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Race, Class and Marriage:
Black Women, Social Mobility, and the Companionate Marriage Ideal

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Doctor of Philosophy

Anthropology

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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By

Riché Jeneen Daniel

This dissertation examines African American professional wives and mothers understanding and enactment of marriage and motherhood. It empirically demonstrates how African American upper-middle class women are modifying their relationship with work and changing their understanding of marriage and motherhood to an ideal of companionate marriage as a marker of upper-middle class social position and attention to race and class reproduction. The emphasis on marriage and family stability, while solidifying their class-based identity, complicates their racialized and gendered identity and forces a reconciliation between the historic view of professional black womanhood as linked to the success of the "race", and the contemporary focus on marriage and family, more in line with the companionate ideal.

Drawing upon over three years of ethnographic observations and interviews with African-American married professional women and their families, first I provide an overview of the African American model of partnership marriage in which black wives' much greater labor force participation and tradition of community participation alongside motherhood normalized more egalitarian marital relationships. Second, I demonstrate the importance of social mobility in creating a context in which some middle- class and

upper-middle class black wives' have opportunities to exercise "choice" in their work and family strategies. While these choices are often constrained, respondents demonstrate a move away from extended-kin and partnership marriage to a more traditional ideal of companionate marriage in which black women's labor force participation is less readily linked to racial advancement. Third, by investing in and modeling a more "modern" marital form, I suggest African American professional mothers, utilizing strategic assimilation, resist and oppose contemporary stereotypes of African American families and seek to ensure their class advantages will be passed on to their children.

The unique convergence of class, race, and gender as simultaneous constructs sets African American professional women and their families apart from white professional families, and poor and working class African American families. Consequently, my focus on strategies rooted in people's different cultural models expands the discourse on work/career and family conflict to include varied histories, interpretations and responses.

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Acknowledgements

There are so many African adages that speak to what the completion of this dissertation means to me but the one that sticks out in my mind; both because it is so accurate and because it has garnered the most popular attention is “It takes a whole village to raise a child.” In this instance the child speaks to multiple people. First the child is representative of me at various points in this process when I needed an “adult,” mentor, or advisor to keep me on track amid my myriad distractions. The child also refers to my three wonderful, beautiful, incredibly smart and patient children, whom I delivered while finishing my course work and preparing for my comprehensive exams respectively. Upon learning that all three of my children were born while I was in graduate school most people would say “how did you do it?” I would answer, “I don’t know… I just did.” But the truth is many people helped and in doing so, helped me to complete this project, sustain my marriage, parent my children and keep my sanity most days. In fact, my husband and I were blessed with a true to life village of family and friends who held us up and continue to do so even though we have now moved many miles away.

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The women who graciously allowed me to poke and prod them and their families for the benefit of my research reminded me each and every day that it was not about me. When I thought about giving up because balancing my own demands was getting too difficult, they reminded me, in their own stories, that a study about them as professional black women, was important to them and had nothing to do with me or my degree. Fiction writers often say their books were written by the characters, they are simply the conduit. While the analysis is mine, and therefore could be severely flawed, the experiences are theirs and that is what makes this study so important. I am grateful to each and every one of them and I wish I could call their names and give homage to their stories and the selflessness which they exuded when I asked them if they would participate in this study. To each of them, I am because you are.

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I dedicate this work to Myrtle Bishop, my “Nana”, whose shoulders I stand on and to Nailah, my daughter, so she can stand on mine.

-July 15, 2009, Deerfield, Massachusetts

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Black[1] Women Have Always Worked

Preface

The contemporary moment finds us in the midst of two competing images of the black family. At the same time that *Essence Magazine* commissioned an article about the Obama family, priding itself on being the first to provide an exclusive on the soon to be elected "first family" that is African American, CNN was working on an exclusive series hosted by Soledad O'Brien that presented a much starker image of the black family. These competing images drew onlookers back into the Cosby Show debate in which news pundits, scholars, and laypeople alike questioned the authenticity of the black professional family on the hugely influential show which featured a married professional couple where the wife was an attorney and the husband was an obstetrician. The show also featured children with minimal stressors and an extended family unit that included grandparents and friends. When Soledad O'Brien's CNN series presented the black family little had changed since Bill Moyer's report of the late 1980s and current black family statistics made the Obama's appear to be another example of the make-believe T.V. exception rather than the norm.

The contemporary moment also finds us in the midst of a debate about career and family conflict, how women make decisions about work and family, and outdated career models that privilege male-oriented career tracks. Hirsch and Wardlow (2006) also

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[1] I use black and African American interchangeably in this study due in large part to the fact that the respondents used both terms to self-identify themselves. I also use them interchangeably believing in the notion that black and African American are terms in the American context that refer to a specific cultural group. While my use of black usually privileges African American as specifically of African descendants of slaves in the mainland U.S. and black as being more inclusive of the dispersed people of the African Diaspora including continental Africans, members of the Caribbean, and dispersed groups throughout Europe, South America and wherever else people of African descent may reside, since all of the respondents in this study were born in the U.S. I use black to refer to American descendants of slaves and the larger racialized group identified by the census.

discuss how companionate marriage has become a part of the globalization process and entrenched Western ideals of marriage deeper into the cultural practices of other cultures. However, African American families have been left out of this conversation. There is no conversation about professional African American women who daily negotiate their commitment to career and family, nor is there conversation about African American marital bonds unless the focus is on their demise. When *Essence Magazine* used the Obama family to shine a spotlight on black families in America, they shed light on a conversation that had already taken root within the black community. African American on-lookers looked to the Obama family as a shining star in the history of black family life, proof that African Americans could have viable, intact, stable, professional families.

As the first lifestyle magazine produced for and about African American women *Essence Magazine's* special edition "The Obama's: Portrait of America's First Family," a paperback 95 page coffee-table book, weaved a classic American narrative around an African American family that stands apart from the historical and contemporary images of black family life. While the book is for general audiences, its special message about the black family is strategically placed for black families and given the magazines audience, primarily black women. Mixed with a host of up-close and personal photos, the final chapter of the book, "What They Meant to Us" begins with the following quote:

> Our Dreams about the future of the black family had been nearly extinguished – now the fires of hope burn bright. They represent the best of who we are. They're the graceful family we see in church. They inspire us with their family values. Their extended family tree of grandparents, siblings, cousins, and friends remind us of our powerful familial bonds. And they assure us of our endless and extraordinary possibilities (Bass 2009: 91).

In addition, numerous magazines and web blogs have chronicled the impact Michelle Obama has, as a "career" woman, in the White House. Her role as wife and mother of two young children and the way she and her mother are working together to keep the children "grounded" has been the topic of multiple media outlets. In addition to *Essence Magazine*, national newspapers and magazines stress her attention to her own work and family balance as well as the concerns of others. While the Obama family provides an intriguing case for highlighting the convergence of these two areas of the literature, black marriage and family life and career and family conflict, this study is not about the Obama family. I begin my story here because the way the American people, particularly African American people have taken to Michelle Obama and her family is a quite fitting example of what I found when interviewing similarly educated and ambitious African American wives and mothers who happened not to marry the future first Black president of the United States of America. Yet they too are negotiating what it means to be representatives of the black family and they find themselves making decisions about their own families with an eye toward how those decisions will affect others. This study is about those women and their conceptions of marriage, children, and career.

Situating African American Women in the Career and Family Debate

> It is hard being an African American mom and a "stay-at-home" mom because that is not the norm. Most black moms have had to work and if you did not work you were being lazy. My mom often calls and asks when I am going back to work. So I battle with the idea that I am being lazy. But I think this is best for my family and we can afford it.
> - Gail, business management/consulting, three children

> Every time my Dad would call he would ask me when I was going back to work. It was like a running joke but it wasn't funny. I knew what he was really saying was why are you still sitting at home with a baby?
> - Denise, attorney, two children

Each of the aforementioned women and the other twenty-one women interviewed for *Race, Class, and Marriage* have achieved success exceeding the hopes and dreams of their grandmothers' and great-grandmothers' generations. They are physicians, attorneys, computer programmers, bankers, advertising executives, school administrators, and engineers. However, as evidenced by the quotes featured above, they are conflicted about their accomplishments and their class position in light of the race and gender history of African American women and the requirements related to mothering. It is my interest in African American college-educated professional married women's choices about motherhood, family, and career that guide this project into a gendered analysis of the ways in which race and class simultaneously operate in the lives of African American wives and mothers to provide new opportunities and choices that juxtapose and contradict historical and cultural legacies.

I ask how African American professional women construct a race- and class-specific gender identity and strategy. I place these articulations within U.S. constructions of race, class, and gender which have historically exploited black women's productive and reproductive labor while simultaneously creating and reifying myths that call African American women's life strategies into question. I begin with three broad, yet guiding questions. First, given the necessity and importance of work for the black community since slavery and the ideology that accompanied it making black women's work important and necessary to black racial uplift, is there a work and family conflict for African American women and if so, why? Second, if black women have traditionally had a relationship with work that was not predicated solely on economic stability, why are some professional African American wives modifying their relationship with work and

choosing to stay-at-home or work part-time? Finally, how do black women construct their gender ideologies and identities as mothers vis-à-vis their position within the black middle class paying particular attention to the enactment of class impacted by the history of "racial uplift" and respectability as a reform movement and resistance strategy?

In posing these questions that disrupt ideologies about race, class, gender, and motherhood, this study illuminates intra-group difference and inter-group similarities. By focusing on an understudied and under-theorized group within a group (African American professional married mothers), questions of class privilege as they are influenced by race and racism are further explored. *Race, Class, and Marriage* focuses on African American professional middle class women with an eye toward first, centering the margins, as stated by bell hooks (1984), and second, utilizing theoretical constructions of race- and class- specific gender strategy, to highlight the ways in which African American women continue to be influenced by the collective cultural memory[2] of the politics of respectability[3]. While this perspective isolates a relatively small, little-known and under-theorized group, the promise is in its ability to not only de-center the experience of "whiteness" as a race- and class- specific norm but to add complexity to the gender, race, and class ideologies around motherhood that are pervasive and prevent the

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[2] Cultural memory is a relatively new area of inquiry. For the purposes of *Race, Class, and Motherhood* I draw from the interpretation set forth by feminist scholars who use cultural memory to theorize gender and women's perspectives on hegemonic normative histories and Black Feminist discourse which identifies collective memory as being embedded in narratives and oral histories (White 2001) and identifies how people "experience their present in light of their past" (St. Jean and Feagin 1998). Hirsch and Smith (2002) define cultural memory as the place where "identity, whether individual or cultural, becomes a story that stretches from the past to the present and the future, that connects the individual to the group, and that is structured by gender and related identity markers . . . [it] . . . is the combined study of what has happened and how it is passed down to us" (Hirsch and Smith 2002: 8-9).

[3] The "politics of respectability" refers to the term coined by history scholar Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham to denote the reform measure that included a Victorian model of respectability alongside racial uplift strategies (1993). See chapter two for more detail on the development of this gender ideology.

development of cultural and political solutions to the conflicts embedded in negotiating career and family in our society across race and class.

This study shows that while there have been important studies on white women's negotiations of work and family, and valuable explorations on middle class African American families, there have been no studies that present the ways in which middle-class and upper-middle-class black women construct and enact their gender strategies in relation to marriage, career and motherhood. Inclusion of middle-class and upper-middle class women in discussion of motherhood ideology, gender strategy, and race and class-based identities contributes to a more nuanced view of the nexus of race, class, and gender in contemporary family lives. This study takes into consideration the gender ideology developed out of black women's varied work and family history as well as the race- and class-based identities developed as a result of persistent social, economic, and political discrimination. As a result, this study empirically demonstrates that professional African American women and their families are experiencing a shift from older models of marriage and parenting obtained from their own parents (and others) that privileged education and careers as the key to African American communal success. African American upper-middle-class women are modifying their relationship with work and changing their understanding of marriage and motherhood to an ideal of companionate marriage where the focus in on affectionate conjugal bonds rather than economic, political, and social consanguineal bonds (extended and fictive kinship). The shift to the companionate marriage ideal operates as a marker of upper-middle-class social position and is accompanied by African American women's attention to race and class reproduction. The focus on conjugal ties, while solidifying their class-based identity,

complicates African American women's racialized and gendered identity therefore creating ambivalence and conflict in their view of themselves as professional black women historically identified as committed to gender equality and the success of the race.

This exploratory ethnographic project reveals that upper-middle-class African American women construct their gender ideologies and identities as mothers alongside their position within the black middle-class. Where conflict in the mainstream literature is in women's role as professionals, for African American upper-middle-class women it is in the role of wife. In addition, African American professional women disrupt intra-cultural expectations of career success previously used to represent and "uplift the race" and focus their attention on family stability, defined as remaining married and raising successful children. Finally, this individuated focus on marriage and family, more in line with the companionate ideal, sets forth a new interpretation of "racial uplift" through the ideal of a stable black marriage and family. Since Daniel Patrick Moynihan's infamous report on the status of black families suggested black women and their failure to support the nuclear patriarchal family was the root cause of black families' pathology, black women have been trying to resurrect their "good" name. In much the same way that nineteenth century African American women protected their "good" name through the "politics of respectability," contemporary African American women look for ways to protect themselves and their families. Faced with less overt and pervasive discrimination and reaching higher economic, social and political positions, many of the professional African American women who participated in this study find their focus on the nuclear family more important to their success and the success of the race than their continued climb up the corporate ladder. While this perspective and the women's subsequent

actions regarding marriage, career and family seemingly mimic the traditional breadwinner/homemaker ideal embraced by mainstream white America, it is not the tradition or the norm for African American women. This shift to a companionate ideal therefore encourages analysis that would provide an understanding of how and why African American women's beliefs and practices may be different.

Black Professional Married Mothers' Standpoint

Regarding the issue of centering black women's experiences, most theoretical articulations on motherhood have focused on white women as much because white women and their decisions are the idealized norm and because whiteness continues to hold the privilege developed through capitalism and the Atlantic slave trade. As E. Ann Kaplan states in her study,[4] "Because dominant forms privilege white, middle-class women, and because I believe dominant discourses inevitably impact minority ones, I have chosen to focus mainly on white, middle-class conflict" (Kaplan 1990:410). Likewise, studies privileging attention to the intersection of race, class, and gender for understanding the linkages between family experience and external structural processes begin with the fact that people of color and particularly women of color are disproportionately represented in the lowest economic groups and in occupations with the poorest pay (Walker 1993). In the context of existing literature, and given that the

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[4] Kaplan is not alone in articulating her view that white women's perspectives will in essence "trickle down" to African American women and other minorities. This is a major criticism of second wave feminism and was heartily attacked with the advent of black feminism. Unfortunately, long after the critical debates of the 1970s and 80s, feminist's treatment of women's lived experiences continue to prioritize and centralize white women's experiences over others. (see also Gerson 1985, Hattery 2001, Moen 2005, Stone 2007).

women in this study are neither white nor poor it is clear that “other research… also needs to be done” (Kaplan 1990: 410).

Although black women remain outside most formidable debates on work and family, the discourse is intrinsic to an understanding of the political economy of the black community. Most of what we know of African American women presents them through a fractured one-dimensional lens that in most instances ignores them. Because African American women have worked outside the home, their paid labor within the labor market and their unpaid labor for their families operate outside prevailing theories and debates about work and family. Likewise, through the mainstream feminist theoretical debates, black professional women’s emphasis on marriage and community is lumped into a discussion on a “return to traditional gender roles” when for the majority of African American women having part-time, flexible, or transient relationships with work has seldom been a viable option.

Black feminist theory provides several tools in conducting this research. The “outsider within” status Patricia Hill Collins utilizes to describe the unique position of African American women whose everyday experiences of racism included being a devalued and invisible part of white people’s lives, as domestics, even as they were intimately involved in the upkeep of their homes and the maintenance of their children (Collins 1998:5). They knew they could never belong to their white families; in spite of their involvement, they remained outsiders (Collins 2004). In fact, African Americans’ status in the U.S. has always been one in which they were not seen as wholly Americans even as their blood, sweat, and tears were used to lay the country’s cornerstones. While Collins imagined African American women’s status as rooted in the race, gender, and

working-class matrix of domination[5] which articulated a particular standpoint (Collins 2000: 274); this study stretches black feminism into a black professional, married, mothers' standpoint thereby broadening the scope of black women's experiences and their ability to theorize outside essentialist notions of black womanhood.

As *Race, Class, and Marriage* demonstrates, a black woman's standpoint theory is further problematized because when they define themselves, black women are conflicted about how multiple identities merge into a coherent sense of self. All of the study participants were prepared for and have experienced in some form or another, the raced and gendered matrix of oppression. Therefore, the participants' responses mimic those of all African American women. However, what is different for these women is the way in which their upper-middle-class standing, and the class expectations that accompany it, create ambiguity about their roles within their nuclear families, their families of origin, and the black community[6].

Race and Class Specific Gender Strategy

When we focus our attention on the effects of work and motherhood on the family in the majority context, we find that the news of white mothers' entrance into the work force in record numbers has affected the family primarily in the area of gender roles and

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[5] Matrix of domination is a concept developed by Patricia Hill Collins which speaks to the ways in which various social classifications are interconnected in their impact on individuals and work together to establish a system of oppression (Collins 1990: 221-238).

[6] Collins identifies three characteristic themes in black feminist thought that move us toward the theoretical construction of the "outsider-within" standpoint on self, family, and society. First, Black women's self-definition and self-valuation; second, the interlocking nature of oppression; and third, the importance of African American women's culture (Collins: 2004). Irma McClaurin supports this theoretical perspective with the text *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis and Poetics* (2001) where she and the other contributors speak to the need for meaningful analysis of the complexities of race and gender research, particularly since these categories are multiple and shifting.

expectations. Hochschild called it a “stalled revolution” (1989) and while many have focused studies on necessary changes in workplace culture, most agree that until there is a change in the essentialist view of mothers as caregivers devoid of careers, there will be very little change in corporate America. This conflict is defined as a cultural contradiction that places employed women at odds with a persistent ideology of intense, child-centered, motherhood in which mothers may be in the paid labor force but their relationship to productive labor is considered superfluous at best (Hayes 1998).

In contrast, African American women have historically had to work due to the political economy of the U.S. that privileged the white middle class as a normative model while maintaining inequitable social and economic policies for blacks, other persons of color, and immigrant European nationalities (Amott and Matthaei 1996). In fact, while white women entered professional positions in record numbers during the 1970s African American women in many instances remained locked outside professional positions and career tracks. If they were allowed to enter, their ability to progress was limited (Higginbotham 1994).

Professional middle class African American women find themselves at a new point in American life that has great implications for the ways in which they view motherhood, family, and work. They have a newfound ability to choose. These choices are constrained not only by mainstream articulations of gender ideology but also and most compellingly by ideological constraints imposed by the black community which center motherhood **and** work in black women’s gender ideology. In fact, post-emancipation work-force participation and economic stability was so important to the black community as a means of survival that black women were encouraged to work for two primary

reasons: First, to ensure the economic stability of a man and a woman when men's viable employment prospects were low; and second, to ensure the economic stability of a woman and her children if her husband was absent (Cole and Guy-Sheftall 2003, Collins 1998a, Ladner 1972). Professional black women had an additional responsibility through the "politics of respectability" wherein black women were expected to work in their professions, their homes, and their communities for the betterment of the black community and as a demonstration to the white community (Higginbotham 1993, Landry 2000).

Through gender strategy, a person develops a plan of action through which to "solve problems at hand, given the cultural notions of gender at play" (Hochschild 1989:15). Gender strategy makes a connection between not only what a woman thinks about her womanhood but also how she feels about it and what she does. It works the same way for men and embedded in these connections is also how one is affected by culturally embedded concepts of womanhood/motherhood and manhood/fatherhood respectively. Likewise, according to Hochschild (2003), in the same we that we can speak of gender strategies, we can also speak of race and class strategies. While Hoschchild continues to orient an either/or framework between race and class when she suggests "we check our available resources "for a person of my race" or a "person of my class" (Hochschild 2003: 136), the concept of gender strategy is used in this study through an analysis that combines race and class to determine gender strategy. Karyn Lacy's (2007) theory of *strategic assimilation* provides a framework that can add insight to gender strategy. For the upper-middle-class African Americans in Lacy's study who negotiate class-based and race-based identities, boundaries between blacks and whites as well as

boundaries between black middle-class and black masses become crucial to the development of an upper-middle class racial strategy. Lacy suggests blacks create public identities in which they "strategically deploy cultural capital, including language, mannerisms, clothing, and credentials, to allow them to lessen or short-circuit potential discriminatory treatment" (Lacy 2007: 73). According to Lacy public identities are distinct from status-based identities where blacks use wealth expressed through lifestyle distinctions to under-score symbolic differences between their social group and others (Lacy 2007: 73). In either case, middle-class blacks seek to limit the probability of discrimination middle-class blacks face in their public interactions with white strangers either due solely to their race or to their failure to mark their class membership.

Race, Class, and Marriage analyzes how women negotiate motherhood, career, and being a wife when faced with class induced contradictions in race and gender strategy. This framework illuminates both the contradictions in the race/gender strategies of "the politics of respectability," and the "strong black woman[7]" as well as the ambiguity reflected in gendered strategies. In this way, we are able to uncover the specific ways in which African American professional married mothers' perceived location in the stratification system produce certain ideologies and strategies of action. In this case, where respectability and super-human strength are no longer advantageous, a new strategy has developed in which preservation of in-tact families becomes the optimal goal

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[7]According to Michelle Wallace, the strong black woman "always had more opportunities than the black man because she was no threat to the white man so he made it easier for her. Frequently ends up on welfare… more educated and makes more money than the black man… provides the main support for the family. Not beautiful rather hard looking unless she has white blood, but then very beautiful. The black ones are exotic though, great in bed, tigers. And very fertile… She is unsupporting of black men, domineering, castrating. She tends to wear the pants around her house. Very strong… tough… unfeminine. Opposed to women's rights movements… considers herself already liberated… definitely not a dreamer, rigid, inflexible, uncompassionate (Wallace: 1979: 8)

regardless of the problems inherent within this strategy. As a result, African American upper-middle-class women are modifying their relationship with work and changing their understanding of marriage and motherhood to an ideal of companionate marriage as a marker of upper-middle-class social position and attention to race and class reproduction.

The Emergence of the Middle-Class

> The key distinction between the white and black middle classes is thus a matter of degree. Middle-class whites fit the public image of the middle class and may therefore take their middle-class status for granted, but blacks who have "made it" must work harder, more deliberately, and more consistently to make their middle-class status known to others (Lacy 2007: 3).

