

Future research on African American mothers attending college can build on this study in a variety of ways. The variable of children sets these mothers apart from their college peers. Additional research should also assess non-parenting college students and compare their life stressors and social resources to those of mothers attending college.

Comparisons should be done to review any significant differences in the experiences and perceptions of both mothers and fathers from various ethnic groups enrolled in college.

Although this study set out to discover whether external life stressors and social resources of African American mothers attending college affected their academic performance and tested for each of these three variables, institutional variables were not investigated. A small, yet significant amount of literature was discovered relevant to African American female college students, and even less so, on the subject of African American mothers attending college. However, what previous research was published, discussed the experiences of African American female college students in relation to the higher educational institutions in which the students enroll. Future research should not only assess, review, and measure the relationships between institutional stressors and resources for African American females attending college but also African American mothers attending college. Separate institutions could conduct comparative research in an attempt to discover why African American mothers might be more successful at one higher educational institution more than another. By not only investigating the external life stressors and social resources but also the institutional stressors and resources, a clearer picture of what these mothers need to succeed in college can be established. With greater understanding of how certain variables influence their success, faculty and staff can better assist with African American mothers' adjustment and matriculation through higher education.

Appendix A

Life Stressor and Social Resource Inventory – Adult Form (LISRES-A)

LISRES-A

by Rudolf H. Moos, PhD

This inventory contains questions about your background and health, your work, and your relationships with friends and relatives. Please mark all your answers on the separate LISRES-A Answer Form. **Do not write in this booklet.**

On the first page of the Answer Form, please fill in your name, today's date, your sex, and your age. Then fill in your marital status (never married, married, separated, divorced, widowed, etc.), your education (number of years completed), your ethnic group (African-American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, White, Other) and your current employment situation (full-time, part-time, both, not employed).

If a question does not apply to you, please write **N/A** ("Not Applicable") in the margin next to that question on the answer form. If you do not wish to answer a question, please circle the number of that question to show that you have purposely skipped it. All your answers are strictly confidential.

Some items require a **Yes** or **No** answer and look like this: **Y N**.

For these items, circle the appropriate response:

Circle **Y** if your response is **Yes**.

Circle **N** if your response is **No**.

Some items require a different kind of response and look like this: **DY MY MN DN**.

For these items:

Circle **DY** if your response is **Definitely Yes**.

Circle **MY** if your response is **Mainly Yes**.

Circle **MN** if your response is **Mainly No**.

Circle **DN** if your response is **Definitely No**.

Some items ask about how often things happen and look like this: **N S ST FO O**.

For these items:

Circle **N** if your response is **Never**.

Circle **S** if your response is **Seldom**.

Circle **ST** if your response is **Sometimes**.

Circle **FO** if your response is **Fairly Often**.

Circle **O** if your response is **Often**.

PAR Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc./P.O. Box 998/Odessa, FL 33556/Toll-Free 1-800-331-TEST

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A. PHYSICAL HEALTH

Items 1 - 26 in this section have two parts (a and b). For each of these items, *answer part b only if you answer "Yes" to part a.*

Have you had any of these medical conditions *in the past 12 months?*

(Circle "Y" only if diagnosed by a physician.)

- 1a. Anemia (low blood).....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 2a. Asthma or allergies.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 3a. Arthritis or rheumatism.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 4a. Serious back trouble.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 5a. Chronic bronchitis.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 6a. Cancer.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 7a. Diabetes.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 8a. Heart trouble.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 9a. High blood pressure.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 10a. Kidney trouble.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 11a. Stroke.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 12a. Stomach or duodenal ulcer.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 13a. Other.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?

Have you had any of these ailments *in the past 12 months?*

- 14a. Frequent cramps in the legs.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 15a. Pain in the heart or tightness
or heaviness in the chest.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 16a. Trouble breathing or shortness of breath.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 17a. Swollen ankles.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 18a. Pains in the back or spine.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 19a. Repeated pains in the stomach.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 20a. Frequent headaches.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 21a. Constant coughing or frequent
heavy chest colds.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 22a. Stiffness, swelling, or aching
in any joint or muscle.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 23a. Getting very tired in a short time.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 24a. Trouble climbing stairs or getting outdoors.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 25a. An injury that has caused you problems.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 26a. Other ailments.....If Yes: b. Did it start in the last year?
- 27. Were you hospitalized in the last year?

B. HOME/NEIGHBORHOOD

In the last year:

- 28. Did you lose your home through fire, flood, disaster, or a major catastrophe?
- 29. Did you move to a worse home?

Have any of these things happened to you or to your spouse or partner *in the last year*?

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30. Car burglarized?
31. Home burglarized?
32. Personally assaulted?
33. Trouble with the law (other than minor traffic violations)?
34. Automobile accident?

(DY = Definitely Yes / MY = Mainly Yes / MN = Mainly No / DN = Definitely No)

The following questions have to do with your home:

35. Is it well kept up (e.g., painting, repairs)?
36. Is the amount of living space comfortable?
37. Is there enough heat in the winter?
38. Is it cool enough in the summer?
39. Is the inside lighting adequate?
40. Is it quiet enough?

The following questions have to do with your neighborhood (the two or three blocks around your home):

41. Are the houses in the neighborhood well maintained?
42. Are the streets clean and free of litter?
43. Is it safe to walk alone in the neighborhood at night?
44. In general, are the people who live near you (within one block of your home) good neighbors?

