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The Educational Attainment of Black Bahamian Women from Low Socio-Economic Environments

Jennifer M. Bethel

THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF BLACK BAHAMIAN WOMEN FROM

LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTS

DISSERTATION

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By

Jennifer M. Bethel

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ABSTRACT

THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF BLACK BAHAMIAN WOMEN FROM LOW

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTS

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Barry University, 2010

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Purpose: The purpose of this research study was to better understand the educational

attainment of Black Bahamian women of low socio-economic status being raised by a female

single-parent in a low socio-economic environment. Better awareness of the challenges and

successes of these women provided a comprehensive analysis which contributed to a critical

understanding of the social realities of these women's lives by giving the contextual setting

central importance and removing the invisibility of gender bias to reveal their perceptions

and understanding of their lived social reality.

Method: This phenomenological qualitative study was conducted with eight

purposively selected individuals. The researcher was the instrument and, therefore,

responsible for collecting the data using the interview protocol. The women provided their

insights, perceptions, and beliefs using 11 open-ended questions in one-on-one interviews.

The questions sought to gain depth of awareness and perception from women raised by a

female single-parent and in a low socio-economic environment. The participants

confidentially described and explained (a) their perspectives; (b) their exposure to contextual

poverty, community, and family; (c) the relative importance of mother-daughter parental

characteristics, such as gender-specific goals and educational inheritance or advancement,

and how these characteristics influenced their educational attainment; and, (d) influencing

factors, such as achievement-related beliefs, disciplined behavior, gender and educational self-efficacy, and other positive processes which may have affected their educational attainment.

The data were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of data analysis. As customary with phenomenological inquiry, the researcher gathered data from the participants which were then used to generate codes. The emerging codes revealed themes or recurring patterns of meaning which provided greater awareness about the participants' experiences and perspectives. The researcher also ensured this study was embedded with verification strategies. Inclusive of these strategies were methodological coherence, sampling sufficiency, data collection and analysis, thinking theoretically, and theory development. Collectively, the aforementioned strategies contributed to the trustworthiness of the research.

Major Findings: The relevant and thick descriptions provided by the eight women postulated a coherent representation of the influences of social origins on the educational attainment of this select group. The findings of this study resulted in three over-arching themes which all had significance in explaining the educational attainment of the women.

Cultural capital represented the first theme and all participants acknowledged their mothers were the most instrumental persons in their educational pursuits. The mothers served to lay the foundation by stressing the importance of education and encouraged the women to excel despite their economic disparity. The mothers' beliefs about the importance of education were transferred to the women and, in turn, became a mantra for their individual pursuits of higher education. The concept of family and community support also emerged as

part of this theme, and represented a unique construct within Afro-centric families in the Bahamas.

The socio-economic status of the participants was the second major theme and all participants acknowledged awareness of its affect on their status, though the recognition occurred at different times in their lives. More importantly, the associated disadvantages served as motivators to elevate them into a new class status and provided an impetus not only to improve their lives, but those of their families and communities. The cognitive abilities of the participants represented the third theme. All the women acknowledged they were intellectually capable of overcoming the circumstances of their socio-economic status with a higher education. Due to the women's scholastic abilities most of them were able to receive a full or partial scholarship to pursue a higher education degree. Therefore, the greatest challenge was being able to balance finances with other responsibilities such as family.

of you always made my days a little brighter and my problems seem a little smaller. To my nieces and nephew, your mothers, my sisters, are committed to your well being and will always play an invaluable part in your lives, as they have mine.

To my very special fur-kid, Venus, I love you. Though you may not have been able to speak, the comfort and support you have provided over the years has meant so much to me. There were times when I was so stressed and overwhelmed and a rub or kiss from you made me smile. You will forever remain tied to my existence.

No matter how independent we think we are as human beings, we all need friends. Berkley, Sean, Jemellia, Daphne, Christina, and Cheche this journey would not have been possible without each of you. From my first thought of going abroad to attend college my true friends have never doubted my abilities. There were times when I thought I would never see the light at the end of the tunnel, and you always provided words of comfort and assistance whenever necessary. Without each of you, I do not know how I would have made it, or, how do I say thank you. You were there to rejoice in my good news; you were there during my frustrations; you were there during my insecurities; and you were there when all I wanted to do was talk about my dissertation. Each of you played and will continue to play a special role in my life.

To my U. S. girlfriends, Judith, Francine, and Maureen, I will always cherish the times we have spent together, and though we may be separated by the sea I will forever keep you in my thoughts. Each of you became a support system as I journeyed through this process. You are all wonderful women with strong constitution and impeccable character. Though we all hail from different islands in the Caribbean basin and different mothers, we are sisters of the same socio-economic and political culture. So sisters, though I may not be

able to see you or talk to you as much as we would like, I will always carry you within my heart, for you have all been a gift to my heart and a lasting companion to my soul.

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Anyone who has attempted a dissertation knows that it is impossible to complete the process without doing research. The process is often arduous and never ending, therefore, it's wise to make friends with librarians. Subsequently, this research would not have been possible without the help of some very special women at Barry University's library, the National Archives of the Bahamas, and the Department of Statistics in the Bahamas. Ms. Merlene Nembhard, you were the first in a series of librarians who became a cheering team, always inquiring how my dissertation was progressing and offering help whenever necessary. Mrs. Marvilean Brown-Houston, from the first time we met, you left an indelible impression on me as your desire to provide endless support and encouragement never ceased. I will forever be appreciative for all that you have done for me. To Mrs. Strachan and Mrs. Gray, thank you for ensuring I always had the available resources upon my arrival and extending beyond the call of duty despite your busy work schedule. To each of you, I say, thank you for your continued interest in my well-being.

According to an unknown author, "No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with

gratitude." With great gratitude, I must acknowledge the faculty and staff at Barry University's School of Education. To my Chair, Sister Ellen, I have probably spent more time with you than any other faculty. There was a variation of emotions as we journeyed together. Respectfully, you were able to tug and stimulate my intellectual abilities as I looked deep within myself to find truth and meaning behind my dissertation. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness, which I shall not forget. You're a real class act. Thanks again.

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the research participants for your active participation and cooperation. I very much appreciate that each of you gave freely of your time to assist in the interview and follow-up questions. If it were not for what you all shared this study would not have been completed. Thanks to all of you for making my dream a reality.

Throughout this journey there were many individuals who I met and ultimately contributed to the success of this venture. Therefore, to all those who I may have forgotten to mention, it was unintentional. I would like to thank you for all of your love and support in every possible way. I will forever be eternally grateful and want to say thanks from the bottom of my heart.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother, Beverley, and all of the female single-parents of Comfort Street. Though the environment may have been impoverished life centered on family and progress. It was with the later thought that mothers, such as you, ensured that your children had all of the necessary opportunities which guaranteed their success. Your hard work and principle living inspired us to excel beyond our environment. Today, we are successful contributing members of society and without your help our dreams would not have been possible. You are truly a daughter of the soil. Thanks, from all of your children.

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The Problem

Introduction

Since the diaspora of African women to the New Worlds of the Americas and Caribbean basin, there had been a persistent inequality due to both racism and sexism (Cauce et al., 1996). The face of the Black female had been cursed, and many had been left to endure on a daily basis the hardships of their environment (Smith & Smith, 1986). Within North America and the Caribbean basin, women of African descent often endured more economic hardships than any other group (Reddock, 2004; Rodney, 1998; U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009; Wagner, 1997). Never had this inequality been more visible than in education where from generation to generation attenuating the inequalities by Black women was often met with struggle and amazement. The economic hardship of Black women often transferred to their children, thereby decreasing their children's probability of educational attainment and increasing the likelihood they would become impoverished as adults (Handa, 2004; McLanahan, 1985; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Amazement seemed to always precede higher educational success because the lived experiences of these women during their attainment years were less than stellar (Angelou, n. d.).

Poverty had been closely associated with Black female single-parent homes, and children reared in low socio-economic conditions faced greater environmental risk for detrimental outcomes (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). Statistics specific to the Bahamas revealed that children within low socio-economic environments were at risk for poverty, crime, lack of financial and emotional support, illiteracy, and female single-parent households (Blank, 2005; Consultative

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Committee, 1994). Additionally, the number of out-of-wedlock children born each year between 1976 and 2005 had increased every year with the exception of 1983 (Department of Statistics, 2009b). During the same period females headed approximately 38% of all households within the Bahamas, and 43% of these women were never married, consequently landing them in the poorest quintile (Dorsett, 2004b). Furthermore, female single-parents in the Bahamas were associated with a higher-than-average household size and represented 55% of all poor households compared to other family structures (Handa, 2004).

As a result, questions and concerns had arisen regarding the impact of this demographic situation on Black children. However, very little research had focused on the lived experiences of low socio-economic Black females. Despite the household structure, girls in the Bahamas from all family structures and at all levels of education demonstrated higher self-efficacy and they outpaced boys sitting for and passing national exams (Blank, 2005; Coakley, 2004). Accordingly, Blank (2005) suggested that most Bahamian students felt that a college education was important. Coincidentally, girls' self-efficacy was higher than boys as the later were twice as likely (14% versus 6%) not to have plans to attend college (Coakley, 2004).

In terms of education, female workers were better educated with 28% having a tertiary-level education versus 16% of their male counterparts (Department of Statistics, 2008a; Handa, 2004). However, only 3% of youths in the poorest quintile, including daughters of single Black mothers, completed post-secondary education in the Bahamas (Coakley, 2004). This 3% suggested that these females had defied the odds, broken the cycle of poverty, and attained academic success. While some literature existed on the sociological and economic realities facing Black women raised in female single-households, little was

known about the self-efficacy of these women. Knowledge of gender-related goals and expectations of these women contributed to our understanding of their expectations for their own educational experiences and the subsequent impact they intended their education to have on their future.

Statement of the Problem

Since emancipation, Black girls had a vested interest in education as their achievements had superseded those of men in the Bahamas (Blank, 2005; Coakley, 2004; Department of Statistics, 2008a, b, c; Handa, 2004; Sands, 2007). The family structure of girls raised in female single-parent homes, like other family types, had long been considered a determinant of their outcomes. According to Axmaker (2005), girls born in female single-parent households were 150% more likely to become pregnant and have out-of-wedlock babies than their counterparts from two-parent families. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) concurred and earlier suggested that the out-of-wedlock children were also more likely to grow up in poverty as generational poverty tended to transfer, more often than not, from one generation to the next (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Hauser & Featherman, 1976; Jencks et al., 1972; Mare, 1980). In the Bahamas, this phenomenon had not been explored, but the effect of generational poverty could possibly explain the likelihood that out-of-wedlock children were more likely to grow up in poverty.

Meanwhile, researchers had contended that the stigma associated with being reared in a female single-parent home often had less influence on the educational attainment of female children than the associated socio-economic hardships (Biblarz, Raftery, & Bucur, 1997; McLanahan, 1985). Accordingly, the pursuit of higher education for many Black women became a mantra expressing their individual desire to pursue a college education, which

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against great odds needed to be explored as a unique element or phenomenon. Young Black girls living in low socio-economic homes with their mother engaged in an active struggle to educate themselves so as to create a universal difference in their lives.

According to Mohanty (2003), women, unlike before, could be represented in the realms of their social reality without borders. Young women growing up in poverty were themselves at risk of becoming victims, yet a few managed to rise amidst the challenges. Unfortunately, there were no comprehensive reviews of the social realities of these women's lives as they attained a higher education, and, like so many other Black women, the perceptions and understanding of their realities and conditions were omitted from in the history books. First, it was this researcher's quest to explore Black Bahamian women's lived educational experiences without borders and reveal the powerful history of resistance and daily praxis necessary to overcome the feminization of poverty often inherited in the poorest strata of society. Second, scholars such as Hill (2002) contended that the life success of children was often gender-of-child-dependent. No research had examined the influence of the socialization process in female single-parent households in the Bahamas and its effects on low-income Black girls in pursuit of a college education. Therefore, it was the researcher's desire to provide seminal exploration on the experience so as to establish awareness.

Purpose of the Study

According to Alfred (2002), voice was essential when discussing women's issues, and only in recent times had the voices of female African ancestors and their offspring begun to resonate and dispel psychological untruths. However, according to Mohanty (2003), the feminization of poverty and the socio-historical context of all women were not the same. Therefore, the success of Black women in the Bahamas who lived in poverty with their

mother could not be extrapolated to other Black women; because although commonality existed, it would have been a false representation of their story and voice. A collective understanding of the struggles endured amidst poverty, lack of sufficient parental support, and economic hardships, had not, but, needed to be explored and understood by examining the structure and context of the lived educational experiences of women raised in poverty in the Bahamas.

In the Bahamas, education was viewed as the key to upward mobility, a door to greater opportunities, independence, the least intrusive element to the ruling class, and influence in the community and beyond. This qualitative phenomenological study provided a voice which helped unearth and understand the essential underlying experiences which had contributed to the academic and upward mobility of Black women from female single-parent homes. Toward this objective, the purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was five-fold. First, the study sought to explore the contextual setting of poverty, community, and family structure. It was hoped this comprehensive analysis contributed to a critical understanding of the social realities of these women's lives by giving the contextual setting central importance and removing the invisibility of gender bias to reveal their perceptions and understanding of their lived social reality.

Second, this study considered the relative importance of mother-daughter parental characteristics, such as gender-specific goals and educational inheritance or advancement, and how these characteristics influenced girls' educational attainment. Third, this study examined influencing factors, such as achievement-related beliefs, disciplined behavior, gender and educational self-efficacy, and other positive processes which may have affected the girls' educational attainment. Fourth, this study hoped to provide structural meaning and

epistemic perspectives of Black Bahamian women who had earned a higher education degree and, thereby, increase understanding of these women's interpretations of their own experiences and the subsequent values they have had on their lives.

Fifth, everything written for or about Black Bahamian women until recent times had been expressed by the ruling minority; the Anglo-Saxon Protestant voice had long been the voice of acceptance (Samuel, n.d.). Brereton (1988) postulated that women were voiceless due to the ways in which questions were posed and issues were analyzed. Like Bahamian women, Brereton (1988) further stated that since the late 1960s it had been accepted that Caribbean women were invisible and hidden from history. Therefore, only half of mankind was recorded while the other half was almost totally neglected. The observations gleaned from this research, hopefully, contributed to the knowledge base in the context of Black Bahamian women and education, generated a better understanding of the challenges and successes of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments, and provided a working framework for the collective development of social capital in the Bahamas.

Theoretical Frameworks

According to Creswell (2003), a theoretical framework was used to guide a study by allowing the researcher to focus on specific assumptions which, in turn, helped examine important issues in one's own investigation. The purpose of this study was to explore the contextual and structural meanings of the lived educational attainment of select Black Bahamian women. Until now, no studies had sought to identify factors that could be used to predict the academic achievements of Black women from low socio-economic environments and raised by a female single-parent. Therefore, the two theoretical frameworks deemed

suitable to be used in this study were Caribbean feminism theory (Baksh-Sooden, 1998,

Mohammed, 1998a, b) and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

Caribbean Feminism Theory

The quest by Caribbean women to create an identity in search of rootedness had

revealed multifaceted realities. Diversity within the region occurred before and after

emancipation from slavery and with the arrival of other ethnic groups. Through the lived

experiences of emancipated slaves and recent immigrants new cultures infused with its

colonizers developed, in spite of, a search for a new identity (Mohammed, 1998b). Due to the

magnitude of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, African ancestry had remained dominant,

especially within the English-speaking Caribbean basin. Feminist scholars in the English-

speaking region had sought to address the shared colonial and post-colonial experiences

exclusive to the region and inclusive of the ". . . psychological scars of emasculation and

defeminization . . ." (Mohammed, 1998b, p. 8) caused by the diaspora which has had

enduring effects on gender relations.

The discourses on feminism in the region were still relevant to the past and, as such,

were a constant struggle. The past was the tool with which to analyze how colonialism had

shaped the modern region (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a). The struggle remained

because though women sought to enrich the place called home many within their perspective

cultures still experienced difficulty in their lives. As a result, the task of searching for an

identity in a post-modern world where women sought to have a voice was best suited for

those familiar with the struggles of being a poor Black Bahamian woman with no voice

because outsiders could not truly speak for the subaltern (Spivak, 1988). In the context of this

investigation, Caribbean feminism as a theoretical framework represented a marginal theory that overlapped with post-colonialism, Black feminism, and Western feminism.

First, Caribbean feminism provided a profound and empowering focus which highlighted slavery, gender parity, race, class, politics, resistance, representation, and socio-economic status of a specific group of Bahamian women whose lived experiences were intertwined in colonialism and modern citizenship. Second, Caribbean feminism allowed the researcher to unearth the underlining relationships of this sub-group with the hegemonic culture. The theory within the context of this investigation allowed the subaltern voice to resonate through dialogue so as to highlight the femininity and strength of Black women who, despite less than stellar circumstances, had risen with a formidable character intact (Angelou, n. d.). Finally, Caribbean feminism served to help develop both efficient and effective strategies to improve the social world of Black Bahamian women of low socio-economic status as they engaged in the daily praxis of their lived realities.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy over the years had received considerable attention as it related to academic motivation and self-regulation. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy was a judgment of one's capability to organize, execute, and accomplish specific goals successfully. Persons with high self-efficacy were not easily intimated and viewed challenging assignments as opportunities for effective performance, which resulted in both growth and mastery. With reference to human behavior, the theory suggested the cognitive process was responsible for both obtaining and regulating one's actions. Meanwhile, psychological factors such as mastery, motivation, and perceived ability played a substantial role in performance. Accordingly, when changes occurred in human behavior, they most

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often resulted from induced and modified experiences garnered from mastery of effective performance.

Parents were among the first in a series of people to motivate and instill self-efficating behaviors and attitudes in their children (Bandura, 1986). Children, over time, often became masters of their own destiny as a result of their parents encouraging them to develop their self-confidence. Self-confidence then led to one's ability to master new situations which continuously developed. Over time, a cycle developed as the child continued to excel and self-efficacy further flourished. First, self-efficacy in this investigation explored if the attainment of Black Bahamian women resulted from the repeated verbal persuasions by their mothers as they motivated and inspired their daughters to excel and, in turn, carried the mantra of educational success. These sentiments, with reference to education, were similar to the thoughts of Pajares (2002) who concurred with Erikson when he suggested that children developed mastery experience not from futile praise or condescending words, but from ". . . accruing ego identity which gains real strength only from wholehearted and consistent recognition of real accomplishment . . ." (p. 11) which had significant meaning in their respective culture.

Second, self-efficacy as a theory served to focus on the factors that may have influenced the participants' beliefs in their own abilities to attain a higher education degree. Furthermore, self-efficacy reflected the long years and struggle of women striving to fulfill their destiny, entering a new class structure through less intrusive means, and being accepted into a higher functional stratification of the social system. Finally, self-efficacy allowed the researcher to delve into the daily self-efficating activities which led to academic success. With these revelations, one began to formulate a framework that provided an understanding

of the belief systems which garnered confidence and facilitated the necessary actions needed to attain the goal of a higher education despite its associated challenges.

Research Questions

This study explored the educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments. The research questions that guided this study were aimed at answering one over-arching question and four sub-questions.

Over-arching Question

What sociological factors influenced Black Bahamian women's educational attainment?

Sub-questions

1) What socio-economic structures impacted Black Bahamian women's educational attainment?

2) What socialization influence(s) did single mothers' gender-of-child-dependent rearing have on their daughter(s) obtaining a higher education degree?

3) What daily self-efficating behaviors and educational activities contributed to the Black Bahamian women's success?

4) What structural meaning(s) did Black Bahamian women ascribed to having earned a higher education degree?

Significance of the Study

Stolen from Africa and brought to the New World described the roots of most African descendents; however, the history of their struggles and tribulations to emancipate both their minds and bodies were obscured. This was because the ruling class controlled the enslaved's thinking and "when you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions"

(Woodson, 2000, back cover, para. 1). As such, not all, but many enslaved women accepted the principles of educational domination.

The sundry story of determination and belief in the pursuit of a college education for Black women needed to be explored and understood in the context of being raised by a female single-parent and in poverty. This study was significant because it created a voice for the voiceless and unsung heroes whose story had often been ignored by historians when it came to issues of slavery and women. More importantly, there was no systematic literary exploration on the experiences of daughters raised by Black women from low socio-economic environments in the Bahamas. This phenomenological qualitative inquiry sought to contribute rich, thick, relevant, and descriptive narratives to the fields of education and women's studies.

Finally, this study was of significance because its seminal exploration served to stimulate and highlight critical thought, which not only emphasized and revealed the nature of the experience, but possibly explained the contributing factors that shaped the values and attitudes of Black Bahamian women. In addition, the benefits derived from this study not only served to provide a voice to the voiceless, but provided insight and learning opportunities for a young independent country in need of evidence-based data to assist in decision-making procedures.

Origin of the Researcher's Interest in the Topic

The researcher's interest in this phenomenological qualitative inquiry mushroomed from childhood. Growing up in an inner city community, the researcher was always aware of the importance of education, and, on a daily basis, education was sung as the constant mantra to upward mobility. Again, and again, having the idea entrenched in the researcher's mind

eventually resulted in a phenomenal experience with reference to her academic success. Upon further reflection, it was observed that others in similar circumstances also garnered commendable success.

As an adult, the constant nagging and lack of awareness by individuals unfamiliar with the struggles of inner city poverty led to a quest that explored and answered the question as to why Black Bahamian women's self-efficacy with reference to education persisted. After embarking upon research in the discipline of Bahamian women's study, the researcher realized that there was little or no literary exploration that captured the true lived experiences of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments. Thus, the researcher sought to comprehensively analyze and provide conceptual understanding of the plight of Black women, about which, little was known. More importantly, this inquiry generated much needed literature about Black Bahamian women while stimulating new ideas and laying a foundation that helped provide a voice to the voiceless in an attempt to re-establish an identity.

Research Design

Omnipresent in the low socio-economic environments of the Bahamas, like other countries in the region, were poverty, crime, lack of financial and emotional support, high illiteracy rates, and female single-households (Blank, 2005; Consultative Committee, 1994; Department of Statistics, 2004). Yet, despite such disadvantaged circumstances in the Bahamas, there were a few Black women who had succeeded against ominous odds and risen to create a better life. With the aforesaid in mind, it was inconceivable to capture the true essence of the lived phenomenon using any method, other than, a qualitative design.

A qualitative design was best suited because the researcher sought to explore a central phenomenon involving participants in their lived environment (Berg, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). More importantly, a qualitative design was most appropriate because the researcher inductively used participants' perspectives to create both a social and historical pattern so as to competently develop a contextual understanding of the event. A qualitative design also allowed the researcher to consider the true essence of the whole experience of growing up in a female single-headed household and in a low socio-economic environment, as oppose to, only parts (Moustakas, 1994).

Using open-ended questions during individual interviews, the researcher was able to gather descriptions from the participants' sub-conscious, as only qualitative inquiry could achieve. Finally, a qualitative inquiry did not dichotomize the participants and their environment, for it was the environment that influenced their lives. As such, the fact that the researcher sought to interview persons who had experienced the same phenomenon was a testament to her commitment of being fully immersed in the search for meaning.

Definition of Key Terms

The researcher was conducting a study which focused on Black women in the Bahamas. Despite the country's close proximity to the United States, there were distinct differences with reference to the meaning of words. Furthermore, a dichotomy existed because of the Bahamas status as a former British colony and the researcher was studying at an American University. Therefore, it was incumbent upon the researcher to provide a reference for readers to facilitate clarity about specific terminology used in this study.

All-Age-School. This referred to schools which provided students the opportunity to complete their formative education at only one institution. Due to the geographical dispersion

of the islands within the Bahamas and their small populations these schools were located mostly on the family or out-islands. Furthermore, these schools provided the opportunity for the government of the Bahamas to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of quality education with cost.

A-Sue. It was a tradition practiced primarily by Black Bahamians and it was believed to be an African custom brought by Yoruba slaves who called it, Esusu (Ajisafe, 1946). The system operated when various groups of people pooled equal amounts of money together and each contributor took a turn at receiving the collected funds known as a draw. The monetary funds helped persons save and acquire money for various purposes such as school fees, as was the case in this study.

Black-Bahamian Woman/Female. More than 85% of all Bahamians were of African descent resulting from the slave trade in which persons from Africa were imported to support the plantation system (Craton, 1986; Department of Statistics, 2000, 2004, 2009b; Saunders, 1985). As a result, women who could trace their roots back to their African ancestors made up the specific demographic group in this study.

Educational System. The Bahamas' educational system was universal and based on the British model; as such, it consisted of three levels of education. These were inclusive of six years of primary education, three years of junior-secondary education, and three years of senior-high education (Bahamas Island Statue Law, 1962g). The Bahamas had a compulsory school age which meant all persons between ages 5 and 16 years were to be enrolled in an educational institution (Bahamas Island Statue Law, 1996).

Government Schools. These were schools financed, operated, and staffed by the Ministry of Education which was responsible for mandating the curriculum, employment,

and regulating policies and procedures. In addition, schools maintained by the government were prohibited to charge fees for all pupils (Bahamas Island Statue Law, 1962c, d).

Higher Education. This referred to the level of education provided by universities, community colleges, and other collegiate-level institutions. Students who completed programs at these institutions were awarded various academic degrees, diplomas, or professional certificates (Bahamas Island Statue Law, 1962a).

Household Head. This was the person who was acknowledged as the head by other members of the family and usually incurred the greatest economic responsibility (Department of Statistics, 2004, 2008c).

Junior-Secondary School. This referred to those schools which consisted of grades seven through nine and whose students ranged between ages 11 and 13 years (Bahamas Island Statue Law, 1962e). At the completion of grade nine students were expected to take and pass at least five Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) examinations. These examinations were modeled after the British exit exams and they provided an analysis of students' progress mid-way through their secondary education.

Low Socio-Economic Status/Poverty. This referred to household heads whose economic and social status inclusive of income, education, and occupation were significantly lower than the national average (Department of Statistics, 1990, 2000, 2004).

Over-the-Hill/Ghetto. This referred to areas that were inhabited mainly by Blacks during and after slavery (Saunders, 1985). Most Black Bahamians could trace their roots back to one of these neighborhoods; however, as prosperity grew among the masses many established new communities. Meanwhile, over-the-hill became known as a ghetto consisting mostly of low socio-economic residents.

Primary School. Persons between ages 5 and 10 years were expected to be enrolled in one of these schools located in their neighborhoods. Primary schools in the Bahamas consisted of grades one through six (Bahamas Island Statue Law, 1962e).

Private/Independent Schools. Private schools had always existed in the Bahamas and referred to schools independently operated in which fee-paying was required. These schools could be denominational or non-denominational and consisted of primary, secondary, or both (Bahamas Island Statue Law, 1962b). Though private, these schools adhered to the Ministry of Education policies and procedures as many were partially subsidized by the government.

Pupil/Student. In the traditional British system pupil referred to both boys and girls enrolled in elementary and secondary schools (Bahamas Island Statue Law, 1962f). However, after Independence, the British influence decreased in the Bahamas while the North American influence had become more dominant. As a result, most Bahamians referred to school-aged children as students; therefore, both terms were used interchangeably.

Senior High School. These schools consisted of students whose ages ranged between 14 and 16 years. The Bahamas established a compulsory school age in 1996, and as a result of The Education Act, all students between ages 5 and 16 years were provided instruction that was expected to lead to university entrance or a vocational trade (Bahamas Island Statue Law, 1962e). Students at the completion of senior high school were expected to take the Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) examination in various disciplines. The BGCSE examinations provided a more contextual and structural relevant assessment, and in 1993 they replaced the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations used mostly in current or former British territories.

Single-Black Mother. This referred to a Bahamian woman of African descent who had children out-of-wedlock, not married, or engaged in a cohabitative relationship (Department of Statistics, 1990, 2000, 2004).

Welfare. The Bahamas government offered several services that provided assistance to members of its society. Persons earning less than $7,800 a year were eligible to receive various services for their family inclusive of food coupons, burial assistance, financial assistance, school uniform, school lunch, rent, and disability assistance (Fielding, Minnis, & Plumridge, 2004).

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Limitations and Delimitations

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Limitations

According to Creswell (2003) limitations and delimitations were inherited in qualitative research as they sought to establish boundaries. This was because qualitative strategies often sought to explore humans' lived experiences within their social settings (Berg, 2007). As a result, the same experiences were subjected to various interpretations by participants, and the researcher was, therefore, challenged to create a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon. An obvious potential limitation in the context of this study was the use of a small number of purposefully selected participants, despite their ability to provide in depth and rich data (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Consequently, the small sample size may have reduced generalizability of the findings to other populations and settings. To guarantee quality and verification, the researcher ensured that transferability was embedded in the study which made certain applicability and dependability in other settings. As a result, rich and thick descriptions of the

select Black Bahamian women's lived experiences enhanced the external validity of the study.

Finally, researchers (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002) agreed that in phenomenological research, the investigator was directly involved with the outcome due to his or her role and responsibility in the study. Having experienced the phenomenon being investigated, the researcher may have had biasness regarding this topic. Biases in this qualitative study were expected due to the existence of multiple realities; however, it was incumbent upon the researcher to reduce them.