Race and class are difficult to discuss in the U.S. context because no one really knows what we are talking about when we use the terms. The majority of Americans, if asked, understand themselves to be middle class or poor (Chancer and Watkins 2006). Because our society has since its inception pushed the idea that our successes are merit based, the vast majority of Americans are unwilling to accept the idea that there are disadvantages to being poor and advantages to being born rich that function outside individual effort (Chancer and Watkins 2006: 79). The conflation of race and class wherein all blacks are considered poor and all whites are considered middle class further complicates our limited understanding of class. Most of the research on African Americans has been concentrated on understanding urban poverty. This provides a very limited understanding of African American experiences since the majority of African Americans are not poor. Recent scholarship, recognizing the dearth in studies foregrounding the experiences of middle class blacks, has created a growing body of research in which the black middle class is the focus of study. This interest has not only

been a result of the location and exploration of a new research topic and population but is equally influenced by the growth in the black middle class since the 1960s and the increase in the number of African American scholars who grew up in middle-class families. There have also been shifts in the demographic profile of the black middle class. There have been three phases in the development of the black middle class and three ways scholars have described the black middle-class: 1. the old mulatto elite (emancipation to 1915), 2. The old black middle-class (1915-1960), and 3. The new black middle-class (1960-present), (Landry 1987: 25). The mulatto elite were a status group whose identification as elite was based on the subjective evaluation of community members. In the case of the mulatto elite, their classification was based on the fact that they had white ancestry, patterned their lifestyles after affluent whites, and had access to better paid jobs, even though they remained service jobs, since they worked for affluent whites. The second group, the "old" black middle class capitalized on the black urban enclaves developed as a result of the Great Migration. These, mostly entrepreneurs, developed businesses for African Americans during a time when African Americans could not garner professional services from whites. They became the first doctors, lawyers, business owners, and college professors by serving the black community. The final group, the new black middle class grew out of the old black middle class who had prepared a way through black newspapers, black teachers, black professional organizations, and black colleges that provided opportunities and prepared the next generation for upward mobility. As a result, when the Civil Rights movement and the booming economy of the 1960s opened doors previously closed to African Americans.

> The *new* black middle class is not just new because of the gains in education and occupation but primarily because of a changed normative

> climate, a climate increasingly free of the violence, intimidation, indignities, and social restrictions of the past. This was a climate in which middle-class blacks increasingly had access to whatever services their money could buy rather than being locked out by the color of their skin. It is new, also, as a result of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and prosperity, which increased access to a greater variety of middle-class jobs, creating a black middle class that differed significantly from the old in its composition (Landry 1987: 92).

As a result of the Civil Rights Act, Title VII, and the economic expansion of the 1960s there was a dramatic increase in black upward mobility, and an expansion in the variety of occupations held by middle-class blacks. According to Landry the black middle class doubled in size during the 1960s, encompassing 27 percent of all black workers by 1970 (Landry 1987: 3). While Landry draws attention to the fact that the black middle class did not continue to grow at the same rate into the 1970s and 1980s. Lacy draws attention to the fact that the black middle class has expanded and added some additional layers.

> In 2000, lower-middle class blacks (those who earned between $30,000 and $49,000 annually made up the majority (65 percent) of the black middle class. At the same time, a completely different group of middle-class blacks exist, one whose socio-economic circumstances more closely resemble the white middle class. Members of this second group of middle-class blacks work as doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, and corporate managers, occupations that require at least a bachelor's degree. These blacks, who earned more than $50,000 annually, made up 35 percent of the black middle class in 2000... In terms of sheer numbers, this group, composed of high-earning middle-class blacks, mirrors its white counterparts in the same income category, which constituted 47 percent of the white middle class in 2000 (Lacy 2007: 3).

This study follows Lacy's analysis in *Blue Chip Black* which argues that the black middle -class can be defined as those earning more than $50,000/year, holding white-collar occupations, a college degree, select neighborhood composition and location and distinct ways of signaling middle-class social position (Lacy 2007: 39). Lacy further

distinguishes the black middle class by differentiating between the lower-middle-class earning less than $50,000, the core middle-class earning more than $50,000 but less than $100,000 and the elite black middle-class earning $100,000 plus (Lacy 2007: 41). This study focuses attention on the core middle-class and the elite/upper-middle-class choosing its research site in the suburban black population and particularly the development of black suburban enclaves (Lacy 2007:45).

In this study, the African American female respondents are either in Lacy's core middle class or the elite. Since the focus is on African American college-educated women who also have professional degrees or hold executive or managerial positions, individual incomes range from $50,000 to $150,000. While many of the women in the study have reduced their hours, left their employers, or developed a flexible work-schedule to accommodate some of the demands of career and family life, most of the women are married to professional African American men whose annual salaries exceed their own placing most of their combined incomes in the $150,000 to $230,000 range. This range places many of these families above the top 20% of U.S. incomes and placed those remaining in the middle 20% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Table of Middle Income Range
Middle Income Range Varies by Type of Household Calendar Year 2006

Type of Household	**Median Income (2006)**	**Middle 20 Percent Range**	**Middle 60 Percent Range (Not in bottom 20% or top 20%)**
All Households	$48,201	$37,771 - $60,000	$20,036 - $97,032
Married Households	$69,716	$57,200 - $82,935	$35,476 - $121,842
Unmarried Households	$29,083	$24,500 - $39,010	$13,062 - $63,500
Households with Unmarried Female Family Head	$31,818	$25,200 - $39,336	$13,476 - $63,000
Households with Unmarried Male Family Head	$47,078	$38,776 - $55,500	$24,300 - $84,000
Non-Family Households (Single)	$29,000	$22,200 -	$12,108 - $60,300

		$36,020	

Note: Income measure is cash money income from Census, which includes most market income (except capital gains) and some transfer income such as Social Security payments. However, it excludes the value of employer-provided health insurance, net imputed rental income, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) payments, the value of food stamps and other in-kind government services, capital gains realizations, and more. For a detailed description of the income concept Census employs, see http://www.census.gov/population/www/cps/cpsdef.html.
Also, technically the fraction of the population falling into those characteristics is based upon March 2007 responses—not exactly the year 2006—even though the income data is all based on 2006 income. (In other words, some households could have a change in their status in that short time period.)
Source: 2006 Current Population Survey, Census Bureau (http://www.taxfoundation.org/research/show/22600.html accessed January 11, 2009)

Therefore to assess their class position I requested the educational attainment and the income level for both members of the couple. I also inquired about their savings, investments, retirement plans, and other sources of income including inheritance. I also asked each of the women in the study about the family's last major purchase, the cost of their home, any expenses for childcare and schooling, and where they took their last vacation to assess the couple's lifestyle habits (see Appendix #2: p 257). This placed each couple significantly above the middle-class index created by the Census Bureau in income and significantly above social class indicators in lifestyle. Utilizing Lacy's terminology I discuss the study population as core-middle-class and elite or upper-middle-class based upon educational attainment and individual earnings or earnings potential for the women and combined household income for the couple.

Class and Gender in Race Perspective

On the surface, African American upper-middle class women and Euro-American upper-middle class women, have similar life experiences. To most, since the demise of the Jim Crow South and the implementation of the Equal Opportunity Legislation, race is no longer the primary issue in educational, employment, or economic advancement

(Henderson 1976, Amott and Matthaei 1996). Black and white elite women are college-educated, often hold graduate and professional degrees, hold management, executive, and professional positions, and household incomes commonly exceeding $100,000. In fact, according to the U.S. Census in 2003, black and white women with four-year college degrees and master's degrees earned almost identical median incomes, with blacks holding a slight advantage. In addition, blacks who held doctoral degrees earned more than whites, $72,743 and $65,278 respectively (U.S. Census Bureau 2003).

While these figures demonstrate the ways in which class dynamics mitigate the effects of racial inequalities, they must be further analyzed as examples of differences articulated racially which have an overwhelming impact on everyday lived experiences. For example, according to a report by the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2005), black women's income performance is largely the result of the fact that black women college graduates are far more likely to hold full-time jobs than white women college graduates. In 2003, only 48 percent of white women college graduates held full-time, year-round jobs while nearly 68 percent of black women college graduates worked full-time. If we adjust the figures and compare the incomes of white women college graduates who worked full-time with those of similar black women, the traditional racial burden persists (*Journal and Blacks in Higher Education* 2005). According to 2007 census data, only 18.5% of black men and women have completed four years of college or more as compared with 29.1% of whites.

However, this analysis is not a comparison of white and black women. It is a contemporary analysis of decisions black women make regarding their family lives given the history of race, class, and gender in the U.S. While comparisons between the

mainstream white model and the multiplicity of black family forms are discussed here, it is not with an eye toward making assertions of a difference between black women and white women or black families and white families, although differences in articulations certainly exist, it is rather an inquiry into the ways black women interpret and incorporate the idealized white, middle class norm within a cultural framework that is inherently at odds with it. In the process it sheds light on the fact that all families, even white families by virtue of representing the idealized norm are trapped into reified notions of what it means to be a good mother, wife and worker and complementarily what it means to be a good father, husband and worker.

Nobody Knows My Name: Making Black Identity

In his introduction to *Nobody Knows My Name*, Baldwin writes: "It turned out that the question of who I was was not solved because I had removed myself from the social forces which menaced me -- anyway these forces had become interior..." (p. xii). James Baldwin is well-known for his work on black-white relations and his treatment of the personal themes of love, self-awareness, the complexities of human relationships and the creation of one’s own identity (Hager 1996). Baldwin, who was both black and homosexual, was cut off from the dominant culture for being both black and openly gay and his position in the black community was precarious as his homosexuality cut him off from notions of black identity. He expounded on the duo-exile in *Nobody Knows My Name* (1993), his autobiographical account of a black man coming of age in the first quarter of the 20th century. Similar to our current entry into the 21st century, it was a time inundated with massive social changes. Although there were more opportunities for

education and economic access, black men also faced worsening racism, violence, and extreme prejudice. Seeing this duality as a prime opportunity for self-identification Baldwin continued,

> Part of the great wealth of the Negro experience lay precisely in its double-edgedness . . . that all Negroes were held in a state of supreme tension between the difficult, dangerous relationship in which they stood to the white world and the relationship, not a whit less painful or dangerous, in which they stood to each other. . . . [and] that in the acceptance of this duality lay their strength, that in this, precisely, lay their means of defining and controlling the world in which they lived (Baldwin 1993: 42-43).

This double-edgedness is an extension of DuBois' double consciousness. DuBois spoke of the Negro's ability to move fluidly between a white world and a black world:

> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa; he does not wish to bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he believes that Negro blood has yet a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the door of Opportunity closed roughly in his face (1999:11).

While DuBois speaks to the effects of living and operating in the white world and black world, Baldwin recognizes that both worlds hold a bit of insecurity when you do not fit neatly in exterior or self-conceptions.

Nowhere is the complexity of the African American experience more visible than in discourse around what to call the black community. While giving a presentation in an Atlanta school whose student population primarily comprised of international students, I was asked if it was okay "to call black people black." Understanding that calling someone black is not a compliment in many parts of the world, and knowing this student

did not know the linguistic history of the term and African American's attempts at re-claiming the word and the identifier as something positive, it made perfect sense that this would be a fine question. I told the student it was fine because "black" is used as a proper noun and is not a descriptor. I found myself giving the students a history of the terms African Americans have used over the years or that have been used to identify African Americans … Negro, Colored, Black, Afro-American, African American, and the infamous N-word. Each of these monikers is fraught with tension and emotion and each has its own complex history. Most African Americans and the general public have ceased to use the terms Negro and Colored, but they continue to be up for debate in longstanding titles of organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the United Negro College Fund, and the National Council of Negro Women. You can tell in what era an association was founded by the name used for black people in the title.

For the purpose of this research, I use the term Black and African American interchangeably as my respondents do. In our interview sessions they self-identify their ethnicity as African American but use black and African American interchangeably when referring to themselves and other "Black" people. Fifteen respondents called themselves African American when asked how they identified ethnically. One of those fifteen originally identified as black and then changed to African American stating "black sounds like a color." And the other, recognizing her mixed - Jamaican, Chinese, Belize, New York-Scottish-Irish, ethnicity said, "It is hard to limit myself, I feel like I am denying parts of who I am. I married an African American man, we live in an African American community, so others identify me as African American." In most instances

there does not seem to be any difference in their meaning in the usage of the terms, however I try to reserve African American when referring to any perceived ethnic and cultural characteristics specific to blacks that are descendants of African slaves brought to the U.S. during the slave trade, thereby making a distinction between them and those who are African or Caribbean immigrants. I use black when referring to phenotypic identity or the all inclusive designation as a descendant of Africa or the African Diaspora.

While the terminology does not seem to matter to the respondents, with African American and black meaning the same thing, identifying as one or the other and celebrating that heritage carries tremendous meaning. The respondents demonstrated a commitment to the black community in their residential choices, school choices, and self-identity. Respondents demonstrated a commitment to what they called the black community. "I don't know anything else," replied one respondent when asked how she self-identified.

> I am a black momma and a black woman first. The poem that talks about hips and curves by Maya Angelou, that's me. I am her. I was raised in the ghetto I don't know anything else. I became more black [understanding black history and culture] by attending [HBCU]. I love being Afrocentric. I love our earthtones. That's who we are. We are the foundation of civilization. I never wanted to lose that. I got teased for being light skin and having curly hair. I wanted to prove that I am as black as they come.

Managing Black Respectability

At the heart of a discussion on black motherhood as it is constructed within and without heterosexual marital unions is a racialized gender narrative rooted in early American constructions of womanhood as articulated through the Victorian era. During this period, white women's sexuality was constructed and represented through images of

moral purity while conceptions of black women's bodies remained linked to centuries-long perceptions of Africans as primitive and savage. Racism was articulated through gender and class and was exemplified, according to Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, through the trope of "lady." Accordingly, ladies were not merely women but were represented by their class positionality as well. In this vein, certain white women could be left out of the construct – prostitutes, poor, working-class – but no black woman, regardless of education, income, refinement, or character, could be conferred the status of "lady" (Higginbotham 1992). "While law and public opinion idealized motherhood and enforced the protection of white women's bodies, the opposite held true for black women" (Higginbotham 1992: 257).

It was Sojourner Truth's famous question "Ar'n't I a Woman?" that exposed the race, class, and gender oppression of African American women. Regarded as a woman only in reproductive capabilities, black women were expected to have the same productive capabilities as men. Dehumanizing black men and women to explain the exploitation of their labor meant pathologizing their bodies and rendering them animalistic sexual beings. This characterization rendered their sexual and moral ethics as questionable at best (Collins 2005). Entrenched in the discourse on racism, are the pervasive images of black men and women's sexuality. These representations have long been used to control the black population both economically and politically (Collins 2005).

According to Hine, late nineteenth century black women, recognizing the state's use of their sexuality to intrude upon and gain control of their innermost lives, developed a "politics of silence" (Hine 1989: 915) wherein black women, especially those of the

middle class, reconstructed and represented their sexuality through its absence, secrecy and invisibility. This strategy was articulated through the "politics of respectability" wherein black clubwomen sought to adhere to Victorian ideology and represent themselves as moral and upstanding women in an effort to protect the upward mobility of black women (Higginbotham 1992, Wolcott 2001). This ideology was clearly articulated by Anna Julia Cooper who believed that elevating the status of black women would uplift the entire race (Cooper 1892). Many women of the black women's club movement worked tirelessly to improve the conditions of black women and black women of the African Diaspora as a key to securing the rights of black women, men, and white women (Harley and Terborg-Penn 1997). It was the racist practices of white women that led black women to align themselves more uniformly with the goal of black liberation at the expense of women's (black and white) liberation (Guy-Sheftall 1995).

Attention to black women's morality as a route to the black community's liberation was fraught with critique then as it is now. The politics of respectability was deemed elitist as middle class (read white) notions of culture, class and deportment became the norm at the expense of "folkways" that were more attributable to rural (read African) vestiges from the South (Wolcott 2001). In addition a resistance strategy that supported and articulated the dominant discourse about African Americans only reified the racist, classist, and sexist hegemony rather than dismantling it (Gaines 1996). However, black women of the nineteenth century, instead of following the cult of domesticity which relegated women to the private sphere, with only men allowed entry into the public sphere, championed a three-fold commitment to family, community, and careers. The decision to develop this converse relationship was based upon the divergent

historical realities between black and white women. According to Landry, not only did black women have to work but they also wanted to, particularly when they had the means to choose a "meaningful" profession and were not relegated to domestic and service positions. In fact, Stephanie Shaw's seminal work *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do* (1996), offered that the late nineteenth to early twentieth century black community pushed young African American women to achieve their education and get jobs as teachers, lawyers, doctors, etc. (occupations needed for racial/community uplift) to protect them from domestic and low-skill work where they may be economically and sexually exploited. Landry demonstrates in his study *Black Working Wives,*

> Just as a particular ideology of white womanhood influences white wives' employment decisions, so too a particular ideology of black womanhood, developed within the black community shaped by black wives' orientation to paid work. In the course of their activities for racial uplift, as they spoke their minds and lived out their lives, black upper-middle-class wives developed and promulgated their own unique conception of true womanhood (Landry 2000: 31).

It is little known that black women of the racial uplift/black women's club movement struggled with these three arenas (family, community, and career). As Stephanie Shaw documents, their commitment to both the public and private spheres sometimes entailed considerable stress and disappointment. As a result, some of the women were forced to give up or at least temporarily suspend their careers, while others enjoyed the tacit or active support of their husbands who were willing to increase their share of the domestic work as the women relinquished it (Shaw 1996: 13). Instead of defining black women's choice Shaw calls what women of the uplift period did in these instances a strategy.

Conceptualizing Choice and Strategy

As stated previously, *Race, Class, and Marriage* centers the simultaneous influence of race, class and gender on individual lives; namely those of African American, professional, married mothers. According to Joy James (1996) centering black women's experiences not only produces new knowledge but provides new ways of thinking about that knowledge. This is the study of African American professional mothers and their families. Before we can explore the question of how these women negotiate the historic, economic, and cultural representation of blackness in their marriage, career, and family decisions we must be clear about the terms.

"Constrained opportunity" recognizes the convergence of growth in the opportunity structures that are available to individuals while simultaneously identifying continued social and structural barriers to said opportunities. Since the mid-twentieth century, the U.S. population has experienced formidable growth in achieved status[8] rather than ascribed status[9]. Due to changes in the political economy of the U.S. as well as a focus on equal rights for women, minorities, and differently-abled individuals, more Americans have seen generational social mobility as a result of occupational and educational opportunities than the inherited wealth of previous generations (Biblarz et al. 1996). While generational wealth inheritance is no longer the only predictor of social mobility, for African American professional women, "generational cultural inheritance" plays a significant role in how opportunities are perceived and choices are made. *Race,*

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[8] Achieved status refers to the social position that a person acquires on the basis of merit. It reflects personal skills, abilities, and efforts.

[9] Ascribed status refers to the social position a person is given from birth. It is usually assigned involuntarily by others on the basis of family background, genetic inheritance, racial, gender, ethnic or religious differences.

Class, and Marriage asserts that for African American professional women the "cultural memory" of race, gender and class oppressions, creates a cultural contradiction in which class privilege troubles racial identity. *Race, Class, and Marriage* demonstrates repeatedly that black women and their families, long devalued in the U.S. scholarly and public psyche, are negotiating their class mobility that finds them disconnected from whites and blacks in totally different ways. From their family of origin[10] they are expected and encouraged to simultaneously reach high levels of education and career advancement that often place them in a higher social class than their families of origin. This higher class places them in an economic and social context that mimics that of middle class whites. For many scholars, this has been the goal of middle class blacks, to be able to access not only the economic advantages of whites but also the social advantages (housing choices, leisure choices, educational choices). However, many "choose" not to pursue these social and economic "advantages." It is this disconnect that is at the heart of this study which explores not only its causes but also its responses.

Choice has been an important part of the discourse on women's negotiation of work and family. It is said that women "opt-out" of the labor force to place more focused attention on their children and their family life, or that in-flexible work-place policies along with mainstream reified gender identities limit their options (see Hays 1996, Jacobs and Gerson 1998, Stone 2007, Williams 2000 for in-depth discussions). It is also said that women, particularly black women, choose to be single parents, or choose to be on welfare (Blau, Kahn, Waldfogel 2002).[11] Pamela Stone's (2007) study coins this work-

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[10] Family of origin refers to the respondents' natal family.

[11] Studies show young black women on welfare tend to be single mothers but there is no causality between gaining welfare benefits, having children and not being married. In other words, "welfare benefits seem

family conundrum the "rhetoric of choice" that places all of the discourse in a conversation about culture and personal responsibility. She finds instead that there is the "reality of constraint." While many scholars have discussed the ways in which choices are constrained by institutional structures in our society, specifically economic and political, and have focused their attention on the disadvantages that are incurred as a result of these political and economic structures (Darity et al 1995, Wilson 1987), *Race, Class, and Marriage* does not ignore the fact that there are many more opportunities for blacks and women than there were in previous generations. In fact this study illuminates many of these advantages. However, by adopting the term "constrained opportunity" I assert that these advantages are experienced with some degree of constraint.

Ethnographic Context

The city of Atlanta is a unique location for the study of African American professional women. According to the Atlanta Regional Commission (2005) African Americans in the metropolitan Atlanta area are faring better than blacks and as well as whites in the nation in educational attainment and income. Where the U.S. median household income for all residents is $46,242 and for black residents it is $30,939, in metro Atlanta, the median household income for blacks is $39,516[12] (see Appendix Table 4 US Census Bureau – 2005 estimates; processed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)).

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not be to an important motivator for young women to have children out of wedlock (Blau, Kahn, Waldfogel 2002: 402).

[12] While African American households fall short of white households, a fact thoroughly discussed as a consequence of racism and discrimination, the twenty-three women and their families participating in *Race, Class, and Marriage* boast a reported median income of $151,000, placing their income in the top 20% of all Americans.

Likewise, an astounding 31 percent of Atlanta's black population holds a professional, managerial, or related occupation as compared to 8.4 percent of African Americans nationally; and 18.4 percent of black Americans have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to Atlanta's 25 percent. Nevertheless, recognizing that a majority of Atlanta's and the nation's residents are not in the upper 20th percentile of the national income measure, nor do they hold the top occupations or degrees, the women interviewed for *Race, Class, and Marriage* were limited to those having completed bachelor's degrees, advanced or professional degrees, and/or holding or having held professional, managerial or related occupations. To ascertain the ways in which race and class affect the gender strategies and class identities of African American women, this study focused on a segment of the African American community that is presumably able to make "choices" about work and family.

The Methodology

Race, Class, and Marriage is based upon three years of ethnographic research in Atlanta, Georgia, (2004-2007) with married or heterosexually cohabitating professional women with at least one child under the age of six. The research included ethnographic observations, semi-structured life histories, and twenty couple/family histories, including contextualized genealogy charts. The observations were conducted with three formal support groups for women, one white American and two African American, who self-identify as "stay-at-home moms." There were twenty-three semi-structured life histories of both African American stay-at-home and full-time working mothers. I also conducted twenty couple/family histories, including contextualized genealogy charts.