In the last year:

45. Did you build your home or do a major remodeling of it?
46. Did you move to a better home?

C. FINANCES

Have any of these things happened to you *in the last year*:

47. Did you take on a large mortgage, loan, or financial obligation?
48. Has your financial situation gotten worse?
49. Have you gone on welfare?
50. Were you involved in a civil lawsuit (noncriminal)?

(DY = Definitely Yes / MY = Mainly Yes / MN = Mainly No / DN = Definitely No)

Do you have enough money to afford:

51. Good medical and dental care when you (your family) need it?
52. Leisure activities and entertainment?
53. Furniture or household equipment that needs to be replaced?
54. The kind of car you need?
55. A large, unexpected bill (over \$500) for auto repair, etc.?
56. Adequate food and clothing?
57. Has your financial situation improved *in the last year*?
58. Have you gone off welfare *in the last year*?
59. What is your total annual family income (your earnings plus those of others who live with you)?

Circle the number on the answer form that corresponds to your income range.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 = less than \$20,000 | 4 = \$30,000 - \$34,999 | 7 = \$50,000 - \$59,999 |
| 2 = \$20,000 - \$24,999 | 5 = \$35,000 - \$39,999 | 8 = \$60,000 or more |
| 3 = \$25,000 - \$29,999 | 6 = \$40,000 - \$49,999 | |

D. WORK

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In the last year:

60. Did you change to a worse job?
61. Were you laid off?
62. Were you fired?
63. Did you stop working or quit for reasons other than retirement?
64. Were you demoted at work?
65. Did you find out that you were not going to get an expected promotion at work?
66. Did you suffer a business loss or failure?
67. Did you take on a greatly increased workload?
68. Did you start regular work for the first time?
69. Did you return to work after not working for a long time (after at least 3 months)?
70. Did you change to a better job?
71. Were you promoted?
72. Did you have a significant success at work (other than a promotion)?
73. Did you start a business or profession?
74. Did you expand a business or professional practice?

If currently not employed, and you have not held a job in the last month, go to SECTION E (SPOUSE/PARTNER).

(N = Never / S = Seldom / ST = Sometimes / FO = Fairly Often / O = Often)

How often does each of these things happen in your current job?

75. Does your supervisor criticize you over minor things?
76. Do you have conflicts with your coworkers?
77. Do you have conflicts with your supervisor?
78. Is there constant pressure to keep working?
79. Does there seem to be a rush or urgency about everything?
80. Are there unpleasant physical conditions on your job, such as too much noise or dust?
81. Do you talk with your fellow employees about your work problems?
82. Are your coworkers friendly toward you?
83. Do you get adequate recognition for your contributions at work?
84. Are responsibilities at work clearly defined?
85. Is your work really challenging?
86. Can you use your own initiative to do things?

E. SPOUSE/PARTNER

87. Have you been separated in the last year?
88. Have you been divorced in the last year?
89. Have you been widowed in the last year?

If you were in a relationship in the last year:

- 90a. Did your relationship change for the worse in the last year?
 - b. **If Yes:** Did you separate for more than 2 weeks?
91. Was your engagement broken in the last year?
92. In the last year, did you stop seeing someone you had been seeing exclusively?

- 93a. Does your spouse or partner have any medical conditions or ailments, such as cancer, heart trouble, arthritis, high blood pressure, severe shortness of breath, constant coughing, or frequent colds?³⁸
 b. **If Yes:** Did it begin in the last year?
- 94a. Does your spouse or partner have any problems with emotions or behavior, such as depression, excessive drinking, severe memory problems, or trouble with the law?
 b. **If Yes:** Did it begin in the last year?
95. Was your spouse or partner hospitalized in the last year?
96. Have you been married in the last year?
97. Did you become engaged in the last year?
98. Did you start seeing someone exclusively in the last year?

If you were in a relationship in the last year:

- 99a. Did your relationship change for the better in the last year?
 b. **If Yes:** Did you get together after a separation of more than 2 weeks?

If you do not currently have a spouse or partner, go to Section F (CHILDREN).

(N = Never / S = Seldom / ST = Sometimes / FO = Fairly Often / O = Often)

How often does each of these things happen with your spouse or partner?

100. Does he or she disagree with you about important things?
101. Is he or she critical or disapproving of you?
102. Does he or she get on your nerves?
103. Does he or she get angry or lose his or her temper with you?
104. Does he or she expect too much of you?
105. Can you count on him or her to help you when you need it?
106. Does he or she cheer you up when you are sad or worried?
107. Do you confide in him or her?
108. Do you share mutual interests or activities with him or her?
109. Does he or she really understand how you feel about things?
110. Does he or she respect your opinion?

F. CHILDREN

Have you or your spouse or partner experienced any of these events *in the last year*?

111. Became pregnant and were sad about it?
112. Had an abortion?
113. Had a miscarriage?
114. Had a stillbirth?
115. Had a premature infant?
116. Found out that you cannot have children?
117. Experienced the death of one of your children?
118. Became pregnant and were happy about it?

If you do not have any living children or stepchildren, go to Section G (EXTENDED FAMILY).