Delimitations

The context of this study was confined to interviewing Black Bahamian women who held a baccalaureate degree or higher, who were reared in a low socio-economic environment by a female single-parent, and who resided in the Bahamas. Delimiting the sample to these criteria meant it was rather difficult to generalize the results to other Black women of African descent.

Chapter Summary

Chapter I highlighted the marginal, but commendable success of select women and the nature of the problem which was inherited from their ancestors who were stolen from Africa and brought to the New World where they toiled in the plantation fields. This was followed by a statement of the problem which flourished after emancipation because, though the chains of enslavement broke, the struggle for educational equality remained. The reasons for this study were presented along with the research questions necessary to explore the lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women.

This chapter also sought to clearly and succinctly present the significance of this

study and a discussion on the origin of the researcher's interest which was pivotal to the successful completion of this investigation. A qualitative design was deemed most suitable for this research because the study sought to investigate the lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women who grew up in low socio-economic environments. The personal narratives of the participants not only shed light on the phenomenon, but also provided in-depth structural meaning to the lived experiences. Next, definitions of terms used within the context of this study were presented to assist readers unfamiliar with Bahamian culture and a study of this nature. Immediately following, were the limitations and delimitations which may have served as potential weaknesses.

Chapter II of this study explores in greater details the related literature regarding the lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women. Included in the discussion will be the socio-economic effects of poverty on children, female single-headed household characteristics and its impact on children, mother-daughter dynamics, and the high self-efficacy of women.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore and narrow the gap in the literature by investigating the empirical matters that influenced the educational attainment of Black Bahamian women. The review of literature further informed the scope of this study and familiarized readers with the context of the topic. The findings of this study suggested thematic links that were transferable and applicable to the context of the lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women and ultimately aided in answering the research question.

This chapter was one of the most critical (Galvan, 2006) and included a review of the socio-economic effects of poverty on children reared in low socio-economic environments. The contextual setting then discussed how Black single female-headed household characteristics impacted students' educational attainment. The researcher then explored how the mother-daughter child-rearing dynamics influenced the educational attainment of Black girls. According to Rodney (1998), analyzing the socio-historical and economic context of Black women was essential because the effects were rooted within slavery and greatly influenced women's role in the structural development of family life. The diaspora and slavery were the foundations that had shaped and continued to affect African people, specifically women, in the Caribbean. Finally, the researcher explored how self-efficacy, in reference to education, contributed to the success of these women.

Effects on Educational Attainment

Effects of Poverty on Children

There was a constellation of psychological and sociological variables that could impact students' educational outcomes. Sheldon (2003) suggested that parental involvement within education encompassed many different phenomena and these variables had not always been clearly defined. One of the earliest and most influential studies on parental involvement in education was conducted by Coleman (1966), who stated that household characteristics such as family household size and structure, and parents' level of education and socio-economic status all affected children's education. Despite the many interrelated factors which had emerged, many scholars continued to suggest that parental influence and income had the most profound effect on students' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral developments with reference to education (Coleman, 1966; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Koppich, 2003; Sheldon, 2003; Steinberg, 2003; Walker & Smrekar, 2003).

Brady-Smith, Fauth, and Brooks-Gunn (2003) cautioned that it was difficult to determine the concrete effects of poverty on a child's educational attainment. This was because not all of the interrelated indices of the family structure which suggested a relationship between poor and non-poor had been taken into consideration. Characteristics such as single-parent, gender, maternal education, and child health were all important variables often examined in isolation despite their combined importance to the development of a child. The scholars also suggested there were five consequences of income poverty: children's health; parental mental health and affective interactions; home environment; school and child care quality; and neighborhood conditions. Blank (2005), in a study concerning the youth of the Bahamas, found similar interrelated threats which hindered the

educational development of children. In her findings were poverty, low academic achievement, poor labor market outcomes, unhealthy lifestyles, unstable home environments, delinquency, crime, and violence.

At present, the Bahamas has achieved a relatively high standard of economic development as evidenced by its high Human Development ranking. The human development ranking resulted from a program operated by the United Nations, and its purpose was to provide alternative and broader human development approaches that sought to improve human life, rather than the economy in which human beings lived. In 2007, the Bahamas was ranked 52 out of 182 countries (United Nations Development, 2009), and this was a testament to efforts by the government of the Bahamas and its people to achieve a high standard of living with all of its associated benefits. The Bahamas, compared to other Caribbean countries, was ranked fourth only behind Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, and Cuba, respectively. Despite its economic success, poverty in the Bahamas was still of major concern because it existed and was often the root cause of other risk factors affecting education.

Poverty in the Bahamas was determined using welfare measures and a poverty line. This methodological approach was identical to those used in many other Latin American and Caribbean countries (Department of Statistics [DOS], 2004). The welfare measures were determined by how well a family's per capita income and household consumption expenditures were able to meet minimum requirements. Meanwhile, the poverty line was based on absolute poverty because it utilized the least amount of funds needed to purchase essential food items that sustained a low cost diet with allowances for non-food items over a specific referenced period, for example, per day (DOS, 2004). Finally, the sum of these two

equaled the poverty line, and according to Handa (2004), the Bahamas had the highest poverty line within the Caribbean basin. The current poverty line was $2,863 per year per person, and those families whose income fell close or further away were categorized as "*poor"* or "*non-poor"*.

Using the poverty line, Dorsett (2004a) and Handa (2004) postulated that 75% of all poor households in the Bahamas had five or more members, most of whom were dependants below age 15 years. Within the poorest quintile, 45% of all households had six or more members (Dorsett, 2004a). As a result, one in five youth in the Bahamas between ages 15 and 24 years lived in a poor household (Blank, 2005). Further analysis revealed female-headed households constituted 23% of all Bahamian households, with 45% of them being the poorest (Dorsett, 2004a). This observable fact resulted in female-headed households having a higher rate of poverty which was well above the national average (Handa, 2004).

The literature linking the poverty of female single-mothers' to children's cognitive and educational outcomes suggested children raised within poor single-parent families were more likely to do worse on indices of school achievement than non-poor children (Brady-Smith, Fauth, and Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Interestingly, Burbridge (1991) noted that a relationship existed between a family's socio-economic status and school achievement scores for both sexes. The study suggested that girls of poor families were able to perform better in school compared to boys of the same socio-economic status. Therefore, a discussion of the relationship between a family's socio-economic status and educational achievement was vital to this study as the researcher explored the lived educational attainment of women. The revelations from this study sought thematic links which revealed the great educational risks associated with low socio-economic environments.

According to Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997), the effects of income on children's ability to achieve academic success could be measured as early as age 2 years and continued through into adulthood. Brady-Smith et al. (2003) concurred and suggested that a child's early years were the most critical period of development, and those raised within poverty were greatly affected by the circumstances of their environment. More specifically, Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997) stated that children raised in poverty between ages 2 and 4 years often achieved lower scores on several measures of child cognitive development and school readiness outcomes. With reference to the Bahamas, Handa (2004) revealed poor children between ages 0 and 2 years were less likely to enroll in pre-school compared to their non-poor counterparts (14% versus 26%), while children of poor households between ages 3 and 4 years also lagged behind in early school enrollment compared to their non-poor counterparts (51% poor versus 91% non-poor).

Smith, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov (1997) suggested that children raised in persistent impoverished homes compared to short-term or transient poverty endured more negative cognitive and educational outcomes. As a result, middle-age children raised in economically poor environments had similar experiences as their poor counterparts in pre-school. The effects translated into low achievement test scores, grade failure, and learning and attention problems (Brady-Smith et al., 2003). Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997) revealed parallel findings which suggested children raised in consistent poverty were less likely to complete school and often lagged behind in grade level for their age.

The definition of middle-age children differed from country to country; in the Bahamas, middle-age youth were those between ages 5 and 13 years. Age 5 years coincided with the mandated school start age for all children and required enrollment in grade one and

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continuation through to grade six, which was usually completed at age 10 years. For children

between ages 5 and 10 years, universal enrollment at the primary school level for poor

children was about 96% compared to almost 100% for their non-poor counterparts (Blank,

2005; Coakley, 2004; Handa, 2004). The findings were consistent with previous population

censuses (1990 and 2000) conducted by the Department of Statistics, which explored the

attendance of school-age children in the Bahamas. The Education Act of 1996 made school

compulsory for all children between ages 5 and 16 years and was probably responsible for

the high attendance rate among students (Bahamas Island Statute, 1996).

Similar findings were a common phenomenon within other English-speaking

Caribbean countries such as Guyana which also made it compulsory for school-age children

to attend school full-time (Critchlow, 2003). Incidentally, children from poor households

were less likely to remain in primary school compared to their non-poor counterparts.

Additionally, 22% of all poor children were twice as likely to repeat a grade compared to

11% of their non-poor counterparts (Handa, 2004). Interestingly, in a study conducted by

Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson (2007), girls of poor families were less likely to repeat a

grade and behave badly in school compared to boys of the same socio-economic status.

These alarming statistics confirmed that poverty did indeed affect early childhood

development because poor households failed to engage their dependents in activities which

ultimately led to school readiness (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997).

One obvious explanation stemmed from poor households' inability to access early

childhood programs, better schooling, and obtain adequate resources due to financial

constraints. Additionally, though the Bahamas government had a vested interest in education,

it operated and funded few pre-school programs (Coakley, 2004; Handa, 2004). As a result,

most of the available programs were provided by private organizations and citizens and were fee-based. Therefore, many poor families were unable to afford these services which translated into many poor children not benefitting from school readiness programs. Coakley (2004) and Handa (2004), therefore, recommended the government of the Bahamas provide more assistance for early childhood education so as to aid in school preparation. It was felt these programs would later translate into commendable performance on literacy and numeracy tests in primary school. This analysis was consistent with sentiments shared by American scholars Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997) who also felt school readiness through early childhood programs greatly enhanced student performance.

Upon completion of primary school, students (ages 11-13 years) in the Bahamas were expected to enroll in junior high school where they completed grades seven through nine. At present, the national attendance average in junior high school was 99%; however, there was a slight difference between the attendance of poor and non-poor children. Unfortunately, children who experienced long-term poverty shared similar observable educational hardships as did their primary counterparts. Non-poor children had a 100% enrollment rate compared to 96% for their poor counterparts (Handa, 2004). The observable findings in the Bahamas again coincided with Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997) who stated that children who experienced poverty during this age often completed school at lower rates and often lagged behind in grade level for their age.

Brady-Smith et al. (1997) also examined the effects of poverty on adolescent children (ages 13-18 years) who lived in long-term poverty. Accordingly, these students were plagued with increased high school dropout rates, lower graduation rates, decreased school engagement, lower grade point averages, and lower achievement test scores. Duncan and

Brooks-Gunn (1997) elaborated and included other effects such as decreased chances of attending college, increased odds of poor grades, and not completing high school. In the Bahamas, children age 14 years usually entered senior high school in grade 10 and exited at about age 16 years when they completed grade 12. The attendance rate for both poor and non-poor were equal, while the grade retention for poor students was slightly lower than their wealthier counterparts, 2.32 % versus 2.72%, respectively.

Bahamian students were expected to take exit exams, known as the Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC), at the end of grade nine, while their older counterparts in grade 12 took the Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations (BGCSE). Both exams were designed to be structurally and contextually relevant to Bahamian culture. The exams, however, remained reflective of the British exit exams which were used to determine student academic success mid-way and at the completion of their formative schooling, respectively. Unfortunately, no longitudinal studies had been located with reference to the effects of poverty on the country's exit exam results. Incidentally, Brady-Smith et al. (2003) contended that though income poverty had a more profound effect during children's early years as opposed to their high school years, those students who lived in persistent poverty and well below the threshold were equally affected. As such, it would be safe to assume the poor results of both the BJC and BGCSE from 1995 to 2003 (Blank, 2005) were partly reflective of the socio-economic status of students.

As previously alluded to, poverty greatly affected students' educational outcomes and was inclusive of other interrelated factors. Of significance were the effects of poverty on children's health which, in turn, affected educational development. Coincidentally, for the most part, Bahamian youth were healthy and this fact could be attributed to a free healthcare

system which provided an opportunity for youth to receive basic medical care such as vaccinations. Unfortunately, there existed a paucity of information on the relationship between the health and poverty status of students. According to Handa (2004), children in the Bahamas who came from lower socio-economic environments tended to have a higher threshold for illness compared to their wealthier counterparts. Both at the primary and secondary levels, poor children were more likely to be absent from school for non-health related reasons (Coakley, 2004, Handa, 2004). More specifically, 85.3% of high school students in poor households were absent for non-health related reasons compared to 24.5% of their wealthier counterparts (Coakley, 2004).

Interestingly, Handa (2004) postulated that about 50% of all poor children in the Bahamas were likely to be underweight, and Blank (2005) later specified that poor children between ages 2 and 5 years were at greater risk of being underweight compared to their wealthier counterparts. The prevalence of under-nourished children between ages 2 and 10 years within the poorest areas resulted in them not only being underweight, but experiencing stunted growth for their age. Accordingly, 15% of all children between ages 2 and 4 years were at risk for not growing, while the risk for youth between ages 7 to 10 years decreased to 10% (Deleveaux, Clarke, Adderley-Coleby, Penn, & Underwood, 2004). Comparing weight and height reversed the findings since children between ages 2 and 4 years were better nourished compared to their 7 and 10 year old counterparts. Deleveaux, Clarke, Adderley-Coleby, Penn, & Underwood (2004) suggested parents in the Bahamas placed greater emphasis on infancy development.

The discussion thus far clearly revealed that poverty greatly affected students' educational experiences while noting that those students who endured persistent poverty as

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opposed to transient were more profoundly affected. Wealthier children enjoyed more productive educational experiences compared to their poor counterparts. Poor children were less likely to attend pre-school, had lower rates of enrollment, and were more likely to attend public school. Additionally, poor children experienced more absence from school, exited school with little or no qualifications, and were less likely to attend tertiary institutions. The findings confirmed that females raised within such environments had a decreased chance of academic attainment. Yet, no studies had explored how a few Black females were able to defy the odds. As a result, the findings made this study a necessity to the future development of the Bahamas.

Effects of Female-Headed Household Characteristics

Smrekar (2003) contended that parents with high socio-economic status and higher levels of education were able to participate in their children's education at higher rates compared to their poorer and less educated counterparts. Coakley (2004) opined that children in the Bahamas who performed better in school were more likely to live with parents who had a higher educational background. There was a strong relationship between the education of household heads' and poverty levels as parents with higher education were often better able to secure a higher paying job which translated into greater resources to facilitate education. More than 15.4% of household heads with limited schooling were living in impoverished conditions, as opposed to 2.8% of household heads with higher secondary schooling (Handa, 2004).

More importantly, gender-role stereotypes suggested women, particularly household heads, required significantly higher levels of schooling than their male counterparts so as to eradicate poverty. This poignancy was reflected in the fact that though female-headed

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households represented the largest poverty group, more than 40% of poor women had completed some secondary education (Handa, 2004). In contrast, 60% of all poor males had completed only primary school, while 50% of poor women had completed secondary school. Handa (2004) further stated, like other Caribbean countries, these findings suggested women experienced less secure status in the labor force, had more dependents which meant their chance of experiencing poverty increased despite being educated, and entered traditionally low paying jobs. Further, there was a lack of relationship between subjects taught in school and the labor market demands. Subsequently, there was an observable decrease in poverty as greater academic success was achieved by women as demonstrated by the fact that women with a secondary education had a lower poverty rate (4.4% compared to 11.4% for women with less schooling) (Handa, 2004).

The schooling outcomes and socio-economic status of parents suggested there was a direct effect on children's schooling and performance. Parents in the wealthiest quintile spent $3,388 on their children's education, twice the national average, and accounted for 6.4% of the total household consumption expenditure (Coakley, 2004). These findings were consistent with a strong relationship between socio-economic status, education, and household expenditure on education and highlighted differences between poor and non-poor. More specific findings suggested persons living in poverty due to limited finances or misplaced priorities spent only $1,716 dollars annually on pre-school education compared to the $2,760 spent by wealthier parents.

Assessing levels of schooling showed that poor parents spent $1,305 on primary education and $1,807 on secondary schooling, while wealthier parents spent $3,263 on primary and $3,897 on secondary schooling, respectively (Handa, 2004). Overall, wealthier

households spent five times more on education compared to their poorer counterparts, and there was a noticeable difference in the type of educational expenditure. Persons in poor households spent a larger proportion of their income on uniforms, while their wealthier counterparts spent a larger proportion of their incomes on tuition and associated fees (Handa, 2004).

Parental investment, however, extended beyond income and included personal time and attitude towards education. Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris (1997) identified three dimensions of parental involvement which centered on how parent-child interactions affected students' schooling and motivation. Behavioral involvement, the first dimension, was similar to Hoover-Dempsey's and Sandler's (1995, 1997) school-based related activities which included parents' public actions such as attending school functions. Personal and cognitive/intellectual involvement, the second and third dimensions, were also similar to Hoover-Dempsey's and Sandler's (1995, 1997) home-based activities. The former included parent-child interactions which often communicated a positive attitude about the importance of school. The later motivated parents to assist their children in school-related activities such as, reading and home-work which promoted knowledge and skill development.

Behavioral involvement, the first dimension, represented parents' visible forms of commitment to education (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997). Unfortunately, there existed a paucity of literature relating to Bahamian parental involvement and the educational outcomes of their children. However, the available research suggested that parents' interest in education meant more persons, especially wealthier and better educated individuals, preferred to enroll their children in private schools (Coakley, 2004). More than

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84% of Bahamian students whose parents had only a primary education attended a government school, while only 41% with a tertiary education attended a government school. Nationally, this translated into 86% of students in the poorest strata attending public schools, compared to only 23% of students whose parents had a tertiary education (Coakley, 2004).

In a Bahamas living conditions study conducted by the Department of Statistics, Coakley (2004) reported that there were no children within the wealthiest strata enrolled in government pre-school programs. The action by parents may be attributed to the belief that private schools in the Bahamas were considered to offer substantial advantages over public schools. Some of the advantages included smaller class size which facilitated more one-on-one help for students, access to more resources, better focused students since private schools strongly emphasized learning while developing other aspects of the student's life, and more and better opportunities for success. These observable findings suggested parents recognized the benefits of private schooling and chose to exercise their right as a parent.

Though no research data existed to confirm or disconfirm the parental public action of poor versus non-poor Bahamian parents, what existed based on the media inclusive of newspaper articles and television reports was a noticeable difference in attendance at sporting events. Children who attended private schools often had more support from immediate and extended family as opposed to their government school counterparts. Smrekar (2003) argued that better educated parents were able to actively participate in school-related activities and could effectively communicate with teachers due to their level of comfort with the school and staff as opposed to their less educated counterparts. Smrekar (2003) also suggested a single-household head with several dependents often did not have adequate resources and opportunities to actively participate in school-related activities. Most female single-parents

worked long hours and possibly had two jobs concurrently which limited their time to engage in activities such as taking children to the library or attending parent-teacher-association (PTA) meetings.

Personal involvement, the second dimension, represented the daily interactions between the child and parent. Grolnick et al. (1997) suggested that parents' continued words of encouragement instilled a sense of competence and conviction that the child could and did control the outcome of his or her school experiences. The purpose of these interactions served to convey the parents' positive ideas about education to the child. Koppich (2003) concurred by stating parents were a child's first teacher and most influential role model. As such, the home was where children's views on education developed. Often parental beliefs, expectations, and attitudes toward education had an impact on the importance of education to a child. Such sentiments confirmed Bandura's (1986) belief that self-efficacy as it related to students' educational attainment rested on the efforts of their parents. In the Bahamas no studies had been conducted which explored the interactions between children and their parents. However, such a question was asked to participants in this study since it was vital to explore how female single-parents influenced their daughters' education.

Cognitive or intellectual involvement, the third dimension, suggested behaviors such as reading books served to develop skills and knowledge (Grolnick et al., 1997). Behavioral and personal involvement often resulted in the importance of developing cognitive skills being instilled in the child. As such, a parent indoctrinated a child on the importance of education through the socialization process. Koppich (2003) concurred by stating that parental influence on students' academic aspirations often occurred before and during a child's formal educational experiences. Students exposed to quality child care, the absence of

violence, availability of social services, the absence of physical and mental issues, opportunities for constructive development, availability of healthy outside school activities, and the involvement in active school-based community connections benefited significantly from schooling experiences.

Coincidentally, it appeared that mothers with higher education displayed more behavioral and personal involvement in their children's education which resulted in better cognitive skills. According to Handa (2004), mothers in the Bahamas with higher education appeared to invest more time and effort in their children as only 8% of their children repeated a grade compared to 19% of students whose parents were less educated. A survey of Bahamian students in 1998 revealed that more than half of all youth in the Bahamas enjoyed their school experiences (Blank, 2005).

Koppich (2003) acknowledged that students raised within a two-parent home were advantaged because they had additional resources unavailable to their counterparts within single-parent homes. He contended that the struggles of students in single-parent homes were greater because there was little assistance to complete home-work and participate in school activities. Sheldon (2003) added that mothers who worked full-time and had multiple dependents were less likely to be involved in their children's education. Koppich (2003), however, did acknowledge that an effective educational environment could overcome these challenges and enable all children to achieve high levels of success, regardless of family type. Henceforth, this study sought to confirm or disconfirm whether the educational success of the participants could be attributed to Koppich's (2003) sentiments regarding poor children being able to overcome educational challenges, despite poverty.

Parental self-efficacy, more than any other variable, greatly affected children's academic abilities and, according to Watkins (1997), parents' self-efficacy, involvement in, and educational goals for their children were stronger predictors of school success than parental levels of education and ethnicity. According to Hess and Shipman (1965), parents, regardless of their socio-economic status, informed their children about the importance of school and how they were expected to conduct themselves. Unfortunately, the message varied in content and style depending on the parents' socio-economic status. For example, parents of middle socio-economic status often supported their children more and encouraged them to adopt a sense of entitlement attitude towards their education (Lareau, 2002). Irrespective of socio-economic status, the impact a parent had on their children's education was deeper and the most important predictor of success (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Koppich, 2003; Sheldon, 2003; Watkins, 1997).

Coleman (1966) concurred and earlier suggested that regardless of whether children were reared by a single parent or both, the chances of success were multiplied when there was parental involvement. Coleman (1966) further added that students from ideal families where the parents were well-educated, possessed a high socio-economic status, and were afforded advantaged circumstances did not necessarily succeed academically, while students from homes considered dysfunctional were able to garner the strength to defy the odds and achieve a commendable level of success. The 3% of youth within the poorest quintile of the Bahamas, including daughters of single Black mothers, reflected Coleman's (1966) sentiments.

These feelings were also shared by Wagner (1997), who stated that parental influence, irrespective of nuclear or single family type, had a tremendous influence on

students' behavior. This was because different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic status did not appear to determine the value parents placed on education. Regardless of status, a parent who was interested in his or her child's schooling, or who aspired more for his or her child's academic success were greater measures than were socio-economic status. Walker and Smrekar (2003) also suggested that parental beliefs about education had a profound and significant effect on students' educational aspirations, regardless of country of origin.

This investigation sought to explore how parental involvement impacted Black Bahamian female educational aspirations. The discussion thus far acknowledged that children from a single-parent home and low socio-economic environments were disadvantaged, but failed to adequately explore the structural and contextual aspects of the Bahamas. As such, the commendable success achieved by Black women from single female-parent households against great odds provided much needed insight into their lives and rich material for analysis.

Effects of Mother-Daughter Dynamics

Since the African diaspora in the Caribbean, women of African descent had faced significant challenges associated with both their race and gender (Cauce et al., 1996). The categorization of mothers as Black and single often had significant and consequential effects on their children. This family type had dramatically increased in the region, and Black mothers were more likely than mothers in other family types to face both social and economic hardships due to race and gender. Recently, questions and concerns regarding the effects of gender-rearing of single Black mothers on their children had arisen. Though this area had received little attention, scholars contended that Black mothers did indeed differ in parenting styles based on their child's gender (Hill, 2002; Telesford & Murray, 2008). In

fact, daughters' occupational attainments were strongly determined by ethnicity and family size (Mellott & Sassler, 2007).

According to Mellot and Sassler (2007), a woman's gender more often than not determined the amount of resources she received from family and society. Such phenomena were observable both in privileged and non-privileged families, regardless of race and ethnicity. In the Bahamas, female single-parent homes made up a disproportionately large share of all families, and characteristics of such environments included increased poverty, lower levels of educational attainment, residence in high crime and poor neighborhoods, and more dependents (Blank, 2005; Consultative Committee, 1994; Department of Statistics, 2000, 2004). Much of the poverty found within these homes resulted from the parents' education, occupational status, race, family size, and family structure (Carter, 1999; Coleman, 1966; Gerstel, 1988; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

"A mother loves her son and raises her daughter" was first coined by Randolph (1995, p. 121), and if the statement holds true, it may possibly explain the observable increased enrollment of Black women in college regardless of their socio-economic status. Williams (1987) suggested that Black mothers often displayed a more permissive style with their sons as opposed to their daughters, with whom they exhibited a more instructive and controlling approach. Jones and Berglas (1978) concurred and earlier suggested that parents of the same sex often emphasized a performance-conditional love for their children.

Telesford and Murray (2008) in a more recent study confirmed that Black women interacted differently with their daughters despite expressing similar goals for all children regardless of gender. According to Hill-Collins (1991), instead of displaying a supportive role towards her daughter, a Black woman often instilled strong and independent skills. Such

concepts often mirrored characteristics of the mother who, due to her own circumstances, had to possess strong and independent characteristics in order to survive. Hill-Collins (1991) also purported that the male hegemony present in society often resulted in female children resisting their mother's influence so as to align with the conformist view of femininity in which women were passive.

According to Cowan and Avants (1988), male children were more likely to use autonomous influence whereas females displayed anticipating and non-compliance traits. As such, male children exhibited more self-sufficient strategies than females; therefore, mothers were more inclined to utilize strict and controlling techniques to instill self-sufficiency in their daughters. The ultimate goal would be to have female children competent and able to survive in the mainstream society upon adulthood (Collins, 1987; Staples & Johnson, 1993). Unfortunately, the study sample consisted of Caucasians and may or may not have been reflective of Black mothers' behavior. There was little research that addressed the issue of Blacks; however, available literature revealed that mothers were indeed more controlling of their daughters as opposed to their sons (Cowan & Avants, 1988).

Of significance to any discussion regarding Black women was the issue of slavery and its effects on modern day Black women. During slavery, many women were used for the production of crops and reproduction of slave children (Bush, 1990). The essence of slavery was based on the use of Africans as property to be bought and sold at will. Therefore, many families were separated; the men were sold leaving mothers to raise children by themselves (Beckles & Shepherd, 1991; Smith, 2004). This phenomena was a common practice throughout the history of slavery and forced many Black women to develop survival skills in which they had to compensate for men who were emasculated psychologically, socially, and

economically due to racism (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Collins, 2004; Sharp & Ispa, 2006, 2008; Springer, 2002).

Despite the disturbing consequences of being raised within a family torn asunder, there had been a significant shift in the enrollment of males versus females throughout the African diaspora at both tertiary and alternative educational institutions. Throughout the western hemisphere more females were now enrolled in tertiary institutions than males (Department of Statistics, 2004; Hudson, 2003; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008; University of the West Indies, Jamaica, 2006). This fact had been attributed to the belief that mothers of African descent parented their female children differently from their male children. It was felt mothers instilled more self-reliant skills in their daughters as opposed to the validation and support they showed their sons (Smetana, Abernathy, & Harris, 2000).

Telesford and Murray (2008) suggested that mothers were inclined to display a more instructive and controlling style of parenting towards their daughters which resulted in increased school enrollment for girls. In addition to providing more support to their female children, mothers often requested more information with school related activities from their daughters as oppose to their sons. According to Porche, Ross, and Snow (2004), mothers often provided more words of encouragement and praise to their daughters for school related activities rather than for their sons. Moreover, mothers expected their daughters to adjust more comfortable in school and behave appropriately as oppose to their sons (Entwisle & Baker, 1983). No information with reference to Bahamian women and the ways they were parented were known to exist. Therefore, this study sought to confirm or disconfirm whether the successes of these women were related to the ways in which their mothers raised them.

Higher Education in The Bahamas

The Pursuit of Higher Learning

According to Sharpes (2002), "the maintenance of a high and rich educated culture, if it cannot be strengthened through education and schooling, is in danger of loss through neglect and apathy" (p. 77). As such, many slave and landowners in the Bahamas after emancipation maintained socio-political and economic hegemony over the country and higher education suffered as a result. The neglect occurred mainly because these persons were in a financial position to send their children abroad to the United States, Canada, or England where they received a higher quality education. Subsequently, many of their progeny were not in need of higher education due to their inheritance which secured their future.

The struggle for acceptance within higher education had always been harder for minorities, especially Blacks (McLean, 1994; Reddock, 2004; Sharpes, 2002; UN Chronicle, 2006). Within the United States, Blacks endured a more treacherous road to educational equality, whereas in the Bahamas the change towards equality had been called the *quiet revolution* (Fawkes, 2003). According to Sharpes (2002), minorities from countries once colonized sought to explore the foundations of their existence in opposition to Western and European ideologies because they were often based on hierarchical structures. Henceforth, establishing institutions of higher learning allowed for a cultural experience within education while confronting and healing post-colonial issues. Such a sentiment also allowed for the development of Historically Black Colleges and Universities such as Fisk and Spellman in North America (Solomon, 1985).