Each of the women was contacted through three stay-at-home mothers' support groups and an African American private school in Southwest Fulton County, where a large majority of the parents are married and college graduates. I met with each mother at least twice and often several more times, depending on her schedule for completing the semi-structured life-history. I observed each family either in their homes or in recreational settings (school, children's activities). I built rapport with each of the mothers by accompanying them to appointments, on errands, and "hanging out" or "pitching in" when things needed to be done around the house while we were talking.

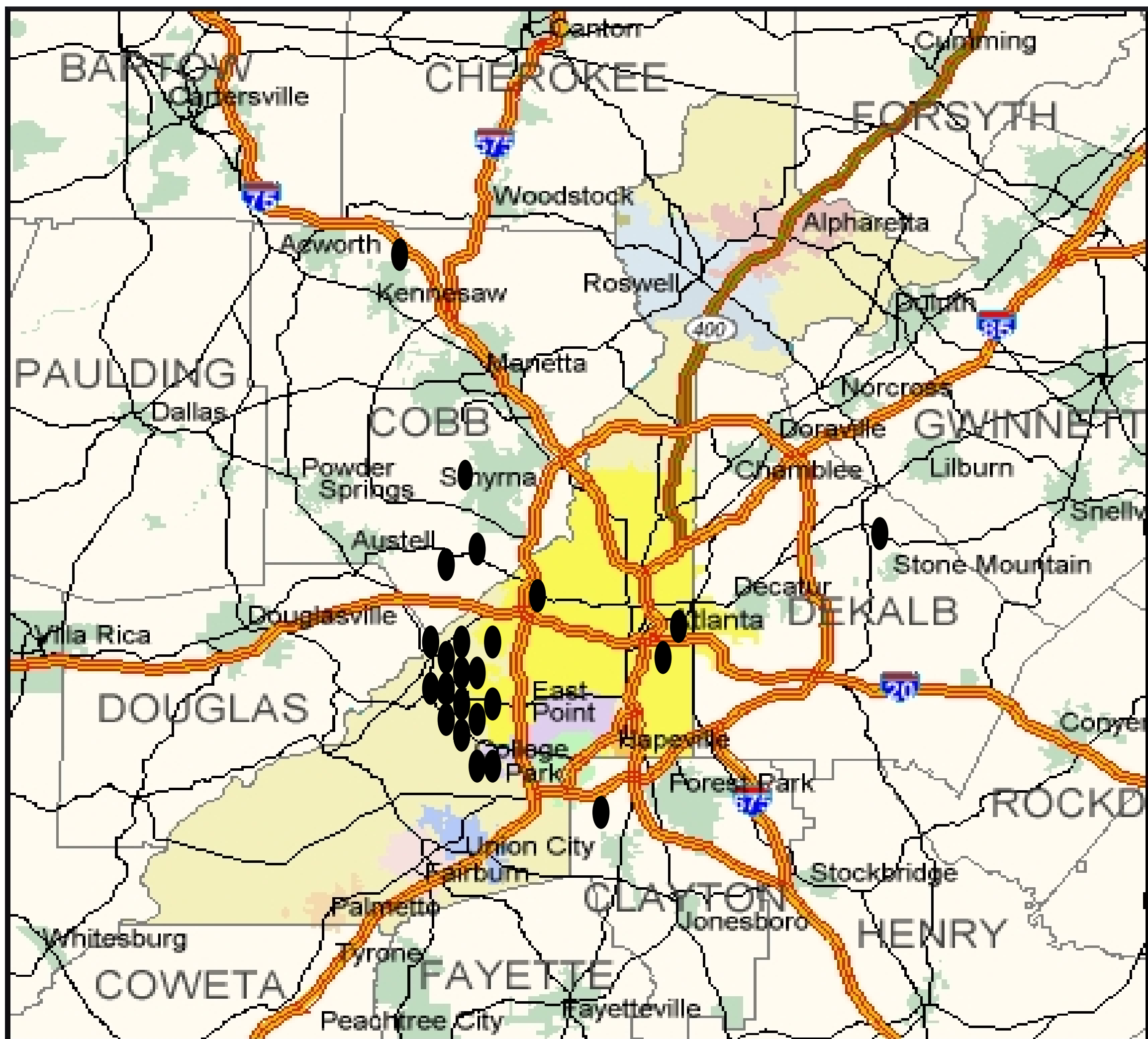

Figure 2: Where They Live
Metropolitan Statistical Area with city of Atlanta boundaries highlighted in yellow and respondents residence marked by black ovals.

Due to the strict criteria for participation, I employed snowball sampling wherein I relied on referrals from initial study participants to generate additional respondents. Recognizing the bias inherent in this model, I compensated by making sure I "selected" respondents who had some degree of diversity even within the group. While all of the participants are married, professional mothers who live in the metropolitan Atlanta area, there are some differences. The respondents reside in four counties and six "cities[13]." Most of the respondents are transplants to the Atlanta area. Only seven out of the twenty-three mothers and four out of the twenty-three fathers are native Atlantans. There were also some differences in educational attainment. Seventeen of the participant's mothers and ten of their fathers earned a bachelor's degree or more[14]. Ten of the participants' husbands' mothers and nine of their fathers completed a bachelor's degree or more. This level of achievement places the respondents' family of origin ahead of the national averages a full generation before the current census data.

On Being a Black Middle Class Wife and Mother

My own biography as an African American married mother, raised in the South, in a two-parent working class family, a transplant from the north, with graduate training, mimicked that of my respondents. I was trained in anthropological tools and commissioned myself, as an avid student of the African American experience, to understand that segment of the population that had been overlooked on all sides of the

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[13] These cities are part of the Metropolitan statistical area and are outside the boundaries of the city of Atlanta, however respondents consider themselves Atlanta residents. Included are Riverdale, Austell, Smyrna, Kennesaw, Stone Mountain, and unincorporated Fulton County.
[14] Five (22 %) of the respondents' mothers completed a Ph.D. or J.D. and four (17 %) of the respondents' fathers completed a Ph.D or M.D.

theoretical, scholarly, and public debates on marriage, career, motherhood, and family. I could see aspects of my biography in the work and family literature of anthropologists, sociologists, and feminist and women's studies scholars. However, important aspects of my life and the lives of the women I knew were not being reflected.

Graciela Hernández, writing about Zora Neale Hurston's "experimental" ethnography, called Hurston a "native daughter". She states that Hurston revealed herself in her ethnographic work, in both racial and gender terms and explored the implications her biography had on her status in the Eatonville community. Where Hurston's class location would have provided the most distance between herself and her community, it is her presence as a "daughter" of Eatonville and her open expression of the reason for her work that breaks down the barriers. When she moves outside the Eatonville community to other nearby towns, New Orleans, and the Caribbean, she encounters the outsider perspective much more vehemently due to her differential class position (Hernandéz 1995).

Having been raised and educated and having all social and economic ties rooted in Atlanta, I, like Hurston, was definitely a daughter returning home. I even stretched the definition of native anthropology to include "marginalized" theories in addition to non-Western precepts and assumptions as articulated by Delmos Jones (1970:251) by utilizing black feminist and womanist explorations of race, class, and gender. Once I began the research, I encountered a number of professional, middle class, married, African American women who were stay-at-home moms, at least for a time, or had negotiated another unconventional relationship with work. I immediately became intrigued by the idea that African American women were opting out of careers that many (and their

families) had worked so hard to achieve. I was mired in personal contradictions and I wanted to locate a way to explore this unacknowledged, invisible conundrum while maintaining scholarly distance (Zavella 1993).

While my native position privileged my research in a number of ways, I had to reconcile my status as a simultaneous insider and outsider as I worked with women and their families, who lived in Atlanta, and shared the common experiences of being black, educated, professionals, mothers, and wives (Aguilar 1981, Messerschmidt 1981:9, Narayan 1993, Zavella 1993). Like Narayan suggests, I partook in an inverse process of studying my own society. She states:

> Instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have preexisting experience absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known. The reframing essentially involves locating vivid particulars within larger cultural patterns, sociological relations, and historical shifts (Narayan 1993:676).

This inverse process is difficult and at times painful. What was different about my particular situation from many of the women I spoke with was work and family had never seemed at odds, they had never needed to be negotiated because in my African American, middle class, southern upbringing, Black women had always worked. In fact, until I became pregnant with my own child, I had not known one Black woman nor heard of a single black woman who had been a “stay-at-home” mom or even a housewife as earlier epochs had dubbed women whose primary responsibility was hearth and home. This does not suggest they did not exist. The closest I had heard of was African American women of the Jim Crow South who had worked from home as washer-women, domestics, and any other “unskilled” laborers wherein they could earn some money while

simultaneously tending hearth and home (Jones 1985, Hunter 1997, Harley 2002). In fact I had been raised, and every other African American woman I knew had been raised, to acquire as much education as possible, become a professional middle class woman, get married, have children, and continue professional employment, homemaking, and community service simultaneously. We were taught that it was our responsibility to stand on the shoulders of our foremothers and have it all; manage it all; and then help other women achieve even higher markers of success (Landry 2000, Shaw 1996).

Studying Up: When the "Natives" are not the "Other"

Most of the conflict in native anthropology comes in the form of class positionality. In keeping with the incessant continuation of marking the "other" within anthropology, very little research is done within the ethnographers own social location. Even in regards to feminist ethnography, rare is the study that focuses on the common (or even higher) class position of the ethnographer and her informant. Even for most Third World ethnographers a return home is a return to a community of origin, not of sustenance. One exception within anthropology that merges the identities of the native ethnographer and her class position is Sherry Ortner's treatment of her high school classmates wherein she focuses specifically on class and the process of social mobility (2005). However, Ortner does not reference the fact that her class position has any bearing on her study although the study is clearly drawn from her own perspectives on class and social mobility as a member of the graduated class she is interviewing. Accordingly, this form of ethnographic study produced a far different methodology than what is usually expected from anthropologists.

Bonnie Urciuoli states in her treatment on *Representing Class* “Unfortunately, much of what anthropology “is” – key people in key institutions – privileges a limited set of topics and places as “real” fields and as “really” fieldwork. They generally exclude work on U.S. culture” (Urciuoli1993: 202). The issue of “real” fieldwork is a common thread when work is done within the U.S. My own work has been challenged as sociological rather than anthropological and placing myself on the job market and in public discourse means negotiating the idea of what anthropology is along with what it commonly is not. Studies of African Americans, marriage and family, and social class within the United States have been the primary domain of sociologists as if a line has been drawn in the sand. Anthropologists travel and study people unlike themselves. Sociologists remain state-side and study people similar to themselves. Correspondingly, the ethnographic record is silent on the study of black women of middle and upper-class position. Even when I began my study of African American women and gender identity and posed a question pertaining to women’s black women’s ability to choose to stay at home to an African American female ethnographer who conducted studies with African American poor and working class women, I was told there were not enough African American women with those types of choices (Mullings 2004). When black women of a higher class position have been the subject of inquiry it has most often been through historical texts (Landry 2000), texts that focus on the black women’s club movement (Giddings 1996, Gilkes 2000, Harley 2002, Hine 1997, Terborg-Penn 1998; White 2000; Waters and Conaway 2007), and works that explore the politics of respectability (Collins 2004; Ferguson 2005; Higginbotham 1993; White 2001, Wolcott 2001). Despite the fact that more black women are graduating from college than black men, reaching

professional positions, and managing career and family goals, the commentary on African American professional women's choices have been in the form of journalistic exposés (Chambers 2003) and memoirs (Parker 2005).

Women of color in anthropology have been engaged in native anthropology and its sister auto-ethnography for decades. This has been the way in which Black feminist anthropologists have sought to acknowledge the distance between themselves and their study populations when their African diasporic identity links them in their relationship with the colonial past but their nationhood as members of the West maintains strategic distance. Irma McClaurin (2001), outlines the importance of this type of research while denoting the challenges involved when conducting research with respondents and in communities that resemble one's own. While I do not include myself in the text, as auto-ethnographers traditionally do, I utilize the role of the auto-ethnographer to illuminate and critically explore the lived experiences of African American women and other women of color whose perspectives have been omitted from large volumes of academic and popular press materials. I also utilize this approach to further the analysis of race, class, and gender as multiple systems of oppression that require further development of intersectionality as a theoretical lens.

Creating Distance

My field research in the metropolitan Atlanta area was divided into two segments over the course of three years. I spent approximately a year and a half conducting participant observation of three stay at home mom support groups. Then I conducted in-depth semi-structured open-ended interviews and contextualized life histories with

married African American women. These interviews included some observation of family activities and the women's day-to-day routines. I often conducted some portion of the interview at their homes, met their children and husbands and, for some of the families, I interviewed the husbands as well. While most of the data comes from the interviews and life histories, a good deal of the framing and research questions came out of my observations at each of the three support groups (one predominantly white and two predominantly black). I listened to the stories of these women first to understand their positionality as women who had left their careers (some admittedly temporarily) to become "stay at home moms" and then to ascertain if there was some difference between the conversations and experiences of the predominantly black support groups and the predominantly white support group[15].

My original goal was to conduct a formal comparison of Euro-American and African American married professional women with at least one child under the age of six to explore the cultural differences in their historical relationship to work and how they made decisions about career and family that were seemingly rooted in disparate histories and social locations. However, conducting a qualitative ethnographic study with a large, random sample of professional married women with children under the age of six proved to be a logistical nightmare. Attempts to decrease the size of the sample and select women who met the criteria from pre-established locales (i.e. daycare centers, school, churches, doctor's offices) did not address the problems of actually trying to create a criterion that would adequately answer questions of difference or sameness in a comparison of women who were "the same" except for their ethnic identity. While we are

[15] It is important to note that the predominantly black support groups were 100% black, while the predominantly white support group had at least two black members in regular attendance at the meetings.

all aware that race and ethnic identity create varied lived experiences for women across class, when exploring women of the same class who hold the same types of positions, same educational status, similar neighborhoods, and similar family forms and structures, it is difficult to determine what questions need to be asked and what experiences need to be observed. Additionally, given that this was not a community study and included people native to Atlanta and migrants from all over the country, it was difficult to determine if perceived differences were attributable to regional differences, personal idiosyncrasies, or actual cultural/ethnic/racial differences. Nevertheless, I informally interviewed six of the white women and I use their responses as part of the observation of the support groups and as examples that may possibly inform the literature.

While I eliminated the problems that arose with a "cross-cultural" comparison, the specific criteria still required that I use an unrepresentative sample of the African American population. To ascertain African American women's relationship to career, family and community while negotiating constructions of motherhood and class identity, I chose to select women from certain common venues and was unable to utilize methodologies that would provide a random sample. I began the study looking for Black women who self identified as African American women, who had completed college and had either a graduate or professional degree, or were working in a management or executive position. The criteria required that each woman be married or cohabitating with a heterosexual partner, and have at least one child under the age of six. Because I was interested in understanding how professional middle class women made decisions concerning career and family, I selected an equal number of women who self-identified as "stay- at- home moms" and "working moms." These women were located through the

two African American "stay at home mom" support groups, a private African American pre-school/elementary school, and snowballing. When I ended my search for candidates, I had completed interviews with twenty-six women. However three did not meet all of the criteria as one woman had not completed college nor was she is a professional or managerial occupation, one woman had three children but the youngest was seven at the time of the interview, and one woman did not self-identify as African American.[16]

Each mother was asked to participate in three phases of the project. First I used a set of structured questions to ask each of the women about their age, marital status, educational background, occupation, children's ages and birthdates, hometown, household tasks, professional and social memberships, time allocation and financial status (which included a series of questions about income, expenditures, and savings). Second I used a more open-ended list of questions to ask the women about their childhoods, family of origin, how they came to meet and marry their spouses, and experiences with education, career advancement, and family negotiation. Third, I created a genealogy of each family to determine marital patterns, educational achievement, and markers of social mobility across three generations (theirs, their parents, and their grandparents).

In each of the interactions, which took approximately four visits to complete (depending upon how much we talked, how many interruptions we had from children or husbands, or how many errands had to be completed) I left a great deal of time and room

[16] She identified as Hebrew Israelite, groups of people of African ancestry situated mostly in the United States who claim to be descendants of the ancient Israelites. They claim that they and many Africans, and blacks in places like Brazil, Madagascar, and the Caribbean are also descended from the Israelites. Although she was phenotypically black, had been raised African American in an African American community and had attended an historically black university, and her parents identify (according to her) as African American she did not and actually considered African American values, practices, and cultural traditions different from her own. (Jackson 2005)

for women to speak freely in response to my questions. If answers were particularly vague I would probe for more detail, but for the most part, each of the participants were very willing to talk with me. We had experienced many of the same things and they often asked me what I thought of particular things they said or did. While I worked to maintain a good deal of distance between the participants and myself, I must say we engaged in a journey together of trying to make sense out of lives that had no representative model or analysis.

Situating this work within a feminist framework was difficult for me. I initially felt uncomfortable using feminist literature to think through various aspects of black women's standpoint. I took courses on feminist theory and tried to garner my own voice in relation to white feminism, black feminism, and the ways in which my upbringing and that of my study participants would not allow us to see ourselves as feminist. Only two of the study participants saw themselves as feminist/womanist. Multiple theorists have commented on the ways the ethnographic process transforms the ethnographer (Rodriguez 2001). There is a clear understanding that you will not leave the field exactly how you entered it. In most instances, many of your questions will change and your analytical lens may change or be expanded. This process has been no different for me. Working through the changes my informants were going through shed light on my own history and biography on which I had not focused much attention. The contradictions inherent in wanting to maintain a cohesive family and wondering if that desire was Eurocentric and anti-feminist often plagued me at night. After I had managed to teach, get my children to and fro, and privilege the needs of my husband while contemplating *Of Woman Born: Marriage as Experience and Institution* (Rich 1976), Audre Lorde's

"Open Letter to Mary Daly" (1979) and Simone de Beauvoir's musings on "The Married Woman" and "The Mother" (1989). How would I reconcile my own thoughts with the actions of my study participants some of whom went to a church sponsored support group organized for stay at home mothers who were former professionals?

When one of my advisors suggested I pay close attention to the politics of respectability as a way to frame what I saw taking place in my informants desires and actions I protested. It was elitist. These women were not separating themselves or telling other women of lesser means what they should be doing, I said. Furthermore, the women of the era that were proponents of the politics of respectability were professionals who did not stay at home, who worked, performed community service, and focused their attention on uplifting the black community. I came to realized there is a similarity. These women are the great-grandchildren of the efforts of the politics of respectability. Their reflections on their families' migration patterns, focus on education, marriage and professional success, demonstrates their allegiance and commitment to the reform measures of the politics of respectability. However, western notions of equality suggest that educated women who are at home moms lack feminist consciousness and for African American women even black consciousness since their professional status places them in a position where they are responsible to and for the race. Yet can the choice to stay at home be subversive, resistant, and beyond the subordinate gender identity that oppresses women? As work on Third World and minority women suggests, the American feminist emphasis on promoting women's work outside the home is largely irrelevant in a global women's studies context (Barrow 1997, Clark 1999, Mikell 1995, Robertson 1983).

Many of the women in my study are caught in an attempt to live a more "middle class" lifestyle and what they perceive to be a better life for their families based on a Eurocentric middle class model. Others are identifying ways to expand their contribution to the black community by focusing their family's financial decisions on wealth accumulation. For the women I interviewed who use Christian precepts to direct their family's lifestyle and choices, theirs is a focus on doing "God's will." Regardless of the impetus these contemporary professional African American women have a strategy that is influenced by the U.S. collective memory that is mired in a racist past and deeply connected to the economy (read social class and mobility) and gender just like the women at the forefront of the post-Reconstruction era politics of respectability movement. The black middle class has always been challenged with the task of representing and "uplifting the race" while simultaneously being critiqued by outsiders and insiders (Gaines 1996).

In my discussion of the simultaneity of their identities as black women, mothers, wives, professionals, and daughters/granddaughters, I present the ambiguity and contradictions these intersections present in these women's lives, how they confront and negotiate these issues, and how these issues affect their families and their communities. The confusion surrounding the meaning and consciousness of feminism and feminist identity within these women's lives and the lives of most African American women reveals the complexity of the impact of race, class, gender, work and motherhood on identity construction and strategy. I do not suggest these women operate in opposition to feminist ideals, nor do I suggest they are resistant to traditional notions of gender roles and identities. It is clear that these responses are deeply embedded in the historic

relationship African American men, women and children have had to the political economy of the U.S. and the global economy and these relationships must be taken into consideration when assessing the everyday lived decisions, negotiations and experiences of African American married professional mothers and their families.

The women I talked to were and remain eager for this study to be completed and for them to have access to it. As they all knew that I am a married mother too, they often volunteered to read, edit, type, transcribe, and help me negotiate my own schedule (much to my chagrin[17]), I turned these offers down. In the final months of its formulation they often kept me on track with meeting my deadlines by asking "when is the book coming out?" I hope that while I utilize a feminist lens which most of them did not self-identify even when they were living and espousing feminist ideals, I am hopeful that I will be able to give voice to their feminist sensibilities. A telling quote by Sherry Ortner in her treatment of class and ethnicity brilliantly makes the point: "you know the amount of feminism among nonfeminists is extraordinary" (2005: 67). I have sought to fairly and accurately represent their attempts at negotiating the many ambiguous and often scary work of mothering, being a wife, a professional, and a member of the black community with all of its disappointments and rewards.

The study began with an inquiry into the number of African American professional women who were "choosing" to stay at home with small children and what decision making processes affected these decisions. Once I began conducting the interviews, it became clear that there were those who were not employed, an oddity within the black motherhood construct; but there were also many who were working in

[17] My attempt to keep my own life out of their view became difficult when I had to reschedule interviews because of a sick child. Or ran into study participants while out with my family.

flexible relationships with work, also an oddity since there is little literature on African American professional women in part-time positions. In the spirit of black feminist theory and praxis, each woman "named" her own relationship to the workforce and I separated each of the women into groups which best articulated their self-proclaimed identities. The categories I created are minimalist and do not take into consideration all of the other myriad ways in which they could all be categorized[18] What follows is an introduction to the women and the categories they best fit (i.e. stay at home mom, full time employment, flexible relationship with employment) according to current debates on working moms and stay-at-home moms.