- 119a. Do any of your children have any medical conditions or ailments, such as cancer, heart trouble, arthritis, high blood pressure, severe shortness of breath, constant coughing, or frequent colds?
 b. **If Yes:** Did it begin in the last year?
- 120a. Do any of your children have any problems with emotions or behavior, such as depression, excessive drinking, severe memory problems, or trouble with the law?
 b. **If Yes:** Did it begin in the last year?

121. Were any of your children hospitalized *in the last year*?

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122. How many children or stepchildren do you have *living with you now*?

The following questions are about the children living with you now. If you do not have any children or stepchildren living with you now, go to item #128.

(N = Never / S = Seldom / ST = Sometimes / FO = Fairly Often / O = Often)

How often do any of the children living with you now:

123. Misbehave or disobey you?

124. Have bursts of anger or moodiness?

125. Act stubborn or have temper tantrums?

126. Make demands on you?

127. Get upset over small things?

The following questions are about your current relationships with your children.

How often do *any* of your children:

128. Disagree with you about important things?

129. Get on your nerves?

130. Get angry or lose their temper with you?

131. Expect too much of you?

132. Are any of them critical or disapproving of you?

133. Can you count on them to help you when you need it?

134. Do they cheer you up when you are sad or worried?

135. Do you confide in one or more of them?

136. Do you share mutual interests or activities with them?

137. Do they try to understand how you feel about things?

138. Do they respect your opinion?

G. EXTENDED FAMILY

The following questions ask about your mother or stepmother. If you have both a mother and stepmother, refer to the person with whom you have the *most contact*.

139a. Is your mother (or stepmother) living?

b. **If No:** Did she die *in the last year*?

If your mother/stepmother is not living, go to item #154.

140a. Does your mother/stepmother have any medical conditions or ailments, such as cancer, heart trouble, arthritis, high blood pressure, severe shortness of breath, constant coughing, or frequent colds?

b. **If Yes:** Did it begin *in the last year*?

141a. Does your mother/stepmother have any problems with emotions or behavior, such as trouble with the law, depression, excessive drinking, or severe memory problems?

b. **If Yes:** Did it begin *in the last year*?

142. Was she hospitalized for any reason *in the last year*?

(N = Never / S = Seldom / ST = Sometimes / FO = Fairly Often / O = Often)

When you spend time with your mother/stepmother, how often:

143. Does she disagree with you about important things?

144. Is she critical or disapproving of you?

- 145. Does she get on your nerves?
- 146. Does she get angry or lose her temper with you?
- 147. Does she expect too much of you?
- 148. Can you count on her to help you when you need it?
- 149. Does she cheer you up when you are sad or worried?
- 150. Do you confide in her?
- 151. Do you share mutual interests or activities with her?
- 152. Does she really understand how you feel about things?
- 153. Does she respect your opinion?

The following questions ask about your father or stepfather. If you have both a father and stepfather, refer to the person with whom you have the *most* contact.

- 154a. Is your father (or stepfather) living?
- b. **If No:** Did he die *in the last year*?

If your father/stepfather is not living, go to item #169.

- 155a. Does your father/stepfather have any medical conditions or ailments, such as cancer, heart trouble, arthritis, high blood pressure, severe shortness of breath, constant coughing, or frequent colds?
- b. **If Yes:** Did it begin *in the last year*?
- 156a. Does your father/stepfather have any problems with emotions or behavior, such as trouble with the law, depression, excessive drinking, or severe memory problems?
- b. **If Yes:** Did it begin *in the last year*?
- 157. Was he hospitalized for any reason *in the last year*?

(N = Never / S = Seldom / ST = Sometimes / FO = Fairly Often / O = Often)

When you spend time with your father/stepfather, how often:

- 158. Does he disagree with you about important things?
- 159. Is he critical or disapproving of you?
- 160. Does he get on your nerves?
- 161. Does he get angry or lose his temper with you?
- 162. Does he expect too much of you?
- 163. Can you count on him to help you when you need it?
- 164. Does he cheer you up when you are sad or worried?
- 165. Do you confide in him?
- 166. Do you share mutual interests or activities with him?
- 167. Does he really understand how you feel about things?
- 168. Does he respect your opinion?

The following questions are about your relatives other than your spouse, children, or parents.

Have any of the following events occurred *in the last year*?

- 169. A relative died?
- 170. A relative moved to a distant place?
- 171. A serious conflict with a relative?

(N = Never / S = Seldom / ST = Sometimes / FO = Fairly Often / O = Often)

When you spend time with your relatives how often:

- 172. Do any of your relatives disagree with you about important things?
- 173. Are any of your relatives critical or disapproving of you?

174. Do any of your relatives get on your nerves?
175. Do any of your relatives get angry or lose their temper with you?
176. Do any of your relatives expect too much of you?
177. Can you count on any of your relatives to help you when you need it?
178. Do any of your relatives cheer you up when you are sad or worried?
179. Do you confide in any of your relatives?
180. Do you share mutual interests or activities with any of your relatives?
181. Do any of your relatives really understand how you feel about things?
182. Do any of your relatives respect your opinion?

H. FRIENDS AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Do not include parents, relatives, or spouse or partner as friends when answering these questions.

Have any of the following events occurred *in the last year*?