It was not until the 20th century that girls' education began to take form in the Caribbean (Reddock, 2004). Of course, this education was modeled after its colonial predecessors and, with acquisition of majority rule and independence in the Bahamas, like other Caribbean countries, education for the masses became a socio-political priority as nationalism grew (McLean, 1994; UN Chronicle, 2006). The masses in the Bahamas gained majority rule in 1967 and the new government sought to place education high on its agenda. The objectives of a new education system were to develop an educated labor force and provide Bahamians with opportunities for social mobility (McLean, 1994).

Today, "the Bahamian government regards education as a fundamental right— a key to sustainable development and an indispensable means by which its people can participate effectively in the national and global economy" (Coakley, 2004, p. 87). To help accomplish the aforementioned, the government was determined to create a tertiary level institution so as to lower the barriers to opportunity. As such, an Act of Parliament in 1974 made possible the first tertiary-level educational institution in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. The college, having been established immediately after independence, sought to provide both academic and intellectual leadership.

The college was intended to provide a place of higher learning for persons unable to secure sufficient funds to study abroad in England, Canada, or the Caribbean. The forefathers' agenda envisioned the future growth of the country in which they felt Bahamians would not have to study abroad, but would be provided with a cultural education that utilized international influence. Learning was to be of primary importance so as to provide sufficient knowledge that would generate new ideas and prepare young Bahamians, especially Blacks,

to assume leadership roles previously denied because of lack of education and to work competitively in a diverse environment pursued by foreign investors.

First, the Act to establish the College of the Bahamas was a momentous document because it represented, for the first time in Bahamian history, an opportunity for the masses to be educated in the realms of their own existence and self-preservation. With an education, there would be an opportunity to reconstruct the past, a past that held people voiceless and silenced for so long. Furthermore, it would help reconstruct what it meant to be a Black Bahamian, or any Bahamian for that matter, while correcting the ills of society.

Second, the document symbolized the creation of a future because education within all higher education institutions aimed to create people who were able to think critically and ensure the healthy and active functioning of society by being equipped with the necessary knowledge, experience, and desire (Ministry of Education, 1974). Concurrently, the government thought it would be better to create persons who could think and contribute to the future growth and development of their country instead of toiling. The development of the country would not be possible without an educated populace because education leads to opportunities for empowerment. This was because education was a liberating influence that could elevate one from ignorance while resulting in social empowerment, not just for the affected but the privileged (Sharpes, 2002).

Finally, the Act provided an opportunity for women to be educated in the realm of their own existence. Women in the country had not been provided with the same opportunity to pursue higher learning. In fact, even though Government High School was established in 1925 as the government's first secondary school and available to all, Black women were not allowed to take the British high school completion exams of General Certificate Examination

O' Levels until 1961 (Craton, 1986). Furthermore, Bahamian women, like first and second generation college women within the United States, were not allowed to study far from home. Since the Bahamas had no higher learning institution many women were limited within their pursuits of a higher education. Many were confined to the traditional role of a woman as wife, mother, and home-maker until a college was made available to serve her needs (Solomon, 1985).

<div align="center">**Self-Efficacy**</div>

Female Self-Efficacy and Higher Learning

The Bahamas, like other Caribbean and Latin American countries, still struggled to provide a comprehensive tertiary education mainly due to the remnants of slavery. However, significant strides had been made, and according to Schiefelbein and Schiefelbein (2003), 25% of all college-aged persons within the aforementioned regions were enrolled in schools in 2001. In 2007, some 75% of the 4,196 students that took full-college credit classes at the College of the Bahamas were women (College of the Bahamas, 2009). In fact, since its inception this rate had remained relatively the same. Of course, this observable truth could be attributed to the fact that most of the programs offered had been more gender stereotypical and included nursing, teaching, and hospitality management.

At the same time, available information on the Bahamas suggested both the educational attainment and qualifications of women had surpassed that of their male counterparts (Department of Statistics, 1990, 2000, 2004; Dorsett, 2004a). The Department of Statistics in the Bahamas did not collect data on race during the national censuses; therefore, it was difficult to assess the achievement gap among women in terms of race and ethnicity (C. Mackey, personal communication, May 5, 2009). As a result, the researcher

focused primarily on the achievements of women compared to their male counterparts. Bahamian women, like their counterparts in the Western hemisphere, had been achieving greater success in attaining higher education degrees (Coakley, 2004; Department of Statistics, 2008a, b, c; Winters, 2008).

Better access to post-secondary education had translated into a more educated workforce in the Bahamas. In 2001, more than 64% of all Bahamians had completed high school, while 22% had obtained a college degree (Dorsett, 2004a). As of 2008, the percentage of persons completing high school with some type of qualifications had risen to 69%, while about 30% had no qualifications (Winters, 2008). More importantly, females were better educated workers as 28% of them had earned some form of college education as opposed to 16% of their male counterparts (Department of Statistics, 2008b). These figures were similar to the 2000 census and the 2008 labor force report. Simultaneously, the enrollment rate in higher education for females between ages 17 and 18 years and ages 19 to 24 years were significantly higher than the enrollment rate of their male counterparts. Enrollment for females between ages 17 and 18 years was 53.8% versus 43.9% for males of the same ages, and 16.7% for females between the ages of 19 and 24 years versus 11.3% for males of the same ages (Coakley, 2004).

As previously indicated, there had been a substantial increase in participation by women in higher education which meant that among the general population between ages 16 and 24 years, a slightly higher percentage of females than males had attained a bachelor's degree or higher (8.6% versus 5.4%) (Coakley, 2004). Of no surprise, persons between ages 19 and 24 years residing in wealthier areas were 10 times more likely to enroll in tertiary education versus those within poorer areas. Statistically, this meant 30.9% of persons within

wealthy areas had earned some form of post-secondary qualification compared to only 3.5% of persons in poorer areas (Coakley, 2004). Although both men and women saw improved living conditions as a result of increased education, it was the women who garnered significant improved standards of living in relation to their academic achievement (Dorsett, 2004b).

According to Hudson (2005), women, despite being better educated, had historically earned more degrees in areas that were associated with lower paying professions, such as education or health care, while their male counterparts had pursued higher paying careers, such as computer science or engineering. Concurrently, gender role stereotypes suggested that women, particularly household-heads, required significantly higher levels of schooling than their male counterparts in order to overcome poverty (Coakley, 2004; Handa, 2004). This poignancy was reflected in the fact that although female-headed households represented the largest poverty quintile, more than 50% of them had completed secondary education compared to 60% of their male counterparts who had completed only primary school (Handa, 2004).

Regrettably, statistical evidence revealed that daughters of single Black mothers born in low socio-economic environments were less likely to attain a tertiary education as opposed to their wealthier counterparts (Dorsett, 2004b). As such, upon adulthood, these individuals were more likely to pursue alternative education instead of obtaining a college degree. Unfortunately, the data provided no explanation; however, it appeared that these persons were financially powerless or lacked the foundational support considering many of their household heads themselves were undereducated. Nevertheless, about 6% of poor adult

households (ages 19 to 24 years) possessed alternative education, compared to less than 2% of their non-poor counterparts (Coakley, 2004).

In addition to the College of the Bahamas, many Bahamians attended the University of the West Indies (UWI). The institution was established in 1948 and catered to Commonwealth nations or British overseas territories in the Caribbean. The purpose of the university since its inception had been to ". . . unlock West Indian potential for economic and cultural growth . . ." thereby facilitating improved regional autonomy (UWI, Jamaica, 2006, mission statement, para. 1). The first campus was opened in Jamaica as an independent College of the University of London, and in 1962 it was granted full university status. Subsequent campuses were opened in Trinidad in 1960, Barbados in 1962, and the Bahamas in 1978 which operated a Centre for Hotel and Tourism Management. In total, there were more than 39,000 students enrolled at different levels and they hailed from 15 contributing countries that supported the university.

Over the last 10 years all campuses had experienced a steady growth in enrollment. In 2007, the Cave Hill campus awarded more undergraduate and post-graduate degrees to women than men in all fields including humanities, education, law, social science, and clinical medicine, with the exceptions being pure and applied sciences (UWI, Barbados, 2007). In fact, the total number of women enrolled during the 2007/2008 school year was double that of their male counterparts. Concurrently, the same phenomenon was observed in Jamaica, the main campus, where plans were being put in place to increase male enrollment in the various academic schools. Since the beginning of the decade, enrollment for women had stood at over 70%, while enrollment for males was less than 30% (UWI, Jamaica, 2008). At the same time, 60% of all first degrees were awarded to women compared to only 18%

awarded to males, and 14% of the female population received higher degrees, while only 8% of the same degrees were awarded to men (UWI, Jamaica, 2008). Comparatively, the same trend had been observed in Trinidad where, within the last decade, the enrollment for women steadily increased while decreasing for males: 60% versus 40% in 2000, and 63% versus 37% in 2008 (UWI, Trinidad, 2007).

The number of female undergraduates increased from the minority to the majority of students graduating between 1970 and 2000. In 1970, 42% of all undergraduates were females while in 2000, 56% were females (Freeman, 2004). In part, this reflected an increase in the number of women entering college immediately after completing high school; but, it also reflected a sizable number of older women enrolled in school (Hoffman & Snyder, 2003). Since the late 1970s, at least half of all part-time students were female, and since 1985, a majority of all full-time students had been female as well (Freeman, 2004). In 2000, females accounted for 55% of full-time enrollment and 58% of part-time enrollment. Comparatively, the same level of enrollment existed in the College of the Bahamas (COB, 2009) as well as the various branches of the University of the West Indies (UWI, Barbados, 2007; UWI, Jamaica, 2008; UWI, Trinidad, 2007).

The strides made by Black women in the Bahamas to educate themselves had always been of concern to policy makers. While women continued to make significant gains in obtaining a higher education degree (Freeman, 2004), it appeared that the gender gap now favored them in the Western hemisphere. Accordingly, women of African, Caucasian, and Hispanic origins had all surpassed their male counterparts; White women did better than Black women, who in turn, outpaced Hispanic women (Hudson, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008). Overall, there was a 10 percentage point gap between

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men and women that extended across all three major racial/ethnic groups in the United States (Hudson, 2005; NCES, 2008). There was also more than a 10 percentage point gap favoring Bahamian women in obtaining a higher education degree compared to their male counterparts (Department of Statistics, 2008a).

At the same time, women were more likely to enroll in college immediately following the completion of high school, and they persisted and completed their degrees at higher rates than did their male counterparts (Hudson, 2003). More than half of all bachelor's and master's degrees were awarded to females (Hudson, 2005). Within the Caribbean basin, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2009) suggested that not only were women outpacing men with reference to degrees, they were also entering more professions and replacing men in managerial positions (Wagner, 1997). In addition, women were also gaining more economic power despite the highest positions being held by men. It was believed that Caribbean women were out pacing men because their activities for so long were restricted by society (Wagner, 1997).

Unfortunately, C. Mackey (personal communication, May 5, 2009) stated that although a large percentage of Bahamians had obtained tertiary degrees, the Department of Statistics had never inquired as to how or where these degrees were obtained. However, according to McLean (1994), the 1990 Bahamas census of student enrollment in higher education found more than 1,700 Bahamians studied abroad and, of that number, 1,500 did so in the United States. Consequently, the Bahamas was considered one of the wealthiest independent countries in the Caribbean (McLean, 1994). The country had the second highest gross domestic product behind the United States and the highest among Caribbean countries (Handa, 2004). Since the 1970s, the government had invested heavily in the education system

at all levels. The large number of enrollments at the tertiary level, as was with other levels of education, was a testament to better access.

The information presented thus far revealed an interesting analysis about disparity between the sexes. Consequently, despite the government's initiatives to provide quality, equal, and equitable access to education for Bahamians, inequalities still persisted. Commendably, women, despite a wide range of psychological gender stereotypes, still managed to emerge with more educational qualifications. Such an accomplishment was a strong indicator of personal success and, more importantly, it reflected a climate that facilitated parity in opportunity. Additionally, the statistics also revealed interesting findings with reference to persons from low socio-economic environments. Upon initial review, it appeared that girls of low socio-economic status may have ended up like their mothers, but some of these women found a way to achieve success despite their humble beginnings. Many of them defied the generally held assumption that students from lower socio-economic groups could not survive the process of schooling due to the physical and psychological stereotypes associated with education. Commendably, such humble means gave rise to successful women in the Bahamas.

According to Guthrie (2003), it was possible for girls to succeed amidst the many challenges associated with low socio-economic environments. But, why had the educational attainment for girls from low socio-economic environments within the Western hemisphere superseded that of their male counterparts. Wagner (1997) had put forth one possible theory that suggested educational success within the Caribbean was higher for girls because education may have been too free for boys. He further opined that boys were always free, while girls had to stay home where they were closely disciplined. Furthermore, boys had

fewer role models because more teachers (90% in primary school and 75% in senior school) were women (Wagner, 1997).

In fact, the literature suggested that because most teachers were females, girls were treated differently from the time they started school, and this often had a very lasting impact on their overall performance (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 2003). For example, boys were allowed to engage in climbing on blocks or crawling on the floor, while girls under the supervision of teachers sat around the table engaged in more lady-like activities (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Additionally, girls were not allowed to speak without being acknowledged or engaged in rough play (Martin, 1998). As a result of the difference in behavior, the evidence also implied that teachers interaction with boys was often more negative and centered on discipline, while girls not only had better deportment but a more positive school experience (Bossert, 1981; Brophy, 1985; Huston, 1983). Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson (2007) suggested that because teachers favored girls more than boys it had a possible positive reciprocal effect on the achievement of girls which continued into postsecondary education.

Coleman (1966), on the other hand, postulated earlier that parents were children's first teachers and it was the home where parental beliefs, expectations, and attitudes about education had a profound impact on students' concepts of how education were to play a role in their lives. Subsequently, what students perceived as important to their parents was often mirrored in their performance. Accordingly, Coleman (1966) suggested 97% of students who earned an "A" or "B" in school were encouraged to do so by a parent. Interestingly, he stated regardless of whether children were reared by a single parent or nuclear family, the chance of success was multiplied when there was parental involvement.

The journey to be educated had been long and treacherous for, like no other people, the education of Blacks had been linked to social, economic, and political forces. As the world embraced the 21st century, the events of slavery and gender parity still impacted the educational system within the Western world despite the fact that Blacks made up the largest minority group in the Caribbean basin and the second largest in the United States (Altbach, 2003; Du Bois, 1969; NCES, 2008; Stromquist, 2003; UNESCO, 2009; UWI, Barbados, 2007; UWI, Jamaica, 2008; UWI, Trinidad, 2007). However, Black women continued to make strides toward upward mobility despite the strong relationship which suggested that because of their socio-economic status their achievements should have been limited. As a result of their hard work, many were reaping the benefits of higher lifetime earnings and greater opportunities for employment with all of its associated benefits.

The information presented in this chapter revealed some of the challenges associated with trying to achieve a higher education; however, no substantial reasons had been provided to explain this observable phenomenon. Thus, those who had emerged from such circumstances were of pivotal importance to the future of those left behind. From their challenges and success in obtaining a higher education, both private and public agencies concerned about women's issues could begin to establish a foundation that could put in place various programs and resources so that more women would have access to higher education and all of its associated benefits.

Chapter Summary

Chapter II stated the purpose of the literature review in this study. The researcher then identified pivotal indices of poverty which could and did affect the educational outcome of children. This was followed by specific characteristics of female-headed households which

impacted the children living in such homes. The effects of mother-daughter dynamics on girls was explored and revealed that mothers did indeed rear their daughters differently than the way they reared their sons. Finally, the self-efficacy of women in the Bahamas was explored and highlighted were the commendable success of select women compared to their male counterparts.

Chapter III discusses the methodology and method inclusive of the target population, sampling procedures, methods for data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

Chapter III describes the methodology and method used in this study. First, the researcher explores the philosophical framework, its purpose, and the assumptions that guide this study. Second, a rationale for use of qualitative research and all its necessary characteristics are address. Third, the discussion includes the rationale for the phenomenological tradition chosen to investigate the phenomenon of Black Bahamian women and this is followed by the research questions. The method section follows and involves a discussion of the setting, the selection of participants, and the data collection procedures that are utilized. Subsequently, the researcher examines the method for analysis of the data, and discusses quality and verification, as well as ethical considerations that are adhered to throughout this study.

Philosophical Framework

Modern philosophical frameworks mushroomed from the intellectual enlightenment of the 16th and 17th centuries when researchers sought to develop a shared world-view that helped shape how humans study the world (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This historical rubric remained a way for persons within qualitative and quantitative research to find commonality and adhere to rigorous methods of trustworthy research, regardless of geographical location or discipline. Based on a set of beliefs, values, and method that guided research inquiry, Berg (2007) described a philosophical framework as a choreographed design that established the research dance.

To help choreograph the research dance, this researcher embedded in this study an interpretive paradigm. According to Crotty (2003), interpretivism was developed to help researchers ". . . look for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (p. 67). The interpretive approach to research inquiry gave birth to two of the most prevalent forms of understanding humans' social world. They were the hermeneutical and phenomenological paradigms which were both used to help the researcher increase awareness about the lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments and how they were able to obtain a higher education degree.

Hermeneutics was developed first and it was founded on the premise that knowledge was subjective because interpretation of its meaning was individually based. Hermeneutics sought to provide guidance on the importance of one's role when decoding the meanings of participants' lived experiences. It sought to provide understanding rather than a theory while the researcher attempted to construct meaning about the phenomenon. The researcher had the awesome responsibility to be reflective and microscopic when, ascribing meaning and interpretations to the words of others. One had to fully understand the interrelationship between ". . . the direct conscious description of experience and the underlying dynamics or structures that account for the experience . . ." (Moustakas, 1994, p. 9). As a result, the researcher exercised ethical considerations so as to provide an accurate description of the phenomenon by unmasking its true meaning and value to the participants. According to Gadamer (1984), a phenomenon could not be ethical; however, the researcher's interpretations of it could be moral.

Phenomenology, because it sought to understand the lived experience, was considered

both a philosophy as well as a method. The chosen paradigm was most appropriate because it

sought to capture the lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994;

Patton, 2002). By allowing the women to reflect on their educational encounter, they were

able to provide insightful descriptions which identified the essence of the human experience

and ultimately led to a comprehensive description of it (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

First developed by Husserl (1913), the term phenomenology was intended to explore how

people described things which they had experienced; because an individual could only

describe what she/he knows. Therefore, it was essential to interview those who had

experienced the same phenomenon because, according to Moustakas (1994), this represented

the first level of phenomenology. By doing so, we, as humans, were able to apply universal

meanings to our humanness.

Statements gathered from the participants were presented within the realm of their

understanding of the phenomenon. The researcher was then challenged to construct a social

meaning of the shared phenomenon as it related to this specific group in society. According

to Moustakas (1994), this represented the second level of phenomenology, which involved

the researcher meticulously analyzing and interpreting participants' accounts of the

experience so as to provide structural meaning. In turn, one developed universal meanings,

meanings which made hermeneutics essential to the phenomenon.

Epistemology

Epistemology sought to explain *how we know what we know*, and it provided the

necessary grounding for determining how humans came to accept what was discovered as

truth (Crotty, 2003). Within this qualitative research, social constructionism was the

epistemology of choice because it was commonly used in phenomenological research. Constructionists believed that multiple realties existed due to the complex nature of our human existence, and it was incumbent upon the researcher to socially construct meaning through interpretations of the lived experiences (Creswell, 1998).

As a result, it was of no surprise that this method was ideally suited to phenomenology and the researcher's choice. This perspective existed because the philosophical foundations were based on the premise that there were no objective truths, but truth was a result of human interaction in the world. According to Patton (2002), all reality was socially constructed and based on an individual's relation within the world. Patton (2002) further contended that this social world was different from that of the physical world and, hence, it was necessary to examine it differently. As a result of the humanness and engagement of the participants within the realities of their world, constructed meanings differed despite having shared the same phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher sought to explore and provide a holistic meaning to the lived experiences of select Black Bahamian women within the realities of their socially constructed world.

To understand what knowledge was within qualitative research, Creswell (1998) recommended that the researcher establish a relationship between herself and that which was being researched. Using this research perspective, the researcher sought to lessen the distance between the participants and her. Thus, using dialogue, the researcher engaged the participants so as to have them delve into their lived experiences. They were asked to return to their past and recall their experiences while growing up in low socio-economic conditions as they achieved a higher education. Upon completion, the researcher had the daunting task of constructing the social meanings of the experiences using the women's own rich and thick

descriptions and, thereby, gathered themes which fully shed light on the lived reality. These experiences illuminated the cultural milieus in which these women were raised and how their own social locale in their homes and community influenced their experiences and decision to pursue higher education.

Assumptions

Within each philosophical framework were embedded assumptions as they related to the chosen paradigm. The assumptions embedded in all research were ontology, axiology, rhetoric, and methodology. With reference to ontology, the researcher was concerned with the nature of reality (Creswell, 1998). Like epistemology, ontology informed the theoretical perspective because it was concerned with understanding *what is*, while epistemology was concerned with *what it means to know* (Crotty, 2003). The ontological stance of the hermeneutical phenomenology paradigm suggested that although participants had experienced the same phenomenon, over time they would have developed multiple realties due to their humanness. These multiple realities were socially constructed and subjective. Thus, the researcher was challenged to gather these multiple realities as revealed by the participants and construct an objective shared meaning.

Creswell (1998) defined axiology as the value-laden nature of the research study. These values were consumed by biases due to the nature of how humans socially constructed the realities of their world. Therefore, the researcher within this study was committed to embedding ethical considerations so as to respect the values of the participants' and her own personal bias. Personal bias were considered during the planning stages and addressed during the analysis stage.

Rhetorical assumption required the researcher to use appropriate language suitable to the study (Creswell, 1998). Within this phenomenological research, the researcher ensured that the narratives articulated the essence of the participants' experiences. The descriptions used in the inquiry provided structural meanings to the lived experience. The researcher socially constructed meanings based on her interpretation of what the experience meant to this select group of participants. The rhetoric in this study focused on aspects related to the roles of the socio-economic environment, maternal influences, self-efficacy, and the effects of the college degree on the present lives of these women.

The final assumption embedded in this research study was methodology, which Creswell (1998) stated began inductively. Methodology often described a plan of action which, in turn, led to desired outcomes of the study (Crotty, 2003). Inductive logic commenced the process of examination in phenomenology as it was essential to start with specifics as they related to the lived experience before one began to develop clusters of meanings and more worldviews. As a result of inductive logic being applied, the most suitable design for this research was a qualitative design.

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

Qualitative research had gained much momentum in the last 25 years and it provided the opportunity to demonstrate fruitfulness and a greater depth of understanding as opposed to quantitative research (Berg, 2007; Salkind, 2006). It was this depth that the researcher sought, as a result, the researcher chose to use a qualitative approach as opposed to a quantitative inquiry. Quantitative inquiry was an element of quantity and assumed that all things could be counted and measured; however, in today's diverse society and multiple

realties, it was impossible to statistically measure the true essence of an experience (Creswell, 1998; Crotty, 2003; Patton, 2002).

Within this section, the researcher differentiated between quantitative and qualitative research in order to further justify the decision to use a qualitative approach. The three main areas in which the two types of research differed were the nature of the question being asked, the method used to answer it, and the degree of precision the method brought to answer the question. First, the nature of the question being asked in a quantitative study often sought to have a numerical value, whereas qualitative questions sought to provide in-depth meaning of a lived experience (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). It was this depth the researcher sought; therefore, a qualitative study was ideal. Due to the nature of the question, the method used to derive answers automatically varied between the two types of research.

Second, the method used in a quantitative research sought to gather empirical findings using experimental and non-experimental designs. Qualitative research sought to gather data in verbal form and, therefore, used narratives to generate a theory based on participants' perspectives (Creswell 2003; Salkind, 2006). Furthermore, another stark difference in the method involved the sample size. Quantitative research often employed a large group of participants who were typically randomly selected; on the other hand, qualitative research often utilized a smaller sample size purposefully selected. Data gathered in a quantitative study were analyzed deductively, whereas in a qualitative study, data were inductively analyzed for structural and contextual meaning. It was this structural and contextual meaning that the researcher sought within this study; therefore, a qualitative study was ideal.

Third, the degree of precision the method brought to answer the question differed between quantitative and qualitative. According to Creswell (1998) and Patton (2002), in qualitative research, the aforementioned did not offer enough rigor and generalizability because it was not statistical in nature. Quantitative research, unlike qualitative research, did not offer enough depth to assess the contents of the participants' narratives (Salkind, 2006). The instrument within quantitative research provided validity by measuring what it intended to measure and, as such, provided the degree of precision to answer the question. On the contrary, the researcher in qualitative research was the instrument. Qualitative research was a complex process that involved the researcher entering a natural setting and creating a holistic picture after careful analysis of words from each participant (Creswell, 1998); therefore, the degree of precision depended greatly on the ethical standards and rigor of the researcher. Accordingly, the researcher ensured both ethical and rigorous standards were followed within this particular research.

The researcher was confident that the qualitative method was ideally suited for this particular study because what was sought was an exploration and better understanding of the lived social and psychological experiences of Black Bahamian women throughout their educational attainment. The nature of the question lent itself to a qualitative study because exploration of the structural meanings behind the phenomenon was being sought. Furthermore, the nature of the research did not dichotomize the participants and their environment, for it was the environment that had influenced their lives. In accordance with Patton (2002), the researcher ensured the phenomenon of the women occurred and was being investigated in a natural setting that represented a real-world situation. When need be, the researcher made adjustments to each interview situation so as to allow the participant to take

the interview in any direction she wished. Making the necessary adjustments ultimately allowed the researcher to better understand the phenomenon having been experienced by the woman and, thereby, avoided a pre-determined and locked-in rigid design. The resulting effects revealed only accurate individual descriptions of the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

As previously stated, the data collection and fieldwork resulted in comprehensive and truthful descriptions as revealed by direct quotes. While engaging in this process, the researcher was mindful to consider her own insights and removed them so as to provide an objective, neutral, and respectful depiction of the educational experiences of the women being interviewed. Importance was also given to the dynamic systems that may have developed throughout the research (Patton, 2002). Thus, because the researcher sought to capture the true essence of each participant's experience and bring it to light, the situational dynamics changed throughout the interviews. The qualitative method was ideally suited because it offered the flexibility needed to adequately capture the true essence of the experience.

Qualitative inquiry was also suited to this study because the researcher was fully aware and earnestly sought to capture and respect the uniqueness of each participant's views. During the analysis of the women's experiences, the researcher ensured each participant's views were accurately presented because they all added value and meaning to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). To ensure this, inductive analysis was mandatory and involved the researcher fully immersing herself in the details and specifics of the data so as to discover objective themes that confirmed or disconfirmed beliefs about Black Bahamian women who had experienced the lived phenomenon.

Finally, qualitative inquiry provided a true holistic perspective that explored the complex process as experienced by these women who overcame obstacles to achieve such a great accomplishment. The words of the participants truly reflected the social, historical, and contextual meanings of a select few who had been voiceless for so long by sheer means of their race, gender, and socio-economic status.

Rationale for a Phenomenological Study

Qualitative research had several traditions that could be used to conduct a study, and its purpose in this investigation was to explore the lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments. According to Crotty (2003), common occurrences were a part of culture which resulted from our humanness, and, subsequently, symbols and meanings developed. Due to the nature of the study, a phenomenological tradition was ideally suited because it investigated the phenomenon in its natural setting which allowed the researcher to develop, understand, and immerse herself in the extraordinary experiences of the specified participants.

The term *phenomenology* appeared in works prior to Edmund Husserl (1859-1938); however, it was he who became renowned and credited with being the father of phenomenology. Phenomenological research aimed to study the lived experience or the essence of common occurrences which resulted from humanness (Creswell, 1998; Crotty, 2003; Patton, 2002). According to Moustakas (1994), a phenomenological study ". . . involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis . . ." (p. 13). Patton (2002) further contended that phenomenology was a retrospective reflection on the lived experience now passed.

Therefore, in this study, it was important to utilize women who had shared the same experience so as to better understand the phenomenon.

No literature existed that supported or disconfirmed the cultural perceptions of Black Bahamian woman. The phenomenological tradition was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the unexplored Bahamian phenomenon by asking participants to return to and unearth their experiences at different stages in their educational development. This provided understanding and meaning to the common everyday experiences. Furthermore, the tradition explored a search for meaning which could be integrated into a typical experience for the person or persons who had experienced the same event. Due to the nature of the research, the women's experiences were filled with thick descriptions, symbols, and meanings, all of which were common within phenomenological research (Berg, 2007).

To ensure that the researcher captured the true essence of the experience, she applied hermeneutical phenomenology. Hermeneutical phenomenology was developed to help researchers understand the objects as they appeared (Moustakas, 1994). It required a return to self and employment of a self-reflective process that encouraged the researcher to increasingly know herself within the experience being investigated. Therefore, during the analysis of data the researcher set aside all presuppositions so as to preserve the integrity of the study and ensured a quality and unbiased research.