Respondents

Stay-At-Home Mom - *Including those who make child-care and/or home-making their primary responsibility and are not employed outside the home on a consistent basis unless working for their husband/family owned business.*

Gia and Ben Sullivan[19]: Gia 42, has been a stay at home mom since her youngest child was one-year-old. Gia was laid off from her position at a multinational corporation where she was a computer technology specialist. She graduated from an HBCU with a degree in Computer Technology. Because she was laid off and had small children, she and her husband Ben decided she should stay home for a while. That was six years ago. Ben is a marketing executive. The two have three children. Their oldest is 14, the middle child is eight and their youngest is seven. Gia was raised in a working class family with high middle class aspirations. While her mother and father and her mothers brothers and sisters attended college, Gia was raised by her grandparents, neither of whom had a high school education. Gia's husband Ben was raised in an upper-middle class family and can remember family narratives that included a grandfather who graduated from college.

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[18] for example: children's ages, hometown, historically black college/university (HBCU) vs. predominantly white college/university (PWCU), education level, women's ages, professions, income, etc..

[19] All names are pseudonyms to protect the identities of the informants and their families. Where it did not distort the results, distinguishing characteristics have also been altered. If there are any similarities in person, place or thing, it is purely coincidental.

Nancy and Aaron Murphy: Nancy 38, is an internist by profession but has been an at-home mom since her second child was born. He husband, a lawyer by trade, decided to become a builder and opened his own development and construction firm. The two have three children, six, four, and two. Nancy will occasionally take "temporary" physician positions at local hospitals to keep her licensing up to date and helps her husband with the business. Nancy was raised by her maternal grandparents when her mother, still in high school, had her at the age of fifteen. Her mother and father later married after completing high school and college but most of Nancy's formative years were spent between her maternal and paternal grandparents, neither of which completed high school. Both of Nancy's husband Aaron's parents completed college.

Frances and Jason Stillman: Frances 32, has a degree in business management from a two-year institution and was on the fast-track to bank manager when she married and decided to become a stay-at-home mom when her daughter was born. Her husband Jason with a degree in Finance is a sales representative with a pharmaceutical company. The two have two children ages five and two. Frances is the only one of her parents' offspring who did not complete a four-year college. Additionally, both of her parents completed college, became education administrators and her sister is a physician.

Monica and Will Ford: Monica 38, has a communications and computer science degree and a Masters in Public Administration and since having her three children has been a stay at home mom dabbling in real estate investing and at-home sales positions. Her husband, Will started his own mortgage company and works in real estate. Their children are nine, two and three.

Kathy and Ronald Jones: Kathy 43, was in hotel management at a major hotel and conference center until she had her son. She and her husband, a manager in hotel operations, are now thinking of starting their own catering business. Their son is four.

Cara and Anthony Curtis: Cara 38, is a former school psychologist. She has a BA and MA in education and has worked in several school districts throughout the country. Her husband Anthony is also an educator. He holds an Ed.D. and works as a consultant with school programming. Cara and Anthony are currently both self-employed. Cara is a real estate investor and Anthony contracts himself to various education agencies. The two have three children ages seven, four, and thirteen months. Although she sees herself as being a business owner she also sees herself as a home-maker and stay-at-home mom.

Charlotte and James Canty: Charlotte 44, holds a B.A. and an MBA. She is a published children's book author and before venturing into her own writing career was a Public Relations Executive. Her husband James is a computer systems director for a major telecommunications firm. The couple have two children, ages four and thirteen months. Although she is under contract with a major publisher, she sees herself as a stay-at-home mom.

Karen and Steven Edwards: Karen 47, is a pediatrician by training but has been in and out of the workforce since she began having children. She has primarily worked on a

part-time basis, working full-time only when “financially” necessary like when her husband opened his own law firm in their New Orleans neighborhood. The two and their three children moved to Atlanta as a result of Hurricane Katrina and decided to stay. Since they moved Karen works part-time in a family care practice and her husband Steven works in the county Solicitor General’s Office. Their children are nine, six, and five.

Richelle and Jeffrey Graham: Richelle 33, aspired to be a physician with her B.S. in Biology from a prestigious all women’s Midwestern school. Marrying her husband Jeffrey, an electrical engineer, right after college the couple moved a few times for his career and Richelle settled into motherhood and homemaking. Now the couple is starting to think about opening their own company and Richelle is working on the planning stages. They have three school-age children ages eight, six, and four.

Full-Time Employment - *Includes those working in a traditional full-time position for an employer.*

Natalie and Charles George: Natalie 36, holds a B.S. in Physics from a prestigious, southern PWCU and also has teaching certification. She is currently a middle school level science teacher at an independent school. She and her husband Charles also manage several rental properties that they own. Charles is a computer systems engineer with a technology firm. He also helps his father with his company. Natalie and Charles have three children, sixteen, thirteen, and nine.

Kalia and Booth Taylor: Kalia 33, holds a BS and MS is Social Work from a well-known HBCU. She is an executive with a national non-profit organization and manages several employees and their programs. Her husband Booth holds a B.S. from a prestigious PWCU and works in carpentry and masonry. Kalia’s parents are African American and Ethiopian and Booth is white. The two form a bi-racial couple and have one child age six.

Linda and Kevin Butler: Linda 38, is a dentist. They both went to HBCUs, one in Washington, DC, the other in Atlanta. They met shortly after college when Linda was completing her DMD. Her husband is a part-owner with an insurance firm. The couple have two children ages seven and three.

Kya and Timothy Fredericks: Kya 34, is a middle school board consultant. She completed her BA at an HBCU and then completed a MA in education at a PWCU. Her husband was laid-off from his position and the two are researching beginning their own firm. They have two children, ages four and two.

Kia and Trevor Andrews: Kia 35, is an engineer with a major product development firm. She and her husband Trevor have been working for the same company since they graduated college as engineers from a premier HBCU engineering program. The couple has four children (the third was born only days after we completed interviews). At the

time, Kia had started a small business from home while working for her company and the couple was considering going into business together. The other three children are nine, seven, and four.

Jill and Paul Denson: Jill 46, was trained as a surgeon after completing her BS at a prestigious women's HBCU she completed her medical training in Washington, DC. After working for a major hospital she and a friend opened their own practice. Once she had her son, she sold her portion of the practice and began working for a national medical conglomerate. Her husband Paul owns a communications firm. Jill had her last child a couple of months after the interviews were completed. Her other two children are nine and six.

Selena and John Austin: Selena 40, holds a degree in economics from a prestigious New England female PWCU. She has worked for a national banking entity for over 15 years. Her husband is a criminal defense attorney. They have three children, ages eleven, nine, and two.

Keayba and Kareem Davis: Keayba 38, is a family practitioner, professor of medical students and a clinical researcher with a prestigious medical school. Her husband Kareem worked for a nationally recognized architecture firm until he entered into partnership and opened his own firm two years ago. The couple have two children ages four and ten months.

Sherri and Clarence Jefferson: Sherri 38, is a financial analyst with a multinational corporation. She had a degree in accounting from a prestigious HBCU and an MBA in Information and Finance Systems. Her husband was a school administrator completing his Ed.D in Atlanta until turning his direction to real estate investing. Sherri is hopeful that she will be able to leave and assist him in the business in a few years. The couple has three children, ages nine, six, and two.

Flexible Relationship with Employment - *Including those in part-time positions, working from home, or supporting their own businesses.*

Gail and Lawrence Johnson: Gail 39, earned a bachelors degree in business administration from a PWCU in Georgia. She worked as an executive office manager for a small firm until just before her first child was born. She was laid-off and decided to stay at home since she was already pregnant. She later worked from home as the property manager for her subdivision and then decided to get licensure and open her own property management firm. Gail and Lawrence have three children. Their oldest is five, their second is three and their youngest is ten months. Gail's husband Lawrence is an accountant for a large multi-national company.

Cory and Brian Williams: Cory 44, holds a B.S. and a MBA from two different HBCUs one in Washington, DC and the other in Atlanta. She is a marketing executive who began working for a multinational corporation in a large Midwestern city. Once her first child

was born and her husband moved to Atlanta to further his education, she located an opportunity where she could work from home and continue in marketing. Cory and Brian have three children. Their oldest is twelve, their second is eight, and their youngest is three. Cory's husband Brian has a bachelors degree from an HBCU in Atlanta and holds a license in theology. He works in Pharmaceutical sales, has managed his own business, and is pastor of a small, growing church.

Marilyn and Jonathan Roth: Marilyn 38, holds a B.S. from an HBCU and an MPH from a prestigious PWCU. She has gone in and out of the work force with the birth of her children while working for a large medical insurance firm. She has held several managerial positions and her employment has ranged from full-time, to stay-at-home, to contract only. She recently went back full time due to a shift in her husband's career that resulted in his being laid-off. Her husband Jonathan a graduate of a PWCU with an MBA was laid-off for a few months. He later accepted a marketing position with another firm, however Marilyn continues to work for her firm with reduced hours. Marilyn and Jonathan have three children. Their oldest is eleven, the second is eight and their youngest is six.

Myra and Robert Calhoun: Myra 39, is an occupational therapist by trade but took off from work when her son was born and now only works on weekends. Her husband, Robert is an attorney. The couple has two children ages six and four.

Denise and Kevin Anderson: Denise, 36 is an attorney. She completed her law degree at a major state university in the Midwest. Denise was a homemaker from the time she married and once her daughters were born she stayed home with them. Once her children became school age, Denise accepted a part-time position with one of the district attorney's offices. Denise's husband Kevin holds a Ph.D. in Biochemistry. He works for pharmaceutical firm and also helps his father to manage his construction and development firm. The couple has two children ages eight and six.

This brief synopsis is meant to illuminate the ways in which these women position themselves within the economy but does not speak to the myriad ways in which they negotiate that experience daily. It is important to recognize that these profiles are a snapshot of a moment in time in the lives of these twenty-three families. It is even clearer within the individual profiles that changes were occurring within these dynamic families over the course of the three year period. In fact, several of the women, as well as their husbands experienced shifts in their careers while we were working together and twelve added at least one child to their family. Additionally, just after completing the

interviews, one mother moved to Ohio when her husband got a new position with a significant pay raise. There were also various shifts in child development and the changes that occurred as a result. One woman faced managing her husband's illness, another experienced the death of her grandmother who raised her, and still another faced the process of going through adoption procedures where a baby promised could just as easily be taken away. Careers were often in flux. Many were away from extended family and forming new relationships with friends. Several marriages were a bit rocky but were trying to survive.

Key Themes and Articulations

There is an overwhelming amount of literature, popular press, media affiliated, and academic, that consistently compares the black population to the white population. The measure of African Americans is in how much closer the chosen variable has gotten to whites. Since the picture of black America is of a population that is failing in every area, when African Americans meet or exceed whites, they are seen as anomalies. It is difficult for the researcher studying the "anomaly." She must find ways to analyze and report her findings without painting a picture too rosy, thereby relegating the rest of the black community to another lesson in "bootstraps," or too desperate, thereby reifying the ethos of victimhood despite the large gains made for certain individuals and anomalies (i.e. Barack Obama). This confusing, ambiguous state in which the researcher finds herself is the same state within which the women in this study find themselves. They are confronted with a black America, even a black Atlanta that enjoys record-breaking numbers of black achievement alongside high rates of black poverty and homelessness.

Do they stay in the city or move to the suburbs? Do they send their children to the local public school or pay for private school? Do they send their children to the neighborhood child-care giver or the elite day care? Do they wait to be laid off or go into business for themselves? Do they stay at home or go to work? While these are decisions made daily by women of various race, class, nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations and abilities, particular historical moments and positions within the stratification system elicit different responses.

African American professional women experience work-family/career-motherhood conflict. When studies are able to ascertain how many African American women are home with children, it is clear that black mothers, no matter their class position, or the age of their children, are in the work-force at higher-rates than white women and other ethnic groups (Cohany and Sok 2005). In 2005, 65 percent of black married mothers of infants were in the labor force, compared with 58 percent of white married mothers, 51 percent of Asian mothers and 34 percent of Hispanic mothers. While African American women are well aware of the ways in which work and family are combined, the study participants in *Race, Class, and Marriage* expressed conflicts not in negotiating work and family but in negotiating their relationships with their husbands. The conflict in marriage expectations and outcomes is reflected in the high-rates of divorce in the black community (two-thirds of all black marriages end in divorce) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). Why this conflict exists and what gender strategies these women implore to resist it are explored in the following chapters.

Since labor markets and inflexible work policies have been identified as the main reason women “opt-out” of their careers or create various strategies for handling career

and family, culture wars about the "Mommy Myth[20]" and a return to "traditional values[21]" have most women, particularly professional women, speaking about and dealing with these issues from a personal perspective, "I made this decision because I want to be home with my kids, etc…" Class positions are deeply rooted in social and cultural ethos, or ideas about what should be done and how one should do it. African American professional women have a long-standing relationship with work, family, and community. The cultural ethos of the late 19th century into the mid-20th century was one of the politics of respectability. Following the Civil Rights Movement and increased participationo from the state in the affairs of the black community (including welfare, public housing, the Moynihan Report of 1965, and the culture of poverty debates), black women took on an ethos of the strong black woman which was resurrected to fight images of emasculating black matriarchs. The women in this study are children of both eras. Having been raised by mothers and grandmothers well-versed in the politics of respectability during the Post-Civil Rights era, their gender strategy makes respectability, representation, and independence uneasy bedfellows. Study participants discussed their desire to be good representations for the black community, actively found ways to "give back," and also sought ways to keep their children away from the low-achieving "element[22]." Theirs is an ambiguous space that pulls on desires to maintain many of the vestiges of black culture that they benefited from while simultaneously recognizing the differences caused by and afforded to their class positions.

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[20] Mommy myth – the model for what it takes to be a good mother that has become extremely unattainable.
[21] Traditional family values refers to the debate about the traditional family ideal. It is formed through the combination of marital and blood ties. It also refers to the structure of these families as father-headed, earning an adequate wage, with a stay at home mother and children.
[22] The "element" was a term used to denote the behaviors that were not a good representation of blackness. This would include the glamorization of hip-hop culture with its hypersexual, misogynistic images, as well as disrespectful mannerisms with authority figure to name a few.

While these women want to be responsible to their communities, their families, and themselves, often choosing to live in racially segregated, black, middle-class neighborhoods, they also want a bit of reprieve, a "lighter" was of life, wherein they are not constantly called upon to carry the weight of the black family on their backs. The women in *Race, Class, and Marriage,* were working to build strong marriages, however this framework often meant rejecting the good advice of mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and friends who traditionally have been people African American women depended upon when the men were not around[23]. The capable, educated, women in this study, who are reducing their employment hours, changing their professions, and becoming stay-at-home moms, are dismantling the notion of the "strong black woman." Their gender strategy could be seen as neo-traditional in that they are willing to make a myriad sacrifices for their marriages and their husbands with an eye toward the importance of commitment and relationship. This study empirically demonstrates that professional African American women and their families are experiencing a shift from older models of marriage and parenting obtained from their own parents (and others) that privileged education and careers as the key to African American communal success.

Overview

This dissertation project, *Race, Class and Marriage: Black Women, Social Mobility, and the Companionate Marriage Ideal,* is a gendered analysis of the ways in which race

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[23] See Angela Davis' (1971) "Reflections on the black woman's role in the community of slaves" (reprinted in Beverly Guy-Sheftall's *Words of Fire* (1995). Davis discusses the importance of the black slave woman in the maintenance of the domestic sphere, how that sphere was seen as a place of resistance, and how black women worked together to take care of the needs of children and men around then who were often not members of their immediate family.

and class simultaneously operate in the lives of African American professional married mothers to provide new opportunities and choices that juxtapose and contradict historical and cultural legacies. It is a study that takes into consideration the gender ideology developed out of black women's varied work and family history as well as the race- and class-based identities developed as a result of persistent social, economic, and political discrimination, this study empirically demonstrates that professional African American women and their families are experiencing a shift from older models of marriage and parenting obtained from their own parents (and others) that privileged education and careers as the key to African American communal success. African American upper-middle class women are modifying their relationship with work and changing their understanding of marriage and motherhood to an ideal of companionate marriage as a marker of upper-middle class social position and attention to race and class reproduction. This shift, while solidifying their class-based identity, complicates their racialized and gendered identity therefore creating ambivalence and conflict in their view of themselves as professional black women historically identified as committed to the success of the race. This exploratory ethnographic project reveals that upper-middle class African American women construct their gender ideologies and identities as mothers alongside their position within the black middle class. Where conflict in the mainstream literature is in women's role as professionals, for African American upper-middle-class women it is in the role of wife. African American professional women disrupt intra-cultural expectations of career success previously used to represent and "uplift the race" and focus their attention on family stability, defined as remaining married and raising successful children. Finally, this individuated focus on marriage and family, more in line

with the companionate ideal, sets forth a new interpretation of "uplifting" the "race" through the ideal of a stable black marriage and family.

In chapter two I review the seminal literature on women, work, and family conflict, marriage ideology, black women career and family, and the black middle/upper-middle-class to understand what we know about Black women's experiences in the area of marriage, family, and career. I review what we should expect from the current study developing how the current project fills the gap in our knowledge of black professional women and their families and how their experiences and strategies offer new understanding to the work and family choice and conflict debate. I develop the theoretical framework used to understand the key issues focusing on Karyn Lacy's theory of strategic assimilation as it is articulated by African American upper-middle class families in Atlanta and use this construct along with standpoint epistemology to explore African American professional women's decision making around career, marriage and children. I demonstrate the movement of the racial uplift ideology of the past that focused on educational and career access and the addition of the ideology of companionate marriage to the long-standing African American practice of partnership marriage.

In chapter three, **Race, Gender and Respectability in Atlanta's Professional Class**, I begin by providing a history of Atlanta's black middle class with a chronological overview. I provide a context for the unique position of Atlanta's black middle class. I use statistical data to demonstrate the status of Atlanta's black upper-middle class in relation to the U.S. middle class index. I then turn my attention to the history of black families with some attention to the development of work and family models (Frazier and

Moynihan debates, etc.). I use data to develop the view of contemporary shifts that have an affect on upper-middle class professional black women's decisions (i.e. professional migration, changes in social networks, race, class and gender ambiguity, and ideological change in marriage.

In chapter four, **Professional Black Wives and Middle Class Mobility,** I explore how women speak about their own educations and aspirations I explore how women speak about their children's opportunities, and how they see these as reflecting themes of racial uplift, and how racial uplift gets bridged into their concerted focus on companionate marriage. I explore the discomfort the women feel in making these choices to modify their relationship with work in ways that seem a bit different from white women (as reported in previous literatures). I develop how this discomfort is rooted in the issues of respectability, racial uplift, and prevailing stereotypes of black women and black mothers.

In chapter five: **Choices, Demands, and Expectations**, I provide a comparative analysis of how the study participants' self-identification as "stay-at-home" moms and "working" moms masks the similarities in their experiences. I demonstrate the problem with creating a dichotomy between "stay-at-home" moms and "working" moms. I explore why some professional black women opt to "stay-at-home" and some do not revisiting the affect of contemporary shifts on professional black women's decisions (professional migration, changes in social networks, race, class and gender ambiguity, and ideological change in marriage). I find that similarly to white women, black women make decisions by filtering and interpreting their experiences through cultural models. For black women, the cultural model of partnership marriage has been replaced and the

model of respectability and racial uplift has been modified to include preservation of in-tact families. Decisions that ensure this goal are enlisted regardless of the problems inherent within this strategy.

In chapter six, **Which Black Community Are We Uplifting?** I explore the fractures in the black community, the growing divide between the black upper-middle-class/middle-middle class and the black lower-middle class, poor and working class. I also return to the ambivalence the study participants feel in dealing with these fractures, especially as they pertaining to their own children's growth and development. Finally, I tie this ambivalence into the racial uplift strategy that focuses attention on the ideal of companionate marriage but recognizes companionate marriage as a potentially flawed response since it places more attention on the nuclear family rather than the historically viable partnership marriage and consanguineal kinship model.

In chapter seven, I conclude the study by highlighting the fact that this study complicates the omissions in the career and family choice and conflict literature. By exploring the experiences of primarily upper-middle class African American women and their families who have traditionally had a very different relationship with work than is presented in media and scholarly articulations. By focusing our attention on African American upper-middle class professional women, we are able to identify other groups that have been left out of the discussion. Each offers new insight as the country grapples with theory and policy that will alleviate the concerns of all working families. This study also updates our knowledge of the way in which the "racial uplift" strategy operated and continues to operate in the black professional and upper-middle class. It explores how respectability shapes the experiences, choices and opportunities of black middle and

upper-middle classes. This study also pulls professional black families into a discussion of the global movement toward the ideal of companionate marriage. Scholars have critiqued companionate marriage as a Western construct that changes economic and social relationships in nonwestern societies. Likewise for African American families whose kinship structure has traditionally been a consanguineal kinship or partnership marriage model, this study explores the reasons why a focus on companionate marriage is increasingly viable and selected for professional black families. It also highlights the pitfalls of companionate marriage as a pitfall for individual couples as well as the black community as a whole. Future study will continue the exploration of the viability of the ideal of companionate marriage as a strategy for professional black families and professional black women in particular. It will also explore how African American professional men understand their choices and constraints. Exploration of black professional/middle class in other locales to create a more nuanced picture of the black middle-class and the black upper-middle-class. A future study of the respondents' mothers' generation will also provide additional insight into how decisions have changed over time.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

African American professional women have been absent from the career-family debates of the last half-century for primarily two reasons: First, scholars have purported that there are not enough professional middle class women to sustain a study on their relationship with career and family (Gerson 1985). Second, the few studies that have been able to "find" African American professional women suggest their race has little bearing in their responses to career and family negotiations (Hattery 2001) and find their class position raises similar arguments and themes espoused by and about white professional middle class women (Stone 2007). This study addresses both of these concerns. To the question of numbers, scholars are admittedly correct. A recent study by the policy think tank *Catalyst*, shows that 34% of women in the US are professional married women with children (Catalyst 2009). This finding includes all professional women recognizing the fact that it is difficult to tease out the diversity in the population due to the decidedly small number of women who can fit in the category. Since white women have held and continue to hold the public imagination as the representative professional woman and mother, it is no surprise that articulations of this already small group, professional women with children under the age of six, would have very little variation. However, there are differences that are bound in the varied history of women and work in the U.S. how gender ideologies constructed through these varied histories have impacted their view and enactment of work, marriage and family, and how those ideologies are shaped in the contemporary moment by race and class-based identities.