183. A friend died?
184. A friend moved to a distant place?
185. A serious conflict with a friend?

(N = Never / S = Seldom / ST = Sometimes / FO = Fairly Often / O = Often)

How often:

186. Do any of your friends disagree with you about important things?
187. Are any of your friends critical or disapproving of you?
188. Do any of your friends get on your nerves?
189. Do any of your friends get angry or lose their temper with you?
190. Do any of your friends expect too much of you?
191. How many clubs and organizations (e.g., church groups, union, PTA, bowling team) do you belong to?
(0, 1, 2, 3, or more than 3)
192. How many close friends do you have, people you feel at ease with and can talk to about personal matters? (0, 1, 2, 3, or more than 3)

(N = Never / S = Seldom (less than twice a year) / ST = Sometimes (several times a year) /
FO = Fairly Often (once or twice a month) / O = Often (every week))

193. How often do you attend religious services?
194. How often are you in touch with the friend or friends
to whom you feel closest?

(N = Never / S = Seldom / ST = Sometimes / FO = Fairly Often / O = Often)

How often:

195. Can you count on your friends to help you when you need it?
196. Do your friends cheer you up when you are sad or worried?
197. Do you confide in any of your friends?
198. Do you share mutual interests or activities with your friends?
199. Do your friends really understand how you feel about things?
200. Do your friends respect your opinion?

Appendix B

LISRES-A Answer Sheet

Answer Key

Y = Yes
N = No
DY = Definitely Yes
MY = Mainly Yes
MN = Mainly No
DN = Definitely No
N = Never
S = Seldom
ST = Sometimes
FO = Fairly Often
O = Often

A. PHYSICAL HEALTH

- 1a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
2a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
3a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
4a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
5a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
6a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
7a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
8a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
9a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
10a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
11a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
12a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
13a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N

- 14a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
15a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
16a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
17a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
18a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
19a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
20a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
21a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
22a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
23a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
24a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
25a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
26a. Y N If Yes: b. Y N
27. Y N

B. HOME/NEIGHBORHOOD

28. Y N
29. Y N
30. Y N
31. Y N
32. Y N
33. Y N
34. Y N
35. DY MY MN DN
36. DY MY MN DN
37. DY MY MN DN
38. DY MY MN DN
39. DY MY MN DN
40. DY MY MN DN
41. DY MY MN DN
42. DY MY MN DN
43. DY MY MN DN
44. DY MY MN DN
45. Y N
46. Y N

C. FINANCES

47. Y N
48. Y N
49. Y N
50. Y N
51. DY MY MN DN
52. DY MY MN DN
53. DY MY MN DN
54. DY MY MN DN
55. DY MY MN DN
56. DY MY MN DN
57. Y N
58. Y N
59. 1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8

Name _____

Marital status _____ Education _____

Employment _____

Please fill in your name, today's date, your sex, and your age (never married, married, separated, divorced, widowed, etc.) background (White, African American, Native American, etc.) current employment situation (full-time, part-time, both, etc.)

D. WORK

60. Y N
61. Y N
62. Y N
63. Y N
64. Y N
65. Y N
66. Y N
67. Y N
68. Y N
69. Y N
70. Y N
71. Y N
72. Y N
73. Y N
74. Y N

If currently not employed, and you have not held a job in the last month, go to Section E.

75. N S ST FO O
76. N S ST FO O
77. N S ST FO O
78. N S ST FO O
79. N S ST FO O
80. N S ST FO O
81. N S ST FO O
82. N S ST FO O
83. N S ST FO O
84. N S ST FO O
85. N S ST FO O
86. N S ST FO O

E. SPOUSE/PARTNER

87. Y N
88. Y N
89. Y N
90a. Y N
90b. If Yes: Y N
91. Y N
92. Y N
93a. Y N
93b. If Yes: Y N
94a. Y N
94b. If Yes: Y N
95. Y N
96. Y N
97. Y N
98. Y N
99a. Y N
99b. If Yes: Y N

If you do not currently have a spouse or partner, go to Section F.

100. N S ST FO O
101. N S ST FO O
102. N S ST FO O
103. N S ST FO O
104. N S ST FO O
105. N S ST FO O
106. N S ST FO O
107. N S ST FO O
108. N S ST FO O
109. N S ST FO O
110. N S ST FO O

te _____ Sex _____ Age _____
hnic group _____

the spaces above. Then fill in your marital status
ur education (number of years completed), your ethnic
ian American, Hispanic/Latino, Other), and your
mployed).

F. CHILDREN

111. Y N
112. Y N
113. Y N
114. Y N
115. Y N
116. Y N
117. Y N

118. Y N

If you do not have any living
children or stepchildren, go
to Section G.

119a. Y N
b. If Yes: Y N

120a. Y N
b. If Yes: Y N

121. Y N

122. 0 1 2 3 4 >4

If you do not have any
children or stepchildren
living with you now, go to
#128.

123. N S ST FO O
124. N S ST FO O
125. N S ST FO O
126. N S ST FO O
127. N S ST FO O

128. N S ST FO O
129. N S ST FO O
130. N S ST FO O
131. N S ST FO O
132. N S ST FO O

133. N S ST FO O
134. N S ST FO O
135. N S ST FO O
136. N S ST FO O
137. N S ST FO O
138. N S ST FO O

G. EXTENDED FAMILY

139a. Y N
b. If No: Y N

If your mother/stepmother
is not living, go to #154.

140a. Y N
b. If Yes: Y N

141a. Y N
b. If Yes: Y N

142. Y N

143. N S ST FO O
144. N S ST FO O
145. N S ST FO O
146. N S ST FO O
147. N S ST FO O

148. N S ST FO O
149. N S ST FO O
150. N S ST FO O
151. N S ST FO O
152. N S ST FO O
153. N S ST FO O

154a. Y N
b. If No: Y N

If your father/stepfather is
not living, go to #169.