<p style="text-align:center">Research Questions</p>

This study explored the lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments. One over-arching question and four sub-questions guided this study.

Over-arching Question

The following over-arching question guided this study:

What sociological factors influenced Black Bahamian women's educational attainment?

Sub-questions

1) What socio-economic structures impacted Black Bahamian women's educational attainment?

2) What socialization influence(s) did single mothers' gender-of-child-dependent rearing have on their daughter(s) obtaining a higher education degree?

3) What daily self-efficating behaviors and educational activities contributed to the Black Bahamian women's success?

4) What structural meaning(s) did Black Bahamian women ascribed to having earned a higher education degree?

<p style="text-align:center">Method</p>

Role of the Researcher

The researcher within a phenomenological qualitative study played an important role because the researcher was the instrument (Berg, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The researcher was responsible for formulating and collecting original naive data descriptions from the interview questions. More importantly, the

researcher had the responsibility to determine the underlying structural meaning of the experiences based on reflective analysis and interpretation (Moustakas, 1994).

Due to the tasks at hand, the researcher developed an intimate relationship between the participants and herself. This relationship was guided by both ethical and confidential standards on the part of the researcher. With the aforementioned in mind, the researcher had chosen a topic that had significant social meaning to Bahamian society. After appropriate selection of the research question, the researcher determined the participant criteria, formulated questions with the intent to solicit responses that answered the research question, selected suitable interviewees, engaged in face-to-face tape-recorded interviews with participants, and provided structural meaning to their responses during the analysis of the data.

The relationship between the researcher and the participants was both personal and confidential. To guarantee ethical conduct, the researcher utilized Barry University's Informed Consent Form which addressed issues of voluntary participation, comprehension of the nature and purpose of the study, risks, benefits, and ethics (Appendix C). To ensure credibility, the researcher provided accurate and authentic accounts of the participants' experiences which were later confirmed by them during verification of the transcriptions (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). All of the aforementioned steps, when followed through, provided credibility and reliability to the study.

Researcher Bias

Researchers (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002) agreed that in a phenomenological investigation, the researcher was directly involved with the outcome due to the researcher's role and responsibility in the study. To ensure that ethical standards were

adhered to, the researcher had to reveal and dispel all biases associated with the study. According to Moustakas (1994) the researcher had a responsibility to reveal any personal experiences, prejudgments, and prejudices in the study.

First, the researcher engaged in the epoche process prior to conducting the interviews and analysis process. By engaging in the epoche process, the researcher exposed her own experiences and prejudices so as to set these aside and reveal only an objective study. An objective study meant that the researcher focused only on the phenomenon as experienced by the participants because it was their voices that were to be the dominant force and not that of the researcher. Second, member checking was another method that avoided bias (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002), and by having the participants review their individual transcripts for accuracy, the researcher was reducing prejudice. To this end, the researcher ensured that only reflective descriptions of the participants' realities were heard and truly reflected the phenomenon as experienced by the women (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher was raised in a female single-headed household all her life, and as a result of the challenges and successes associated with this experience she became interested in the phenomena of being raised in a low socio-economic home with only a mother. After having engaged in discussions with other women who had shared the same phenomenon, the researcher's interest in the topic was further peaked. The researcher wanted to explore how girls who were raised by a Black female single-parent in low socio-economic homes were able to obtain a higher education degree. The researcher engaged in a literature review on the topic and found that in the Bahamas, little or no information existed on the influential role of a mother's involvement and environment in the education of her daughter(s). Additionally, the phenomenon of single female-headed households had been on the increase in the

Bahamas since the 1950s (Department of Statistics, 2009b; Saunders, 1990). Evidence-based

data on the phenomenon could provide a vital opportunity to put programs in place so as to

better assist current families with the challenges associated with this experience.

As a result of having experienced the phenomenon being investigated, the researcher

may have had preconceived notions regarding this topic. Biases in this qualitative study were

expected due to the existence of multiple realities; however, it was incumbent upon the

researcher to reduce them. In this study, unfounded views were most prevalent during the

interview and analysis process. First, the researcher, due to her own experience, sought to

avoid asking questions that may have solicited responses she wanted to hear. The questions

were objective so that participants could truly reflect their own experiences and answer the

research questions.

Second, the researcher was mindful not to coerce or influence the responses in the

direction that fitted her own experience. Participants were able to lead the responses while

the interviewer followed, being cautious not to interrupt. Third, during the analysis, the

researcher may have been biased because she was responsible for interpreting the responses.

Therefore, she ensured that the analysis and structural meanings provided truly reflected the

phenomenon and were the descriptions of the participants, not her own (Moustakas, 1994).

Sample

Although phenomenology sought in-depth analysis, a large sample size was not

required to obtain such findings. This was because, customary to qualitative research, a small

number of purposefully selected participants provided in-depth and rich data in the context of

the study (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Phenomenology utilized

a sample size of no more than 10 participants and, as purported by Creswell (2003), this

number guaranteed quality assurance. With reference to this study, eight participants were purposefully selected based on the criterion of the shared phenomenon, which represented a critical key. More importantly, it provided richness of information suitable for the research.

Criteria for participation in the study included Black Bahamian females who had earned a Bachelor's degree or higher, resided in a low socio-economic neighborhood during their formative years (grades PK-12), were raised in a female single-parent household, were willing to speak about their experiences, and were willing to agree to one tape-recorded interview and one meeting to verify the transcript. No age limits were imposed because it was irrelevant to the lived experience. The researcher believed the age differences made it interesting to note whether the socio-economic and political conditions of the country over time impeded or enhanced the participants' achievements. What was important was each participant's ability to articulate her view of the lived experience.

Access to the participants was gained from three women's social clubs in the Bahamas. The women's clubs served as gatekeepers and included the Aurora Household of Ruth, International Association of Administrators, and Zonta Club of New Providence. The researcher mailed one letter in a stamped envelope to each of the aforementioned clubs (Appendix A). The letter requested the President of their respective club to announce to members of the organization that their voluntary participation was being requested. When permission was granted, a flyer (Appendix B) stating the intended purpose of the investigation, research criteria, and the researcher's contact information was posted for two weeks, thereby allowing interested participants to voluntarily initiate contact with the researcher via email or telephone. After the researcher discussed the study with prospective

participants (Appendix C) and those that were still interested in participating, arrangements for an interview and meeting were made.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), interviews required a detailed description of the phenomenon. The participants through in-depth and structured open-ended interviews led much of the discussion resulting in saturation. According to Creswell (1998), it was essential that the researcher gathered data until saturation was achieved and redundancy was established.

Instrument

Utilizing eight participants, the interview protocol was the primary instrument used to collect data in this study. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), qualitative interviews were each unique because the researcher was the instrument responsible for formulating and collecting data from the questions. The instrument helped solicit data which further aided in understanding the experiences of the participants, thereby constructing meaning (Patton, 2002). Since all the interviewees were different, revelations differed and what they were willing to share was unknown; therefore, the researcher utilized the same questions for each interviewee. It was the only way to elicit a detailed narration about the stages of educational development and how formative experiences shaped the women's present values on education and motherhood. The questions were designed by the researcher based on the review of the literature, the researcher's knowledge, and the research question itself (Appendix F).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested that qualitative interviews had two dimensions which were breadth of focus (narrow or broad) and subject of focus (meaning or description). The researcher made use of broadly focused scope with-in-between emphasis on meaning

and framework as one dimension and events and processes as the other. Such questions avoided the participants having "yes" or "no" responses; instead, the questions sought elaborative answers that allowed the researcher to understand how people viewed and decoded their world and how others could elucidate their interpretations (Moustakas, 1994). The interview questions were modified as each interview built upon the other, thereby expanding information that were revealed in the participant's own terms. The use of such questions also allowed one to be mindful not to influence, distort, or misinterpret the meaning to responses solicited. Instead, the researcher was encouraged to appreciate the participant's meanings, knowledge, and shared meaning of her lived experiences with the phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

The participants, at pre-arranged times, were interviewed one-on-one in the Bahamas using in-depth questions. The researcher utilized 11 questions that were designed to inquire about the women's shared experiences as low socio-economic students who were raised by a female single-parent and how they were able to obtain a college degree(s) (Appendix F). Responses were taped-recorded as direct quotes to capture, through exploration, the full richness and detail of the phenomenon experienced by the participants. The final question asked the women to add any rich data not requested by the researcher, but which might have contributed to the study. To ensure comfort and convenience, the women were allowed to choose the time and setting for the interviews. In selection of a site, considerations such as sufficient light, comfort, privacy, and minimal noise were essential. According to Creswell (2003), in-depth interviews could last a maximum of two hours per interview; however, the researcher utilized 90-minutes interviews. Upon completion, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings.

The aim of the interviews was to discover the women's perceptions of their experiences and factors which contributed to their success. By asking the women to provide a narrative about the stages of their educational experiences, the researcher began to accurately recognize clues and signs that provided meaning to the discussion. Thus, leading toward finding the real meaning in the experiences of women from female single-headed households, their circumstances of poverty, and understanding the social process endured while overcoming the many obstacles to obtain a college degree. Furthermore, at the completion of the interview, the researcher helped fill in historical blanks by contributing to Bahamian literature using contextual and meaningful interpretation of the social complex of the lived experience often ignored by historians when it came to issues of slavery and women in the Bahamas.

Data Collection and Processing Procedures

Upon receiving approval from Barry University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), data collection procedures commenced. The researcher wrote a letter to three women's social clubs which served as gatekeepers to the participants and included Aurora Household of Ruth, International Association of Administrators, and Zonta Club of New Providence (Appendix A). The letter appealed to the President to announce to members of the organization that a research study was being conducted and members' voluntary participation was being requested. In addition, the President was asked to put flyers in their establishments for members to learn more about the study. The flyer (Appendix B) was posted for two weeks and it solicited women willing to participate in a research study which focused on the educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments. Those women who believed they met the criteria and were interested in participating in the

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study were asked to initiate contact with the researcher via telephone or e-mail, at which time the researcher screened for appropriateness (Appendix C), while informing the participant of her rights within the study.

Eight participants who met the criteria and agreed to participate in one interview and one meeting to confirm the interview transcript comprised the sample. Due to the number of organizations approached, their large membership, and the use of confidential procedures, the researcher was confident that participants were not identified in any published data. At the pre-arranged time, the researcher met with each interviewee for the first meeting, and it was during this meeting the researcher provided the participant an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). The form acknowledged her commitment and comprehension of the interview and its impact on the study. The form included confidentiality of participant data, and toward this end, no name was used and published results retained participant's confidentiality. Risks or benefits from the research study, voluntary participation, time commitment, data storage and destruction, and withdrawal from the research investigation were discussed with the participant during that time.

The researcher informed the participant about the protocol for the interview and her right to stop participation at any time during the course of the interview. The participant also had the right to refuse to answer any question(s) she was not comfortable with and could have requested that the tape-recorder be stopped. Subsequently, the researcher informed the participant that she was entitled to a copy of the transcript and, with her permission, could be contacted by the researcher for a second meeting to verify the accuracy of the transcription of the interview.

Interested individual participants and the researcher engaged in a face-to-face interview in the Bahamas. Demographic answers were solicited (Appendix E) before utilizing structured open-ended questions (Appendix F). The researcher interviewed individual participants for 90-minutes and the interview was conducted in a mutually agreed upon location that was private, safe, and provided sufficient lighting. To ensure verbatim transcription of the interview, an audio-tape was used to record feedback to the interview questions.

The researcher assumed the role of listener and tried to avoid interjecting personal bias and opinions (Creswell, 1998). However, the researcher sought immediate clarification and responses to dogmatic answers which may have had hidden meaning, thereby adding richness to the data collection. More importantly, at the completion of the interviews, the researcher gathered depth and understanding from the lived experiences of women of low socio-economic status from a female single-headed household. This allowed the researcher to fill in blanks that not only contributed to Bahamian literature, but also provided an understanding of the events and experiences in the personal lives of these women.

Once the interview was complete, the participant was thanked for her participation. Each participant was assigned a moniker (e.g., JBI-1, JBI-2) as identification which was to be the participant's pseudonym for the purpose of the research. Within phenomenology, the researcher was the instrument and was responsible for collecting data. Following each interview, the researcher recorded field notes (Appendix G) which provided a full, detailed overview of the interview. After each initial interview, the researcher immediately recorded notes which included information related to non-verbal communication, verbal emphasis, facial and body postures, physical appearance, location of the interview setting, social

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interactions, and any other important events during the interview. According to Patton (2002), field notes added to the rich descriptions of the interview and acted like an instrument to assist the researcher with better understanding the experiences of the interviewee, thereby aiding in the transcription process.

The researcher alone transcribed the audio-recording and completed initial data analysis within one month of the first interview. Upon completion, the researcher then contacted the participant for a second meeting lasting no more than 30-minutes so as to review the transcript of the interview for accuracy. The participant was asked to review the transcript for accuracy and to clarify, when necessary, her descriptions of her lived educational experiences. Upon verification of accuracy, the audio-recording was destroyed within 24 hours. In addition, all consent forms were kept separate so as to protect confidentiality. Raw data, transcriptions, field notes, and all information were kept in a separate folder, locked, and secured in the researcher's home office for a maximum of five years.

At the completion of the study, all forms were to be kept for the allotted period of five years in accordance with the university's policy and procedure (2015). After the expiration of such time, all forms and transcriptions will be destroyed. Additionally, the researcher provided the women with contact information in the event they had any further questions requiring clarification after completion of the interview with the researcher.

Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose of phenomenological research was to understand the participant's experience from her point of view. The focus of this research study was to understand how participants perceived their experiences as Black Bahamian women of low socio-economic

status who were able to obtain a college degree. This methodology used a search for meaning that could be integrated into a typical experience for people who had experienced the same event. According to Creswell (2003), there existed no one formula in qualitative analysis to transform data into findings. In qualitative analysis, the researcher was responsible for turning interviews and field notes into findings. It was a custom-built approach that required insight, intuition, and impression as one had to take large amounts of data and reduce it into significant themes and meaningful interpretations. The researcher identified themes from the multiple perspectives of a specified experience from eight participants which led to transferability about the event in terms of what it was like from an insider's perspective.

Upon transcription of the interviews and confirmation of accuracy, the researcher used Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method for data analysis (Appendix H). The Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method had four steps which were all necessary to complete the data analysis. Steps one and two provided a guide for how to analyze the first individual interview effectively, while step three encouraged the researcher to complete the previous steps for each of the remaining participants. The final step, step four, encouraged the researcher to integrate all of the individual textural-structural analysis into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole.

Step one of the Moustakas' (1994) modifications of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method for data analysis involved the researcher describing and translating in detail her own understanding of the phenomenon as expressed by the participants. This description resulted because the researcher listened and allowed the interview to go in the direction which the participant wished. The researcher also set aside any subjective views and pre-suppositions

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as experienced while journeying throughout the research, interviews, and field notes, thereby allowing her to objectively obtain a full description of the participants' essence of the phenomenon.

Step two involved the researcher completing seven stages and it began with utilizing the verbatim transcriptions of the participants. The researcher read and re-read so as to generate an overall impression and provided a holistic context for the research. Each statement based on the women's responses to the interview questions with respect to the significance it may have had to understanding the phenomenon was considered. The researcher then recorded all relevant statements for further analysis. Of course, this required the researcher to look and explore, again and again, so as to complete the nature of the meaning of the experience as a Black woman in low socio-economic conditions.

The researcher then listed each non-repetitive and non-overlapping statement which later served to generate possible themes and sub-themes from each individual's perspective. This process was done inductively so as to view the information from an open and unbiased perspective (Patton, 2002). The researcher then horizontalized the women's statements because participants' descriptions of the experiences as they appeared were all valuable and held equal meaning to the nature and essence of the research. A new horizon arrived every time the participant self-reflected and it was a never-ending process of unlimited discovery (Moustakas, 1994). Each horizon about the participant's educational development as it came into her conscious experience was as a result of the condition of the phenomenon that gave it a distinctive character.

Next, the researcher sought to relate and cluster invariant meaningful units into themes. These statements were all important to the research because they not only provided

thematic links but transcended all other information and revealed meaningful statements which transformed the world of the lived educational attainment of the participants into a meaningful experience to be understood. The researcher then gathered, aligned, and related all common themes from the women's conscious experiences into clusters and organized them so as to decipher and reflect a textural description of the attitudes and behaviors of the participants necessary to achieve academic success throughout their extraordinary life experiences in the Bahamas. It was the reductive descriptions which explicated the essential nature of the phenomenon the way it was experienced by each woman through use of her verbatim statements (Moustakas, 1994).

Subsequently, the researcher self-reflected and constructed a description of the textural and structural experiences of her understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by these women. The researcher revealed thoughts and feelings about the experience and relinquished her role in the investigation. At this point, the researcher revealed only the pure essence filled with a rich meaning and understanding of the experience of each Black Bahamian woman from low socio-economic environments who were able to rise against the odds with formidable character and obtain a college degree.

According to Moustakas (1994), the next step in phenomenological analysis used imaginative variation. Utilizing the composite textural description of each of the participants and use of imaginative variation, the researcher created a composite structural depiction of each participant. The final step involved the researcher integrating a composite textural and composite structural description of each participant into a group as a whole so as to offer a synthesis of the meaning and essence of the phenomenon. The researcher integrated the data into meaningful experiences based on Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998,

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Mohammed, 1998a, b) and self-efficacy theories (Bandura, 1977, 1986) which confirmed or disconfirmed the researcher's initial assertions about the culture of Black Bahamian women from female single-headed households.

Quality and Verification

Within qualitative research it was essential to utilize specific measures that ensured trustworthiness. The researcher employed three methods to verify the quality of data collected. First, the researcher clarified any biases from the onset of the study and during the research process. According to Creswell (1998), this was essential in order to better understand one's position and its impact on the study. The researcher did have experience with the phenomenon, and it was important to self-reflect such subjective opinions prior to the study and before the analysis of data so as to present a more objective study. Second, member checking was employed in which each participant was asked to verify the accuracy and credibility of her transcribed interview. Also, comments or corrections with reference to the transcription were addressed and this enhanced the external validity of the study. Third, to guarantee quality and verification, the researcher ensured that transferability was embedded within the study which guaranteed applicability and dependability in other settings.

Ethical Considerations

Phenomenological research sought to delve into the lived experiences of participants and, as such, required a high degree of rapport and trust between the participants and researcher (Patton, 2002). With the aforementioned in mind, the main ethical concerns that were addressed were informed consent, avoidance of harmful situations, and confidentiality of all participants. The researcher ensured the relationship with each participant was

respectful, open, and non-exploitive as it was crucial to gathering and synthesizing data objectively so as to present the lived experiences of Black Bahamian women with structural meanings.

To access explicit and tacit knowledge, the researcher used Informed Consent so as to protect the rights of participants (Appendix D). All ethical matters related to the nature and intent of the study was addressed with participants prior to the first meeting. The participants were made fully aware of the role they were to play in the discovery of cultural knowledge. First, the researcher ensured that participants were aware of their voluntary right to participate or drop out at any point, their right to refuse to answer any question(s), and their right to ask for the tape-recorder to be stopped. Second, all participants were entitled to a copy of their transcribed interview. Subsequently, the participants were allowed to confirm accuracy of the transcription and discuss any questions or concerns that may have needed to be addressed.

Avoidance of harm during fieldwork was another major ethical concern with reference to this research. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), to reduce harm to participants, the researcher considered all possible threats during the planning stages of the research. The researcher was mindful and sensitive during the interview to issues of potential harm and coercion of the participants. Furthermore, the researcher demonstrated respect to participants' rights, concerns, and ensured truthful description of the women's lived experiences with the phenomenon.

Issues of confidentially and privacy were addressed in this study to ensure participants' information was safeguarded solely by the researcher and only used in the manner agreed upon (Creswell, 2003). To safeguard the privacy of participants' information,

the researcher considered this matter in the planning stages of the investigation. To this end, upon revision of the transcriptions for accuracy, the audio-recordings were destroyed within 24 hours. In addition, all consent forms were kept separate and raw data, transcriptions, and all other information were kept in a separate folder, locked, and secured within the researcher's home office for a period not to exceed five years (2015).

Other important ethical issues that were considered in this research study were the worthiness of the investigation, benefits, and integrity (Creswell, 2003). There was a lack of literature on Black Bahamian women and their lived experiences. A thoughtful, high quality, and applied qualitative study contributed significantly to this lack by providing contextual and structural meanings to the educational phenomenon of select Black Bahamian women. More importantly, this research helped fill gaps within the history of Black women forgotten so long ago and often distorted due its benefit for the ruling class. Additionally, the benefits to be derived from this study not only served to provide a voice to the voiceless, but offered insight and learning opportunities for a young independent country in need of evidence-based data to assist in decision-making processes.

Chapter Summary

Chapter III described in detail the methodology and method that guided this study. A qualitative study in the phenomenological tradition was suitable for this research because the study sought to investigate the lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments. Only the participants' narratives could truly shed light and provide structural meaning to the phenomenon.

The researcher's role in this study was as the instrument and, hence, the investigator was responsible for designing the questions, conducting the interviews, and analyzing the

data. The researcher engaged in epoche and member checking so as to present a more objective study. Eight participants who met the criteria comprised the purposeful sample and were asked to engage in one face-to-face interview using 11 questions designed by the researcher. After the interview, the researcher engaged in one meeting to confirm the accuracy of the transcribed interview. All informed consent forms were stored separate from the tape-recordings and transcriptions and all materials were safely stored and secured in a locked drawer in the researcher's home office. The data analysis employed the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method as described by Moustakas (1994).

The researcher highlighted important steps that, when followed, ensured that the most stringent ethical principles was applied to the study. This also guaranteed that the lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women was presented in an objective, structural, and contextual manner that truly reflected the phenomenon.

Chapter IV explores in greater details the findings of this study which were inclusive of the demographics, the over-arching research question, and the sub-questions. Demographics were collected on the following: age; marital status; island on which the participant was raised; type of formative schooling; educational level; employment status; and income. Through data analysis, the researcher was able to categorize and summarize the perceptions and insights of specific Black Bahamian women with regard to their educational attainment.

Chapter IV

Results of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to better understand the educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments and how they were able to obtain a higher education degree despite being raised by a female single-parent. There were no studies with reference to the sociological factors necessary to overcome the feminization of poverty often inherited within the poorest strata of society. According to Saban (2007), acquiring a middle-class status and elevating oneself from poverty through obtaining a Bachelor's degree was the best possible avenue for an individual not born independently wealthy. Powers (2000) concurred and earlier stated that the ability to obtain a middle-class salary was based principally upon an individual's educational qualifications. As such, this study provided a framework to generate a better awareness of the challenges and successes of specific women as they sought to elevate themselves from modest means and enter a new class status with all of its associated benefits.

The problem presented was studied within the context of Black Bahamian women who once resided in low socio-economic environments. The theoretical frameworks that guided this study were Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986). This study was guided by one over-arching research question and four sub-questions. The primary data collection protocol consisted of eight purposively selected participants who were interviewed one-on-one in the Bahamas. The criteria for selection were that the participants had to be a Black Bahamian woman who held

a baccalaureate degree or higher, was reared in a low socio-economic environment by a female single-parent, and resided in the Bahamas.

The researcher was the instrument and, therefore, responsible for collecting data using the interview protocol. The rich, thick, relevant, and descriptive narratives led the researcher to formulate interpretations and gain a better awareness of the lives of these women. The participants, through in-depth and structured open-ended interviews, led much of the discussion, thereby resulting in saturation. This led to the researcher providing substantiated interpretations and a better awareness of the struggles and jubilations of these women as they overcame the obstacles of feminization, poverty, educational challenges, and obtained success and entered a new class status. Utilizing structured interviews, analytic induction, and the comparative method, the researcher was able to develop independent evidence of relationships within and between data. Narrative descriptions allowed for the emergence of critical themes that captured the true essence of the experience. Through the use of ethical standards such as clarification of biases from the onset, member checking, and transferability within other settings which allowed for dependability and applicability, the researcher ensured the research quality was verified within this qualitative phenomenological study.

The findings of this study included: (a) demographic data from eight Black Bahamian women; (b) the data analysis and coding process; (c) answers to the over-arching research question and four sub-questions; and, (d) a summary of the findings.

Demographics of the Participants

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with each participant at an agreed upon location and at their convenience in the Bahamas. Prior to commencing the individual

interview, each participant was asked to complete an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D).

To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym as follows: JBI-1

through JBI-8. Each participant was also asked to complete a demographic form (Appendix

E) which compiled extraneous factors used to elaborate on results from the data analysis. The

following characteristics were incorporated in the demographic findings: age; marital status;

island on which the participant was raised; type of formative schooling; educational level;

employment status; and income. Based on the criteria for participation within the study, it

was not necessary to ask for gender and ethnicity on the demographic survey.

Age of the Participants

Eight Black Bahamian women participated in the study, and their ages ranged

between 28 and 52 years. The researcher opted to use specific ages as opposed to ranges

because the participants came from diverse backgrounds throughout society and the age

range was essential to determine if the socio-economic and political conditions of the country

over time enhanced or impeded the educational success of these women. Statistically

speaking, one participant (12.5%) was between ages 20 and 30 years; three (37.5%)

participants were between ages 31 and 40 years; another three (37.5%) were between ages 41

and 50 years; and one participant (12.5%) was between ages 51 and 60 years. See figure 4.1

for participants' demographics by age.
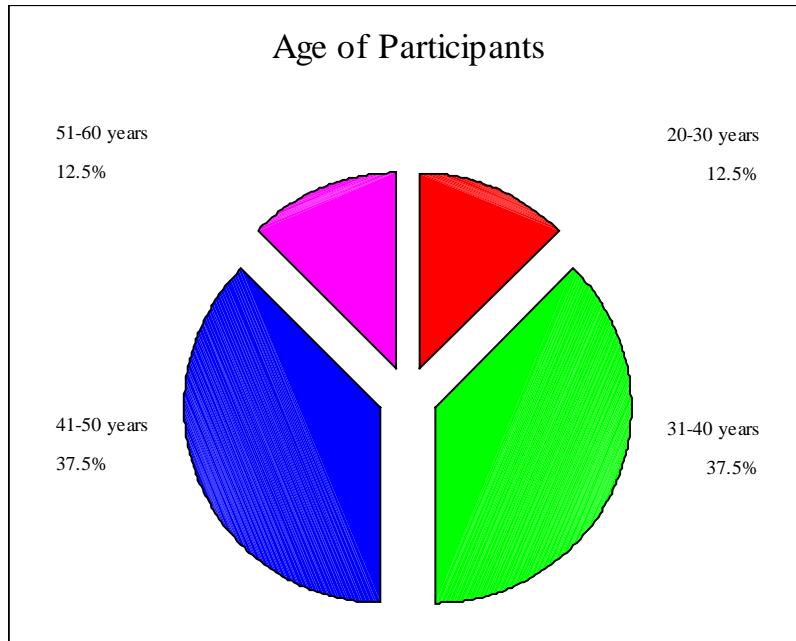
Figure 4.1 Participants' Demographics by Age

Marital Status of the Participants

The majority (62.5%) of the participants in this study was married; two participants (25%) were single, while one (12.5%) was divorced. The marital status of the women provided extraneous factors which were used to elaborate on results from the data analysis. Participants' marital status is illustrated in figure 4.2.

Participants' Marital Status

Divorced
12.5%

Single
25.0%

Married
62.5%
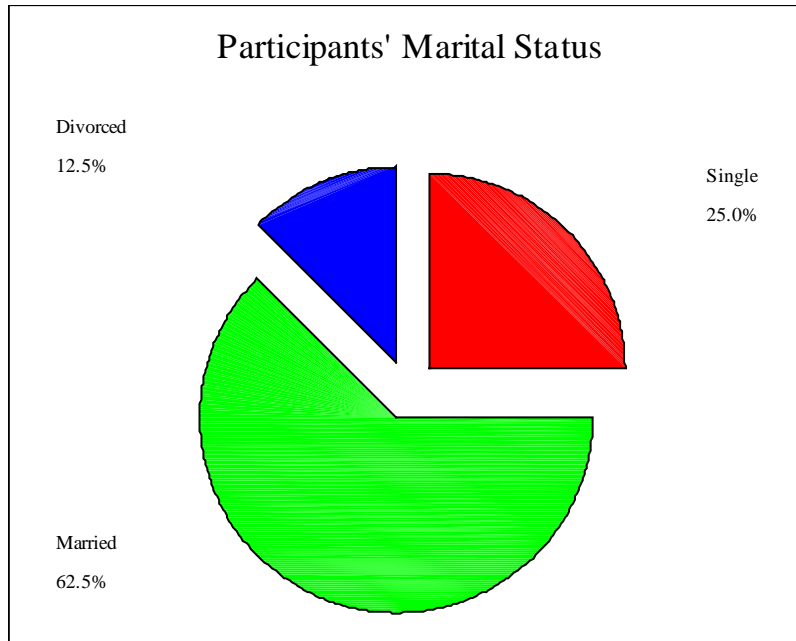
Figure 4.2 Participants' Marital Status.