Work and Family Conflict and Choice

A *New York Times Magazine* article published in 2003, by reporter Lisa Belkin, featured a small sample of professional married mothers who had "opted out" of their Ivy League educations and hard-won educational and career advancements to be "at-home" moms. Belkin used their individual cases to assert the notion that these women were leading a trend that saw women who had benefited from the gender equity campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s, returning to "traditional" gender roles. Belkin coined this trend the "opt-out revolution" and along with Sylvia Ann Hewlett's study *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children (2002)*, cautioned professional women to choose their partners, bear children early, and find undemanding careers. In both the popular press and scholarly venues in the last 15 years, critics initiated a debate in which many argued that a "choice" approach views "opting out" as an example of women's agency rather than recognizing the long-standing political and economic factors that shape these decisions (Hays 1996, Stone 2008, Williams 2007). Before 2003, when Belkin's article became the primary catalyst for scholarly discussion, media treatment of women's work-force participation had been recreating the idea of women's "choice" for decades creating a scenario in which employers explained women's low numbers in upper-management positions as a result of their lack of desire for them (Williams 2007). References to "traditional" gender roles are not easily supported. Peggy Barlett's seminal study *American Dreams, Rural Realities,* which explored the survival of family farms in rural Georgia during the family farm crises of the 1980s, contributes some perspective on the effects of the economy on women's "choices" (1993). In a profession that appears

more traditional than most, Barlett finds that farm women have multiple ideologies for understanding their gender and marital roles. Designating these two ideologies as industrial and agrarian, Barlett suggests the agrarian model takes on more of the form of a partnership while the industrial model is patterned after the breadwinner/homemaker ideal. Exploring work and family ideologies for corporate women means paying attention to the political and economic structures that impact their decisions as well.

In the following section I foreground Kathleen Gerson's seminal work *Hard Choices: How Women Decide About Work, Career, and Marriage* (1985), as the first post-feminist movement discussion oriented toward countering the prevailing view that educated, professional women left the work-force because of the pull of maternity. Since Gerson's treatment a number of scholars, motivated to counter the prevailing public individualist view that women "choose" to stay at home, have focused on the perception that women simply do not want to work once they have children, or are incapable of balancing work and motherhood effectively. While "choice" is a big part of Gerson's analysis it is a constrained choice in which structural inequalities, primarily workplace policies and household division of labor practices, continue to wield the most influence. In fact, Pamela Stone's *Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Career and Head Home* (2007) took up this issue almost twenty years after Gerson when she countered the idea that highly educated professional women quit their jobs to stay home and found instead that many are "pushed" out by antiquated workplace policies that make it impossible for any parent to manage raising their children and achieving career advancement (2007). For these high-powered women who marry high-powered men, they have to figure out how to manage their high-demand careers and that of their husbands. While Stone's

study focused on professional women, who have made greater inroads into management and leadership positions since Gerson's study, *Hard Choices* explored how a cohort of middle-class and working-class white women made rational decisions about careers and motherhood based upon opportunity costs (what they would lose if they focused on work or what they would lose if they did not). Gerson conducts an exploratory cohort analysis in which she interviewed 35 university alumni and 28 community college students born in the 1940s and 1950s who came of age in the midst of the large-scale challenges to women's employment and economic inequalities (Gerson 1985: 40). While Gerson admits that the 1950s appear more aberrant than typical when charting the employment participation of women, she says the women born in this generation are a perfect study population given the differences in opportunities between their generation and their mothers' generation (Gerson 1985:9).

Gerson decided upon two primary labels for women in her study, domestic and nondomestic (Gerson 1985: 43-68). Domestic women were stay-at-home mothers, housewives, or those who were non-committally employed. Nondomestic women were committed to employment, ambitious about their employment, and often saw their employment decisions as at odds with their ability to have and/or sustain a family. Gerson determines an interplay between relationship status and occupational opportunities in women's decision-making. According to Gerson who theorized in response to prevailing ideas that suggested women were socialized to be maternal or ambitious and made decisions accordingly, stable relationships were important to providing domestic women with the means to remain domestic. For women who wanted to be domestic, an unstable relationship could thwart that possibility. However, for

nondomestic women relationships could have an affect on whether or not nondomestic women had children and on the number of children depending on the perceived level of involvement of their male partners.

Work-place opportunities had a similar affect on directing women's decisions. The women in Gerson's study all came of age at a time when there were increased and increasing work opportunities for women however, as stated previously, some of those opportunities remained limited and constrained. For Gerson's respondents, who planned to be domestic, shifts in the economy meant that their husbands' income often did not provide a breadwinner salary thus providing them with an opportunity to remain at home. Many of these women had to enter the workforce to help maintain their family's standard of living. Some of these women took part-time work and some took work that was non-committal and did not offer opportunities for advancement. Other women who started out domestically oriented and went to work to help support their families ended up in workplaces that pushed them forward and gave them advancement and increased respect and responsibility. For many, it was the result of affirmative action policies and anti-discrimination clauses where women were given management and executive positions as a result of government pressures (Gerson 1985: 227). These women were able to capitalize on these shifts in public policy.

While there were some women with domestic **and** non-domestic orientations who continued with their original orientation. Gerson states that this was in large part because they did not encounter any significant change in their perspective as it related to relationships and workplace opportunities. There were no major unexpected hiccups. Gerson does suggest however that women who did make changes, as well as non-

domestic women had to either maintain or shift their ideological focus either more solidly toward the ideal of the traditional family or purposefully away from the ideal of the traditional family and the traditional role of women (Gerson 1985: 201). In this way they developed "coping" mechanisms that allowed them to embrace, even if somewhat ambivalently, the role and life course they had chosen (Gerson 1985: 166).

Arlie Hochschild's *The Second Shift* (1989) demonstrates this "coping mechanism" in her study of fifty working families in the Bay Area over a number of years as women's work outside the home had become normal for all social classes. Like Gerson, Hochschild found that while women entered the work-place in unprecedented numbers they found the work-place inflexible but the domestic realm equally so. Hochschild referred to the constraints in the domestic realm as the "stalled revolution." According to this framework, women are forced to adopt a "second shift" due to the fact that women's employment remains devalued and women continue to be responsible for housework and childcare while men retain their valuable careers and "help" at home. Gerson and Hochschild agree on the constraints working women continue to face as they enter the work force and manage their family lives. In fact, Hochschild's stance on "gender ideologies" further explores Gerson's findings. Where Hochschild suggests women and men come into marriage with implicit "gender ideologies" – expectations about appropriate marital roles for themselves and their mates, which are a product of their own childhoods, habits and acquired values, Gerson suggests gender ideologies based upon childhood socialization are easily altered when women encounter relationship or workplace realities that are different from their childhood expectations. There is no universal "mothering need" produced by childhood socialization. Instead, both Gerson

and Hochschild conclude that since our society continues to push toward more women being in committed, permanent relationships with work while simultaneously being responsible for marriage and children, it is the wife who sacrifices her professed values in order to save her marriage.

Each of the three aforementioned studies (Stone 2008, Hochschild 1989, Gerson 1985) focus their attention on the household and the family in understanding the constraints men and particularly women face when negotiating work and family. For Stone, professional women's decision to return home with the addition of children has more to do with structural constraints at work than with gender dynamics at home. For Hochschild, gender dynamics at home make it difficult to maintain a commitment to work as couples try to attain a career and family compromise. Finally, Gerson explains the "choice" of domesticity or non-domesticity as reliant on both the workplace and male-female relationships. However, in Gerson's estimation these choices are often at the expense of children where ambitious, non-domestically oriented women choose not to have children or to have only one child if they believe a) they cannot manage work and family simultaneously due to work constraints and/or expectations, or b) they are not married, are not in a stable marriage, or their spouse is unwilling to participate equally in parenting (Gerson 1985: 184). For most of the women in Gerson's study marriage is most important in issues of parenting and in the final decisions about work. While Gerson splits her analysis between the two constraints: workplace vs. male-female relationships, it is clear that in most instances women are making decisions to better position themselves to get married or sustain marriage. While Gerson never utilizes the term "companionate marriage," in her assessment of these marital relationships it is clear

that her respondents are invested in a companionate marriage ideal. It is also clear that economic constraints colored many of Gerson's respondent's choices, however a focus on relationship and negotiation within marriage remained a primary consideration particularly as what Gerson called "reluctant mothers[24]" found ways to garner more equitable parenting participation from their husbands who appreciated both the economic security provided by their careers and their gendered roles as mothers (Gerson 1985: 185).

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, there has been a renewed focus on the meaning of marriage and the differences in contemporary practices. Some scholars have focused their attention on the historical development of the companionate marriage model and its relationship to gender equality in the U.S. and European nations, while others have drawn much needed attention to the global development of the companionate marriage ideal – its pros and cons, complexities and contestations. What each has garnered through careful analysis of historical, archival, and contemporary shifts is the way that the development of the companionate marriage ideal and its subsequent iterations rests on the complexities of modernity. These complexities include a shift away from the communal to the individual, from subsistence to consumption, and from patriarchy to the appearance of gender equity.

Marriage Ideology

> *Around the world, young people are talking about the importance of affective bonds in creating marital ties, deliberately positioning*

[24] Gerson defined reluctant mothers as women who were "committed workers who viewed children as potentially costly to their work careers. Unlike permanently childless women, however, they decided over time that childlessness held greater costs than motherhood. These women thus neither wholeheartedly embraced motherhood nor rejected it completely. Rather, they approached parenthood reluctantly, aware of the problems it posed, yet fearful that a different course would hold even more dangers."

> *themselves in contrast to their parents and grandparents* (Maggi 2006: 81).

Recent studies have drawn attention to the development of the companionate marriage ideal which at its inception, had a greater focus on emotional, social, and sexual intimacy, rather than economic, political, and moralistic reasons for marriage (Celello 2009, Simmons 2009, Hirsch and Wardlow 2006). Developed to some extent in the eighteenth century[25], and to some historians even earlier[26], companionate marriage

> is generally defined as a marital ideal in which emotional closeness is understood to be both one of the primary measures of success in marriage and a central practice through which the relationship is constituted and reinforced. The term *companionate marriage* has also been used… to refer to a form of kinship in which the conjugal partnership is privileged over other family ties. (Hirsch and Wardlow 2006: 4).

In *Modern Loves: The Anthropology of Romantic Courtship and Companionate Marriage,* Jennifer Hirsch and Holly Wardlow (2006) explore the impact of the ideal of companionate marriage in the context of globalization. Recognizing that companionate marriage is critiqued as a Western ideal redefining marriage, economies, and kinship in its global quest for progress, Hirsch and Wardlow strive to present the far-reaching appeal of companionate marriage as an example of the movement toward modernity for people all over the world. Scholars have noted that there is a difference between romantic love and love marriages. In a global context affective bonds between male and female is

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[25] Some historians suggest companionate marriage grew out of the European wealthy elite because without economic constraints they were free to marry for love. Others assert the shift from traditional marriage was born amongst the poor since they did not have to be concerned about rules of lineage and property (Hirsch and Wardlow 2006: 6-7).

[26] According to Hirsch and Wardlow (2006) some historians find the beginning of companionate marriage in eleventh century Provence where partners were expected not to marry. Elements of this "courtly love" later became embedded in marriage (6).

not a new phenomenon, however "allowing love and the desires people feel for one another to produce kinship – the larger foundation upon which most culture is elaborated" (Maggi 2006: 82) is new and often dangerous. Scholars ask "will love, whatever it means, be allowed to become marriage, whatever that means? Will the desires of individuals be encouraged to shape the larger connections between people in the community, or will individuals expect themselves to put aside their personal desires and agendas and yield to someone else's decisions" (Maggi 2006: 82).

While Hirsch and Wardlow recognize the impact of cultural globalization, they also locate the ideologies of intimacy in relation to the material and demographic conditions of people's lives. They explore, in their edited volume, "the ways in which the organization of production and consumption enables or impedes various kinds of conjugal ties, as well as the different strategic advantages men and women see (or don't) in their particular local version of companionate marriage" (2). Through Hirsch and Wardlow, readers are able to imagine companionate marriage outside the Western ideal aware of the impact of Eurocentric viewpoints, while developing a theoretical framework that privileges the ways in which groups modify, adapt, and strategize the ideal for their own purposes. According to Hirsch and Wardlow what connects the changes in love and companionate marriage for the Western and the global ideal are three central problematics of modernity:

> the emergence of the individualized self; the related importance of commodity consumption to practices of self-crafting, as well as the significance of love in the context of commoditized social relations; and the deployment of discourses about progressive gender relations as a means to claim a modern identity, whether this is on the level of interpersonal relations or the nation-state (Hirsch and Wardlow 1984:14).

Selina Ching Chan's chapter on marriage transformation in Singapore and Hong Kong privileges the role of consumption in changing gender relations (Chan 2006). Where marriages previously took place within a large complex family system, marked by the inheritance of family jewels, in the transformation to companionate marriage, inherited jewelry is no longer as important (Chan 2006: 40). Currently, jewelry given by a husband to his wife marks the educational and financial independence of the wife while simultaneously reifying the symbolic gender inequality in the relationship (Chan 2006: 47). This framework illuminates Hirsch and Wardlow's claim that consumption and romantic love go together. "Love needs to be nourished and should constantly be cultivated through consumption" (47).

Likewise, Wardlow's treatment of the Huli of Papua New Guinea highlights the role of media images and Christianity for "helping" people to develop companionate love as a framework for marriage (Wardlow 2006: 75). For the Huli, romantic love and companionate marriage are associated with being a modern person. While the Huli tradition of arranged marriages has not been devoid of mutual warmth, affection, and companionship, it is quite different from the modern companionate ideal. For older traditional marriages, "it was working together planning and strategizing over the course of a lifetime that built trust and affection." (Wardlow 2006: 56). Even then, this level of comfort between spouses was most common between couples who no longer lived together and did not involve the level of intimate companionship the modern marital form would associate with companionate marriage. According to Wardlow many women are apprehensive about this level of companionship yet their desire for a different kind of marriage is not just about marriage itself but about what they perceive as the lifestyle that

accompanies modern marriage. It is as much about consumer goods, modern possessions, and a certain kind of personhood as it is about male-female relationships (Wardlow 2006: 57). In fact, many women imagine companionate marriage taking place with partners alongside spaces and objects of modernity (houses with store-bought materials and verandas). Seeing these types of accoutrements generally available only to married public servants, Huli women imagine the ways that companionate marriage will take them from subsistence agriculture to the world of the salaried (Wardlow 2006: 57).

It is Wynne Maggi's chapter, "Heart-Stuck: Love Marriage as a Marker of Ethnic Identity among the Kalasha of Northwest Pakistan," included in the edited volume *Modern Loves*, that challenges the idea of shifts in marriage ideologies as an example of the push for and toward modernity. According to Maggi, for the Kalasha people, an ethnic minority in the Muslim dominated Pakistani region, who are under intense pressure to assimilate into Muslim culture, their cultural right to act on their romantic passions and engage in romantic marriage is an important ethnic marker. Arguing against a purely modernist analysis of companionate marriage, Maggi reveals some of the complexities in Wardlow's assertion that romantic love and companionate marriage have been able to thrive as ideologies about modernity because of structural and particularly economic changes to women's lives. Wardlow asserts ethnographers have argued this link through three modern phenomena:

> 1) Some argue women's participation in wage labor and their increasing economic independence mean that women have more freedom to choose their own partners and to conceptualize relationships as about emotion, not economics.
> 2) Others argue households become sites of consumption rather than sites of production and couples are no longer as economically interdependent and romantic love itself becomes an important site of consumption and a means to perform one's individualism.

> 3) Still others note that in the context of capitalism, the home becomes demarcated as the safe haven of emotional intimacy, a place where one recovers from the alienation of the market-place (Wardlow 2006: 74).

The Kalasha approach to romantic love, as revealed in Maggi's studies operates in contrast to the Muslim practice of "feeling intensely in love but not being able to act on it as an expression of religious piety that brings honor to the family and the community and is an expression of moral selfhood" (Maggi 2006: 82). In this way, Maggi suggests, the Kalasha love marriages are linked to ethnic tradition and heritage rather than modernity. It is viewed as a way to strengthen the community that often experiences violent tension from their devout Muslim neighbors to convert to Islam (Maggi 2006: 86). For the Kalasha love marriages may or may not translate into "successful" companionate marriages (i.e. there is no expectation that the love that drives the marriage will sustain the marriage and many marriages have variable outcomes including changing partners, or adding partners.[27]) This provides a distinct difference from the modern ideal. However, by allowing Kalasha women, in many respects the least powerful people in the community, to choose whom they will marry, the issue of gender equity, contested within notions of companionate marriage, reveals the pervasive links to modernity. In fact, while there is a strong belief in love marriages among the Kalasha, young women exercise the minimal power they have within the community when they choose their mates, "often against the best laid plans of irate parents, village elders, and ex-husbands" (Maggi 2006:82). Village elders are aware of the fact that young people could convert to Islam if they are not allowed certain freedoms. Exercising choice in marriage becomes

[27] This is different from the Western ideal of companionate marriage particularly in the U.S. where teaching people, particularly women, to sustain their marriages has become a self-help industry (Celello 2009).

not only a way to identify and sustain their ethnic beliefs for their community – ensuring that Kalasha women will not leave the community to marry into a wealthier and more prestigious Muslim group – but by allowing Kalasha women this freedom, Kalasha women are able to choose between what appears to be a wealthier but also more repressive lifestyle, versus their ethnic community of origin where they are free to cultivate their sexual and marital freedom (Maggi 2006: 87). It is this hard-won freedom[28] to choose love that according to Maggi is a marker for the extreme lengths the Kalasha must go through to "practice their traditional religion and culture in a region where they are an oppressed and despised minority" (Maggi 2006: 90).

Gender Equality and Marriage

Locating marriage practices and forms of gender equity within ethnic struggles reveals the extent to which the question of modernity answers all of our questions about companionate marriage. *Modern Loves* foregrounds the relationship between gender equity and the companionate marriage ideal recognizing that companionate marriage often releases women in some respects while further restricting them in others. In fact, as Stephanie Coontz asserts, in her book, *Marriage, A History* (2005), complete gender equality was expected to take place within the confines of companionate marriage as each partner was expected to be motivated, through love, to maintain admiration and desire by not dominating or exploiting one another. In practice, there are a number of potential

[28] Freedom here is not in the form of the U.S. ideal of freedom from restriction and constraint. For the Kalasha, even the word meaning "released from restriction" always includes the assumption that restrictions are there and real (Maggi 2006: 91).

costs to women who subscribe to the romantic notions of love and feel they demonstrate that love by staying in a marriage.

Kristin Celello's timely study *Making Marriage Work: A History of Marriage and Divorce in the Twentieth-Century United States*, sheds some light on the discourse in which Americans, and particularly women, came to understand marriage, and specifically companionate marriage, as an institution wives needed to work at (Celello 2009: 3). It is this rhetoric, developed by marriage "experts" in response to the fear of the breakdown of American marriages and the increase in divorce rates over time that was used to increase couples desire to marry. It was also used to deter couples, particularly white and middle-class, from divorce. All of the focus, from experts, popular magazines, college courses, and religious tracts, pointed to women as the key to sustainable marriages. Not only did couples have to be convinced that companionate marriages, based upon "love" and not economic, reproductive, or moral incentives, required hard work but according to Celello these media, scholarly, and religious influences had to convince women that it was their responsibility and duty to ensure the success of their marriages (Celello 2009). Failing to do so not only meant potential social ostracism for the wives and their children, but often also economic disaster and multiple failures in the social, political and economic structure of the U.S.

Both Christina Simmons' volume *Making Marriage Modern* (2009) and Celello's *Making Marriage Work* (2009) link the U.S. ideal of companionate marriage to class and social mobility. While Celello's historical treatment spans the entire twentieth-century but pays the most attention to the last half of the twentieth-century, Simmons explores the shift in ideology from the Victorian ideals of marriage and motherhood to the World War

II era. Celello examines how marriage counselors formulated the idea that marriage requires work and created an industry and a national language and dialogue about sustaining marriage. According to Celello it was in the 1950s that we began to see the most concerted efforts at pushing the marriage ideal as more couples became able to acquire the "American Dream" and began to embrace the middle class family ideals with suburbanization, the GI Bill, growth in the housing market and a prospering economy. According to Celello with this new lifestyle, couples believed they were embarking on a new type of marriage. Different from the one's they observed with their own parents and saw themselves as helping marriage become a new, fully egalitarian institution. "According to this interpretation, women's work inside the home was complementary to men's work outside the home and thus of equal value to the family unit… marriage experts encouraged wives to embrace this position and to view marriage as a fulfilling career" (Celello 2009: 76-77).

Simmons, starting from an early historic period and being more concerned with how the new ideology of companionate marriage was being developed, promoted, and critiqued by intellectuals, novelists, advice writers, reformers, and radicals, finds the shift deeply entrenched in middle class notions of respectability. Simmons challenges the idea that companionate marriage freed women from the puritanical Victorian model finding that "inequality has persisted in modern marriage in domestic labor, child care, and sexual activity" (Simmons 2009: 11).

Celello discusses the onus that was placed on women as a result of this interpretation of marriage. Even before they were married, women were expected to find a potential mate, convince him to get married, and once married make it her duty to find a

way to keep him. Women were also cautioned not to spend too much time on their children and to focus their attention on their husbands. They were also warned not to disrupt a man's career or to cause his poor health or untimely death. According to marriage experts it became a woman's fault if her husband was underemployed or unemployed and also her fault if she were widowed due to his poor health (Celello 2009: 81-82).

Feminists in the 1960s and 1970s believed women needed to be liberated from the oppressive expectations placed on wives and mothers within the nuclear family. Celello draws attention to the fact that feminist debates on the institution of marriage have not been adequately explored leaving the inadvertent impression that most feminists were out of touch with the lives and concerns of "everyday" women (Celello 2009: 105).

> While many feminists, especially those who identified as "radicals" did argue that a complete rejection of marriage was necessary to bring about a revolution in women's roles, other fervent women's activists asserted that Americans were unlikely to discard marriage and that, if it was remade in an equitable manner, it could have a viable future as an institution (Celello 2009: 105).

For many feminists of the time, particularly Betty Freidan, the problem was not marriage per say, but rather the need to add a career so that a woman could have a life of her own and "can fulfill a commitment to profession and politics, and to marriage and motherhood with equal seriousness" (Celello 2009: 107). Freidan argued for the combination of work and family, an equitable balance between the two but according to Celello "avoided any discussion of the difficulties that many women (either married or divorced) might face as they tried to balance their working lives and their familial responsibilities" (Celello 009: 108). As was discussed at length previously, career and family began a troubled union with no clear way to minimize the conflict. Since the marriage ideal was based upon

middle class social markers, each new upwardly mobile group aspired to the ideal therefore reinforcing its pervasiveness. "The most prevalent version of companionate marriage did not drastically alter gender roles, but it did provide a functional modern form for the middle-class family, with its emphasis on home as an arena of consumption and leisure" (Simmons 2009: 225). When we couple middle class sensibility with resistant workplace policies and practices, as well as lack of male "buy-in" to the additional responsibilities of home- and child care there are few alternatives to the gender inequity embedded in the companionate marriage ideal as it is articulated and practiced in the U.S. Partnership marriage offered some reprieve but mired in racial dynamics could not receive recognition in mainstream conceptualizations of practice.