155a. Y N
b. If Yes: Y N

156a. Y N
b. If Yes: Y N

157. Y N

158. N S ST FO O
159. N S ST FO O
160. N S ST FO O
161. N S ST FO O
162. N S ST FO O

163. N S ST FO O
164. N S ST FO O
165. N S ST FO O
166. N S ST FO O
167. N S ST FO O
168. N S ST FO O

169. Y N
170. Y N
171. Y N

172. N S ST FO O
173. N S ST FO O
174. N S ST FO O
175. N S ST FO O
176. N S ST FO O

177. N S ST FO O
178. N S ST FO O
179. N S ST FO O
180. N S ST FO O
181. N S ST FO O
182. N S ST FO O

H. FRIENDS & SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

183. Y N
184. Y N
185. Y N

186. N S ST FO O
187. N S ST FO O
188. N S ST FO O
189. N S ST FO O
190. N S ST FO O

191. 0 1 2 3 >3
192. 0 1 2 3 >3

193. N S ST FO O
194. N S ST FO O
195. N S ST FO O
196. N S ST FO O
197. N S ST FO O
198. N S ST FO O
199. N S ST FO O
200. N S ST FO O

Answer Key

Y = Yes
N = No
DY = Definitely Yes
MY = Mainly Yes
MN = Mainly No
DN = Definitely No
N = Never
S = Seldom
ST = Sometimes
FO = Fairly Often
O = Often

Appendix C

LISRES-A Life Stressor and Social Resource Profile

Life Stressors Profile

[illegible]

Raw score	T score
DI	HN
WT	FTN
GD	WV
CU	CD
EAM	CU
ED	EAM
NT	ED

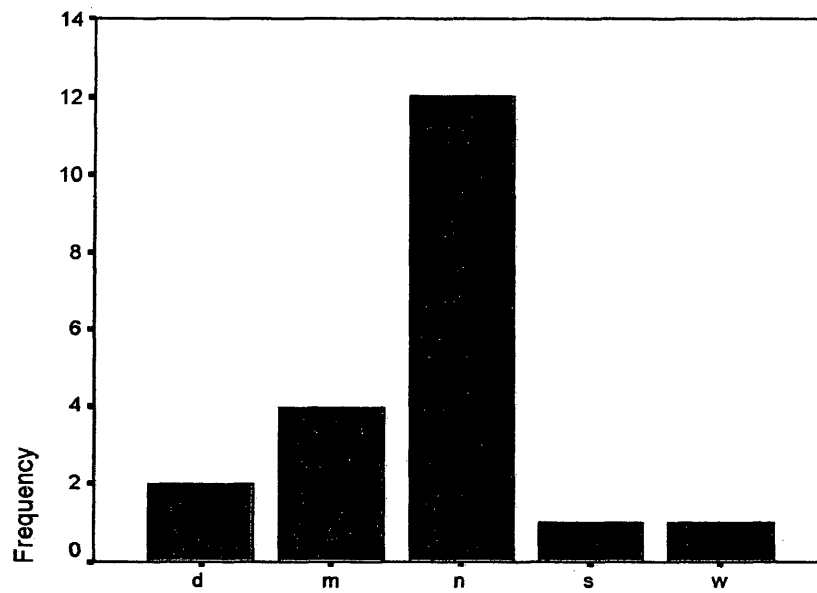
Social Resources Profile

T		T		T		T	
score	7	score	7	score	7	score	7
80+	79	80+	79	80+	79	80+	79
77	78	77	78	77	78	77	78
75	76	75	76	75	76	75	76
73	74	73	74	73	74	73	74
72	73	72	73	72	73	72	73
71	72	71	72	71	72	71	72
70	71	70	71	70	71	70	71
69	68	69	68	69	68	69	68
68	67	68	67	68	67	68	67
67	66	67	66	67	66	67	66
66	65	66	65	66	65	66	65
65	64	65	64	65	64	65	64
64	63	64	63	64	63	64	63
63	62	63	62	63	62	63	62
62	61	62	61	62	61	62	61
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46	45	46	45	46	45	46	45
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44	43	44	43	44	43	44	43
43	42	43	42	43	42	43	42
42	41	42	41	42	41	42	41
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39	38	39	38	39	38	39	38
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3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2
2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
0	NA	0	NA	0	NA	0	NA
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
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NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
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NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
NA	NA	NA	NA	NA			

	Raw score	T score
PLAN	_____	_____
WITF	_____	_____
CN	_____	_____
MT	_____	_____
CLASS	_____	_____
REN	_____	_____
PSYCH	_____	_____