Residence during formative schooling and type of formative schooling

The Bahamas is an archipelago made up of more than 700 islands, cays, and rocks;

however, only about 30 of them are significantly inhabited. Nassau, the capital city, is

located on the island of New Providence, and it is the most important island. The island of

New Providence has approximately 248,948 residents (Department of Statistics, 2010), while

its capital city operates as the center for government, business, and industry. Due to its

economic stability and central importance, New Providence is considered the heart of the

Bahamas and is responsible for all major decisions regarding the socio-political, economic,

and educational systems in the country. Many of the residents, however, have their roots in

the out-islands or family-islands and have migrated to New Providence due to better health

facilities, employment opportunities, education, and other opportunities for prosperity not

available or as advanced on their respective islands.

All participants (87.5%), with the exception of one (12.5%), grew up and attended

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school during their formative years on the island of New Providence. The remaining participant was born on one of the family-islands and graduated from the all-age-school located on that island. Upon completion, she relocated to New Providence where she attended the local college and has since remained. To further protect the confidentiality of the participant, the island on which this individual was raised was not revealed. Additionally, many of the participants attended both government and private schools throughout their formative experiences. However, all participants (87.5%), with the exception of one (12.5%), completed secondary high school at a private institution in the Bahamas.

Level of Education

All of the participants met the criteria of having earned a higher education degree. One participant (12.5%) had a Doctoral degree; two (25%) had Masters' degrees; while five (62.5%) had Bachelors' degrees. Most of the participants started their college education at the College of the Bahamas, while some obtained their degrees from various institutions abroad, mostly within the United States. The College of the Bahamas, until recently, only offered Associate's degrees; however, the college has transitioned into a four-year institution. As such, some of the participants returned to complete their Bachelors' degrees. There were also several Master's programs, mainly through affiliation with American colleges and universities. Participants with degrees higher than a Bachelor's degree were more likely to pursue their degrees abroad. To protect the confidentiality of participants, the researcher did not elaborate as to where degrees were obtained. Figure 4.3 illustrates the educational attainment of the participants.

Educational Attainment of Participants
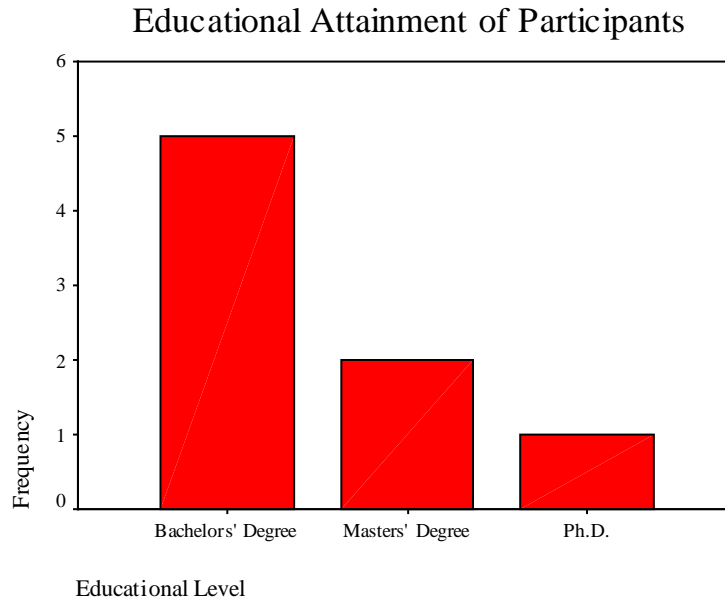
Figure 4.3 The Educational Attainment of Participants

Work Status and Income of the Participants

Most of the participants (75%) worked full-time, while two (25%) worked part-time, and they all held various positions within their respective places of employment. To protect the confidentiality of participants, their place of employment and positions were not revealed; however, the salaries were in alignment with the positions held. With reference to salary, many of the participants held more than one job concurrently; therefore, they were asked to list the salary for their primary employment. To safeguard participants' privacy, salary was collected using a wage range instead of exact amount. Again, to protect the participants' confidentiality, information regarding secondary positions was not revealed and it should be noted that this affected the salary. According to data collected, the annual salaries were as follows: one participant's (12.5%) salary averaged more than $50,000; two participants (25%) averaged between $40,000 and $49,000; four participants (50%) averaged between $30,000 and $39,000; and one participant (12.5%) averaged between $10,000 and

$19,000. Figure 4.4 illustrates the income of the participants.

Income of Participants
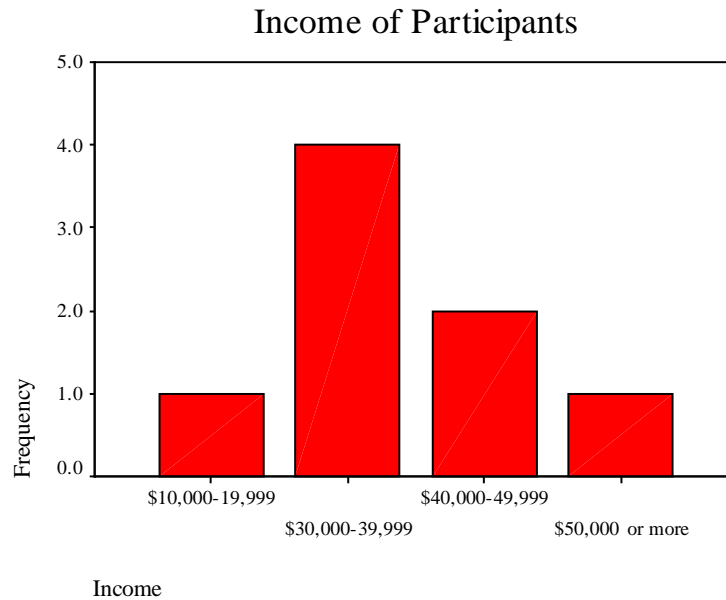
Figure 4.4 Participants' Income

Findings

This section provided an explanation of the data collection process as well as information regarding the data analysis coding procedures utilized in this study. According to Moustakas (1994), the first step of data analysis began when the researcher created a full description of her own understanding of the phenomenon. To accomplish this, the researcher listened attentively to each participant, accepting each statement as valid and with equal importance to the experience, and sought clarification which contributed to comprehensive disclosure of the experience. This process also dispelled researcher bias which served to increase trust in the process.

At the completion of each interview, the researcher recorded field notes. The field notes served to add to the rich descriptions of the interviews, and assisted the researcher with better understanding the experiences of the interviewees by adding meaning and providing a

clear portrayal of specific activities that contributed to educational attainment, unfolding situational relationships that promoted individual success, and the retrospective thoughts and feelings of the participants. Once all of the interviews were transcribed, the researcher met with each participant for a second meeting to verify the transcription. This process allowed the researcher the opportunity to better understand and explore the opinions of each participant.

Upon completion, the researcher began the second step in which she read each participant's statements numerous times to gain a better awareness of the phenomenon experienced by each individual. The more the researcher read the statements, the more she was able to better appreciate the experiences of the participants. Once completed, the researcher recorded all relevant statements as they related to the lived experience of the Black Bahamian women. The relevant statements later assisted the researcher in answering the one over-arching research question and four sub-research questions which guided this study.

Following this step, the researcher proceeded to the next step which involved analyzing the information by comparing each woman's statements over and over again in order to list non-repetitive or non-overlapping statements which provided meaningful units of information related to the experience. These statements represented the heart of the study as they provided relevance, significance, and invariant meanings to the lived experience of Black Bahamian women raised by a female single-parent in a low socio-economic environment yet who were able to attain a higher education degree. In this study, commonalities were found and resulted in the researcher deriving 26 invariant components. Upon completion of the comparative analysis, the researcher began exploring themes and

meaningful clusters which resulted in the researcher clustering the 26 invariant components into three major themes: (a) cultural capital, (b) socio-economic status, and (c) cognitive abilities. The three major themes which emerged developed as a result of the researcher using "phenomenological reflection and imaginative variation" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 131) to create a thematic representation of the experience from eight Black Bahamian women.

Once the researcher had created themes which represented the meaning of the experience shared by participants, she began to synthesize the invariant constituents. This resulted in the researcher creating vivid descriptions of the experience using the rich, thick, relevant, and descriptive narratives of the participants which were common within phenomenological studies. In the findings section, the researcher used individual verbatim textural descriptions of the experience of community, poverty, mother-daughter dynamics, stereotypes, and educational challenges and successes. The researcher, using the textural description of the participants, tried to evoke an awareness of what the participants experienced in their daily lives as well as their thoughts and feelings as individuals who were determined to educate and elevate themselves into a new class status.

Upon completion, the researcher reflected upon her own textural description of the experience. This process allowed the researcher to review the transcripts, invariant constituents, and themes of each participant which resulted in a depiction of the experiences of each individual. It was this textural depiction of the individuals which provided a foundation to create a better awareness of this phenomenon, without prejudice, as experienced by each of the women. According to Moustakas (1994), the next step in phenomenological analysis used imaginative variation. Utilizing the composite textural description of each participant and imaginative variation, the researcher created a composite

structural depiction of the participants. It was during this process that the researcher was able to provide a better awareness of the phenomenon as experienced by each individual participant. The researcher was able to provide an accurate account and generate a better awareness of the experience of girls raised by a Black female single-parent and in a low socio-economic environment.

The final step, according to Moustakas (1994), required the researcher to integrate the composite textural and composite structural description of each participant into a group so as to offer a synthesis of the meaning and essence of the phenomenon. Using the description of each participant, the researcher grouped the responses, the textures, and structures together in order to organize the themes into grouped data. This data then provided a shared meaning by using the verbatim transcripts of Black Bahamian women who had experienced the phenomenon of having been raised by a female single-parent and in a low socio-economic environment. This depiction provided a living description that will allow individuals to gain a better understanding of the experience of a Black Bahamian girl who lived with a female single-parent, resided in a low socio-economic environment, and was able to attain a higher education.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

This section presented the eight participants' direct responses to the 11 interview questions. The responses were categorized according to the one over-arching research question and four sub-questions which not only guided this study, but served to facilitate meaningful discussion. The participants were assigned a pseudonym as follows: JBI-1, JBI-2, JBI-3, JBI-4, JBI-5, JBI-6, JBI-7, and JBI-8. Using the participants' own rich, thick descriptions as presented by direct quotes, the researcher developed emerging themes. The

lived educational attainment of Black Bahamian women of low socio-economic status were presented in themes and illustrated by the responses to the research questions which illustrated the participants' realities.

The following over-arching question and four sub-questions were developed by the researcher to investigate and generate a meaningful discussion.

Over-arching Question

What sociological factors influenced Black Bahamian women's educational attainment?

Sub-questions

1) What socio-economic structures impacted Black Bahamian women's educational attainment?

2) What socialization influence(s) did single mothers' gender-of-child-dependent rearing have on their daughter(s) obtaining a higher education degree?

3) What daily self-efficating behaviors and educational activities contributed to the Black Bahamian women's success?

4) What structural meaning(s) did Black Bahamian women ascribed to having earned a higher education degree?

Sociological factors which influenced Black Bahamian women's educational attainment

Due to a lack of literature on the educational attainment of Black Bahamian women raised by female single-parents in a low socio-economic environment, it was the researcher's quest to explore which sociological factors affected the intergenerational educational attainment of these women. The researcher discovered three main themes which explored how social origins impacted the women's choices and possibilities. The three themes

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included: (a) the cultural capital of the home intertwined with social responsibility; (b) the socio-economic circumstances of the rearing; and (c) the cognitive abilities of the women.

The first theme to emerge was the cultural capital of the home. This referred to the non-monetary resources of the home such as the educational level and attainment of the parent which promoted social mobility (Bourdieu, 1973). All participants stated that their mothers, though not directly involved with completing school-related activities, did transmit the necessary positive attitudes and habits needed to succeed within the educational system. According to JBI-2, "I sat around the table and read books and there was almost unspoken pride, joy, acceptance, and waiver that were granted to me to do other kinds of things with reference to school." JBI-7 simply stated that her mother encouraged her to be the best and to strive for more. Moreover, she stated, "I was taught that hard-work was the only way to get what you want." Further, she added "My mother admonished me that if I received a good education I would have a choice in my career path and salary and would not have to settle for anything less."

JBI-5 stated, "Having been raised by a female single-parent was hard because I was not the only child. In fact, my mother had nine children and not having a father-figure in the house made it even more difficult." The participant went on to add, "My mother . . . always told us that when we went out in public we were representing her. She was extremely strict and motivated us." According to JBI-6, her mother played a more supportive role as she encouraged her to complete homework or study for an upcoming exam. JBI-6 went on further to state, "I would say that my mother played a silent role or behind the scenes role in which she encouraged and pushed me to do well." JBI-8 had similar experiences as JBI-6

who stated, "My mother was not able to assist me in my homework assignments; however, she made sure I did it. In addition, she did look over the work."

A sub-theme intertwined with the first theme was social responsibility. All of the individuals credited their mothers and communities for their self-efficacy which, in turn, resulted in their success. At no point was their self-efficacy generated by them alone; it was their environment that propelled them. The attainment of a higher education degree would be the last indicator of their success, because without their mothers' and communities' influences, they would not have had the confidence and skills necessary to overcome the feminization of poverty. These sentiments were stated best by JBI-2, who shared,

> I don't know that you can separate the two, you cannot separate the two because within Afro-centric oriented communities there is no two, there is a oneness. There is no individualism as an ideology because you are one individual and a part of a community so there is a reciprocal kind of approach. Therefore, self-efficacy was always a part of the community and me and there is no division, so it was always to pursue, as far as, and, as much as, you can for your community.

With reference to oneness within Afro-centric families, JBI-5 also concurred with JBI-2. JBI-5 explained, "It is difficult to separate one's success from family because in the Bahamas individuals tend to live for their families . . . my mother was a maid (house-keeper) turned businesswoman and so she wanted a better way for us." The participant elaborated further and stated,

> . . . you did it for your family because it was always drilled into us that manners, respect, and hard work will carry you throughout the world . . . so you did your degree to prove that yes something good comes out of the ghetto and for your family.

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With reference to the second theme, all of the participants were aware of their socio-economic status and its impact on their rearing. It should be noted that the women became aware of their socio-economic status at different times in their lives. JBI-1, without a smile on her face and with direct eye contact, stated, "I knew we were poor and that pushed me to excel." Participant JBI-3 stated that she became knowledgeable about her status "in high school . . . definitely not in primary school . . . many people thought I was poor." Unlike JBI-3, participant JBI-2 stated, "I was not aware until after post-high school because we did not know what that meant to be of low socio-economic status." On the same note, JBI-6 made a profound comment when she stated, "Though it was never said to me, I do know that coming from a female single-parent home I was stereotyped, and if I had repeated the cycle, it would not have been viewed as abnormal."

The women acknowledged their mothers incurred most of the economic responsibility for the family. Despite the hardships associated with the environment, the women posited that their mothers did their best with what they had and never placed any burden on the children. Of significance, was the women's admiration for their mothers' industriousness as they strived to take care of their children. With the exception of one participant, none of the participants took on the economic responsibility for supporting their families. Additionally, some of the participants stated that their fathers actively contributed to their educational attainment, while others stated that their fathers were not involved in any aspect of their upbringing. The most challenging experiences occurred while the women were obtaining a college degree. However, because of their scholastic abilities, most of the women were able to overcome the associated educational challenges and receive scholarships.

The third theme to emerge was the women's educational self-efficacy which resulted in attainment of various higher education degrees. Due to the women's scholastic abilities, they were able to garner significant self-efficacy and never doubted their scholastic abilities. The women stated that at no point did their socio-economic status affect their educational pursuits and that their mothers served as the foundation of their success. All of them were very grateful for the many sacrifices made on their behalf; as a result, they hoped in turn to offer the same opportunities to their children. All of the women with children felt that because of the sacrifices made by their mothers to ensure their lives would be better, the lives of their children would be even better than theirs. The economic benefits from obtaining a degree meant not only were they able to afford miscellaneous luxuries for their children, more importantly; they were able to offer greater opportunities for educational success. They felt if they were able to garner success with few resources, then their children would have to meet or exceed their educational level because the foundation had already been established.

The women all agreed education was the key to their success. According to JBI-1, she knew she would not have been in the position she is in today without an education, while JBI-3 stated, "You need your papers [degree] . . ." An education was essential because having obtained higher learning allowed them to make better decisions with reference to their lives and families in addition to earning higher pay and gaining respect within their careers and society. More importantly, the women felt not only did they gain the essential skills necessary to work within a competitive world; they learned to think critically and make better judgments when faced with decisions.

Socio-economic structures which impacted Black Bahamian women's educational attainment

The question posed to the participants reflected two parts, with the first focusing on the social structures in which the women were exposed during their formative years and the second focusing on the economic dynamics of being raised by a female single-parent. With reference to the first, all of the participants stated that their social upbringing did indeed affect their educational attainment and, in retrospect, they were fortunate to have been raised at that time in history. Three themes emerged from the participants: (a) appreciation for their communities which consisted of family and close friends; (b) emotional support by other females in the community; and, (c) their shared goal for educational advancement.

In a retrospective view, six (75%) of the eight participants suggested their socio-economic circumstances were not bad and they all considered themselves fortunate to have survived with commendable success. Participant JBI-3 stated, "No, it was not so bad in or out of the area because back then the people were different, so it is not the way it is now." Meanwhile, participant JBI-5 stated, "Looking back, I can now say, we kind of lived as one and everyone was each others' brother's keeper within the neighborhood. I often try to tell my children that when I was growing up everyone looked out for each other . . ." She further added that when she told her children how everyone looked out for each other they found it hard to believe. "They often think that I am referring to some medieval time in which these things were foreign."

The researcher suggested that the aforementioned sentiments stemmed from the fact that all of the participants grew up in a neighborhood surrounded by mostly relatives and close family friends. According to JBI-1, "I grew up in one big yard living with my

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grandmother and my aunts who also had their children in separate houses, but in the same yard. It was one family in one big yard." In addition, "I would have to say that it was a good thing because I do believe that the experience was rewarding because it allowed for healthy competition to see who would do well in school." Meanwhile, participant JBI-2 concurred, and stated with a cheerful giggle, "Where we lived consisted mostly of very, very close relatives and so it was a big family, mostly happy, and sometimes contentious, but one big family."

Though not all of the participants grew up with family, many still considered the communities in which they once resided to be close and influential within their lives. Participant JBI-4 stated, ". . . everyone knew everyone and we lived as one." She also added, "Though I had a lot of siblings to play with, we also played with the other children in the neighborhood which acted like its own network."

Participant JBI-8 stated,

Looking back on my childhood, my neighborhood had affected my educational experiences because I was living in the ghetto. What good can come out of ghetto? Therefore, I had to work hard because I was expected to attend the public school system and I was privately schooled.

The participant went on to state that she felt she had to prove herself within the community. Meanwhile, two participants stated that their community had no significant impact on their educational success. JBI-6 stated, "If my community did have an impact, maybe I am not seeing it," while JBI-7 outwardly stated that her environment had no impact.

Another major theme which emerged from the social structure in which these women were raised was emotional support from others, especially other women. All the women had

older female cousins, aunts, and family friends who ensured they were cared for while their mother was at work or engaged in other activities which would have otherwise left them alone. The role of these females was to act as substitute mother figures and included supervising, feeding, completing chores, and homework. Participant JBI-5 stated,

> . . . if our mother was not home, our neighbor, Ms. Curry, supervised. She ensured that we sat along with her children to complete our homework and gathered water to clean or for bathing. There was no slack time as we were always supervised.

Participant JBI-1 stated, ". . . my aunt, in particular, ensured that my cousins and I (*me*) completed homework and took the necessary national exams to propel us further." Additionally, JBI-2 stated, "My aunts, thankfully, all of them again coming from a low socio-economic environment . . . they all attended private schools . . . this would have been instrumental . . . because a path had already been etched out for me."

The final theme which emerged from the participants' communities was self-efficacy, which resulted in a shared goal for educational advancement. After reviewing transcripts, the researcher realized that the women tended to associate with persons of like-mind as deemed so by their guardians. Participant JBI-3 stated,

> I was only allowed to associate with people who were of a similar circumstances, meaning that persons whose mothers were also single, yet they seem to display an interest in ensuring that their children received a good education. All of the persons in my community who I associated with had children who attended either the same private school as I did or another private school. These were the persons who I was most influenced by, mainly because they were the only ones that I was allowed to spend time with outside of my house and within in my community.

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JBI-6 stated, "While I interacted with those in the community, I knew that my destiny in life was to be successful and not be a product of the ghetto."

The second part of sub-question one focused on the economic structures which affected these women's educational attainment, and four themes emerged: (a) economic constraints on the mother as she attempted to provide a good education for her children; (b) participants' awareness of their low socio-economic status from peers; (c) economic support for educational purposes on the part of some fathers; and, (d) lack of educational support by some fathers. With reference to the first theme, all of the participants grew up with a female single-parent and, in retrospect, believed they were lucky to have survived the circumstances of their childhood.

All the participants (87.5%) with the exception of one (12.5%), attended a private high school, and evidence suggested the decision to provide a private school education was because their mothers saw the benefits to be derived. The private school of choice was based on economic sustainability; therefore, in three cases, the school of choice was based on the family's economic situation. JBI-5 stated, ". . . the school fee was lesser and it was close in terms of walking distance." All the participants who attended a private school felt they were lucky because, according to JBI-8, ". . . basically everyone in the neighborhood was attending the public school." Participant JBI-2 revealed that though the school fee was a challenge to her mother, she was able to afford the associated fees with ". . . this thing called A-sue in which there was this common sharing of monies that enabled you to gain so much more with less because it was strategically saved for a specific purpose or a defined timed period." When school fees were due, her mother received the necessary funds.

Also important to note was that many of the women held several jobs concurrently so as to provide a good education for their children. JBI-2 noted that her mom ". . . was a seamstress in the day-time and in the evening she and her sisters collectively sewed as straw-vendors and sometimes baked cakes to sell . . ." Meanwhile, JBI-8 recalled, "My mom usually worked about two or three jobs at one time so as to save money for my school fees." JBI-1 was the only participant who needed to work to support her formative education even though it was only temporary. According to JBI-1, her greatest economic challenge was experienced in the 12th grade when she stated,

> . . . in my senior year I had to take on an after-school job which involved me assisting in the cleaning of homes so as to pay for my national exams known as the GCE (*General Certificate of Education*). Other than that, I had all the things I needed for my education.

The second theme with reference to the economic structure was the participants' awareness of their socio-economic status from their peers. In retrospect, though all the participants felt lucky to have survived the experience, it left a lasting impact. Participant JBI-1 was the only participant who attended a public high school and she stated, "I knew I was poor . . . we did not have electricity . . . there were times that we were on welfare and, though I was never teased by others in the community, I do believe that they looked down on us." The participant indicated that, despite her circumstances of poverty, she did have the basic supplies necessary to experience a good education because her aunts, mother, and family friends provided economic assistance to purchase school supplies.

JBI-8 stated, "I lived in the ghetto and I went to school with students who I considered had more than I did, so it did affect my educational experiences." The participant

went on further to add, "It affected my experience because I felt that I was out of my realm and those students had more." As a result, this participant felt she was not afforded the same opportunity. Participant JBI-3 stated,

> When I think back, I realize that we really did not have it that bad even though I did live in what was considered a low socio-economic environment. I was afforded all of the necessary opportunities as other children who attended the same high school, despite them living in what was considered high socio-economic environments.

This participant also indicated her schoolmates made her aware of her environment "When I started high school . . . definitely not in primary school." She added that, because of where she lived, ". . . many people thought that I was poor." However, she found it ironic that she attended primary school with many of these same students and it was not a problem at that time mainly because they were young and unaware of its associated implications.

Until now, the fathers of the participants had been omitted because of the nature of the study. However, there was a need to mention that some of the fathers played an active financial role with reference to education. JBI-4 stated, "Even though I was raised by a female single-parent, my father still played an integral role in my upbringing because he paid the school fees . . . " Meanwhile, JBI-6 stated she attended private school and ". . . my father was responsible for paying school fees; therefore, the challenges were on my mother's side due to her limited education and responsibility of my siblings who had a different father . . ." This participant added that there were times when her father was unable to fulfill his financial responsibility with reference to paying her school fees and, ". . . it was during those times that I had to rely on my mother and that is where I think most of the challenges came

because she was not always in a position to assist financially as much as she would have liked."

Ironically, the same sentiments were not shared about all fathers because, according to JBI-8, "I don't think my father assisted with my education and, if he did, I was unaware. To my knowledge, my mother worked between two to three jobs simultaneously to ensure that my school fees were paid." Participant JBI-5, on the other hand, stated that her mother once shared she had put her father in court for maintenance of the children, ". . . when they went before the judge, Maxwell Thompson, he told my father that he either had to pay £3 or spend three months in Fox Hill prison." With a laugh she concluded, "He chose Fox Hill prison, so he did not play any role within our lives." Yet, unfortunately, others were unsure of their fathers' role in their education. According to JBI-1, "I don't really remember much about him in terms of helping me with my education; however, I do find it ironic that he always brags about my success. He always bragged that I got my smartness from him."

The socialization influence(s) that single mothers' gender-of-child-dependent rearing had on their daughter(s) obtaining a higher education degree

All of the participants stated their mothers had strong influences on their lives, particularly their educational pursuits. For this particular sub-question, six themes emerged: (a) a mother's support via words of encouragement; (b) lack of direct assistance from mothers with school-related assignments; (c) little or no emotional interaction between mother and daughter; (d) industriousness of the mother; (e) all participants chose educational advancement as opposed to inheritance; and, (f) Black Bahamian female single-parents did indeed display gender-of-child-dependent rearing based on their child(ren)'s gender.

With reference to a mother's support, all of the women experiences suggested they all had sufficient support to engage in productive school experiences. Without a smile and with an elevated pitch in her voice, JBI-3 stated, "Her guardian would always say, school, school, school, and then books, books, books. That was it: school, books, school, and books." Participant JBI-7 stated, "My mother always wanted me to be successful and to have the things that she did not have as a child. Therefore, I was taught that hard-work was the only way to get what you wanted." Participant JBI-5 stated, "My mother certainly encouraged me throughout my educational studies and even way back then she did not believe in mediocrity . . . She was extremely strict and she often encouraged us on a daily basis to complete our school assignments." Participant JBI-6 stated, "My mother was adamant that I would fill out college applications and we even took a trip to Atlanta to visit colleges because it was her dream that I receive a college education."

The ages of the participants varied and so did the educational attainment of their parents. Despite the varied educational attainment of their mothers, all the participants stated that they received little or no direct assistance from their mothers with reference to school assignments. Participant JBI-3 stated, "No, I did not really get any assistance from my mother with reference to my education." Her counterpart JBI-8 stated, "My mother seemed to always be working and her education level was equivalent to that of a sixth grade which made it difficult for her once I got into high school." Meanwhile, JBI-4 stated, "My mother did not provide much educational assistance with reference to the education of my siblings and I (*me*) even though she attended St. John's College." St. John's College was a private high school in the Bahamas, so her mother, in her opinion, was quite capable of assisting with school-related activities. The reason for the parents' lack of direct assistance may have

resulted, from JBI-6 who stated, that "Instead of providing me with parental-assistance, they [father and mother] often opted to provide me with tutors and others who they felt might have been able to provide greater assistance." JBI-6 further added, "This is not to say they were unable or unknowledgeable about the work, but at the time they felt that it was best."

Despite all of the participants' acknowledgement of their mothers, another interesting theme emerged which revealed that because of the associated stresses of raising a family and trying to provide the best, many mothers often sacrificed affection. The women, now adults, all appeared to have a better awareness of the stress of raising children, despite financial and emotional support from others, including those fathers who may have been involved. According to JBI-6, "I love you was not often said on a daily basis;" however, according to JBI-4, "Her children, above everything else, were the most important thing to her."

All the women acknowledged they were loved, though it was not said on a daily basis. Explanation for the lack of verbal affection may have best been stated by JBI-4 who shared:

> The reason why my mother was not emotionally involved with my education was because of her own experiences in which she herself was not afforded that opportunity from her parents to engage in emotional interaction; therefore, it is very difficult for her to display that affection to my siblings and me . . .

This participant went on to suggest that because her mother worked outside of the home and upon arrival she had to engage in household activities such as cleaning and cooking, the responsibilities were overwhelming. The participant, with a laugh, made an interesting point when she stated that her siblings and she, especially her brother, often stated, " . . . she was

an angry woman when we were growing up, and I said, 'child, it was the situation and circumstances of having to raise children by herself.'"

Evidence to suggest the mothers loved their children resulted when the children left their presence. JBI-4 stated that the relationship with her mother had only blossomed since adulthood and she now better understood the dynamics. With direct eye contact and a cheerful voice she added, when she took an overseas job, ". . . it was the first time that I had ever heard my mother say 'I love you' and I think she missed me." So surprised and shocked was the participant, she immediately called her sister to share the news. JBI-8, on the other hand, stated, "I never heard my mom say 'I love you' or even remember her giving us (my sisters and me) a hug because she was always so busy." JBI-6 also stated, "I never heard her say . . . come and give me a kiss or experience her hugging me." This participant went on to state that it was she who reached out to her mom, especially while studying abroad. She recalled the moment when their relationship took a change for the better. According to JBI-6, "One day while driving to the airport, I reached over and I kissed her and said 'I love you' . . . and then she began reaching out to me via letters."