Partnership Marriage

> Widespread emergence of the idea that marriage should be a partnership entered into by two individuals and sustained by their emotional and sexual attachment suggests that similar kinds of structural and cultural forces may be shaping sexual and marital relationships across a wide range of cultural settings. However... it is critical to be ethnographically specific about the source of companionate ideals and the specific local circumstances that make them available and appealing to people as a way of understanding relationships… While the desire for romantic love and companionate marriage may be replacing other forms of union in various locations around the world, the reasons for this change may not be the same everywhere (Hirsch and Wardlow 2006: 26-27).

While partnership in marriage has been a way to discuss the issue of gender equality within marriages there remains a lack of clarity about what is meant by partnership when referring to marriage. Contemporary couples often see themselves as partners as they negotiate their careers and family lives, non-married couples often refer to each other as partners, and gay couples typically refer to one another as partners rather

than “husband” or “wife.” In addition, the use of the term partnership in marriage has been contested as men and women negotiate household and care-work responsibilities where each desires a partnership but envision it very differently. Men often see themselves as partners and women see men as “helpers.”

Recent studies exploring the development of and shifts in the companionate marriage ideal have begun describing African American marriages as partnership marriages (Simmons 2009, Freeman 2007[29]). However, where partnership is seen as something valuable in marriage, bringing couples closer to the equitable ideal, African American marriage practices have not always been celebrated as a viable representation of the marriage bond. In fact, since the late 1950s, African Americans have been defending their family forms and practices as either an adaptation to or a refutation to the inequitable racial forces that destabilized them.

Chronicling the development of the companionate marriage ideal as a negation of the Victorian ideal, Simmons portrays three revisionist forms that developed for those who wanted change but remained committed to marriage. Simmons defines the “flapper marriage[30],” the “partnership marriage[31],” and the “feminist marriage[32].” Simmons makes it clear that in her study and others it has been difficult to ascertain how ordinary

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[29] Carla Freeman’s discussion of partnership marriage among West Indians in Barbados is included in this discussion due to the similarities in the relationship between marriage, family, and work for African Americans and Afro-Barbadians. Both groups are descendants of the plantation slave economy and pervasive racial discrimination that limited Afro-Diasporic men and women’s ability to emulate the companionate marriage ideal (Freeman 2007).

[30] “flapper” marriage – free-spirited young wives enjoyed the early years of marriage, postponing children and domesticity but maintaining male-female power structure.

[31] “partnership marriage” which often included wives’ employment and drew more heavily on the involvement of the community and extended family. Simmons characterizes African Americans as having practiced and promoted this form of marriage.

[32] feminist marriage in which women imagined greater equality between the sexes in domestic and paid work and sex.

people responded to the ideals of marriage but Simmons suggests we are able to garner some understanding through the images presented in marriage tracts and popular fiction of the time (Simmons 2009). Situating the parameters of the discussion within literature of the early twentieth century speaks to the importance of the movement toward the companionate marriage ideal within the bourgeois middle-class. "A culture of consumption expanded and touched more Americans as leisure time increased, advertising developed, and the availability of consumer goods grew" (Simmons 2009: 11). Additionally only certain sectors of the population had access to these resources. Thus for Simmons, each of the revisionist forms of marriage that described and promoted companionate marriage in the 1920s were reliant on a number of cultural and material transformations in the lives of middle-class Americans (Simmons 2009).

In the early twentieth century, an expanding African American middle class joined in discussions about marriage (Simmons 2009, Landry 2000, Higginbotham 1993). Their perspective on marriage was different from the emerging mainstream due to their experiences of racism. According to Landry African Americans of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries developed an ideology that maintained the importance of marriage while simultaneously approving and supporting black women's roles as workers, and mothers, as well as wives. This approach to marriage, work and family was designed to "uplift" the black community by ensuring the economic success of the family unit. In addition, using the family unit as a way to uplift the race meant that ties to the community and the extended family remained central to the social organization of the black community (Landry 2000, Gaines 1996).

Bart Landry's study of *Black Working Wives* (2000) fills the void in the literature on black women's negotiation of work and family from the Victorian era through the late twentieth-century. Landry lays out an argument in which he demystifies the idea of a "traditional" family and describes it as a social construction that is relatively new in our nation's conception of itself. He uses the case of African American professional wives to demonstrate the possibilities for the rest of Americans to have more gender equity in their marriages and greater balance between career and family.

While Landry uses African Americans as an example, of occupational and home-life equity he notes that African American families developed this conception of work and family balance due to the history of slavery, racial discrimination, and educational and employment discrimination. Landry asserts each of these factors locked African American families out of the white American norm, Victorian models of womanhood and the cult of domesticity. Additionally Simmons asserts that marriage was structured to create and maintain inequalities according to race, class and gender. White women of the middle and upper class sustained their class hegemony, maintained racial barriers, and maintained their own respectable status through legal marriage to men of their race and class. Similarly white men of the middle and upper class enjoyed many of the same race and class prerogatives of women of their race and class. However, they could choose between the "code of Christian gentleman" and the masculine culture that exploited lower class women. For upper and middle class black men the same held true except they were limited in their exploits to black women. For lower class women and black women as a whole, there were few options for how they could be viewed. As a result their strategies had to be race and class specific.

> Lower-status women subordinated by race or class, were defined as "bad" and "available" by nature. They had the role of providing sexual service to men and domestic service to women of more powerful groups but also to their own families as they also reproduced the labor force. Most whites automatically placed African American women in this category of "available" women, despite African American women club women's vigorous protests (Simmons 2000: 71).

Women, men, and their communities had to create another ideology that would pull them out of the white American view that they were aberrant, deviant, and less than. According to Landry, black women of the 19th century who worked hard for racial and gender equality, did so from a perspective that combined the roles of mother, wife, employee, and activist for the good of the black community (Landry 2000). In fact middle-class black women complained about the social taint that undermined their respectability and class status. The ideological premise in which black middle-class wives championed a "three-fold commitment" to family, community, and careers, took root throughout most of the black community and created an ideology in which, according to Landry, even black families with means[33], who were able to keep the woman at home, believed they were able to create a better work-life balance, upward economic mobility, and gender equity if both men and women worked (Landry 2000). Additionally racial advancement was linked to "economic realities requiring a higher level of employment for black wives, as well as the older conception of marriage as a broad social and economic partnership" (Simmons 2009: 157). In fact, Stephanie Shaw's seminal book, *What A Woman Ought to Be and To Do* (1996), posited that the late nineteenth to early twentieth century black community pushed young African American women to achieve

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[33] It is important to note that there were some black families that believed and practiced women staying at home. E. Franklin Frazier reportedly worked very hard to ensure his wife would not need to work outside the home (Platt 1991:17).

their education and get jobs as teachers, lawyers, doctors, etc. (occupations needed for racial/community uplift) to protect them from domestic and low-skill work where they may be economically and sexually exploited. Drawing a distinction between black and white women's/communities' ideologies on the role of women in the private and public spheres, Landry suggests (although not blatantly) that these individual decisions were developed within the black community to address the particular needs of the community and were supported by the black community (Landry 2000). In this way African Americans pioneered a pragmatic egalitarianism – partnership marriage.

According to Christina Simmons, "African American partnership marriage was invisible to most whites but actively debated and lived by middle-class black people" (Simmons 2009: 175). Landry expressed a similar perspective when he discussed the fact that African American women pioneered the career and family balance that white women of the late twentieth-century desired however there was very little knowledge of this ideology outside the black community. African Americans developed this version of modern marriage to accommodate the racist world they faced. Marriage and respectability had to remain an intimate part of their racial ideology to overcome the negative portrayal that worked to block their acceptance as legitimate citizens (Landry 2000). As stated previously, the Victorian model of respectability espoused by African American women was different from that sustained by white women. For white women, the ideology of respectability was a complex cultural system that combined economic, religious, and moral codes to dictate gender definitions and practices that covered every aspect of a person's life. As stated previously these norms were shared by all people of the middle class as a social ideal in a time of nationwide uncertainty, yet the behavioral

code was raced and gendered. To undermine the racialized stereotypes of black women and by extension black families and the black community as a whole, many African American women adopted the tenets of white bourgeois status. Respectability became a strategy to attack racism and many African American women used the strategy combined with a commitment to improving the status of their race to directly challenge racist definitions (Wolcott 2001). Being respectable meant a break for African American women from the biologically determined status as less than human. Through respectability these women were able to claim their humanity as well as that of the entire race. By constructing their own class identity, these women, in effect, challenged the quasi-scientific biological arguments of the time, created a class structure that distinguished one class of African Americans from another, and called attention to class similarities between the races. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham explains these class dynamics in her important text *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (1993). In one of the earliest treatments of the notion of respectability in the black community and how it was transformed into a strategy for racial uplift, Higginbotham explained:

> While adherence to respectability enabled black women to counter racist images and structures, their discursive contestation was not directed solely at white Americans; the black Baptist women condemned what they perceived to be negative practices and attitudes among their own people. Their assimilationist leanings led to their insistence upon blacks' conformity to the dominant society's norms of manners and morals. Thus the discourse of respectability disclosed class and status differentiation (Higginbotham 1993: 187).

As demonstrated by Higginbotham's statement, African Americans had to identify ways to liken their decisions and practices with mainstream white values while simultaneously distinguishing themselves from the manner and morals of the lower-classes. In fact, it

was this attempt at differentiation that worked best to reveal the class and status differences between the black elite and upper-class and the black masses.

Race and/or Class in Black Family Life

Contemporary scholars have taken up this issue of intra-class and inter-class differentiation to explain both how blacks are similar to whites and how blacks are varied as a group (Lacy 2007, Pattillo-McCoy 1999; 1999b, Landry 1987). In fact, scholars have found that African Americans racial and class identity gets conflated in often contradictory ways such that whites are the unmarked middle class and the poor are marked black (Pattillo-McCoy 1999a).

Bart Landry took up the task of exploring the little-known black middle class with his important work *The New Black Middle Class* (1987). Landry began the work in 1973 when he noticed that there were few studies that explored black families in the middle-income category. At the time, and into the present, the bulk of the literature on black families focused on poor blacks residing in the ghettos of the inner city. The work that had been done on the black middle class did not explore who they were or the conditions of their development. In fact, a clear indication of the gap in the literature within explorations of black families and white families was that not only were these married couple households but they were also dual-earner households at a time when the white middle class continued to operate within the confines of the breadwinner/homemaker model (Landry 1987; 2000).

This review of the literature on family decision-making, marriage ideology, and race and class identity construction suggests that focusing on individual and personal

choices ignores why our decisions are limited. However, taking the social, cultural, and economic factors into consideration often ignores how these forces shape personal responses to the available options. According to Mary Blair-Loy, whose study of executive women juggling the demands of family and career critiques both solely individual and solely structural explanations, "people develop a sense of what are legitimate job and family demands by filtering and interpreting their experiences and exigencies through different cultural models of the meaning of work and of family" (Blair-Loy 2003: 4).

As suggested, African American women have traditionally had a different ideology of marriage, career, family, and community than the mainstream white middle class-American ideology. This difference is not based upon a clear attempt at creating a cultural system different from white Americans. Parallel to the Kalasha case, (Maggi 2006) African American women's ideology was created in response to the ways in which mainstream American economic, political, and social policies and actions prevented black Americans from orchestrating their own lives and successfully assimilating into the mainstream American models of marriage, womanhood, and family. As historians seeking to understand marriage and family decisions articulated during the development of the companionate marriage ideal have asserted, African Americans developed their own gender ideology "the politics of respectability[34]" and their own companionate marriage ideal "partnership marriage" in which black women combined these efforts and

[34] The term "politics of respectability" is not used in common understandings of marriage and family in the black community, however the cultural practices of combining marriage, family, career, and community work, are all very well known, particularly as they pertain to the ideology of black womanhood.

sought marriage, employment, sustainable families, and community involvement as the key to family survival and racial uplift.

As was expected of them according to African American women's gender ideology, all of the women in my study expected to complete college and have meaningful careers. However, two never expected to be married, and five were ambivalent about marriage. Likewise, none of them expected to leave their careers and become stay-at-home moms – even temporarily. I demonstrate that was has changed for African American women is not their relationship with work or home, the majority of African American women have always worked outside the home and have aspired to careers outside the home. Rather what has changed is the role of husbands and marriage as an important part of the African American "family." Whereas the barrage of negative imagery in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries galvanized communal efforts for black women "to defend their virtue," the contemporary period requires a different tactic where focus is placed on the nuclear family rather than the extended and communal family. In this way, maintaining marriage and family works to defeat contemporary stereotypes of deviant black families in the same way that combining career, community, and family attempted to defeat stereotypes of lazy, hyper-sexualized black women and the uncivilized black community.

There is a concern among the black middle-class about how the group is perceived. Karyn Lacy (2007) focuses on individual encounters in her study but sprinkles throughout her discussion times when respondents spoke about the black community as a whole. For instance, language at the town hall meeting such as "when will we start to care about our kids education, because it is very poor" suggested a

common investment in the children of the community (Lacy 2007: 196). Additionally, a respondent in Lacy's study encouraged Lacy as a black Ph.D. student at Harvard (Lacy 2007: 232). While Lacy signals the importance of the connections to the black community that the black middle class has and intentionally develops, there is some disconnect as we are not able to ascertain to what extent black middle-class respondents continue to have ties to their family members and friends who continue to be members of the working-class, and lower-middle class. Even those who are not first-generation college-educated but find themselves in professional positions their educator, and clerical worker parents only dreamed of, worry about staying connected to the black community while also providing the best possible outcomes for their children.

One of the outcomes upper-middle-class African American wives and mothers have identified as negative is growing up in a household without both parents. In a effort to ensure that does not happen to them, or their children, these mothers and wives are turning to the companionate marriage ideal that is quite different from the model of success seemingly passed down to black women from the consanguineal family model. The consanguineal or extended family model has been associated with the working class and poor as a way to ensure economic sustainability for all family members (Stack 1974, Ladner 1972). When the goal of racial uplift did not include marriage (due to black male unemployment, under-employment, and remnants of the culture of poverty model), black families retained the uplift model that privileged education, career, and children and relegated marriage to an option rather than a goal. Professional women who grapple with what they were taught by their families and communities about carving out success for themselves and their families, now turn away from these notions of black female

independence and replace this ideology with the companionate marriage model focusing more attention on the conjugal marital relationship than extended family ties.

By focusing on nuclear families, these professional families, many of them a long way from communal supports and the extended kin that sustained them in their pursuit of education and career, attempt to redirect not only how they are perceived in the nation's imagination and policies, but also establish boundaries for their children where issues of "authentic blackness" threaten their upper-middle class success. Accordingly, this is also a study of upward mobility. Marriage has always been important as a marker of middle-class social status for whites as well as blacks. Whereas Lacy suggests class differentiation in the black community is important to constructing a distinct black middle-class identity, and explores and demonstrates "how different groups of middle-class blacks may conceive of this process in different ways" (Lacy 2007: 8), my own study picks up on ways that black families negotiate this race and class conundrum. Few of the studies to date have explored the process by which black working class and poor individuals move into and develop their own self-concept as middle class. To provide information about how study participants developed public identities or the cultural capital necessary to assert these identities, especially since they are from primarily working-class origins, Lacy explores their childhood and what they learned from their parents and where their parents' knowledge was not sufficient, how they constructed these identities without sure models (Lacy 2000). Lacy asserts that the majority of middle-class blacks in her study, first generation middle-class, did not acquire cultural capital from their parents as Bourdieu and other cultural capital theorists have asserted. Therefore they did not have models at home for how to signal their class position to

whites. Lacy provides examples of interactions the respondents have had with their parents that point to clear generational differences in terms of accessing the kind of cultural resources useful in managing interactions with whites. Respondents were compelled to figure out these negotiations on their own through their immersion in white colleges, workplaces, and educational institutions (Lacy 2007: 84). They figured it out through two socialization processes that facilitate the construction of public identities: improvisation[35] and script-switching[36]. This is important to my study since we hear a great deal of commentary about first-generation college graduates and therefore first-generation middle-class with very little understanding of what this means for identity construction especially around the convergence of race and class. Many of the mothers in my study, first-generation middle-class, are actively seeking ways to construct a black middle-class identity for themselves and their children with few models for how to achieve this goal successfully. They are dealing with race-class-and gender-based identities.

Karyn Lacy's *Blue Chip Black* (2007) does not discuss gendered identities at all as is evident in one example she provides of a black woman who says of herself when dealing with a racially charged incident, "… I forgot I was female and black." For my purposes, this is very important. Lacy explains in a footnote "this could have been a situation in which her white male co-worker would have been uncomfortable with any "girl" maybe having more to with "gendered stereotypes thank with race. However, the fact that he

[35] Improvisational socialization – they left the impression that they were obeying the rules when they were, in fact, circumventing rules and established practices. They confront discrimination most effectively by doing it indirectly (Lacy 2007: 84-87)

[36] Script-switching – refers to the strategies middle-class blacks employ to demonstrate that they are knowledgeable about middle-class lifestyles and to communicate their social position to others (Lacy 2007: 88-92).

references his own race as well as Michelle's suggests that gender is not the operative term and renders such a conclusion unlikely (Lacy 2007: 246). I would contend that the fact that the co-worker references race and gender means both are operative. Lacy does not offer any differences according to gender throughout her analysis. She says that she interviews both men and women (couples) as much as possible in her research design but this does nothing to increase her number of respondents. There is no discussion of how men and women may process the construction of these identities differently (or not) or see these distinctions differently (or not).

Carla Freeman's recent treatment of Afro-Barbadian entrepreneurial wives and their families pulls some of these dynamics together in her treatment of "partnership marriage" (Freeman 2007). While Freeman's study is one of few that seek to identify and define the partnership marriage ideal in the contemporary moment, Freeman suggests that for Afro-Barbadian women partnership marriage is a recent local formulation. Defined as a partnership in the economic sense in which each spouse performs a specific role and utilizes particular skills in the couples' entrepreneurial endeavors, it is also representative of a companionate model in which the couple is emotionally in synch and expresses love through the business and domestic partnership. According to Freeman the structural and emotional demands of the marriage are inextricably connected to the couple's business pursuits (Freeman 2007: 13). Freeman's understanding of "partnership marriage" draws our attention to the unique ways in which the history of African American women and work have had an impact on marriage ideals and helps us to connect issues of race, class and gender as they are experienced by various members of the African Diaspora whose national identities render their experiences very different

from one another but provides some commonality in experience and theorization since their historical identity as racialized "others" has considerable impact on their lives. Freeman demonstrates how the issues of respectability and reputation converge so that social mobility relies upon a merging of "lower-class" working-class practices and middle-class ideals. She states,

> Indeed, the new entrepreneurs I have studied are evidence that increasingly reputation-oriented practices are vital to middle-class livelihoods and a growing middle-class idealization of economic autonomy, even as respectability continues to be sought and romanticized in the realms of marriage (Freeman 2007: 10).

The U.S. attention to the public/private dichotomy is reminiscent of the Afro-Barbadian sense of reputation and respectability. In the same way that reputation has been synonymous with the masculine domain and respectability that of the feminine, American women have struggled with being relegated to and responsible for the private domain while recognizing that their access to gender equality is through the public domain. It was the unique status of African Americans as a racial minority in the U.S. that helped to formulate their approach to the dichotomy in ways distinct from the West Indian approach. In fact, Bart Landry states, part of the reason why black women have traditionally had an easier time working outside the home, even when their husbands did not want them to is because there was community support for work outside the home (Landry 2000: 135).

> As absorbing as motherhood was for black women is could not become a full-time occupation. While some white feminists and activists of the early nineteenth century agreed with this ideology, Mary Church Terrell states, "what most distinguished black from white feminists and activist was the larger number of the former who unequivocally challenged domesticity and the greater receptivity found for their views in the black community. As a result, while the cult of domesticity remained

> dominant in the white community at the turn of the twentieth century, it did not hold sway within the black community (Landry 2000: 70).

In the early twenty-first century it is young African American wives' parents, extended kin, and communal supports who critique them when they leave the workforce and stay at home with their children "a little too long." The community support remains. However, there is a disconnect between how the community defines and understands the path to racial uplift and what contemporary families are finding as they navigate race, class, and gender changes in the contemporary period.

Black Women, Social Mobility, and the Companionate Marriage Ideal

The women in *Race, Class, and Marriage: Black Women, Social Mobility and the Companionate Marriage Ideal,* continue to support the ideology of black women's motherhood created at the turn of the twentieth century and adopted by middle-class and working-class black women. According to the tenets Bart Landry developed to define the ideology, their movement away from work is temporary, they continue to pursue equality in marriage, they value employment as the key to equality in marriage and society, and fulfilling lives for themselves, and they do not purport that all women should stay home or suggest it is an ideal for working-class women (Landry 2000: 31). Contemporary women see their shifts in their relationship with work as a response to social conditions in much the same way that early twentieth-century black women created a response to racism and the cult-of-domesticity. African American women of the early twenty-first century are responding to set-backs in the enactment of family-life in the black community intended for the uplift of the black community similarly to the way black

women responded to the harsh social conditions that negatively affected black women and their families. They are not copying white families but there are similarities in experience as black, white, and other minority women create their lives within the confines of the American system that does not offer support for women and their families as they try to meet the economic and social needs of their families. While negotiating the demands of their careers and families middle-class black women seek to revitalize their commitment to marriage, family, and career, and, when it is not working for these women, career must take a back-burner, not marriage and family. In fact, sustaining marriage and family, as the companionate ideal suggests, becomes a marker of middle-class success as black women and their families achieve greater social mobility and the onus for sustaining marriage falls to black women who must make choices to sustain those marriages. Due to continued racial discrimination, although less blatant, black women also have to be concerned about the social status of their children and their ability to reproduce their race and class-based social location. Through strategic assimilation, deliberate and frequent interactions in black spaces, including majority black suburban enclaves, and the boundary making between themselves and the black lower classes, members of the black middle-class construct and maintain black racial identities and class-based identities as a matter of cultural survival.

Notions of class and status differentiation persist into the contemporary period and in many instances are marked by marriage and family decisions. At the heart of this study is recognition that a professional middle class position does mitigate some of the effects of race among African American professional women (African Americans only make up 13.5% of the U.S. population – Bureau of the Census 2007). However, I

demonstrate a varied family and work history and the contemporary persistence of racial discrimination create a unique context in which middle-class and upper-middle class African American women negotiate these aspects of their lives differently not only from white women as a whole, but working-class and poor black women as well. African American professional wives and mothers construct a race- and class-based gender ideology based upon their history with work and family in the U.S. that shapes the way they view and enact work, marriage, and family. In so-doing they draw much needed attention to the way in which race, class, and gender shape and affect the global ideal of companionate marriage and re-focus our efforts toward gender equality where the onus of managing, negotiating and sustaining marriage, career, and family does not fall solely on women.