Appendix D
Data Analysis Charts

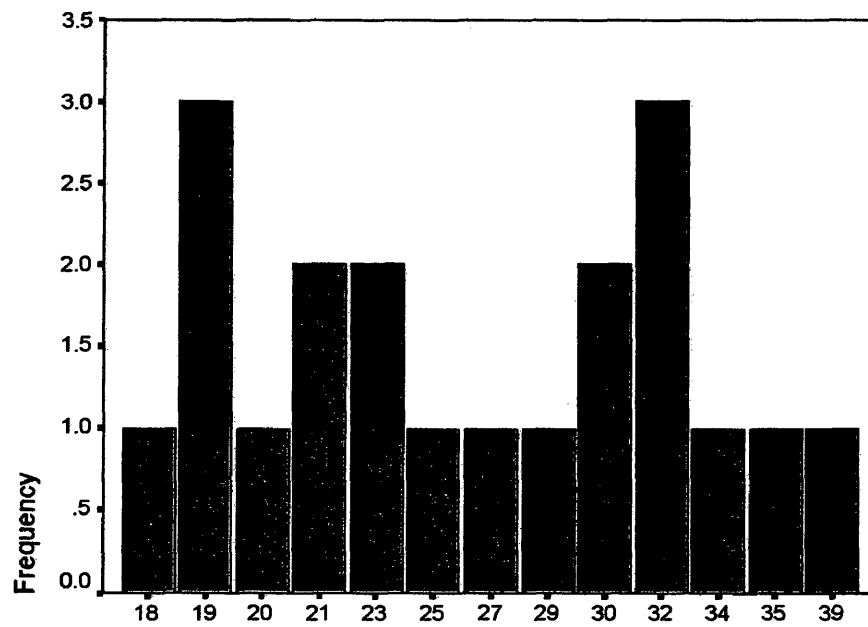
Graph 1: Marital Status



Marital Status of Participants

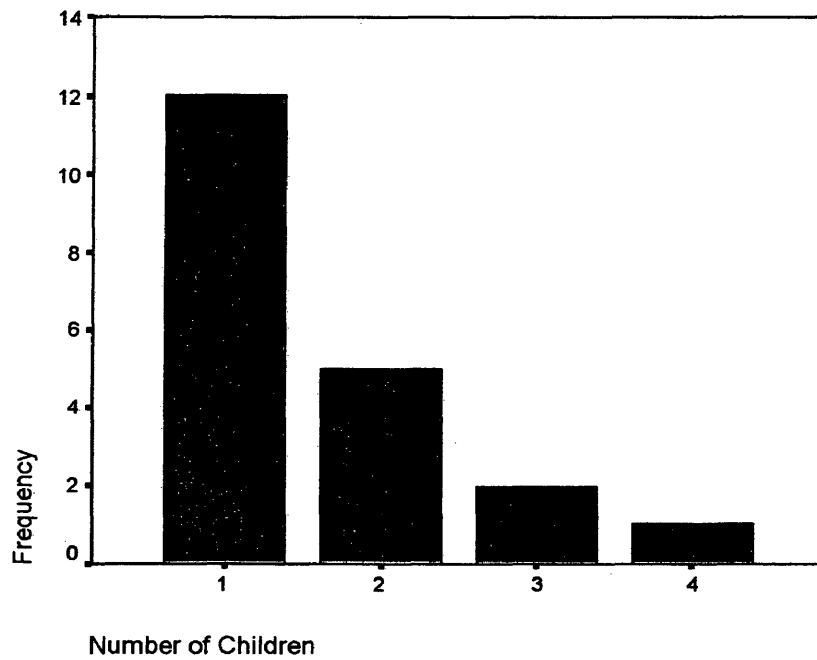
d = divorced m = married n = never married s = separated w = widowed