Interestingly, the mothers' industriousness emerged as a theme in which all of the women not only stated their mothers assisted in their educational pursuits, but provided inspiration. All the participants expressed deep respect and admiration for their mothers, whom they felt made great sacrifices on their behalf to ensure a more educated and better way of life. JBI-4 stated, "My mother was always an independent woman and so was my grandmother and so I know that I come from a long line of independent women and my mother raised my sisters and I (*me*) to be independent." Participant JBI-2 stated, "There was also something called the industriousness of the people." It was this awareness by the women

that meant, "Yes, my mom's life then would have provided an impetus and a prompting to make sure that my life was better in terms of formal education . . ."

These sentiments were shared by JBI-5 who stated, ". . . my mother was a stern person and she came from a long heritage of go-getters or industrious individuals, and even though she was faced with a number of adversities, they did not deter her." She added,

They [female single-parents] are people who you call salt of the earth; you do not need to season anything for them because they will season it for themselves and they are going to show you how they were able to season it for themselves."

On the other hand, JBI-7 stated, "My mother was a Christian and she always instilled Christian principles into my life. I was always taught to be the best and to strive for more. Additionally, anything less than the best would not have been accepted . . ."

Another astonishing theme which emerged from the women was their desire to engage in educational advancement as opposed to inheritance. All of the women, beginning with JBI-1 stated, "I do believe that my mother and grandmother did a very good job of raising my siblings and me." As a result, the women felt that despite their socio-economic status, their mothers' influences provided an inspiration to ensure their educational success.

Being raised by a single-parent did affect my educational attainment because I knew it was very hard for my mother. Therefore, I made sure that I did well in school because she was paying the school fee so I had to do well whether I wanted to or not, and I was certain I did not want the life she had, stated JBI-3.

Meanwhile, JBI-7 stated, "My mother admonished me that if I received a good education, then I would have a choice in my career path and salary and would not have to settle for anything less." Finally, JBI-8 stated, "Because of my mother's determination to give me a

better life and her many sacrifices to educate me, it was my responsibility to go beyond her educational level."

The ages and places of employment among the participants varied, as did their family dynamics. The birth order of the participants also varied and so did the gender of their siblings, all of which impacted their educational attainment. Additionally, all of the participants, with the exception of two, were raised with either brothers or male cousins. The brothers and male cousins were significant to this study and the lives of these women because they helped determine whether the participants' mothers displayed gender-of-child-dependent rearing. With reference to the former, participants who were among the eldest in their family often assisted their younger siblings, and this was confirmed by their counterparts who were younger members within their own family dynamics. For example, JBI-8 stated, "I am the first . . . being the first is setting the pace in that I had no other child around . . . everything was trial and error . . . being the oldest meant I am often modeled." Meanwhile, JBI-4 stated, "I had older siblings who provided guidance and assistance whenever necessary to help complete my school-work." Participants JBI-4 and JBI-5 stated that the close ages between their siblings and them allowed for mutual support while completing school assignments.

Participant JBI-1 stated that her birth order did not affect her educational attainment because she was raised without her siblings; however, there was a significant difference in the ways in which her male cousins and she were treated. According to her, "Of course the boys could always run wild and, in fact, all of my cousins had more freedom than me." Being raised by her grandmother, JBI-1, with a deep tone in her voice and direct eye contact, stated, "My grandma was extremely strict and if she stated that you were not going anywhere, then

you were not going anywhere . . ." With a loud giggle, she added, "My grandmother had this saying that went like this, 'I'm going to spit, and if my spit runs dry before you reach back, you will get beaten.'"

Participant JBI-2 stated that her birth order didn't affect her educational attainment; however, when questioned about gender-of-child-rearing she stated without any facial expression and direct eye contact, "Oh yes, my younger brother was the baby and he was treated quite differently than I was, and that's for sure." When asked why she felt this occurred, the participant responded, "I think he was treated differently because he was the last child and the only boy." Meanwhile, JBI-5 noted,

> I do believe that my brothers had a little more freedom and I think so because back in
> those days your daughter had to be able to know how to clean, wash, and iron. I do
> believe that mothers in those days put a lot more emphasis on their daughters.

This was to prepare them for womanhood so they would eventually become a good mother and wife.

The daily self-efficacy behaviors and educational activities which contributed to the Black Bahamian women's success

When asked about the behaviors and attitudes needed to overcome their challenges, four themes emerged from the participants. First, all the women believed their educational attainment was based on their cognitive abilities in which the women all believed they had the academic capabilities to attend college and excel. Second, the greatest challenge to obtaining a higher education degree resulted from various constraints such as finances or family. The constraints varied depending on whether the participants were married or single

and whether they had children while pursuing their degree. Third, the women all realized the importance of obtaining a higher education degree.

Participant JBI-2 stated that she never experienced prejudices regarding neither her race nor gender because most Bahamian women ". . . had female teachers predominately, and therefore, they would always want to bring out the best." Furthermore, she added, during her youth "there was a celebration of human kind coming out of the colonial experience . . . the late 60s, represented a period when the entire world began an acceptance of Blacks into education, the Catholic Church, into politics, and government in the Bahamas . . .," setting the pace for equal and equitable education for all women within the country. Furthermore, JBI-8 added another interesting statement which may have justified the women's perception of equality with reference to education. JBI-8 stated,

> Maybe the family to which I was born may have affected my educational experiences because my mother could only afford a certain school. There were schools that only rich children could attend and those schools were institutions where the majority of students were white.

Therefore, students who attended those schools may have experienced adverse effects with reference to race.

"I don't think that being a female has anything to do with one's learning experiences. I do believe it has more to do with the person who must know what they want and go after it," stated JBI-3. This participant also stated that pursuing higher education meant seeking every avenue to receive help from teachers and many long days spent completing the necessary assignments and studying. Meanwhile, JBI-2 stated, ". . . I sat around the table and read books and . . . I remember being promoted from one grade to a higher one because of

the competencies they [teachers] recognized in my abilities." JBI-1 stated, "I was always a bookworm and inquisitive so I always wanted to achieve more . . ."

Self-efficacy, the second theme, was of pivotal importance to the women's success. They did not focus heavily on their educational activities because this carried over from high school. During college, they knew they had the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and discipline to complete the necessary tasks, so many of them was awarded full or partial scholarships. As a result, their self-efficacy to overcome the feminization of poverty was the focal point. It should be noted that the participants who pursued their education prior to having families had different perspectives from their counterparts.

Participant JBI-1 stated, "The color of my skin or gender did not impact my educational attainment." With reference to her educational attainment, JBI-1 stated that her socio-economic status contributed to her ability to excel. According to her, "We were poor, and that pushed me to excel more, so I decided to work hard in college . . . I was a bright student and, therefore, I spent much of my younger years being interested in school work." The participant elaborated, "For me, it was not really about wanting to leave my environment, but doing something greater, so I needed a college education." JBI-6 stated, "I always wanted to be . . . so I knew that only completing high school would not be sufficient for me to achieve that dream; therefore, I knew I had to get some other levels (tertiary degree) of education . . ." JBI-8 stated that her self-efficacy resulted from her mother; therefore, because of her awareness of her mother's determination and sacrifices to provide a better life she was inspired to go beyond her educational level and achieve a college education. On the other hand, JBI-7's self-efficacy resulted because "My decision to pursue a college degree was based on my desire to further my education, to become more

knowledgeable, and to excel on the job in order to put myself in a desirable position (financially)."

The third theme which emerged focused on constraints of finances and family, but the later presented the most challenge. JBI-2, like JBI-1, stated, "I got a scholarship for the Associate's degree from the College of the Bahamas; Bachelor's degree was also a scholarship from the government." Unfortunately, when JBI-2 decided to pursue a higher degree she stated, "I think financial resources were a challenge so it required the greatest sacrifice because they had no scholarships at those levels [Master's and Doctorate]." With reference to her education in college, JBI-1 stated, ". . . the one good thing about attending college was the fact that I was able to obtain a scholarship, so I did not have to worry about school fees being paid on time."

Some of the participants experienced financial constraints while trying to pursue their education. JBI-1, though she received a scholarship, did experience financial difficulty and according to her, "Most of my college days were spent walking to school and there were times when I did not have enough money to buy lunch." JBI-5, an older participant, stated she also endured financial constraints. According to her, "I was unaware of scholarships available at that time so, with the assistance of my mother, I worked and that made it possible for me to achieve my education." Meanwhile, JBI-6 stated that though her parents [mother and father] assisted in her education financially, she also experienced financial challenges from time-to-time. She was the third of her father's children to attend college and her mother's first, so it was difficult for them both. As a result, "I participated in work-study and the monies I received went towards my school fees."

While returning to school to obtain her Bachelor's degree, JBI-1 stated that she had experienced the most difficult challenge because she had to balance school and family. Participant JBI-1 stated, "Having my own children out-of-wedlock and being a single Black mother has made me realize how difficult it is to raise children and how difficult the circumstances can be." JBI-4, unlike the others, did not endure financial constraints; however, she like JBI-1 stated, ". . . my greatest challenge while pursuing my higher education degree was time . . . I worked full-time and I also had to juggle the responsibility of taking care of my children in the evening."

According to JBI-2, the greatest challenge came while trying to balance the responsibilities of wife and motherhood with wanting to attain greater educational accomplishments. These sentiments were also shared by JBI-5, who stated, "My greatest educational challenge came while obtaining my Master's degree because I was already married, so having to balance a marriage, motherhood, and studies provided the greatest challenge." As a result, JBI-5 suggested,

> I would recommend that if you can do it [obtain a college education] before you get
> married, do it, because going to school can put a strain on one's relationship and no
> one wants to fail while in college. This can happen, especially, if your husband or
> mate doesn't see the value of what you are trying to attain, even though they may be
> there to support you.

JBI-8 stated she also received a partial scholarship, so finances were irrelevant; however,

> The sacrifices were less socializing and family time because it was denying yourself
> pleasurable activities at times because either you had to study or finish an assignment.
> Also, my children were very young at the time when I was pursuing my degree . . .

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and the little precious moments, such as their first word or step, I think about because I cannot recall them.

The fourth theme which emerged was the importance of receiving a higher education degree. JBI-3 stated that a higher education degree was essential to her " . . . because no matter what you do in this town, you need your papers [degree] because they always ask for your papers and no matter how much you know, as in the practical stuff, you need something beyond that." The desire to pursue a college education for JBI-7 was similar to JBI-3's desire when she stated that her decision to attend college was based on her desire to acquire more knowledge, excel on the job, and place herself in a financially desirable position.

Interestingly, JBI-4 also shared that when she completed school, "There was not so much pressure to obtain a college degree because the most important thing was I completed high school and I was now ready to get a job." Upon completion of high school, she worked for several years with her father and then she decided to seek other opportunities. It was at this time ". . . I realized I needed a degree to ensure upward mobility." JBI-7 stated that she opted to pursue a higher education degree because ". . . otherwise I do not believe that I would have been as successful as I am at this point in my life." She added, "I believe the environment that I grew up in pushed me to ensure that my children grow up in a better environment and are not exposed to the things that I was exposed to."

The structural meaning Black Bahamian women ascribed to having earned a higher education degree

The eight participants in this study were all able to provide rich, thick, and relevant descriptions about their lived experiences. From their retrospective views of their accomplishments, several themes emerged. First, all the women felt education was the key to

fulfilling one's dreams with reference to job promotion and financial compensation. Second, as a result of their attainment, the women felt their perspectives on life situations had expanded because of the education they received. Third, their experiences had impacted and enriched their families, especially their children, who they felt now had a legacy to fulfill in reference to obtaining a higher education degree. Finally, all the women had a deep sense of humbleness with reference to their achievement. In the researcher's opinion, none of them appeared to be arrogant. Instead, they were more appreciative of the opportunity given to them by their mothers and communities; therefore, they wished everyone could have been as fortunate as they were.

Education, as a key to fulfilling ones' dream, was the first theme as all participants acknowledged their success could be attributed to their educational level. JBI-1 stated, "I do know that education is the key." She elaborated and with authority in her voice stated,

> . . . I do know that if I did not obtain an education [higher education], I would not be in the position that I am now, having my own home, having a good job, and being able to afford some of the luxuries that I did not grow up with.

JBI-5, on the other hand, shared, "It was drilled into you that in order for you to reach a certain level in life financially, you had to attain a higher education." She added that because of her desire to ". . . live a certain way and that's not to say that I had a rough life, but obtaining higher education degrees certainly helped fulfill that dream of earning the big bucks." Finally, JBI-7 stated,

> I consider myself successful because I own my home (investment property) in a very good area . . . I have a good job, and more importantly, I have a supportive and loving family. I am happy that I made the decision to do well in school and pursue a

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college degree; otherwise, I do not believe that I would have been as successful as I am at this point in my life.

The second theme reflected on how the women felt their education exposed them to new thoughts and ideas. JBI-2 stated,

The power that this particular degree has is so amazing that I have no doubt that because of my academic and intellectual attainment I was asked to be part of a political party . . . because prior to my degree I was never part of anything major . . . and so it is very, very powerful.

JBI-2 further added,

My area of studies taught me and empowered me with very critical insider kind of information with people from all walks of life, status, political, and economic status, and more importantly, any race of people regardless of country of origin or culture.

JBI-4 stated, "Being able to resume a higher education opened my eyes to different things in different extremes and it certainly broadened my horizons and perspectives of life and my current profession." JBI-6 stated, that though she understood the importance of obtaining a higher education degree, she acknowledged that one must never stop gaining new knowledge ". . . because the world is becoming much more competitive, not just in the Bahamas, but globally. Yesterday a Bachelor's degree was ideal, today; a Master's or Doctorate is required and considered to be a more commendable form of success."

After revision of the transcripts, the researcher became aware that the participants found it difficult to separate family from self. The participants attributed this to the Afro-centric culture in which every individual was an extension of his or her family and community; therefore, any shame or success was reflected on everyone. As such, the women

acknowledged their mothers strived to ensure they obtained higher education so as to elevate themselves and provide a better way of life. As noted by JBI-7, "My mother admonished me that if I received a good education, that I would have a choice in my career path and salary and would not have to settle for anything less." Therefore, many of the participants, now mothers, with the exception of two, felt it was their responsibility to provide an even better way of life for their children and families.

JBI-1, with strong conviction in her voice, stated, "My children's lives are better because of my experiences and because of what I have endured, I now encourage my children to do better and expect them to do better." JBI-2 also stated,

> The education I have obtained is powerful and the achievement is a profound gateway for our nation, for my community . . . and more profoundly for my children . . . when you get a certain level of higher education . . . the power that this particular degree brings is so amazing because it opens your mind to intellectual thoughts . . .

This participant went on to state that she expected her children to excel as well. According to her, with emphasis in her tone stated, that both her son and daughter ". . . have no choice but to complete a Doctorate degree in any area, *I don't care what it is*, . . . because mummy has achieved it and *so they are now expected to go even further*." Participant JBI-5 felt, because of her success and inspiration, her children (two daughters) valued education. According to her, "My eldest daughter straight out of high school went to college and my second daughter will enter 12th grade this year and she is already looking at colleges because she doesn't want to be knocking about."

The final theme which emerged was appreciation for all their life experiences which allowed them to succeed and will, in turn, provide a better life for others. According to JBI-6,

"I feel more privileged than successful because there are still things that I would like to accomplish . . . and I do want to give something back to my country." Meanwhile, for JBI-8 the experience meant,

> Any child can rise from any circumstance and achieve his or her goal once given the opportunity to follow that goal through educational experiences. You do not have to remain in your status quo as you can raise the bar and become whatever your heart desires through education. For me personally, I have risen beyond my status quo. I am making a difference and making a name for myself.

> Participant JBI-3, upon reflection, shared, "You cannot blame your environment because that is not an excuse; you just have to do it. Some people do and some people don't." The exact sentiments were shared by JBI-4, who stated,

> . . . in order to know where you're going, you have to know where you came from. In retrospect, I know and understand where I came from and I always look at my childhood in perspective to my life now. I often ask what has caused me to be here and the answer is always the same; I was given a lot of opportunities which I used to my advantage.

Though JBI-6 had no children, she felt her experiences prepared her so much so, "I will use this as a stepping stone to ensure that I do the very best so that my children receive a higher education degree." JBI-6 added,

> Both of my parents had only a completion certificate and they afforded me the opportunity to receive a college education . . . this will be a platform to ensure that all of my children go to college and make something of themselves and use it to their advantage to further their position in society.

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Interestingly, JBI-3 also shared,

. . . I have learned not to judge others and it brings to memory the old adage, you

never judge a book by its cover because you do not know what's inside. When I tell

people where I grew up, they cannot believe it, but that's where I grew up and I

cannot lie about that. You always have to remember where you came from and more

importantly, where you are headed. I am always aiming for the top and I don't know

exactly where that is, but I know that is where I am heading.

Meanwhile, JBI-1 suggested, "Education is the key because it opens your mind to other

possibilities, but it's not everything." JBI-1 also added, "I do believe that an individual should

be a well rounded person because you learn each and every day, not only from the books, but

also from life."

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore Black

Bahamian women's beliefs and perspectives regarding their ability to obtain a college degree

despite being reared in low socio-economic environments. The sample consisted of eight

participants who met the criteria and were willing to engage in one face-to-face interview and

one meeting to verify the accuracy of the transcripts. Data were collected using 11 open-

ended questions designed by the researcher and based on the review of literature, the

researcher's knowledge, and the nature of the research question.

This chapter presented data related to the demographics and the research question as

revealed during the analysis process. Participant demographics were collected on the

following: age, marital status, island on which the participant was raised, type of formative

schooling, educational level, employment status, and income. One participant was between

ages 20 and 30 years (12.5%), there were an equal number of participants between ages 31 and 40 years (37.5%) and between ages 41 and 50 years (37.5%), and one participant was between ages 51 and 60 years (12.5%). The majority (62.5%) of the participants were married, while two were single, and one was divorced. Almost all (87.5%) of the women who participated in this study were raised on the island of New Providence and the majority (87.5%) attended a private institution to complete high school education. All of the women met the criteria of having earned a higher education degree and the most common (62.5%) degree earned was a Bachelor's degree. The majority of the participants (75%) worked full-time, while the mean income for the majority (50%) of the participants was between $30,000 and $39,000 annually.

Upon analysis of the transcribed interviews, the researcher categorized and summarized the perceptions and insights of specific Black Bahamian women with regard to their educational attainment. This shared meanings allowed for a better awareness about the challenges and successes of Black women raised by a female single-parents and in low socio-economic environments. A summary of the findings revealed three major over-arching themes: (a) the cultural capital of the home as established by the mother and intertwined with social responsibility; (b) socio-economic circumstances of the participants' rearing; and finally, (c) the cognitive abilities of the participants.

The cultural capital of the home as established by the mother was the first main theme. The women all stated their mothers, for as long as they could remember motivated them and provided the greatest inspiration for their success. All the mothers distinctly displayed an industrious spirit and, according to one participant, her mother was the salt of the earth and quite capable of making the best out of life's situations. All the mothers, many

of them working two or three jobs concurrently, accumulated the necessary funds so as to afford their children the opportunity to attend private school and college.

From childhood, the mothers impressed upon their daughters that the best and least intrusive means to obtain a better way of life was through a higher education degree(s). Equipped with a tertiary degree, the mothers felt their daughters would have a choice in their career paths, salaries, and would not have to settle for anything less. The concept of family and community was part of this theme and, as revealed by several participants, this was a unique construct within Afro-centric families in the Bahamas. Most of the women acknowledged that their entire lives involved a complex network inclusive of mother-daughter dynamics, sibling relationships, female or maternal support from others, community encouragement, and the responsibility to offer greater opportunities to their children as their mothers had offered to them.

The socio-economic environments in which the participants were reared represented the second theme. The participants at different stages in their lives were made aware that being raised by a Black female single-parent in a low socio-economic environment meant they were stereotyped and disadvantaged. However, due to the industriousness of their mothers, their educational abilities, and support from others within the community, the women did not allow their poverty to deter their desire to obtain a higher education degree and all of its associated benefits.

The cognitive abilities of the participants represented the third theme. All of the participants acknowledged their desire to obtain a higher education degree and enter a new class status resulted from the driving force of both their mothers and themselves. The mothers endured the initial responsibility of instilling self-confidence and educational-

efficacy which, in turn, became a mantra on the part of the daughters to forge a new and better path through higher education.

Chapter V will discuss the nature of the research as it related to its purpose, significance, method, and limitations. The three major themes which emerged included the cultural capital of the home which was intertwined with community support, the socioeconomic status of the household, and the cognitive abilities of the participants. The aforementioned themes will be discussed in relation to the review of the literature and Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986), the two theoretical frameworks, which guided this study. Immediately following, the researcher will suggest the implications for practice as it relates to this topic. Finally, recommendations for future research will be discussed.

Chapter V

Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

This study was about the educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments. Only about 3% of youths in the poorest quintile of the Bahamas, including daughters of single Black mothers, obtained a higher education degree (Coakley, 2004). Though this number was small, the success of these individuals was commendable because Black children were more likely to inherit the economic hardships of their mothers. As a result, not only were the women in this study more likely to live in poverty, it was highly unlikely they would have been afforded the opportunity to attend college. Unfortunately, the increased number in out-of-wedlock births and low socio-economic status of women obtaining a higher education degree had not been given any significant importance, thereby resulting in marginalization.

There was a strong relationship between Black female single-parent homes and poverty. Subsequently, girls reared in such environments were at greater risk for repeating the cycle. Therefore, to avoid the inheritance of poverty and broaden one's opportunities, girls raised in such environments had to attain a higher education degree. Due to the associated adversities of being raised in a low socio-economic environment, this study sought to investigate and attempt to gain a better awareness of the sociological factors that influenced Black Bahamian women's educational attainment.

The problem was investigated utilizing the verbatim statements of eight Black Bahamian women who were reared by a female single-parent and resided in a low socio-economic environment in the Bahamas. Specifically, this study sought to explore the central

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contextual phenomenon in its natural setting; therefore, of importance to this investigation were four environmental constructs of the family unit. First, the socio-economic construct of the family impacted how the women were parented which, in turn, affected their educational attainment. Socio-economic status had a great influence on the educational attainment of children as opposed to the stigma associated with being reared by a female single-parent (Biblarz, Raftery, & Bucur, 1997; McLanahan, 1985). Bowles, Gintis, and Groves (2005) concurred, and stated there was a strong relationship between a family's socio-economic status and the educational attainment of children.

Second, the socialization influence(s) a mother's gender-of-child-dependent rearing had on her daughter(s) obtaining a higher education degree was significant. Traditionally, female children, regardless of their socio-economic status, were parented differently (Hill, 2002). Mellot and Sassler (2007) suggested that parents allocated resources within their respective family unit based on their child's gender. More specifically, Black mothers, irrespective of culture or country of origin, had displayed dissimilar parenting styles based on their child's gender (Hill, 2002; Telesford & Murray, 2008). As a result, the occupational attainment and expectations of mothers was of contextual importance to this investigation. Determining whether mothers' influences and family size served to enhance or limit daughters was important to better understand the challenges endured by girls during their formative development and educational pursuits.

Third, the daily self-efficating behaviors and educational activities which contributed to the women's success were important. Considering that most children raised within such environments were at risk of repeating the cycle, it was important to explore the attitudes and behaviors necessary to overcome the feminization of poverty. Bandura (1986) suggested that

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parents often provided the foundational scaffold necessary to promote self-confidence within their children which, in turn, transcended into self-efficating behaviors and attitudes. Within this study, all participants confirmed that their mothers were responsible for the evolution of their self-efficacy. As such, a female single-parent of low socio-economic status was perpetually responsible for her daughter's success. Researchers (Coleman, 1966; Koppich, 2003) advocated that parental support, irrespective of a child's socio-economic status, often served to provide an impetus to inspire their children's educational attainment.

Finally, the structural meaning each woman ascribed to having earned a higher education degree was significant to the future growth and development of her family, country, and identity. As previously stated, the educational attainment of an individual was strongly related with his or her family's background (Bowles, Gintis, & Groves, 2005). Powers (2000) suggested that an individual's educational attainment represented the best possible means to attaining middle-class status. This study explored the women's perspectives regarding the impact of their educational attainment on their family and future plans. All of the women with children served to reinforce the belief that their socio-economic and educational success certainly perpetuated the educational advancement of their progeny. Furthermore, each participant was adamant that her social mobility, economic middle-class status, and awareness of educational attainment should serve as a predictor of her children's educational success, life choices, and enhancement in the development of the Bahamas.

Summary of the Study

The researcher will discuss the purpose of this study, its significance, the method used, and the limitations. Immediately following will be a discussion of the findings in relation to Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) and self-

efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986) theories which served to guide this study. Discourses on Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) were intertwined with the past and remained a constant struggle within modern citizenship. Colonialism has had the most impact on modern citizenship within the Caribbean basin; therefore, its residual effects were the tools which best helped to analyze the structural development of the Black family (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a; Rodney, 1998). Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) within the context of this investigation also served to highlight how gender parity, class, politics, resistance, representation, and socio-economic status all impacted the lives of a specific group of Bahamian women. Finally, Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) served to highlight how these women attempted to establish their place and status within the fabric of modern citizenship.

Meanwhile, according to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy stemmed from parents who often provided inspiration and motivation which allowed their children to develop the belief that their positive educational actions could affect their lives. In the case of the women in this study, self-efficacy resulted in performance and accomplishments that resulted from them taking responsibility for their own educational results. Self-efficacy theory within the context of this investigation served as a tool to investigate how the achievements of higher education resulted from mothers who understood the importance of education to the future growth and development of their children. Additionally, self-efficacy helped determine how the self-efficating behaviors and attitudes of the women enabled them to undertake activities and persevere in the face of adversity to attain a higher education degree.

Evidence from the Department of Statistics (2010) suggested that Bahamian women were more educated than men at all levels irrespective of their familial unit. However, no

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studies had sought to explore how a specific group of women, particularly those raised by female single-parents in low socio-economic environments, were able to overcome the challenges associated with their environment. Therefore, the results of this study provided the first comprehensive analysis of girls raised in low socio-economic environments by female single-parents and how they were able to obtain higher education degrees. The results of this study offered information that helped gain a better awareness of the issues and challenges faced by this specific group of women. Plus, the study provided guidance on the issues to be addressed by those concerned about putting programs in place to assist girls presently enduring the struggles that come from life in a low socio-economic environment.

Purpose

In the Bahamas, there has been an overwhelming surge in the number of children being reared in female single-parent homes (Department of Statistics, 2009b). Girls in the Bahamas, despite their household status, had generated greater educational success as opposed to their male counterparts (Blank, 2005; Coakley, 2004). However, very little research had focused on the lived experiences of low socio-economic Black females. For this reason, the purpose of this study was to gain better awareness of the life experiences of Black Bahamian women raised by female single-parents in low socio-economic environments as they sought to obtain higher education degrees. The results of this study can be utilized by government and organizations concerned with enhancing and improving the lives of those still enduring this struggle.

The researcher explored the sociological factors which impacted the women's ability to obtain higher education degrees. Specifically, this study was intended to gain a better awareness of the socio-economic structures which impacted the women's educational

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attainment; the nature of the mother-daughter dynamics which influenced gender-of-child-dependent rearing and educational inheritance or advancement; and self-efficating behaviors and attitudes necessary to overcome poverty. Powers (2000) suggested the lack of independent wealth by most persons meant that in order to obtain a middle-class status, one had to pursue a higher education degree. As such, the researcher also examined the perceptions of the impact of a higher education degree on the women's present socio-economic status and family-life.

In order to better understand the women's perceptions of their life struggles, one over-arching question and four sub-questions were developed to gain an awareness of the women's beliefs and perceptions regarding their admirable success.

Over-arching Question

What sociological factors influenced Black Bahamian women's educational attainment?

Sub-questions

1) What socio-economic structures impacted Black Bahamian women's educational attainment?

2) What socialization influence(s) did single mothers' gender-of-child-dependent rearing have on their daughter(s) obtaining a higher education degree?

3) What daily self-efficating behaviors and educational activities contributed to the Black Bahamian women's success?

4) What structural meaning(s) did Black Bahamian women ascribed to having earned a higher education degree?

Significance of the Study

Though minimal literature existed on Black Bahamian female single-parents and their children, as documented in Chapter II, there had been a steady and observable increase in the number of out-of-wedlock births. Unfortunately, children born to female single-parents were more likely to live in low socio-economic environments and were, therefore, at risk for poverty, crime, lack of financial and emotional support, and illiteracy (Blank, 2005; Consultative Committee, 1994). Remarkably, girls raised within this type of family structure, like their wealthier female counterparts, had achieved commendable academic success. As such, the significance of acquiring at least a Bachelor's degree under such circumstances was of importance to a developing country such as the Bahamas. According to Mohanty (2003), a study of this nature allowed women the opportunity to be represented within the realm of their lived experiences. In the Caribbean women had only recently begun to voice their life experiences. A study of this nature provided the necessary ground work to represent Bahamian women because neither girls nor women can reach their full potential without an education.