Chapter 3 Race, Gender and Respectability in Atlanta's Professional Class

The metropolitan Atlanta area of Georgia is a uniquely[37] appropriate site to address the question of how African American professional wives negotiate and construct middle class notions of motherhood and work. Reasons include the historical and political legacy of the area; the social, political, and economic prominence of African Americans, as well as their distribution among the middle, working, and poorer classes (Bayor 1996). Atlanta, often referred to as the "black Mecca" (Whitaker 2002), because of its long-standing history of being an economically, culturally, socially, and politically strong arena for African American life, and a place where Black people have made some of the more definitive political statements about themselves as Americans. The African American communities of Atlanta have also included intellectual, politically sophisticated middle-class leaders who have fought for political and civil rights (Harmon 1996, Stone 1989), in addition to a strong grass roots base upon which much of that political and economic achievement depended. While not as recognized in accounts of Atlanta's success, black women in the community have also been at the forefront of the political, economic, and social development of the black community (Ferguson 2005, Hine 1997, Hunter 1997, LeFever 2005). In addition to its very rich tradition of African American middle class professionals, Atlanta is also the product of its southern heritage and while it boasts one of the largest populations of African American residents, its black

[37] Washington, DC, Raleigh-Durham, NC, and Houston, TX, have also garnered the attention of demographers interested in exploring the lifestyles of the professional black middle class. According to *Black Enterprise Magazine* (May 2007), these cities, along with Atlanta, are consistently ranked within the top five of the best cities for African Americans to "live, work, and play."

and white residents continue to be divided on the basis of race and increasingly by class (Bayor 1996, Keating 2001, Pomerantz 1997, Stone 1989).

Similarly, the black middle class in Atlanta, despite its wealth, has lived in segregated neighborhoods for most of the city's history. As newcomers move to outlying counties that are more integrated and diverse, there remains a very large faction of the population who choose to live in African American neighborhoods. In fact, South Fulton County, housing one of the largest populations of black middle class residents in the country and the geographic area where most of this study was conducted, has seen one of the largest growth spurts in the five county metropolitan area of Atlanta. In fact, 20,000 housing units have been approved for development in the area during the past few years and residents have benefited from new retail shopping developments and higher priced planned communities and subdivisions. Residents attribute the growth to Northeast and West Coast migrants to the area who are in search of a lower cost of living and a more relaxed lifestyle. Correspondingly, of the twenty-three families included in the study, fewer than half had at least one member of the couple that was native to Atlanta. Of those, only two couples had members that were both Atlanta natives. Furthermore only nine of the respondents lived outside the predominantly black southwest Atlanta - south Fulton County area, scattered throughout four metropolitan counties (Cobb, Dekalb and Clayton). Only five of these families reside in communities that are majority white; four in Cobb County and one in Dekalb County. While residing outside the southwest Atlanta/south Fulton County geographic boundaries, the region is a considerably important part of their lives. They commute into the area to attend church, visit with family and friends, and some come daily to drop their children off at school.

"The Starbucks on Cascade[38]" is where I conducted many of my initial interviews with the participants in my study. Although it can be noisy at times, it is a location that everyone in southwest Atlanta knows, especially those of the black middle class. Just off the "Perimeter" in a commercial district marked by two national chain grocery stores, a national hardware do-it-yourself store, and several small retailers, banks, and consumer services, sits Magic Johnson's Starbucks. Opened in July, 2000, the coffee shop known for its chic décor (often displaying local artist's works, a trademark mural of Magic Johnson, and posted flyers for community events) and nearly $5.00 cups of specialty "Venti" coffee, serves some of Atlanta's most elite customers. At any time from 7am to 11pm one may see a news broadcast personality, a city council person, the mayor, the editor of a major historically black weekly, local doctors and dentists, lawyers working out a deal, local writers and artists, a next door neighbor, or a long lost friend, and 99%[39] of the customers on any given day are black.

When Gia and I sat down with her specialty coffee and my chai latté, I knew she had moved to southwest Fulton County in Atlanta from Alpharetta (a north Futon County suburb of Atlanta) and one of the first things I wanted to ask her was what would make her move. Alpharetta[40], is home to great schools, beautiful homes, and well-known

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[38] Part of the 50/50 partnership with Starbucks and Earvin "Magic" Johnson's Urban Coffee Opportunities.

[39] This does not reference a statistical measurement but rather anecdotally refers to the fact that on most days there are no white customers, unlike most other Starbucks I have visited in the city. Since Starbucks most often acts as a hub for customers who live and or work closest to it this Starbucks acts as a marker of the demographic make-up of this community. It is overwhelmingly middle class African American. (Median income in 2000 was $36,349 with a population of 42,416 blacks and 1,013 whites) www.citydata.com.

[40] Public schools serving the City of Alpharetta are among the best in the nation. With approximately 89% of area high school graduates taking the SAT, as compared to 48% nationally, the average SAT score for Alpharetta schools is 1092, which exceeds the national average of 1026.As of June 2006, the median sale price of a home in Alpharetta climbed to $299,119. Over 77% of Alpharetta residents are employed in professional, managerial, technical, sales and administrative positions (U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census, Atlanta Regional Commission, and the City of Alpharetta Department of Community Development).

shopping venues and for those new to Atlanta it is usually marketed as a great place to live. She said, "We were tired of feeling like we did not belong," continued Gia. "We wanted the kids to grow up around people who looked like them but also who acted like us (black professionals). We love Atlanta," she said, "but it can still be racist."

This was the sentiment for many of the families that I met when conducting my research on African American professional mothers and their career and family decisions. While Atlanta boasted amicable racial relationships even through much of the civil rights movement when other major southern cities and towns endured very violent and public civil unrest, Atlanta's racial harmony appeared true as long as blacks lived in one area and whites in another.

> "I will never forget," continued Gia, "When we first moved here and we were traveling around the B&C[41] headquarters. [Gia's husband had just taken a position as an advertising executive with the company] We got a little turned around and were holding up traffic a bit, yes, I'll admit it…. Anyway, this white guy rolls down his window and says 'get out of the way n---'[42] I grew up in Indiana so I am used to a bit of that but I did not expect it. It is much more blatant here, their disdain for black people, and we did not want the kids to grow up around that."

The City Too Busy to Hate

Residential segregation of blacks and whites has not always existed (Thompson 2000:89). Prior to the turn of the last century, most of America lived in integrated neighborhoods in both the north and the south (Thompson 2000: 89). It was not until the "Great Migration" a period of mass migration from the rural south to the urban north that whites began developing segregated residential patterns in response to the huge influx of

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[41] B&C is a pseudonym for a major corporation headquartered in Atlanta.
[42] Referring to his use of the word nigger, a racial slur that carries a lot of baggage as it was the term most often used to refer to African Americans during slavery and the Jim Crow (racially segregated) south.

black residents[43] (Thompson 2000: 89). While Atlanta was positioned in the Deep South, it was not a part of the rural south, having boasted a great deal of industry as the southeastern terminus of the Western and Atlantic railroad. It was this railroad that provided the impetus and subsequent growth of the city of Atlanta As a result many people from the rural south were relocating to Atlanta.

Atlanta has long been a hub for regional activity. Following the Civil War, Atlanta became very popular in the South's economic redevelopment. With this came a growth in population as well. The city's overall population grew from 89,000 in 1900, to 150,000 in 1910. In addition, the city's black population grew from 9,000 in 1880 to 35,000 in 1900 (Mixon and Kuhn 2005). This surge in growth created pressure on city services, housing, and employment and at the same time, the city experienced the emergence of a growing black elite (Mixon and Kuhn 2005). All of these things created a tense environment in the city of Atlanta in which three factions began to develop, 1) whites, 2) poor and working class blacks, and 3) elite blacks. When the four days of violence finally came to an end following the Atlanta Race Riots of 1906, city officials, clergy, and businessmen called for an end because it was damaging the city's new image as a "thriving New South city" (Mixon 2005). As this quote suggests, it is has long been Atlanta's focus on the creation of wealth that has made it seek ways to overcome the appearance of racial adversity. Much of the solution has come in the form of residential segregation.

The key to Atlanta's continued segregation practices was not in outwardly discriminatory ordinances but rather in terms of land use, building types, and tenant

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[43] In 1870 approximately 80 percent of blacks lived in the rural south. By 1970, 80 percent of blacks lived in urban areas in both the north and the south).

categories that Atlanta's white leaders felt they could get by any Supreme Court rulings (Bayor 1996). The 1917 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that declared segregation ordinances unconstitutional resulted in the city adopting citywide comprehensive zoning which included and upheld the separation of the races (Bayor 1996:54). As the city was divided by housing type and resident, blacks received less land than whites for residential dwellings and a number of their neighborhoods were classified as industrial. Because of the rapid increase in the number of black residents, racial zoning was used to oversee the migration of the black community and to create buffers between white and black residential neighborhoods. Black residential sections were places near the central business district, near industry, and in parts of the west side. The north side was classified as the white area (Bayor 1996). Despite the fact that the courts struck down these laws and many others that were designed to circumvent the Supreme Court rulings, city officials remained cognizant of what sections had been designated as appropriate for black use and continued to think of these areas as the only ones suitable for Atlanta's black citizens (Keating 2001). In addition to creating commercial and industrial buffers between white and black neighborhoods, city officials began to plan Atlanta along racial lines indicating a racial boundary by the construction of certain streets and highways that were used as boundaries. They demarcated these areas with the use of name signs so that the same street may be called one name in a black neighborhood and another name in a white neighborhood (Bayor 1996).[44]

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[44] Ponce de Leon, just east of Atlanta's business district is said to be one such area. Several streets along Ponce de Leon have one name to the north and another name to the south indicating the north-south racial divide that has historically been a part of the city's landscape.

Following WWII, the need for more residential areas for blacks, along with federal policies to prohibit black movement to the suburbs, the 1950s and 1960s highway development and urban renewal efforts, and the continued black migration into Atlanta, all threatened to develop hostile race relationships and violence (Bayor 1996). The city began to look for land to accommodate the growing black population and decided to expand the boundaries for Atlanta's black residents using black owned land near land already designated for blacks like the Atlanta University Center area (Bayor 1996). White city leaders and black business owners worked together to approve the selected lands and to finance them. The willingness of the white city officials to accept some black expansion and the black community's push for more land was also the result of the growing black political presence in the mid- to late 1940s (Stone 1989).

As the black population grew and blacks moved farther west, they experienced even more subversive tactics. Garnering the political acumen of the black middle class to work with the white leadership, more and more "agreements" were made for black expansion into formerly white neighborhoods. To prevent blacks from accessing areas that were to continue to be white, Jim Crow policies allowed for the development of privately funded agencies that would work to buy back homes from black families that were in white neighborhoods and to buy-out whites who wanted to move out of black neighborhoods or who wanted to be protected from encroaching black neighborhoods (Bayor 1996).

Roads were also used to designate the boundaries between black and white neighborhoods. In some instance (as mentioned previously) an already existing street would be used as a boundary. However, as new roads were built, white-only roads would

be paved while roads in black neighborhoods would not, and a street already in existence would be paved only up to a certain point in the road. The unpaved part would represent an unofficial dividing line (Bayor 1996). Another tactic that has had long-term effects in the city's development is the use of closed roads. That there are few continuous north-south streets in Atlanta is the result of efforts to block black expansion, particularly on the west side. One of the streets blocked to prevent blacks from traveling into all white Cascade Heights was the cut-off of Willis Mill Road. During the late 1950's the major north-south road was cut-off and 100 acres of land were left undeveloped. To the present-day Willis Mill's two parts remain unconnected (Bayor 1996:66).

Pathway to the Black Mecca

> I came to go to [HBCU] business school. I had heard good things about Atlanta and I knew it was a good place for African Americans. I also figured that companies that were looking for strong black MBAs would go to an HBCU [Historically Black College and Universities] to get them. I got so many opportunities at [HBCU].
> - Cory, marketing executive, three children, Chicago native.

Race has always been very important in Atlanta. Much of the economic development of the city, the public-private coalition of governance, the housing patterns, and the expansion of the city limits have been fueled, at least in part, by the desire to segregate blacks and maintain white control of city government (a black mayor and city council does not insure black control of Atlanta city government). Clarence Stone's revealing book described the inner-workings of Atlanta's government in his widely acclaimed book, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta 1946-1988*. In the book he outlines the coalition politics that has sustained Atlanta in which the city is controlled by black electoral strength, demonstrated in the prevalence of black elected officials and city

government managers, and stable white economic power (1989). The combination of the two has guaranteed Atlanta's survival and growth through the demise of "Jim Crow", the deleterious effects of residential and economic "white flight," and urban deindustrialization, when similar cities have not been as successful and still others have tried to mimic its success (1989). Despite these important gains in seeming biracial cooperation, that herald income levels, education levels, and cost-of-living indexes more favorable than the national averages, Atlanta's poverty rate (27.8%), listed at number five according to the 2004 Census, falls just below Newark, New Jersey's (28.1). Additionally Atlanta is ranked number one in percent of children below the poverty level with an alarming 48.1%[45].

According to Stone, these large discrepancies between those who live in poverty and those who live in relative affluence exist not simplistically as a result of elites dominating public spending, but as a result of governing arrangements that structure a give-and-take relationship of inside deal-making that can only serve limited purposes. While black public officials and white business leaders in their public-private partnership, are not intentionally ignoring a large lower class, their mutually beneficial focus on the development of Atlanta's business industry and larger-than-life image as an oasis for the black middle class makes attention to the core central business district and the surrounding ring difficult at best.

Because Atlanta is home to the Atlanta University Center, the largest consortium of historically black colleges and universities in the world – Spelman College,

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[45] (National Urban League Policy Institute, 2006, http://www.nul.org/publications/policyinstitute/factsheet/PovertyFactSheet.doc accessed October 10, 2008).

Morehouse College, Clark Atlanta University (formerly Clark College and Atlanta University), tentative Morris Brown College, the Interdenominational Theological Center, and the Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta's corporate employees do not have to be home-grown and as revealed in *Race, Class, and Marriage,* many are transplants. As early as 1894, the black elite in Atlanta were not defined by pedigree as had been the norm in northern cities, but by "education, wealth, and respectability" all of which could be attained by affiliation with one of the Atlanta University schools (Ferguson 2005: 32). According to Ferguson, "these institutions were the training ground for the relatively large educated black middle class of professionals, white-collar workers, and business owners who constituted just over 6 percent of Atlanta's black work force in 1930" Ferguson 2005: 32). Today, a significant portion of Atlanta's black educated middle class (25%) are graduates of the Atlanta University Center schools, including five of the women who participated in this study and seven of their husbands. In fact, Atlanta's consortium of institutions produces and has produced some of the best known and respected leaders, thinkers, educators, entrepreneurs, professionals, athletes and entertainers in the country including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. David Satcher, Dr. Audrey Forbes Manley, Spike Lee, Samuel L. Jackson, Edwin Moses, Alice Walker and Marian Wright Edelman. Other notables have been affiliated with the schools including W.E.B.DuBois, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, and Benjamin E. Mays.

While many of Atlanta's transplants are graduates of the Atlanta University Center who have continued to reside in Atlanta[46], a significant portion were educated at northern predominantly white and historically black colleges and universities. According

[46] Mobility patterns are discussed in greater detail in later chapters.

to a report by demographer William Frey, at the Brookings Institute (May 2004), between 1995 and 2000, Atlanta's metropolitan area took in a larger number of college-educated blacks than any city in America, boasting 16% more college educated blacks in Atlanta than the national average. Additionally, black college graduates who moved to metropolitan Atlanta saw the fastest income growth, 22.6 percent between 1995 and 2000, compared with 13.4 percent in the rest of the country.[47]

Leaving the gates of the Atlanta University Center (AUC) one may be on any one of the streets named for some of Atlanta's most well-known and esteemed leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Reverend Joseph Lowery, and Ralph David Abernathy. Taking these streets from the AUC west or south leads into or adjacent to Atlanta's black neighborhoods. Taking them East, takes you back to "Sweet Auburn."

Sweet Auburn and the Birth of Atlanta's Black Middle Class

John Wesley Dobbs, the maternal grandfather to former Mayor Maynard Jackson, Jr. was affectionately known as "the Grand," the unofficial mayor of Auburn Avenue and the African American counterpart to Mayor William B. Hartsfield. He coined the name "Sweet Auburn" for the famed street which boasted black-owned businesses and an elite black community.

Dobbs, who began college at Atlanta Baptist Seminary, later to be renamed Morehouse College, was not able to complete his education due to the untimely illness of his mother during his first year of college (Pomerantz 1996). But he was determined to

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[47] (http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2004/05demographics_frey.aspx accessed October 10, 2008).

get an education nonetheless and studied and passed the civil service exam and became a railway mail clerk in 1903. Dobbs, a Prince Hall Mason[48], was an avid reader and was often seen "preaching" on the streets of Auburn Avenue about race relations, facts, figures and quotations often from Bacon, DuBois, the Bible or whatever noteworthy book he was reading (Pomerantz 2006). Dobbs was a member of Atlanta's rising black middle class and it was on and near Auburn Avenue that much of the economic and social capital was developed.

Auburn's notoriety is long established in the city of Atlanta. Although the street only runs a little more than a mile and a half, it has carried the reputation of being the "Black Peachtree Street.[49]" And even as blacks moved away from Auburn into newly opened residential areas on the west side, Auburn remained the spiritual center of black Atlanta boasting the three top businesses in black finance – Citizens Trust Bank (of which Dobbs was among the original board of directors), Mutual Federal Savings & Loan, and Alonzo Herndon's Atlanta Life Insurance Company. The Atlanta *Daily World*, the nation's first black-owned daily newspaper, was founded on Auburn Avenue in 1928. Several churches, prominent in Atlanta's history, are located along the avenue including Big Bethel AME, First Congregational, and Ebenezer Baptist Church (where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his father Martin Luther King, Sr. pastored). Sweet Auburn was also home to The Royal Peacock, the only entertainment venue open to blacks during segregation, and many black-owned barbershops, shoeshine stands, and small businesses.

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[48] Prince Hall Masons are a chartered organization of black masons founded by a West Indian named Prince Hall in Boston Massachusetts. Dobbs was elected the Grand Master of his lodge in 1932 (Pomerantz 1996).

[49] Peachtree Street is the most popular street name in Atlanta. It is the main north-south street and runs through the heart of the city's business district. Running from downtown, to Midtown and on through Buckhead, it is the home of many of Atlanta's major businesses, hotels, historical and municipal buildings. Peachtree Street is for Atlanta what Broadway is for New York

Several black business men erected their own buildings on Auburn Avenue, including Henry Rucker (businessman and politician), Alonzo Herndon, (Atlanta Life Insurance Company), Benjamin J. Davis (publisher of the *Atlanta Independent* newspaper) and John Wesley Dobbs, who erected the Prince Hall Masonic Temple in 1937 (Pomerantz 1996).

Like so many other black business districts around the nation, Sweet Auburn was as much a product of white strategies as it was black opportunity. Sweet Auburn's ability to thrive was linked to the segregated residential patterns that existed across the nation post civil-war and post-reconstruction (Pattillo-McCoy 1999). African Americans were forced to move into segregated areas and land zoning and fierce white opposition kept them in areas designated for African Americans. Just as segregationist policy makers used zoning ordinances, laws, and deliberate practices forced blacks into certain areas of the city that produced the Sweet Auburn's of the world, these same laws were used to systematically destroy black business districts. As African Americans conducted protests, sit-ins, and risked their lives for equal opportunity and equal access, what appeared as an answer to their prayers over time became the foundation for the demise of their business districts. Following the disinvestment in black-owned businesses accompanying integration and the movement of blacks from the over-crowded "black" districts as land ordinances opened more space for blacks, Sweet Auburn began to lose some of its charm. In addition, the construction of the "downtown connector" or I-75/85 in 1950, cut Sweet Auburn in half and placed an expansive viaduct between the business district and the residential district. What the "connector" did not do to Sweet Auburn and the middle

class community that had grown up around it, Atlanta's residential policies supported by black and white "flight" completed.

Cascade Heights: Sweet Auburn Relocated

> We just want the area to be self-sustaining, a community that is strong in the black tradition something like the old Auburn Avenue.
> –Cascade Corridor resident

Cascade Heights was a middle class white neighborhood until the early 1960s as blacks crossed barriers and buffers and moved farther into the white areas on the west side. The best-known example of a closed-off north-south road was the short-lived Peyton Road "Wall." When a black doctor attempted to purchase a home in Peyton Forrest, the residents of the white development secured approval from the alderman and then Mayor Ivan Allen to erect concrete and steel barricades. The barricades made the national news and tarnished Atlanta's racial harmony image. Amidst protests from SNCC, the Atlanta Negro Voters League, and several other organizations, the Fulton Superior Court promptly ordered the barricades removed (Bayor 1996:67).

The negative publicity, the protest by blacks, and the city's greater willingness to acknowledge and respect blacks' need for housing on the west side, stymied whites' attempts to blatantly halt black expansion on the west side. None of the highway/road barriers lasted as racial barriers. Blacks, particularly those of the middle class, jumped over all obstacles to their mobility – roads, railroads, commercial strips, industry and even cemeteries. This was in part because whites were not aware of the economic power blacks had through such black-owned institutions as the Atlanta Life Insurance Company,

the Citizens Trust Bank, and Mutual Federal Savings and Loan Association of Atlanta, which provided loans for mortgages (Bayor 1996).

As whites continued to leave Cascade Heights, blacks, most of them prominent city leaders, and professionals, continued to move in and the area became known as home to black Atlanta's old money. Having the bulk of Atlanta's middle class in one area meant a lot of political clout for the area. While Cascade Heights only comprises a portion of the black community in southwest Atlanta, it was the seat of power as many of the city's black politicians and leaders lived in the neighborhood. But the community has not fared completely well over the years and is just beginning to reap some of the fruits of its labor.

While Cascade Heights and its adjoining and inclusive neighborhoods have developed into some of the most prominent all-black neighborhoods in the country, the economic gains made during the black middle class' Sweet Auburn heyday have been long in coming. The black middle class as a whole has done well professionally, particularly under the administration of Atlanta mayors Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young[50], but the economic investment in the communities where they live(d) has not demonstrated their contemporaries' good fortune. Despite the fact that Atlanta has emerged as an example of Sunbelt prosperity, black prosperity as a whole, has been relatively negligible and the election of black mayors has not fully changed the problems of poverty.