Graph 2: Age of Participants

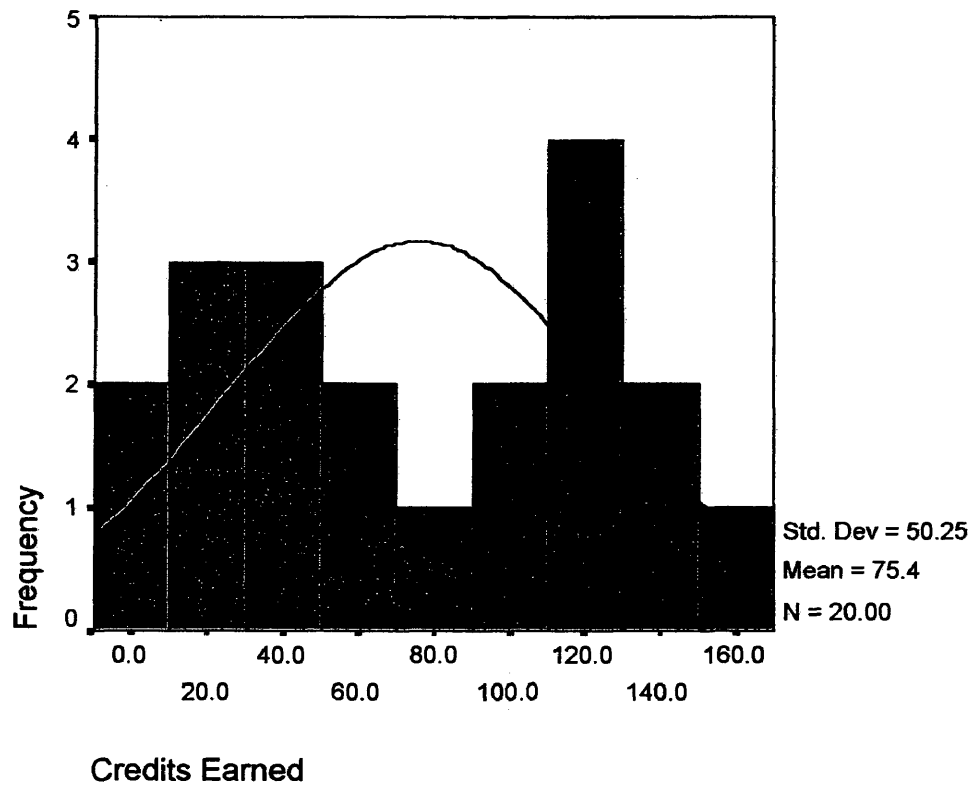


Age of Participants

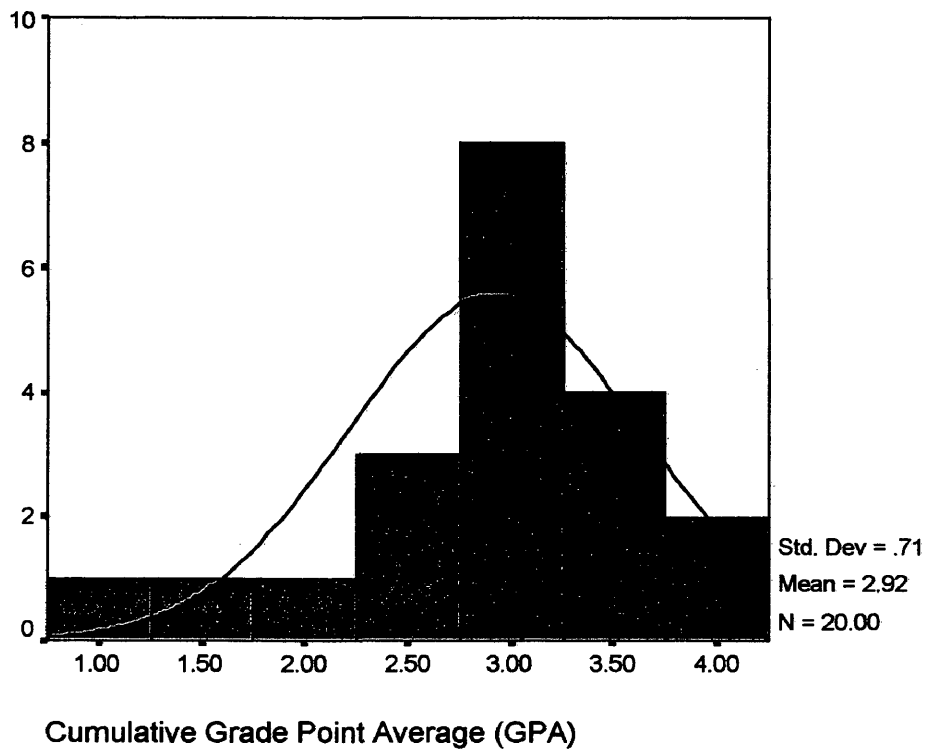
Graph 3: Number of Reported Children Living at Home



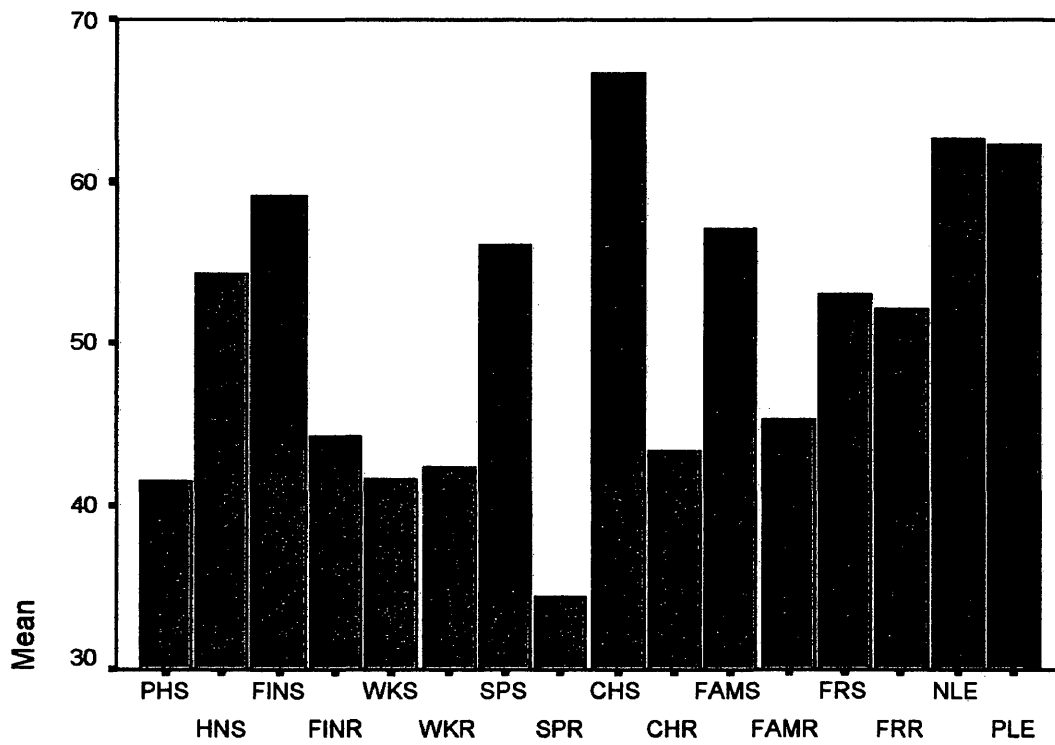
Graph 4: Cumulative Number of Credits Earned at End of Spring 2001 Semester