Numerous challenges were associated with being raised in a low socio-economic environment by a female single-parent. One was the attainment of a higher education degree, and according to Bowles and Gintis (1976), the social locale of children had a significant impact on their school results and graduation from college. Therefore, a study of this nature was important because it explored how the constructs of social and economic backgrounds influenced the lives of women raised by female single-parents. For the first time, a voice for the voiceless and unsung heroes provided the opportunity to record their stories as told by them without gender bias. Additionally, a study of this nature was significant because women

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were held voiceless in studies conducted by male researchers which resulted in them being marginalized; therefore, this study brought visibility and relevance to the lives of women in the Bahamas.

More importantly, this systematic literary exploration of the experiences of daughters raised by Black women from low socio-economic environments in the Bahamas resulted in descriptive narratives which contributed to the fields of education and women's studies. Due to the fact that no evidence-based research existed which highlighted the efforts of Bahamian women to educate themselves, especially Black Bahamian women reared by a female single-parent, this study contributed to understanding the importance of a higher education degree and all of its associated benefits. Finally, this study was significant because it served to arouse and highlight critical thought that explained the contributing factors which shaped the values and attitudes of Black Bahamian women.

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black Bahamian women who obtained a higher education degree despite being raised by a female single-parent in a low socio-economic environment. The researcher chose to use a qualitative method to answer the research question because it could plumb the depth of the lived experience which was what the researcher sought. More importantly, a qualitative study of this nature used narratives to generate a better awareness and understanding of the participants' lives based on their perspectives and opinions (Creswell 2003; Salkind, 2006).

Within this qualitative study, the researcher was the instrument. She entered the natural setting and sought to create a holistic picture using the words of each participant

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(Creswell, 1998). The nature of the research did not dichotomize the participants and their environment, because it was the environment that had influenced their lives. In accordance with Patton (2002), the researcher ensured the phenomenon of the women occurred and was being investigated in a natural setting that represented a real-world situation. Additionally, the researcher applied the highest ethical standards and rigor to ensure the words of the participants were stated and understood as they were intended. This required the researcher to provide a holistic and unbiased perspective to the complex interdependencies of the phenomenon.

Aurora Household of Ruth, International Association of Administrators, and Zonta Club of New Providence provided access to the participants (Appendix A). The women's clubs served as gatekeepers and allowed the researcher to purposively select eight participants based on the established criteria. All participants were purposefully selected based on a shared phenomenon which represented a critical key (Appendix B). Utilizing a sample whose members had all shared the same phenomenon allowed the researcher to explore, learn, understand, and gain a better awareness of the lives of Black Bahamian women. Criteria for participation in this study included Black Bahamian females who had earned a Bachelor's degree or higher, resided in a low socio-economic neighborhood during their formative years, were raised in a female single-parent household, were willing to speak about their experiences, and were willing to agree to one tape-recorded interview and one meeting to verify the transcript.

The interview protocol was the primary instrument used to collect data for this study. Eleven open-ended questions were designed by the researcher based on the review of literature, the researcher's knowledge, and the research question itself (Appendix F). All

interviewees were different, revelations differed, and what each participant was willing to share differed as well; however, use of the same questions allowed the researcher to capture the depth and detailed narration about the stages of educational development. The interview questions were modified by the researcher as each interview built on the other, thereby expanding information that revealed the participants' lived experiences in their own terms. Upon completion of each interview, the researcher recorded notes and included information related to non-verbal communication, verbal emphasis, and social interactions during the interview. The field notes added to the rich description of the interviews and served as an instrument to assist the researcher with better understanding the experiences of the interviewees (Patton, 2002).

Once all interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed the tape recordings of the participants. Upon completion, the researcher contacted each participant for a second meeting to review the transcript for accuracy. Each participant was asked to review the transcript and clarify any unclear aspects of her life experiences. After all data was collected, the researcher mailed a thank you letter in a stamped envelope to the three women's clubs which provided access to the participants (Appendix I), while a separate letter was mailed to each individual participant thanking them for their role in the study (Appendix J). The researcher utilized Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method for data analysis (Appendix H). Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method required the researcher to complete four steps during the data analysis. The first two steps provided a step-by-step guide of how to analyze the initial interview, while step three encouraged the researcher to complete the previous steps for each of the remaining participants. Step four allowed the researcher to incorporate all the individual textural-

structural analysis into a universal description of the experience representing all the participants as a whole.

Finally, the researcher gathered interpretations of the lived experiences of Black Bahamian women and compared the findings with Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986) theories that guided this study, and the review of literature. From this process, the researcher was able to capture the true essence of the phenomenon as experienced by this select group of Black Bahamian women. Additionally, though the interpretations provided a better awareness of the experience, they also raised new questions which generated new educational investigations that sought to identify theories which describe, predict, and control phenomena to improve learning. Of importance to this study was the researcher's use of quality and verification which ensured transferability was embedded which, in turn, guaranteed applicability and dependability within other settings.

Limitations

A study of this nature, like other phenomenological studies, was subject to limitations because it sought to explore humans' lived experiences in their social settings (Berg, 2007). As a result, self-reporting of information by participants was subject to various interpretations. Due to the role and responsibility of a researcher within a phenomenological study, the investigator was directly involved with the outcome (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). The researcher had experience with the phenomenon being investigated; therefore, there may have been bias regarding this topic. Through the use of open-ended interviews in which the researcher listened without interrupting, the researcher was able to capture the real meaning of the experience. Upon completion, the researcher used analytical

induction of the transcripts to capture the true essence of the experience through use of the comparative method which provided evidence of independent relationships within and between the data so as to increase unbiased interpretations.

Discussion of the Findings

The eight Black Bahamian women who participated in this study were all well educated, passionate about the role their mothers played in their lives, appreciative of the opportunities given to attain their dreams, hopeful about their responsibility to educate their children, and willing to contribute to the future growth and development of their country. The researcher used the comparative method to compare particular narratives from one interview with another as it related to the same category. The grouped narratives were then used to express findings, multiple perspectives, and generate themes via direct quotes. The direct quotes were analyzed inductively to provide interpretation of the data by comparing the findings to the literature review and Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986), the two theoretical frameworks, which guided this study.

Despite the increase in out-of-wedlock births, very little research had focused on the effects on children, particularly female dependents. Understandably, there were disadvantages to being raised by a female single-parent in a low socio-economic environment, yet 3% of youths within the poorest strata of Bahamian society had been able to defy the odds and receive a higher education degree. Subsequently, one of the reasons for this investigation was to provide a voice to the many women who had defied the odds but remained omitted from history books. The research questions served to generate knowledge and awareness about the challenges, successes, and benefits of earning a higher education

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degree. The findings were presented based on the over-arching research question and four sub-questions that guided this study.

The sociological factors that influenced Black Bahamian women's educational attainment

Within this study, the researcher utilized one over-arching question which was typical in qualitative studies. Its role was to present the issue at hand while providing a focus for the purpose of the study which involved a constellation of complex variables. As a result, it was necessary to utilize sub-questions which served to further explore the central research question by dividing the issue into specific topics. Subsequently, the researcher discussed the findings of this study in relation to the sub-questions which provided information of greater depth about the sociological factors that influenced Black Bahamian women's educational attainment. The findings were discussed as they pertained to the themes of the literature review and the theoretical frameworks which guided this study.

The findings related to the over-arching question were consistent with the literature regarding sociological factors that impacted the educational attainment of children. The sociological factors included socio-economic status; parental influence by the mother which established a positive cultural capital in the home; community which was intertwined with the cultural capital of the home; and cognitive abilities which were reflected as part of self-efficacy.

The socio-economic structures which impacted the women's educational attainment

Researchers (Coleman, 1966; Koppich, 2003; Sheldon, 2003) suggested the socio-economic structure of the home had the greatest impact on students' educational attainment. Due to the many interrelated variables intertwined in socio-economic structures, the

researcher chose to highlight the social element first before elaborating on the economic impact. Socially, the most profound consequences of being raised within such an environment included health, home environment, delinquency, and neighborhood conditions (Blank, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Steinberg, 2003; Walker & Smrekar, 2003).

With reference to the social impact of a female single-parent home, the average household size of the participants was five. This number was consistent with the findings of Dorsett (2004a) and Handa (2004) who earlier posited that 75% of all poor households in the Bahamas had five or more members. Statistics on the Bahamas also revealed that due to the large number of family members residing in the home, a strong relationship existed between the health and poverty status of students. Researchers (Coakley, 2004; Handa, 2004) suggested that at all levels of educational enrollment, children from poor households were more likely to be absent from school for non-health related reasons.

This study disconfirmed the idea that children from poor households were more likely to miss school due to non-health related reasons because all the participants actively attended school and seemed to enjoy their experiences. According to Blank (2005), a study of students' educational experiences in 1998 revealed most Bahamian students enjoyed their school experiences. The participants in this study were of no exception as they all expressed an interest in school from childhood and their tone of voice suggested they enjoyed their school experiences. Participant JBI-1 stated that, "I found that I was a bright student and, therefore, I spent much of my younger years being interested in school work." Meanwhile, JBI-2 stated that, she remembered being promoted in school by her teachers because of her

intellectual abilities. Participant JBI-7 stated that, "I am happy that I made the decision to do well in school."

The researcher, however, was cautious about making a generalized statement that all women raised in such environments would have shared similar feelings as the participants of this study. It was believed that awareness of their environmental circumstances and the influential role of their mothers fostered their positive educational pursuits. More research would be necessary to make a generalized statement because all the women stated that they grew up at a time when the community took responsibility for their upbringing. So much so, that the environment, though it may have been impoverished, was not engulfed in crime, delinquency, and instability within the home.

Of significance was the awareness of self-efficacy at a very young age. The women's early educational experiences confirmed Bandura's (1986) assertions that parents were the ones initially responsible for motivating children to excel in school which, in turn, fostered confidence. This confidence encouraged mastery which promoted positive educational experiences. To this end, the women's narratives also confirmed Pajares (2002) who concurred with Erikson when he suggested that consistent and whole-hearted praise from parents had a profound impact on children.

Blank (2005) suggested that delinquency affected young people raised in impoverished environments in the Bahamas. Most (87.5%) of the women grew-up within traditional communities that had existed since slavery. According to Saunders (1990), after emancipation, many communities continued to thrive as parents took pride in where they lived and sought to impart values in their children, many of whom went onto become contributing members of society. Subsequently, the residents of what were considered low

socio-economic environments had demonstrated high self-efficacy and a history of excelling beyond their environments. These sentiments were poignantly shared by JBI-5 who stated that, ". . . the leaders of today in the Bahamas can trace their roots back to the ghetto . . . they would say that their mother was a straw-vendor or their father was a taxi-driver . . ."

Saunders (1990) also stated that families' geographical dispersion in the Bahamas mushroomed during the 1950s and this adversely affected generational and community support in the upbringing of children. However, community support was still present, though diminished, as revealed by the participants in this study. Most of the participants, with the exception of two, grew up in neighborhoods surrounded by close relatives. According to JBI-3, she was only allowed to associate with persons of similar circumstances, while JBI-4 stated, her siblings and she were not allowed to roam the streets because they were always supervised. Participant JBI-4 stated that, her neighborhood was family oriented because everyone knew everyone and these sentiments were also shared by JBI-5 who added that, "The community was so close that everyone knew when somebody did something wrong . . . and everyone was everyone's brother's keeper within the neighborhood."

The sentiments shared by the women all reflected Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) as the identity of the female single-parent was inherited from the African diaspora. Therefore, the upbringing of children within family-centered environments was in alignment with Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) which resulted from its relationship with Europe. The sharing of responsibility for children was quite common as it provided support for women to engage in other activities. In Africa, newborns were often carried on their mothers' backs regardless of

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where they went, and once weaned children remained in the community with close relatives not far away (Marquet, 1972).

During slavery, infants and children under age six were usually cared for by an elderly slave nanny at a makeshift nursery (Craton & Saunders, 1991; Saunders, 1983). Of importance was the concept of an older woman who contributed to the passing on of traditions to children. This act was very much part of Black feminine identity in the Bahamas, and it was also common in other English speaking countries. According to Gadsby (2006), this concept was often inherited from mother and transferred to her daughters, which proved to be a rewarding opportunity in which to raise a child as the extended family provided support and nurture. Most (62.5%) of the women in this study were raised in the same yard or in close proximity to their relatives. This allowed for the use and support of the extended family and, according to Saunders (1990), "the yard system was common throughout the Bahama Islands" (p.147).

The scope of this investigation did not allow for the comparison of the findings to actual events of present communities. However, the sentiments shared by JBI-5 may have served to explain how the society had changed over time when she shared that her daughters, ". . . they think I am referring to some medieval time in which these things are foreign." This suggested the experiences of the participants were unique to that period in history and the continued progression of Bahamian families, as first noted by Saunders (1990), had remained and continued to affect the support offered to female single-parents in their respective communities. The social life experiences of the women confirmed that when children were raised within a positive environment, the chances of their success were multiplied irrespective of family stature.

All the women confirmed the economic structure of their homes had the greatest impact on their educational pursuits. Participant JBI-1 stated that at a very young age she was affected by poverty. According to her, "Being on welfare had a negative affect because there were people who talked about it in the community." The Bahamas government offered several services that provided assistance to members of society. Participant JBI-1 stated that her grandmother received assistance in the form of food coupons. According to Fielding, Minnis, and Plumridge (2004), persons who earned less than $7,800 a year were eligible to receive food assistance along with other services.

Though no other participants stated they were on welfare, many of their mothers worked several jobs concurrently which suggested there was not an abundance of readily available funds. JBI-2 stated that, her mother in one day worked several jobs so as to earn enough money to sustain the family; meanwhile, JBI-8 stated that, her mother seemed to be always working. The review of literature confirmed that female single-parent homes had a higher threshold for poverty and they accounted for more than 23% of all Bahamian households, while 45% of them were among the poorest. Based on the participants' direct quotes, this study confirmed that female-headed households did indeed endure more economic challenges as evidenced by the number of jobs and economic activities in which the female-parents engaged. In addition, multiple sources of employment were essential due to the many dependents which were comparable to the national average of five.

The women not only mentioned that their mothers were the main bread-winners; they also spoke about the industriousness of their mothers. Participant JBI-5 stated that her mother was the salt of the earth; while the other participants stated that their mothers were very industrious which meant all of the women were very capable of making the best out of life.

This spirit of the mother was in alignment with Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) as sucking salt was a common saying which reflected the ability of a Black woman to develop self-efficating survival strategies. According to Gadsby (2006), Caribbean women had been sucking salt since their arrival to the region when they developed numerous strategies to circumvent the barriers of slavery, racism, and sexism in attempts to pave a better way of life for their progeny.

Of interest to this study was that the participants who had children had only two, which was in stark comparison to their mothers. Out of the women (seven) with children, only one had her children out-of-wedlock. JBI-1 stated that she was a single-parent and as a result she now had a better awareness of its associated challenges. This trend on the part of these women reflected their understanding of the struggles associated with raising large families and it also confirmed Handa's (2004) sentiments when she suggested that more educated women had fewer children. Also, several of the women pursued their degrees while being married and there was no time to maintain a large family due to the complexities involved.

Another interesting theme which emerged was the involvement, or lack thereof, and economic support by fathers. Each of the women had unique experiences with reference to paternal influence on the economic aspect of her upbringing and educational pursuits. Most of the participants' fathers did not provide any support with reference to their educational attainment. JBI-7 sentiments concurred with JBI-3 when she stated that her father played no major role in her life. JBI-5 also stated that her father was not involved in the upbringing of her mother's nine children and she confirmed that this made it even more difficult for them financially. She also shared a funny but heartbreaking story of her father's defiance and

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determination not to support his children. According to JBI-5, her mother had put her father in court for child support and the judge gave him an ultimatum to pay £3 or spend three months in prison, he chose prison.

The lack of paternal involvement was once again in alignment with Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) as out-of-wedlock children were so common that the stigma had forever remained associated with Black women. Though rare during slavery, plantation owners in the Bahamas, like Barbados, often encouraged nuclear families among their slaves. As such, most Black women were married which meant children had both maternal and paternal support. Consequently, the concept of Black female-single parents began mushrooming in the 1950s and had continued to increase (Department of Statistics, 2009b; Saunders, 1990). As such, the concept of Black female single-parents was intertwined within modern culture and it was reflective of a constant struggle to disassociate with the past.

Some fathers, on the other hand, provided small contributions to their children; however, they did not have any significant impact on the educational pursuits of the participants. For example, JBI-1 stated that her father was present her entire life, and he provided minimal financial assistance mostly when she was young. JBI-2, on the other hand, stated that, "He came back into our lives when I was about 16 or 17 years . . . and during Christmas he would give us $100 . . ." Only two of the participants acknowledged their father played an active role in their educational pursuits. According to JBI-4, even though she was raised by her mother, her father still played an integral role because he provided money to assist in paying school fees, Christmas gifts, and other essentials. JBI-6 also shared a similar

experience and stated that, her father paid for her education in the Bahamas and abroad while she was in college.

It should be noted that the fathers who supported the educational pursuits of their children enjoyed constant interaction which fostered a good relationship. It was observed by the researcher that the other fathers were absent and initiated no relationship with their daughters. Again, the scope of this study and lack of literature on the topic generated another area of study which may be instrumental to the lived experiences of other girls currently experiencing the phenomenon being investigated.

The socialization influence(s) of single mothers' gender-of-child-dependent rearing

Koppich (2003) acknowledged that children raised by a female single-parent were disadvantaged; however, an effective educational environment could increase the odds of their success. The participants recognized the hardships their mothers endured due to a lack of advanced education, inherited wealth, and support from a partner. According to JBI-5, being raised by a female single-parent was hard because there was no paternal support which made it even more difficult for her siblings and her to obtain the love and support they desired. Meanwhile, JBI-8 stated that she lived in the ghetto and it felt harder because, like JBI-5, she was not afforded the benefits of being parented by a mother and father.

Despite the hardships associated with the environment, the participants all agreed their mothers were the most influential person with reference to their educational attainment. The participants added that though life was hard, their mothers sought to establish the appropriate cultural capital in the home necessary to facilitate educational advancement. Participant JBI-3 stated that she was always reminded about ". . . school, school, school and books, books, books, that was it . . . " The perspectives of the women were in alignment with

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scholars (Coleman, 1966; Koppich, 2003; Watkins, 1997) who acknowledged the appropriate educational environment, irrespective of familial unit, could foster positive educational experiences for children. According to Walker and Smrekar (2003), the results transcended country of origin, which meant the findings of this study were in alignment with similar studies conducted in North America and the Caribbean.

Scholarship among Bahamian women had long existed and at the turn of the 20th century, the Governor commented, "With few exceptions, the youth is past praying for. The young women have a much higher sense of responsibility" (Colonial Office, Allardyce to Grindle, October 5, 1918). At the turn of the twentieth century more women were receiving a high school education compared to boys, even though, they were confined to gender stereotypical jobs. To this end, the success of the women in this study extended beyond a time before they were even born. JBI-2 stated that her aunts, many of whom also attended private schools, inspired her as she now did for her nieces and nephews. Interdependence between mother and daughter, grandmother and granddaughter, aunts, nieces, and sisters continued to exist. According to Gadsby (2006), there existed a multiplicity of Caribbean women's role as mother, daughter, aunt, advocate, and laborer.

The desire for mothers to encourage their children had been in existence since their diaspora to the region and reflected Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986) theories. Black women within the region had endured constant change due to a series of migrations, whether forced or otherwise, to and from the region; however, their desire for their children to be educated had remained strong. According to Saunders (1990), Black families had always imparted values onto their progeny. As such, from generation to generation, more opportunities had been available to

Bahamian daughters because of their mother, grandmother, and aunts. Concurrently, the multiplicity of women's roles had resulted in an emerging identity in education which had resulted in their self-efficacy being higher than the self-efficacy of their male counterparts.

From early childhood, and throughout their educational attainment, the women in this study were aware that education would be the key to their success. The researcher discovered the educational level of the mothers varied as did the schools they attended. None of the participants revealed that their mother attended college, but their parental self-efficacy had a profound affect on the women's success. Watkins (1997) stated the value which a parent placed on education was far more important than one's cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic status (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Also, women of low socio-economic status often encouraged their daughters to excel through words of encouragement and praise (Porche, Ross & Snow, 2004), as was the case of the participants in this study. According to JBI-2, her mother's life provided the impetus necessary to ensure her life would be better with the assistance of formal education. Meanwhile, JBI-7 stated that from childhood she was always encouraged to strive for the best and settling for anything less would have been unacceptable. JBI-8 stated that her mother's determination to provide her with greater opportunities meant she felt obligated to excel.

Despite the high parental self-efficacy exhibited by Bahamian mothers, none provided daily assistance in their children's education. These findings confirmed sentiments shared by Sheldon (2003) who stated that children reared in single-parent homes were often provided with little or no assistance with reference to behavioral, personal, and cognitive involvement (Grolnick et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). As a result, the women often received no assistance to complete homework and school-related activities.

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Sheldon (2003) added that this occurred because the mother had to work full-time, held several jobs concurrently, and had multiple dependents which left little time for personal assistance with school-related activities. The reasons for lack of direct parental involvement varied between the women working several jobs and limited educational attainment. As a result, two interesting sources of assistance were revealed: sibling support and outside help.

The average household size in this study was five; therefore, all the women had siblings. Older siblings often assisted younger siblings, as was the case with JBI-4 who stated that, her large family allowed her to receive assistance from her older siblings. Meanwhile, older siblings stated that the close ages between the children allowed for mutual support with reference to school related assignments. JBI-5 stated that her siblings and she were close in ages so they were able to provide mutual assistance. The other source of assistance involved outside help such as tutoring, and according to JBI-6, her parents preferred to provide tutors who they felt might have been able to provide greater assistance. Other participants stated that they were provided with help and support from teachers because their parents were unavailable or unwilling to provide assistance with school-related activities.

Unfortunately, no literature on the Bahamas existed to explain why female single-parents opted not to assist in the day-to-day educational activities of their children even though they had the educational capabilities. JBI-5 provided one possible explanation and stated in retrospect that her siblings and she now agree that her mother was stressed from her day job and having multiple dependents at home with no other adult to lean on for support. Once home, she had to ensure cleaning, cooking, and feeding took place; so much so, that by the time she was finished it was late and she was too tired. The statement was reflective of Sheldon (2003) who concluded single-parents were so overwhelmed that they often did not

engage in direct school activities with their children. Another possible explanation could have stemmed from the structural and contextual aspects of Bahamian culture where persons who were assumed to be in positions of authority were more educated and better able to provide assistance. According to JBI-6, she believed that her parents chose tutors or outside help because they would have been able to offer substantial benefits such as increased knowledge and understanding in a particular discipline. This belief was reflective of Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) because during slavery those persons who were able to read and write, though at no defined standard, were more respected and had considerable authority.

The observable increase in enrollment of Black women in college compared to their male counterparts had been attributed to "a mother loves her son and raises her daughter" (Randolph, 1995, p. 121). All of the participants who had male relatives felt they were parented differently from their male siblings. The participants stated that their male siblings were allowed more freedom to roam the streets and participate in outdoor activities. JBI-5 stated that girls were expected to learn domestic skills which would have prepared them for womanhood, marriage, and motherhood, therefore, greater emphasis was placed on their upbringing. The opinions of the women confirmed Wagner (1997) sentiments that women in the Caribbean excelled because boys were too free while girls had to remain close to home where they were closely disciplined. The findings of this study confirmed that Black mothers did exhibit dissimilar parenting based on their child's gender (Hill, 2002; Telesford & Murray, 2008). Meanwhile, this study also confirmed Porche, Ross, and Snow (2004) who suggested that mothers who provided words of encouragement and praise to their daughters resulted in them achieving commendable academic success.

Additionally, girls had more role models especially in the classroom where many of the teachers were females. Participants JBI-1 and JBI-2 stated that because most of their teachers were females they felt advantaged because they were often encouraged to excel academically. Wagner (1997) also stated that the large percentage of female teachers both at the primary and secondary levels in the Caribbean served to offer more advantages to girls as opposed to boys. Even in the United States, the large percentage of female teachers had been shown to have a lasting impact on the education of girls (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 2003). Due to female teachers' positive interactions inclusive of words of encouragement and willingness to offer additionally help to girls they were able to achieve commendable success well into their postsecondary education. Therefore, the sentiments shared by the participants confirmed the literature as it related to teachers and gender differences in schools. It should be noted that the government of the Bahamas being aware of the aforesaid continued to encourage more men to enter the teaching profession so as to offer positive role models for male students.

The women acknowledged that their mothers were more controlling with them as oppose to their brother(s) because they knew the challenges women faced without higher education, and they wanted to ensure they would have been able to survive the hardships associated with their gender. These sentiments were best shared by participant JBI-7 who stated that her mother's belief and determination to provide her with a better life had made her a strong woman. This aspect of parenting was definitely part of Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) because mothers wanted their daughters to possess the skills that mirrored the characteristics they felt would have been necessary to

survive upon adulthood. This was important because women faced greater challenges as opposed to men.

In many African societies women were always responsible for taking care of children and the family, and upon arrival in the New World, this responsibility remained. In fact, children born during slavery were often associated with their mother, as opposed to their father. This mainly occurred because children were, more often, than not, separated from their fathers, rather than their mothers (Blassingame, 1972; Bush, 1990). Additionally, the women agreed that their mothers shared similar goals for all of their children because education was essential to the future success of all Bahamians.

No studies had explored the interactions between children and their parents in the Bahamas. In the scope of this investigation the participants revealed that their mothers did not provide any personal involvement with reference to their education. Though the mothers did not provide direct assistance, their support and encouragement confirmed sentiments suggested by researchers (Coleman, 1966; Grolnick et al., 1997; Koppich, 2003) who believed parental involvement, expectations, and positive attitudes about education had a profound impact on women's educational pursuits. As such, the women's success mirrored the importance their mothers placed on education. Bandura (1986) and Koppich (2003) earlier suggested that parents were children's first teachers and most influential role models, and this was confirmed by all of the participants in this study. As a result, the women's success mirrored their parents' hopes that they would have received a higher education with all of its associated benefits.

The daily self-efficating behaviors and educational activities that contributed to the women's success

Handa (2004) posited that children reared with mothers who had higher education invested more time and effort in their children which reduced grade repetition. Though this study could not be generalized to the entire Bahamas, the findings of this study disconfirmed Handa's (2004) sentiments. All of the participants fully enjoyed their educational experiences and most of them stated that they were always interested in school and though young, many of their teachers recognized their competencies before they did. Furthermore, the women all felt they were more than capable of achieving academic success as their self-efficacy was high. Blank (2005) in a survey of Bahamian students in 1998 revealed that more than half of all youth in the Bahamas enjoyed their school experiences and the sentiments shared by the women supported the aforesaid assertions.

Of importance to this discussion was the women's enrollment in pre-school and its significant benefits. Coakley (2004) and Handa (2004) acknowledged that the Bahamas government supported and funded few pre-schools, which limited access for individuals living in poverty. The findings of this study revealed that the majority of the participants (62.5%) attended pre-school. Statistics suggested poverty did affect early childhood development because poor households were unable to access such services. This study revealed some parents were able to afford such services. Those persons who were unable to access early childhood programs were not in a financial position to do so because such services were provided by private organizations and citizens and were fee-based. The participants who were not enrolled in pre-school were cared for by an older woman in the community which was both very common and a part of Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden,

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1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b). This act represented the extended support offered to female single-parents. The findings served to further support Handa (2004) and Coakley (2004) who suggested that the Bahamas government should offer more pre-school programs for poor families.

As previously mentioned, the participants stated that their mothers were not directly involved in school-related activities; however, the majority (87.5%) of the participants attended a private high school. This was significant because it demonstrated the mothers' self-efficacy, behavioral involvement, and commitment (Grolnick et al., 1997) to ensuring their children received a good education. In the Bahamas, private schools were considered to offer substantial benefits over the public school system, such as smaller class size, better resources, and greater opportunities for advancement. Coakley (2004) postulated that more than 86% of Bahamian students reared in poverty attended public school; however, this study dispelled the belief that only children whose parents had a tertiary education were more likely to attend private school.

All of the participants who attended a private school revealed their parents' determination to ensure they received the best education possible to facilitate socio-economic advancement. JBI-2 stated that her mother participated in A-sue, while JBI-8 stated her mom worked at least two jobs concurrently, as did JBI-5's mother, which ensured money for school fees were available. As previously indicated, A-sue were a tradition practiced primarily by Black Bahamians and it was believed to have its roots in Africa (Ajisafe, 1946). Various groups of people pooled equal amounts of money together and each contributor took a turn at receiving the collected funds known as a *draw*.

Bandura (1977) posited that individuals with high self-efficacy were often able to achieve their desired goal because of their belief in their ability. With reference to educational attainment, self-efficacy determined how well people were able to motivate themselves. Of course, in this study, the women's success was an extension of parental self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) further posited that self-efficacy beliefs often manifested themselves through four processes, one of which involved the cognitive process. All of the participants confirmed that they were actively engaged in reading books, completing assignments, and eager to enhance their critical thinking skills, all of which fostered their self-confidence and belief in their ability to rise above their socio-economic status.

Though not all individuals raised in poverty were able to overcome their social status, the participants in this study were among the 3% of poor youths who had achieved such an accomplishment. Their stories of commitment to promote advancement included the story of JBI-3 who stated that she had to do well whether she wanted to or not, because she was certain she did not want the life of her mother. According to Grolnick et al. (1997), such behaviors were essential to the intellectual development which, in turn, became responsible for the women's success in college and attainment of a higher education degree. This also dispelled the notion, suggested by Coakley (2004), that those children who came from homes with parents who attained a higher education degree were able to garner school success. None of the participants' mothers had obtained a higher education degree, and it should be noted their levels of education varied between completing primary and high school.

According to JBI-2, the post-colonial era in the Bahamas, like the region, allowed for greater opportunities for Blacks into education, politics, and government in the Bahamas. As a result, in 1967 when the Bahamas gained majority, the Act of 1974 paved the way for the

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country's first tertiary institution. With greater access to post-secondary education women were able to pursue their dream which had translated into a more educated workforce in the Bahamas. The findings of this study confirmed statistics regarding the commendable achievements of Bahamian women (Coakley, 2004; Department of Statistics, 2008a, b, c; Winters, 2008).

Better access to post-secondary education was significant because the educational qualifications bestowed upon the women by various educational institutions allowed them to pursue and maintain professional and managerial positions in their respective organizations. Most (62.5%) of the women possessed a Bachelor's degree which had long been considered a determinant of socio-economic status. Concurrently, most persons who possessed at least a Bachelor's degree were able to obtain a middle-class status as evidenced by the findings of this study. All of the women's salaries were in alignment with their educational attainment and a middle-class socio-economic status.

Currently, the average gross salary for all Bahamian women was $33,451 per annum, while the national average for all head-of-households, regardless of sex, was $38,314 (Department of Statistics, 2009a). According to this study's findings, all of the participants salary, with the exception of one, was both within the national range for all household-heads and within their sex. The one participant who made below the national average and that of her sex was due to the fact that the participant only worked part-time because she was semi-retired. Interestingly, in sharp contrast to their mothers, most (75%) of the participants were in managerial positions while others worked as professionals in their respective organizations.

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More importantly, this supported data collected by the Department of Statistics (2008b) which suggested that women were better educated workers than their male counterparts. The findings of this study also aligned with studies conducted in North America and the Caribbean which suggested the educational attainment of women of all races had exceeded their male counterparts due to their self-efficacy (UWI, Barbados, 2007; UWI, Jamaica, 2008; UWI, Trinidad, 2007). This study also confirmed that over a lifetime the earnings and employment of women were higher, while men who failed to actively participate in school received lower wages, endured higher unemployment, and experienced higher incarceration rates (McDill, Natriello, & Pallas, 1986; Royce, Darlington, & Murray, 1983). Simultaneously, the success of these women also reflected the rapid trend and success with which women were now entering jobs and positions traditionally held by men, or it may have reflected the new opportunities available for women to develop new career paths. Surprisingly, the majority (62.5%) of the participants were employed in the private sector which meant they derived their income in a competitive market.

Though women raised in low socio-economic environments were less likely to attend college, these participants, like other women, were able to garner improved living conditions through educational attainment. Hudson (2005) commented that despite women being more educated, they had traditionally acquired degrees in areas that were lower paying than those of their male counterparts. Therefore, gender role stereotypes suggested women required higher levels of schooling to overcome poverty (Coakley, 2004; Handa, 2004). In this study, most (62.5%) of the women were not working in gender stereotypical jobs. None of the women revealed that they worked two jobs to supplement their income. This in itself was a testament to the substantial benefits to be derived from a higher education degree and

confirmed what JBI-7's mother expressed when she urged her daughter to receive a good education so that she would have a choice in employment and salary.

Based on the findings of this study, it was safe to assume the efforts of the participants' mothers ensured that they excelled in their educational and professional attainment. More important, the findings supported Guthrie (2003) who posited that, despite the associated challenges of ones' socio-economic status; it was possible for girls to succeed. To protect confidentiality, the researcher did not reveal the various positions held by the participants. However, it should be noted, managerial positions often placed greater demand on women; so much so, they had to be career oriented because of the struggle of balancing their position, husband, and dependents (Crompton, 1995).

On the other hand, Crompton (1995) suggested that professionals were afforded more opportunities to balance work and family. In the scope of this study, there was no evidence to suggest the participants, whether professional or managerial, were differently advantaged in their current capacity. Of course, this study did not examine these factors and, perhaps, an investigation may be needed to explore how female managers were able to maintain their positions while balancing the demands of work and family and if there were differences in their employment capacity.

The structural meaning ascribed to having earned a higher education degree

All of the participants felt their observable decrease in poverty resulted because of their academic success. This was consistent with findings by Handa (2004) who suggested that women in the Bahamas who had higher educational attainment endured lower levels of poverty. As a result, the women had a great appreciation for the opportunity given to them. In this study, six (75%) participants had children; and of that number, five (83.3%) had school-

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age children, while one had toddlers. All of the participants (83.3%) with school-age children, with the exception of one, enrolled their children in private schools. This act symbolized the participants' belief that private schools offered more advantages; but it also reflected their own experiences. Although no findings were available, it could be assumed that the actions on the part of the mothers reflected their behavioral and personal involvement in their children's education which facilitated their cognitive development. Moreover, this action possibly reflected the participants' parental self-efficacy, identification with their current socio-economic status, and further contributed to the desire or capacity as a parent to pass on the family's middle-class status.

Interestingly, some schools, notably those that were private and academically selective, fed a greater proportion of their students into universities and into high-status occupations. However, in terms of occupational level, it was the attainment of a university degree that seemed more important than a high school education. Moreover, for the participants in this study, the type of school (private or public) did not appear to have influenced the participants' choice of a managerial or professional career path. However, schools whether public or private, may have contributed to the establishment and continuation of middle-class status. No studies in the Bahamas had explored whether students who attended private school were more likely to attend college and obtain a middle-class status. This question presented a promising area for further exploration focusing on the educational choices parents made for their children and the intended impact on their future.

The women's perspectives were a part of self-efficacy and part of their emerging identity in education which had resulted in a new class status and broadened thinking. Their perspectives were shaped by the values of their mothers, community, and individualism.

Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) will always be a part of these women as any scholarship on Black women affirmed that women in this region were tied to the past and discussion of the past will always be relevant. Black intelligentsia was not a fixed identity but fluid and ever changing as reflected by the women in this study who, despite the challenges endured while growing up, were creating a new Caribbean feminist identity and imparting it to their daughter(s) who will, in turn, redefine it once again.

All of the participants noted that though their mothers supported their educational pursuits, they were not very close. JBI-8 noted that she never experienced her mother telling her and her siblings she loved them. Meanwhile, JBI-4 stated that her mother never expressed any emotions with her and her siblings. According to JBI-4, she believed because her mother was not afforded such experiences by her mother, it was difficult for her to show affection to her children. Complimentary, JBI-5 shared that though they knew they were loved, the demands of work and trying to make ends meet so as to make a better life made it difficult to better express one's love.

Most of the women, though appreciative for the opportunities given to them, were determined to redefine their roles as females. JBI-1, JBI-4, and JBI-5, with strong conviction in their voices, spoke about how their relationships with their children, particularly their daughters, were so much more loving and open. JBI-4 stated that she and her children told each other how much they loved each other, while JBI-5 shared that her daughters ". . . can come into my bed where they can share their daily activities with me." The women were all determined that the impetus offered by their mothers ensured their lives would be better and it had indeed been better. Therefore, the lives of their children will be even better because they were provided with so much more and they were expected to meet or exceed their self-

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efficacy. As a result, Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) will once again redefine itself when their daughters come of age.

Recommendations

Implications for the Practice

The findings from this study will contribute to the fields of education and women's studies. The Bahamas is a young independent country in need of evidence-based data to improve the lives of its citizens. Unlike its Caribbean brothers and sisters, the Bahamas had not yet begun a systematic search for an identity with relation to the past and future. With reference to education, this study provided an inside look at the mother-daughter dynamics of female single-parent homes which, until this time, had remained unexplored. Insights from this study will help policymakers gain a better awareness of the challenges of both mother and child as women strive to obtain higher education degrees. Concurrently, this research attempted to better understand the importance of a mother's role and influence on the achievements, opportunities, and choices of her daughter.

The testaments by the women, all of whom suggested their mothers played a very inspirational and influential role in their educational choices, strongly confirmed the sentiments of Bourdieu (1973) who believed socio-economic status was not the only factor that determined the educational attainment of children. Therefore, the existence of strong parental role models greatly enhanced attainment of a higher education degree. As a result, government and agencies concerned about women can utilize this study to put programs in place to support women and their children as they endure the adversities associated with their environments.

The attainment of various higher education degrees by the participants supported the assertion that a degree had significant meaning and value in achieving middle-class status. However, there were associated challenges, particularly for women raised in impoverished environments and those attempting to balance family and educational pursuits. Therefore, the seminal exploration conducted for this study will serve to stimulate and highlight critical thought which may provide assistance to these women. This study will help explain the contributing factors that shaped the values and attitudes of Black Bahamian women about education and motherhood.

Further Research

As previously stated, this study served as a seminal exploration on the lives of women who obtained a higher education degree while being raised by a female single-parent in a low socio-economic environment. As a result, this study yielded seven recommendations for further research. First, this study revealed three major themes: (a) cultural capital, (b) socio-economic status, and (c) cognitive abilities; however, each theme may need to be analyzed separately because not all of the interrelated indices have been taken into consideration. It is, therefore, imperative to assess these factors so as to gather deeper and more valuable information.

Second, there were no systematic investigations regarding the impact of female single-parenting on the educational attainment of children, specifically girls. According to the participants, their mothers were the strongest predictors of their educational attainment. The direct effects of a mother's influence were complex and vulnerable to unstated characteristics as revealed by the participants in this study. Therefore, a study which focuses on whether mothers are aware of their influential role on their daughters' decision to pursue a

higher education degree is significant to the future development of educational attainment in the Bahamas.

Third, due to the use of a small purposively selected sample consisting of females raised mostly (87.5%) on New Providence, it is recommended that an instrument be developed from the findings and used throughout the entire Bahamas to obtain additional information. This would serve to strengthen the generalizability of the findings and provide significant meaning to the experiences of other Black Bahamian women raised in poverty by a female single-parent. More importantly, such a study would serve to provide an opportunity to generate a common understanding of the sociological effects of intergenerational poverty between mothers who reside on New Providence and those who reside on the various family-islands of the Bahamas.

Fourth, this study examined the positive processes which facilitated the educational advancement of the participants. Perhaps, a study which focuses on women who were not exposed to such positive processes may serve to provide a more holistic awareness and understanding of the effect of parental characteristics, conspicuous or less conspicuous discouragement or encouragement by the community, and the impact of self-achievement and self-expectation on the effects of educational attainment. The researcher believes awareness of both positive and negative environments will allow those in authority to make more informed decisions to assist the most vulnerable populations.

Fifth, with the exception of one participant, all of the women (87.5%) considered themselves very fortunate and not poor. Thus, a need exists to explore the nature of girls being raised by a female single-parent as experienced by individuals who have lived in profound poverty as this may be essential to understanding its impact on the educational

attainment of these women. Smith, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov (1997) suggested dependents who endured persistent poverty rather than transient or short-term poverty were significantly affected. Unfortunately, this study provided no evidence to confirm or disconfirm this because most of the participants stated that though they endured economic hardships, they didn't really consider themselves poor.

Sixth, this study revealed most (87.5%) of the participants graduated from a private high school, and though this research focused more on the attainment of a tertiary degree, exploration may be needed on whether private high school students are more likely to enter college and feed into middle-class status. Finally, several of the participants mentioned the financial role that their fathers played in their educational pursuits, while others acknowledged their fathers' lack of involvement. Therefore, it would be worthy to explore and elucidate the role of male single-parents raising daughters and sons as well as the impact of female single-parents' influence on the educational attainment of their sons.

Chapter Summary

This was a qualitative phenomenological study which interviewed eight purposively selected Black Bahamian women who were raised by a female single-parent in a low socio-economic environment. This chapter sought to provide a synopsis of the research which included a purpose statement, significance of the study, the method which served to guide this study, and the limitations.

The researcher highlighted the findings which were revealed using direct quotes from the participants. One over-arching question and four sub-questions guided this study and generated perceptions, beliefs, and opinions from the participants as they allowed the researcher to delve into their lived experiences with reference to their educational attainment.

At the conclusion of the analysis, three major themes emerged: (a) cultural capital of the home as established by the mother; (b) the socio-economic environment in which the women were reared and its effects on their educational attainment; and (c) the cognitive abilities of the women which facilitated their success. From the major themes emerged sub-themes which centered around and further supported the main themes.

This chapter then discussed the findings in relation to the relevant literature which confirmed or disconfirmed the researcher's beliefs about the educational attainment of Black Bahamian women. The discussion suggested socio-economic status did have a strong impact on females' educational pursuits; however, the parental characteristics of the mother had the strongest affect. Additionally, the discussion suggested there was a relationship between the rearing practices of Black women in North America and the Caribbean. The discussion then shifted to Caribbean feminism (Baksh-Sooden, 1998; Mohammed, 1998a, b) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986), the two theoretical frameworks, which guided this study. The researcher was able to relate the findings to the theories which confirmed specific assumptions that helped examine important issues within the investigation.

The findings of this chapter suggested several implications for practice resulting from this study. Among them were this study's contribution to the fields of education and women's studies. Researchers had not provided any substantial investigation of the influencing role of female single-parents in the Bahamas on their daughters' decision to pursue a higher education degree. The women all suggested that their mothers played inspirational and influential roles in their decisions to attend college, despite their socio-economic status. Therefore, government agencies and private organizations can use this seminal exploration to put programs in place to assist women and their children as they

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endure the struggles associated with their environment. This chapter also sought to highlight the value of a higher education degree in achieving middle-class status and all of its associated benefits. Simultaneously, this chapter explained the contributing factors that shaped the values and attitudes of Black Bahamian women with reference to education and motherhood.

Finally, this chapter concluded with recommendations for future research. The researcher highlighted seven areas which may further explore this topic and provide significant benefits to the Bahamas. The recommendations included (a) the need to elaborate on each of the major themes so as to gain a deeper awareness of its impact on Black girls raised by female single-parents in low socio-economic environments; (b) an examination of the influential role of mothers which was revealed as the strongest predictor of the women's success and investigating whether mothers are aware of their influential role; (c) an instrument to generate greater generalizability of the findings to the entire archipelago of the Bahamas; (d) a study which focuses on participants who were not exposed to such positive processes may provide a more holistic awareness of parental and environmental characteristics; (e) the need to explore the nature of the phenomenon as experienced by individuals who have lived in profound poverty; (f) a study which explores whether private schools enhance college enrollment and graduation; and (g) the role fathers play in the educational pursuits of their daughters and or sons, and the impact of female single-parents on the educational attainment of their sons.

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APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER

Sample letter to women's social clubs

Jennifer Bethel
660 N. E. 78th St.
Apt. 201
Miami, FL. 33138

Aurora Household of Ruth
No. 26
P. O. Box N-1503
Nassau, N. P., Bahamas

Dear Madam,

Your organization's participation in a research study is being requested. The study is entitled, "The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments" and it is a phenomenological study. The research is being conducted by Jennifer Bethel, a doctoral candidate at Barry University's Adrian Dominican School of Education. This study will explore and, hopefully, generate a better awareness of the lived experiences of women who were able to obtain a higher education degree despite being raised by a female single-parent and in a low socio-economic environment. This letter will serve to provide you, as President of Aurora Household of Ruth, with an explanation of the research project.

For this study, as President, the researcher would greatly appreciate if you would announce to members of the organization that their voluntary participation is being requested. A maximum of 10 participants is being sought to participate in the study. In addition, a flyer has been enclosed which details the study and the role of each prospective participant. It would be greatly appreciated if you would post the enclosed flyer within your establishment for members to see. Please contact me if you are unable to meet this request because the study will take place very soon.

The researcher would like to thank you in advance for your assistance and looks forward to future relations.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bethel

Sample letter to women's social clubs

Jennifer Bethel
660 N. E. 78th St.
Apt. 201
Miami, FL. 33138

International Association of Administrators
P. O. Box N-9069
Nassau, N. P., Bahamas

Dear Madam,

Your organization's participation in a research study is being requested. The study is entitled, "The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments" and it is a phenomenological study. The research is being conducted by Jennifer Bethel, a doctoral candidate at Barry University's Adrian Dominican School of Education. This study will explore and, hopefully, generate a better awareness of the lived experiences of women who were able to obtain a higher education degree despite being raised by a female single-parent and in a low socio-economic environment. This letter will serve to provide you, as President of the International Association of Administrators, with an explanation of the research project.

For this study, as President, the researcher would greatly appreciate if you would announce to members of the organization that their voluntary participation is being requested. A maximum of 10 participants is being sought to participate in the study. In addition, a flyer has been enclosed which details the study and the role of each prospective participant. It would be greatly appreciated if you would post the enclosed flyer within your establishment for members to see. Please contact me if you are unable to meet this request because the study will take place very soon.

The researcher would like to thank you in advance for your assistance and looks forward to future relations.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bethel

APPENDIX A

Sample letter to women's social clubs

Jennifer Bethel
660 N. E. 78th St.
Apt. 201
Miami, FL. 33138

Zonta Club of New Providence
P. O. Box SS-5342
Nassau, N. P., Bahamas

Dear Madam,

Your organization's participation in a research study is being requested. The study is entitled, "The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments" and it is a phenomenological study. The research is being conducted by Jennifer Bethel, a doctoral candidate at Barry University's Adrian Dominican School of Education. This study will explore and, hopefully, generate a better awareness of the lived experiences of women who were able to obtain a higher education degree despite being raised by a female single-parent and in a low socio-economic environment. This letter will serve to provide you, as President of Zonta Club of New Providence, with an explanation of the research project.

For this study, as President, the researcher would greatly appreciate if you would announce to members of the organization that their voluntary participation is being requested. A maximum of 10 participants is being sought to participate in the study. In addition, a flyer has been enclosed which details the study and the role of each prospective participant. It would be greatly appreciated if you would post the enclosed flyer within your establishment for members to see. Please contact me if you are unable to meet this request because the study will take place very soon.

The researcher would like to thank you in advance for your assistance and looks forward to future relations.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bethel

APPENDIX B

FLYER

Looking For Volunteers

To

Participate in a Research Study

On

The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments

A dissertation research study is being conducted by Jennifer Bethel, doctoral candidate at Barry University in the Adrian Dominican School of Education

To participate or for more information please call or e-mail your contact information to (242) 361-1702 or jmbethell@hotmail.com

*Please put "Bahamian women" on the subject line of the e-mail

Study Requirements:
- **Participate in a brief conversation to screen for appropriateness**
- **Participate in one 90-minutes audio-tape recorded interview**
- **Participate in one follow-up session to review the interview transcript for accuracy**

Eligibility Requirements:
- **Black Bahamian female**
- **Raised in a female single-headed household**
- **Resided in a low socio-economic environment**
- **Possess a Bachelor's degree or higher**

This is a research study in which participation is voluntary and confidentiality will be protected. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact my supervisor, Sister Ellen Rice, at (305) 899-3704, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Mrs. Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020.

APPENDIX C

SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATENESS

APPENDIX C
Screening for Appropriateness

Researcher: Hi _____, my name is Jennifer Bethel and I am currently a doctoral candidate at Barry University in the Adrian Dominican School of Education. I would like to thank you for expressing interest within my study. The tile of my study is: *The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments.* At this present time, I would now like to take this opportunity to ask you a few questions. The purposes of the questions are to ensure that you will be able to effectively participate. This should take no more than three minutes of your time.

Prospective Participant Response:

Researcher: This study requires participants to be Black Bahamian woman of African descent. Do you meet this requirement?

Prospective Participant Response:

Researcher: There are many family types that exist in the Bahamas. Since this study requires persons who were raised by a female single-parent only, I am looking for an individual who meets this requirement. Do you meet this requirement?

Prospective Participant Response:

Researcher: This study focuses on Black Bahamian women who were raised in a low socio-economic environment during their formative (grades PK-12) educational experiences. Do you meet this criterion?

Prospective Participant Response:

Researcher: This study focuses on Black Bahamian women who have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. Do you meet this requirement?

Prospective Participant Response:

Researcher: The purpose of this research is to interview women who share the experience of having being raised by a female single-parent, lived in a low socio-economic environment, possess a Bachelor's degree or higher, and willing to speak about the experience during two meetings. Will you be able to commit to two meetings with the former being in the form of a 90-minutes interview and the later a 30-minutes meeting to confirm accuracy of the transcript?

Prospective Participant Response:

Ms. _____ I am pleased to inform you that you do meet all of the requirements necessary to effectively participate in this study. Do you have any questions or concerns?

Prospective Participant Response:

Researcher: Ms. _____ now that I have determined that you do meet the requirements for this study, I would like to inform you of your rights as a prospective participant. Shall we begin?

Prospective Participant Response:

Researcher:

1. Participation in this study is voluntary.

2. As a participant you may refuse to continue at any time without prejudice.

3. This study will be strictly confidential, meaning that no names will be used. If you agree to participate, you will be assigned a moniker and during the presentation of data, only grouped information within specific categories will be presented.

4. Your participation is free of costs during or thereafter the study.

5. The interview can be conducted in a location agreed upon and one that provides sufficient light and safety.

6. During the interview you may refuse to answer any question(s).

7. As a participant you may ask for the tape-recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

8. Upon revision of the transcript for accuracy the audio- recordings will be destroyed within 24 hours.

9. There are no direct benefits to you; however, it is hoped the observations gleaned from this research will, hopefully, contribute to the knowledge base in the context of Black Bahamian women and education. Additionally, it may generate a better awareness of the challenges and successes of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments.

10. You will be asked to provide demographic data which will be held confidential and no names will appear on the form.

11. You will be asked to sign a consent form which will signify that you are fully aware of your role and the nature of the study. This form will be kept separate from raw data,

transcriptions, and all other information in a separate folder, lock, and secure file in my home office for a period not to exceed five years (2015).

Prospective Participant Response:

Researcher: Ms. _____ I would like thank you for your patience and time. If it's okay, can we schedule a time that will be convenient for the first meeting.

APPENDIX D

BARRY UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX D

Barry University Informed Consent Form

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of the study is: *The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments.* This research is being conducted by Jennifer Bethel, a student in the Education and Leadership School in the Education Department at Barry University, and is seeking information that will be useful in the field of Education. The aim of the research is to gain a better awareness of the structural and contextual meaning of the experiences.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following: participate in a phone conversation to determine suitability for the study, one face-to-face 90-minutes audio-tape recorded interview, and one 30-minutes face-to-face meeting to confirm accuracy of the transcript. I anticipate the number of participants to be a maximum of 10 individuals. Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary and should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects.

There are no known risks to your involvement in this study. Although there are no direct benefits to you, your participation in this study may help increase awareness with reference to the phenomenon associated with the challenges and successes of women in impoverished environments. Greater awareness of the phenomenon might help put programs in place to better assist others enduring these conditions.

As a research participant any published results will retain participant's confidentiality. Raw data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's home office. All audio tapes of the individual interview and field notes will be destroyed in 24 hours of the confirmation of accuracy of the transcript. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from the raw data. All data and consent forms will be destroyed after five years (2015).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Jennifer Bethel, at (954) 494-4166, my supervisor, Sister Ellen Rice, at (305) 899-3704, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Mrs. Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020. If you are satisfied with the information provided and are willing to participate in this research, please signify your consent by signing this consent form.

Voluntary Consent

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this study by Jennifer Bethel, I have read and understand the information presented above, and that I have received a copy of this form for my records. I give my voluntary consent to participate in this research study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   *Date*

_____   _____   _____   _____
Researcher   *Date*   *Witness*   *Date*
(Witness signature is required only if research involves pregnant women, children, other vulnerable populations, or if more than minimal risk is present.)

APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Demographic Information Form

Please fill out this demographic survey so as to provide some general information about you. Your answers are confidential.

Please write in (where appropriate) or circle the appropriate number to your response.

1. Your age: _____

2. Marital status:
    1. Single
    2. Married
    3. Separated
    4. Divorced
    5. Widowed
    6. Cohabitating

3. On what island were you raised?
    1. New Providence
    2. Grand Bahama
    3. Other: _____

4. What type of school did you attend during your formative years (grades PK-12)?
    1. Private School
    2. Government School

5. Educational level:
    1. Bachelor's Degree
    2. Master's Degree
    3. Post-graduate degree (Ph.D., M.D., etc.)
    4. Other: _____

6. Current work status:
    1. Employed/Self-employed full-time
    2. Employed/Self-employed part-time
    3. Employed/Private or government full-time
    4. Employed/Private or government part-time
    5. Unemployed
    6. Other: _____

7. Income:
    1. Less than $9,999 per year
    2. Between $10,000 and $19,999
    3. Between $20,000 and $29,999
    4. Between $30,000 and $39,999
    5. Between $40,000 and $49,999
    6. $50,000 or more

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol

Research Title: The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments.

Over-arching Research Question: What sociological factors influenced Black Bahamian women's educational attainment?

Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Position of Interviewee:

Sub-questions:

1. What is your birth order and in what ways did it affect your educational experiences?

2. Looking back on your childhood, how did your neighborhood affect your educational experiences?

3. How were you affected by others in your life?

4. In what ways did the mother-daughter-dynamics affect your educational experiences?

5. In what ways did your socio-economic status affect your educational experiences?

6. In what ways did the color of your skin affect your educational experiences?

7. In what ways did your gender affect your educational experiences?

8. What experiences throughout your life led to your decision to pursue a college degree?

9. In what ways do you consider yourself successful?

10. Looking back on your educational experiences, what does it all mean to you?

11. What have I not asked about your educational experiences that you would like to share?

APPENDIX G

FIELD NOTES

APPENDIX G

Researcher Field Notes

Date of Interview: _____

Time: _____

Length of Interview: _____

Assigned Moniker: _____

Descriptive Notes	Reflexive Notes

This form is a revision of Creswell's (1998) observational protocol form.

Citation: Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

APPENDIX H

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

APPENDIX H

Moustakas' Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Data Analysis

The steps for this are given as follows:

1. Using a phenomenological approach, obtain a full description of your own experience of the phenomenon.

2. From the verbatim transcript of your experience complete the following steps:

    a. Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience.
    b. Record all relevant statements.
    c. List each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.
    d. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
    e. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a description of the textures of the experience. Include verbatim examples.
    f. Reflect on your textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a description of the structures of your experience.
    g. Construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of your experience.

3. From the verbatim transcript of the experience of each of the co-researchers complete the above steps a to g.

4. From the individual textural-structural descriptions of all co-researchers' experiences, construct a composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole.

Citation: Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

APPENDIX I

THANK YOU LETTER TO PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

APPENDIX I

Sample thank you letter to women's social clubs

Jennifer Bethel
660 N. E. 78th St.
Apt. 201
Miami, FL. 33138

Aurora Household of Ruth
No. 26
P. O. Box N-1503
Nassau, N. P., Bahamas

Dear Madam,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to your organization for posting my flyers within its establishment. My dissertation entitled: *"The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments"* received positive interests from members of the organization.

You may be interested to know that the overall results of the study were very encouraging, particularly with regard to the analysis and discussion of the findings. I recognize that your organization made a valuable contribution and will figure prominently into the completion of the study, which should be published next month.

Once again, I would like to thank you and I certainly look forward to future relations.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bethel

APPENDIX I

Sample thank you letter to women's social clubs

Jennifer Bethel
Apt. 201
660 N. E. 78th St.
Miami, FL. 33138

International Association of Administrators
P. O. Box N-9069
Nassau, N. P., Bahamas

Dear Madam,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to your organization for posting my flyers within its establishment. My dissertation entitled: *"The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments"* received positive interests from members of the organization.

You may be interested to know that the overall results of the study were very encouraging, particularly with regard to the analysis and discussion of the findings. I recognize that your organization made a valuable contribution and will figure prominently into the completion of the study, which should be published next month.

Once again, I would like to thank you and I certainly look forward to future relations.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bethel

APPENDIX I

Sample thank you letter to women's social clubs

Jennifer Bethel
Apt. 201
660 N. E. 78th St.
Miami, FL. 33138

Zonta Club of New Providence
P. O. Box SS-5342
Nassau, N. P., Bahamas

Dear Madam,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to your organization for posting my flyers within its establishment. My dissertation entitled: *"The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments"* received positive interests from members of the organization.

You may be interested to know that the overall results of the study were very encouraging, particularly with regard to the analysis and discussion of the findings. I recognize that your organization made a valuable contribution and will figure prominently into the completion of the study, which should be published next month.

Once again, I would like to thank you and I certainly look forward to future relations.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bethel

APPENDIX J

THANK YOU LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Sample letter to participants

Jennifer Bethel
660 N. E. 78th St.
Apt. 201
Miami, FL. 33138

Participant's Name
Postal Address

Dear (Participant's Name),

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to you for your very active participation in my dissertation entitled: *"The educational attainment of Black Bahamian women from low socio-economic environments"*.

I very much appreciate that you gave freely of your time to assist in the interview and follow-up questions. You may be interested to know that the overall progress of the study looks very promising, particularly with regard to the analysis and discussion of the findings. I recognize that your contribution will figure prominently into the completion of the study, which should be published next month.

I trust that you enjoyed your time as an active participant and I certainly look forward to future relations.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bethel