Graph 5: Distribution of Participant's Cumulative Grade Point Average



Graph 6: Individual Domain Means



Graph 7: Reported Employment Status



ne = not employed pt = part-time employment ft = full-time employment

Appendix F
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Forms



Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA)
University of Nebraska Medical Center
Service Building 3000
987830 Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, NE 68198-7830
(402) 559-6463
Fax: (402) 559-3300
E-mail: irbora@unmc.edu
<http://www.unmc.edu/irb>

May 8, 2001

Katherine Gaehring
Graduate Counseling, KH 421
UNO - VIA COURIER

IRB#: 170-01-EX

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: African American Mothers Attending College: The Relationship Between Life Stressors, Social Resources, and Grade Point Average

Dear Ms. Gaehring:

The IRB has reviewed your Exemption Form for the above-titled research project. According to the information provided, this project is exempt under 45 CFR 46:101b, category 2. You are therefore authorized to begin the research.

It is understood this project will be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines. It is also understood that the IRB will be immediately notified of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project.

Please be advised that the IRB has a maximum protocol approval period of three years from the original date of approval and release. If this study continues beyond the three year approval period, the project must be resubmitted in order to maintain an active approval status.

Sincerely,

Ernest Prentice, PhD/gdk

Ernest D. Prentice, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, IRB

gdk



IRB # 170-01-EX

University of
Nebraska at
Omaha

56
Multicultural Affairs
A Unit of Student Affairs
Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0467
(402) 554-2248
<http://www.unomaha.edu>
Page 1 of 2

ADULT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS ATTENDING COLLEGE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIFE STRESSORS, SOCIAL RESOURCES, AND GRADE POINT AVERAGE

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in this research study. The information in the consent form is provided to help you decide whether to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

WHY ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

You are eligible to participate because you are an African American female over the age of 18 and are enrolled as an undergraduate college student. In addition, you have identified yourself as having custody of at least one child.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to identify any existing relationship or interactions between life stressors, social resources, and academic performance (demonstrated through grade point average) for African American mothers attending college.

WHAT DOES THIS STUDY INVOLVE?

This study involves the one time completion of a self-report inventory, suggested to take 30 minutes. The self-report inventory asks personal questions about your current life stressors (physical health, home/neighborhood, financial, work, spouse or partner, children, extended family, friends, and negative life events), and social resources (financial, work, spouse or partner, children, extended family, friends, and positive life events).

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS YOU COULD EXPERIENCE?

There is the possibility of minimal psychological distress due to a greater awareness of constant life stressors.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO YOU?

The benefit you may personally receive from participating in this study is possible better awareness of stable life stressors and social resources.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO SOCIETY?

Results from this study may help university faculty, administrators, counselors, and the community to better understand the experiences of African American mothers attending college.

HOW WILL YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person or agency required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

APPROVED

University of Nebraska at Omaha University of Nebraska Medical Center University of Nebraska-Lincoln University of Nebraska at Kearney

Participants Initials _____



IRB # 170-01-EX

Multicultural Affairs
A Unit of Student Affairs
Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0467
(402) 554-2248
<http://www.unomaha.edu>

Page 2 of 2

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT?

You have rights as a research participant. These rights are explained in *The Rights of Research Participants*, which you have been given. If you have questions concerning your rights, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), phone #(402) 559-6463.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO PARTICIPATE?

You can decide not to participate in this study or you can withdraw from this study at any time. Your decision will not affect your care or your relationship with the investigator(s) or the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

If any new information develops during the course of this study that may affect your willingness to continue participating, you will be informed immediately.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH. YOUR SIGNATURE MEANS THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PRESENTED AND DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE ALSO MEANS THAT THE INFORMATION ON THIS CONSENT FORM HAS BEEN FULLY EXPLAINED TO YOU AND ALL YOUR QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED TO YOUR SATISFACTION. IF YOU THINK OF ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS DURING THE STUDY, YOU SHOULD CONTACT THE INVESTIGATOR. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT_____
DATE

I CERTIFY THAT ALL THE ELEMENTS OF INFORMED CONSENT DESCRIBED ON THIS CONSENT FORM HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED FULLY TO THE PARTICIPANT. IN MY JUDGEMENT, THE PARTICIPANT IS VOLUNTARILY AND KNOWINGLY GIVING INFORMED CONSENT AND POSSESSES THE LEGAL CAPACITY TO GIVE INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH.

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR_____
DATE

AUTHORIZED STUDY PERSONNEL

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

K.C. Gaehring, M.A. Candidate

Office: (402) 554-2969

University of Nebraska at Omaha

University of Nebraska Medical Center

University of Nebraska—Lincoln

University of Nebraska at Kearney

Participant's Initials

COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH CHILDREN



IF YOU ARE:

- AFRICAN AMERICAN
- FEMALE
- PARENTING AT LEAST ONE CHILD
- AN UNDERGRADUATE AT UNOMAHA

****YOU ARE QUALIFIED FOR A GRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT****

TIME COMMITMENT: JUST 30 MINUTES

FOR DETAILS CONTACT: K.C. GAHRING, GRADUATE ASSISTANT
OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS
(office) 554-2969, (email) kc_gahring@unomaha.edu

APPROVED

References

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