Since the 1960s when blacks moved to Cascade Heights in large numbers and whites moved out, prominent members of the community have been soliciting support for

[50] The black middle class grew as a result of affirmative action and the Minority Business Enterprise program, designed to increase the percentage of city contracts going to black firms.

greater development and investment. Annexed into the city of Atlanta the same year as Buckhead (the city's elite white community and northern business district), 1935, Cascade Heights residents, including prominent city council members, past and current mayors, business owners, and educators have been trying to garner the same resources for the southern tip of the city as that enjoyed by the northern tip. According to residents interviewed and observed in this study, new developments have been slow in coming due to the fact that "whites didn't think we could afford it."

It was not until 1993 that Cascade Heights began to see some substantial economic investment with the first national-scale commercial commitment – the opening of an upscale chain grocery store. Following the success of the store, developers began to bring in new shopping centers, office buildings and upscale homes. But residents had been decrying the lack of restaurants, banking services, grocery stores, and retail centers for over ten years. Much of the hold-up was due to Atlanta's persistent racial segregation and the assumption that blacks in Atlanta could not support viable upper-income businesses or new home construction developments. Persistent in the delay in development was age-old Atlanta politics that continued to separate people by race and increasingly by class.

The Black Mecca is in the Suburbs

While most of my respondents live in zip code 30331, a city of Atlanta zip-code and a city of Atlanta address, many of these respondents do not live in the city of Atlanta. They live in unincorporated Fulton County. A visit to southwest Atlanta, just outside the perimeter reveals a peculiar space and place divide that continues to be contested today as

the area decides whether to be annexed into the city of Atlanta or to become its own "city". The residents in this unnamed space usually referred to as "Cascade," "Cascade Corridor," or "off Cascade" or by a host of individual subdivision names, have county services, pay county taxes, and vote in county, not city elections. They are not a part of the city of Atlanta so they have no formal neighborhood planning unit and all of the developments have their own community boards and new developments are free to go up as long as they are approved by the county zoning board and have the financial banking necessary. It is particularly interesting that the city of Atlanta weaves in and out of this area quite easily so that city and county boundaries are often hard to distinguish. Residents believe this area was left out of the city of Atlanta due to the fact that the area was largely uninhabited until the 1980s, and was a refuge for whites who were fleeing African American migration into Cascade Heights, Collier Heights, Peyton Forrest, and Greenbriar. Residential folklore presumes white residents felt they would have to be annexed into the city under African American government leadership so it was intentionally left out and not pursued.

Although there has been no confirmation of these allegations, sentiments along Cascade Corridor suggest it was and remains political. Following the incorporation of Sandy Springs, a predominantly white upper-middle class community, into a city during the summer of 2006[51], unincorporated south Fulton County raised the issue of city-hood for its own citizenry. Since the development of the area, Fulton County and Atlanta city government have been trying to negotiate the way the area is being developed. As

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[51] a long –contested battle between city leaders who wanted to annex the upper-middle class white neighborhood into the City's limits, and residents who have long garnered for their own government (Bayor 1996, Keating 2001)

unincorporated Fulton County, the city is missing out on much needed tax dollars from the area (especially as new home developments range in price from $190,000 condos to $750,000 homes). However, Fulton County must be in a position to handle new development with infrastructure, schools and services. The development in the area has led to a new fire department and police station, new schools, and new community performing arts center, all provided by the county. It is also linked to the southern end of Campbellton Road that connects with the Sandtown community and the adjacent Camp Creek community. In addition, the fact that the area is connected in space and mind with the pre-existing Cascade Corridor and the history of Cascade Heights, Peyton Forrest, and West Manor on the east side of I-285 (all a part of Atlanta City), suggests that what happens on one side of the Perimeter affects the other side.

Because the area had been a strong black middle class area previously and is now becoming the home of many upper-middle class African Americans, it is having more of an impact on the economic standing of the black community in the city of Atlanta and is drawing upper-middle class Atlanta transplants (like Gia and Cory). The development of the study area over the last ten years has made it one of the fastest growing real estate markets in the metropolitan area and the fastest growing high-end market. New residential housing is continuously being built. The development in this area has also drawn attention to the development of the entire southwest area of the city and to outlying cities on the southern tip of Fulton County (also southwest Cobb county and northeast Douglass County who have both experienced an increase in new construction and middle class black migration). The residential development has also spurred the

development of commercial areas in the neighborhood and has drawn key economic anchors and plans for more commercial development.

There is a drawback to the spatial organization of development in Fulton County. More African American middle class people are moving to the suburbs of Atlanta and not the city of Atlanta. While the middle class chooses to move to the outskirts of town, the lower class and poor are being re-located from the city core (yet again) in favor of a development plan that promised to move low-income citizens out of poverty-entrenched public housing and into more mixed-income communities. The Atlanta Housing Authority has named the plan the "Quality of Life Initiative" and "allows families… the opportunity to escape concentrated poverty.[52] What has happened instead with new developments inside the city is the creation of condominiums and lofts that are drawing middle and upper class whites back into the city. Some say this reorganization of the city's landscape is due to the fact that the city is preparing for the change in the political regime. Maynard Jackson's death in 2003 signaled the demise of Jackson's process to hand-pick a mayor and Andrew Young and Joseph Lowery are increasingly depicted as part of the senile old guard who will have very little political clout when Shirley Franklin's eight-year tenure as the first African American female mayor is over.

Disrupting the Image: Atlanta, Respectability and Black Womanhood

The economic progress of Atlanta's black community has been documented in many magazines and newspapers around the nation. It is part of Atlanta's gift of boosterism and self-aggrandizement. But Atlanta has not been the Mecca it boasts itself

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[52] AHA *Relocation Fact Sheet* http://www.atlantahousing.org/portfolio/index.cfm?fuseaction=qli accessed November 2008.

to be for all of its residents. Recent studies focused on black professional women have utilized respondents in Atlanta to explore the effects of gendered racism on maternal health and infant mortality (Jackson 2007, Jackson et al 2001), African American women with Type 2 Diabetes body size and shape (Liburd et al. 1999), and how relationships with food influence identity (Liburd 2003). In a study entitled "Race, Poverty, Affluence and Breast Cancer" (Hall and Rockhill 2002), aggregate-level data indicate that Black women in metropolitan Atlanta are of higher socioeconomic status than Black women in other parts of the United States. Black women in Atlanta are more likely to be college educated and living above the poverty level than Black women in other metropolitan areas, and the total fertility rate (as estimated by the number of children ever born per 1000 women aged 35–44 years) of Black women in Atlanta is lower than that of Black women in other major cities. Additionally, in some counties in the Atlanta metro area, Black women have a lower total fertility rate than White women (Hall and Rockhill 2002). According to *the Status of Black Atlanta Report* (Southern Center 2004), high education levels, high socio-economic status, and low fertility rate for black women may be attributable to the city's serious decline in African American marriage rates. According to their findings, the number of black married couples plummeted nationally from 68 percent in 1970 to 46.1 percent in 2000. In Atlanta, the decline has been as sharp, declining from 58.5 percent to 33.7 percent. Black married couples with children comprise only 12.4 percent of total black households in Atlanta compared to 30.5 percent for whites. This downward trend has been attributed to the low supply of "marriageable black men" given that there are 610 black males with managerial and professional jobs

for every 1,000 black women in the Atlanta MSA, and 464 black females for every 1,000 males in the city of Atlanta (Southern Center 2004).

While most of the data available brings attention to the effects of trends African American children and low-income families, explaining the increases in teen childbearing, high school dropouts rates, children in foster care, increase in welfare rolls, kids in poverty and incarceration rates (Southern Center 2004), this study draws attention to black middle class families. It pays particular attention to professional black married women and their families and how they negotiate family and career in a race and class climate that makes marriage, children and career strange bedfellows.

African American professional women's identities as wives, mothers, and workers have not always been a contradiction. As reviewed in chapter two, the "politics of respectability" was developed to resist the efforts of white supremacists to deny African Americans' the rights entailed in citizenship. White supremacist rhetoric of the day suggested African Americans did not have the capacity and therefore could not operate as full-fledged citizens. They used the economically depressed conditions blacks lived in and the fact that many could not find employment in the Post-Reconstruction period to support their claims. African American reformers, while seeking access to the voting booths[53], employment, health care, and basic services, additionally sought to "show" whites, particularly liberal whites who would fight for their rights, that African American were human and had deportment just like them (Wolcott 2001). While this tactic fostered racial pride for African American women, it also provided some degree of protection from white and black men, as black women continued to be seen, in contrast to

[53] Jim Crow tactics had been so successful that in 1868, 96.7 percent of Mississippi's black voting-age population was registered to vote and by 1896, the percentage was down to 5.9 (Shaw 1996: 246)

white women, as "mules of de world" with no sexual mores (Hurston 1991: 31-32). Preparing their daughters to be "respectable" young women with Christian mores, sexual purity, chastity, formal education, and community empowerment was meant to protect them from the hardships that awaited them in most of the jobs available to black women[54]. Black parents knew that black women's incomes were critical to the families survival and without formal education their daughters would have few alternatives to working as domestics and agricultural workers. Black parents also knew that economic and sexual exploitation was common in these fields and those who could, often at great sacrifice, sought to ensure this would not be the lot of their daughters (Shaw 1996). While this gender strategy worked to protect many women and provided ways for them to maintain careers and families, for black reformers it was also a way to demonstrate black women were just as virtuous as white women and by default, the black community must be also (Wolcott 2001).

In Atlanta, during the respectability era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the most prominent professional careers for African American women were teachers, librarians, nurses, and social workers who sought to "uplift" the black community and viewed their professions as a calling (Ferguson 2005). Lugenia Burns Hope, wife of Atlanta University president John Hope, was very upset upon learning that a neighbor had been ill and had died before she could do anything to help. A historian of the time recounted "Deeply grieving that at their very door and under the shadow of the

[54] In 1930, 77.5 percent of black women worked as agricultural and domestic laborers. In Atlanta, 58 percent of all gainfully employed black Atlantans, and almost 90 percent of employed women served whites as maids, cooks, in-home and commercial laundry workers, janitors, bellmen, porters, and waiters. They worked in hotels, office buildings, railroad stations, commercial laundries, and in private homes. African Americans filled almost all service positions in the city. For example, of the 13,245 female servants in Atlanta in 1930, only 265 or 2 percent were white. (Shaw 1996: 250, Ferguson 2005: 22)

College, a poor woman could sicken and die probably from the want of such womanly care as the neighbors could have given had they known, the College women said, 'this should not be; we should know our neighbors better" (Shaw 1996: 140). Hope used the tragedy and an elitist notion shared by black reformers, that since they were unable to escape their poor and unrespectable neighbors, they should uplift them. Working within her husband's vision of the University campuses serving as a black utopia shielded from the racist practices of the Jim Crow south, Mrs. Hope used her own sense of responsibility for the needs of the black community, as well as an elitist notion that "educational institutions" should not be "surrounded by a slum, ghetto type of community and environment" to drive the development of The Neighborhood Union, a social settlement program she co-founded in 1908 (Ferguson 2005:191).

The respectability reform effort of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after proving incapable of changing the political economy of black America gave way to the early underpinning of the Civil Rights movement, much of which was grounded in Atlanta. As racial uplift reformers began to realize, with the implementation of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal," getting the government to enforce the federal laws was the best way to deconstruct Jim Crow, the "politics of respectability" was a reform strategy no longer needed (Wolcott 2001, Ferguson 2005). However, the characteristics of respectability, which had been culturally transmitted for three generations of African American women who had risen to great professional heights and had been beacons of black progress, died hard.

Representations of respectable blackness carried the African American population into the Civil Rights movement as "respectable" young people in school and church,

became the reincarnated image of racial uplift and pride. Through the use of television images, these "respectable" preachers, teachers and lawyers, became the vehicle to reach the conscience of white America[55]. Political gains with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, opened avenues in education, profession, and lifestyle previously closed to most African Americans. However, this "honeymoon" period did not last long. Just as the Post-Reconstruction period saw a decline in the status of black Americans so did the Post-Civil Rights era. Marked by the rampant deindustrialization of largely black urban centers, a new gender strategy was required.

Marriage, Race and Class in the African American Middle Class(es)

Scholars have noted that there has been a change in the formation of family in all sectors of the American population. High rates of divorce, blended families, single-parenthood, non-marital cohabitation, and same-sex unions are forcing Americans to reexamine their definition of family (Besharov and West 2002). For the black family, these trends have been an ever-present concern over the last few decades and as the old adage suggests "when America has a cold, black America has the flu."

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[55] For example, a pregnant un-wed teenager, Claudette Colvin, was arrested for not relinquishing her seat on a Montgomery bus just nine months prior to Rosa Parks. The NAACP did not galvanize to support her case fearing the white public and city officials would not support the demonstration if there were any questions about morals. Colvin was reportedly raped by a married man. Again, a "respectable" seamstress just finishing a "respectable" day at "respectable" work, would garner much more public sympathy. According to E.D. Nixon, then leader of the NAACP in Montgomery said, Rosa Parks, who had taken an interest in the Colvin case, as secretary of the local NAACP chapter, was "morally clean, reliable, nobody has anything on her" (Baldwin and Woodson 1992). While leaders have been accused of class bias and elitism because Colvin was poor, it was clearly understood within the ranks of the NAACP that following the tenets of civil disobedience espoused by Ghandi, only a model citizen would be effective in their pursuits against white segregationists because anyone who was not beyond moral reproach would have set the movement back.

Changes in black women's relationship to work, influences of migration patterns, and shifts in the communal structure of the black community have had an enormous impact on the structure of black families. While black marriages, in comparison with white marriages, have been seen as more egalitarian in regards to gender roles and decision-making (Willie 1983, Landry 2000), black marriages have been much more difficult to sustain regardless of class location (McDonald 2006: 110). The history of black marital relationships in the U.S has been a major factor (Gutman 1976).

Studies showing the similarities between black and white families usually focus on a social class analysis. This perspective assumes that if blacks were not so poor and did not suffer from racism and discrimination, their families would be much like white families. While a simple class analysis finds this to be true, adding the complexities of race changes the experience (Lacy 2007). The participants in *Race, Class, and Marriage* are members of the black professional middle class and find themselves mirroring many of the mainstream American norms of middle class life. However, they remain on the periphery. The twenty-three couples highlighted here set their sights on significant educational and career goals and, along with support from family, friends, church, and community, they were able to capitalize on social, economic, and policy changes which propped open doors that had previously been only slightly ajar or swinging.

Their status in the middle class, however, is precarious. As a recent study by Benjamin Bowser demonstrates (2006), the black middle class continues to bare the brunt of economic shifts in the U.S. corporate structure as they are the first to be "eased" out of white-collar professional positions as corporations undergo cutbacks and mergers due to global shifts in the world economy. Where the white middle class is buffered by these

changes through socio-cultural capital and inherited wealth accumulation, the contemporary black middle class tends to be first or second generation college educated, having parents who were teachers, clerical or postal workers, and have been dependent upon government programs in education and on government jobs, most of which have been decreased or eliminated [56] during the past few Republican dominated administrations.

Having discussed some of the theoretical undercurrents that support our inquiry into the lives of black professional middle class families, we turn now to African American professional women class positionality as it is intricately linked to that of their husband's. This section explores the "post" (post war, post civil rights, post women's movement) generation of the black middle class who have been able to capitalize not only on their own middle class ambitions, but that of their parents. This section pays particular attention to the effects of the current political and economic structure of the U.S., how these structural forces and patterns are mitigated by race, and how "choice," becomes a marker of black upper-middle class identity. The respondents came from families that were not only able to choose to go to college, as going to college became the norm, but were also able to decide where they would go to college. Likewise a plethora of career opportunities were available to them to choose from, including migration to different cities (usually of their choosing). Respondents also found choosing alternative sources of income with an eye toward wealth accumulation as an important part of solidifying their position in the professional middle class.

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[56] Jobs have been affected, not programming.

Race, Class and Higher Learning

Eleven of the twenty-three women who participated in this study grew up in families where both parents finished college and nine of the mothers of those eleven achieved advanced degrees. These mothers are not descendants of the black bourgeoisie. They came of age as the civil rights era was taking root, many of them born in the 1940s. Many of the respondents mothers were privileged enough to be sent to college, a trend well established and documented for female children in African American families (see Paula Giddings (1984), Stephanie Shaw (1996), Bart Landry (2000)). However, their advanced degrees were achieved later in their careers, usually after they started their families and were most often in educational fields. The respondents highlighted here, many of them daughters of first generation college graduates and attendees, had no choice in whether or not they would go to college. Even for those whose parents were unsure of how they would do it, they knew that it was something they needed for their daughters.

Sheri, a financial analyst for a multi-national corporation headquartered in Atlanta is an example of this educational trajectory. “My mother always instilled ‘Go to college!’ There was no choice,” said Sheri. Her mom is currently an assistant principal. “She went to [HBCU] and we always went to [HBC] games she always taught us to get our education. She got her Ph.D. while we were kids and that kind of stuck with me.”

Cory grew up in a family where both her mom and dad graduated from the Midwestern [PWCU] in the early 1960s. They were Chicago natives and worked hard to “better” their opportunities by attending one of the most prestigious predominantly white college and university (PWCU) in the country. When it was time for Cory and her

brother to head off to college, Cory expected to be shipped off to the same or another PWCU. Cory shared, “It was just understood that people thought you got a better education if you went to a white school.” Cory had been properly prepared. She had gone to one of the top independent schools in the city. She was socialized with middle and upper-middle class black and white peers, and she had excelled in academia and sports. But Cory’s mother had other ideas. She told Cory to apply to some of the country’s top historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Cory chose [HBCU].

> When I was accepted I was still a little unsure because I did not know. HBCU invited prospective students for an overnight stay during their senior year of high school and I remember calling my parents and saying “just send me my stuff!” It was such a wonderful inviting place and I felt so comfortable and safe. - Cory, marketing executive, three children

Cory is not an anomaly. According to a recent study by Charles Willie and Richard Reddick (2005), HBCUs are more diverse (race/ethnicity, class, gender, religion, ability) than predominantly white colleges and universities (PWCU). They debunk stereotypes about African Americans by providing students with an opportunity to see the range of abilities people possess regardless of their race, class, or gender. Contrary to popular beliefs that question the practicality of HBCU’s, according to the United Negro College Fund, HBCU’s comprise only 3% of the nations institutions of higher learning (105) but graduate almost 25% of African Americans earning undergraduate degrees. Additionally, nine of the top ten colleges that graduate the most African Americans who go on to earn Ph.Ds are HBCUs. Fifty-seven percent of the women in this study earned their undergraduate degrees at HBCUs. In the following paragraphs we explore the choice of attending an HBCU for seven of the thirteen study participants who attended HBCUs.

Many of the respondents expressed the fact that they really had no choice in attending an HBCU in the same way that they had no choice in whether or not they would attend college. Many laughed over the fact that their parents said something like "I don't know where you are going to school but my check is going to [HBCU]." Kia related a similar story when her parents, who both hold advanced degrees, told her and her sisters they could go to college anywhere they wanted to as long as it was outside their home state, Texas, and was an HBCU. "I decided to go to [HBCU] because I wanted to be an engineer."

For many of these women and their families, this was a bold step. Predominantly white colleges and universities were actively trying to diversify and were seeking well-qualified minorities with scholarship incentives at a time when HBCUs were financially unable. While college costs were less expensive than they are now, opting for an HBCU often meant paying out-of-pocket or having college loans. Many parents who were in college when the Civil Rights Movement was taking place decided they would rather pay than have their children experience the isolation and marginalization they experienced. "My mom said she did not want me to be the president of the black student association," said Cory when her mother tried to explain her desire for her children to attend an HBCU. "Having gone to an HBCU and knowing that it in no way limited my opportunities or options, I will choose that for my children too."

What continues to separate this study population from previous studies that focused on the upper-middle class (Frazier, 1997 in particular) is the fact that these families are not part of the black aristocracy. None of the study participants were legacy HBCU graduates (preceded by a close relative), nor were they benefactors of white

philanthropists except as limited scholarship funds were disseminated. Keayba came closest when her older brother went to HBC on a math and science scholarship "I knew I wanted to go to a black school. I had been visiting Atlanta from a young age because my grandparents lived here. My high school was mixed 35% black a few Asian, and not many Latinos. Once I learned more about HBC, I knew that was what I wanted. Then Malcolm came to HBC, it was a no-brainer." Likewise, Jill relayed, "I had a friend who went to HBC and I visited with her. I went home in love."

Making a Way out of No Way

Even for those participants whose financial situation would have made attending any college difficult, there remained a need and desire to not only go to college but to go to one of the top HBCUs in the country. The mothers of two of the respondents, Gia and Nancy, completed college after they were born and then pushed their daughters to get their college education as well.

Gia

Gia, 42, is from Gary, Indiana, a small mid-western city near Chicago where the gradual de-industrialization of the Northeast and Midwest have worsened living conditions for most of the city's population. Gia knew she was going to college. It had been drilled into her head from a very young age as her family struggled to protect her from the influences that could lead her down another road. However, Gia was not raised by her mother and father. She was raised by her grandparents because her mother had become pregnant with her while in college and was not planning to marry her father. To

ensure her mother's completion of college, Gia's grandparents and aunts and uncles rallied around her and decided that her grandparents would raise her. Gia's mother and father never married and their relationship ended but Gia remained with her grandparents, not really knowing her mother until she was five years old. "At first I saw college as my way out of Gary," said Gia, formerly a computer analyst now a stay-at-home mom with three children.

> My grandparents had very little education. They grew up during the Depression and then migrated from the South to Gary. They worked really hard to put all of their kids through college so I was actually second generation college even though I was being raised by my grandmother who had a sixth grade education and my grandfather who had a third grade education.
> -Gia, computer science and information technology, three children

Gia was almost denied that opportunity when the Veteran's Affairs administration changed the rules for dependents' educational assistance. Gia was eligible for those benefits through her grandfather and Gia's uncle learned of the changes taking place. He learned that students already enrolled in college and receiving college benefits would not be affected by the changes. He enrolled Gia in junior college her senior year of high school so she would not lose the benefits. "My uncle was an educator and he saw what was happening to education benefits before the changes occurred. He came over our house one day and said we have to get you in college or you are going to lose your college benefits." The changes did not eradicate benefits to dependents but rather cut them significantly. While Gia's extended family could have supported her in college, the VA benefits made it much easier to support her in other ways. Gia went to the local junior college and completed her senior year of high school and then enrolled in [HBCU] via a combination of VA benefits, scholarships, and a small student loan.

Nancy

Nancy and Gia are similar in that they were raised primarily by their grandparents. While Gia spent all of her formative years with her grandparents while her mother completed her educational and career goals, Nancy was born to her parents while they were still in high school. Nancy was seven when her mother and father, after he completed college and she completed and got married. She spent most of her formative years as an only child as her parents waited until she was 17 to start having additional children. This resulted in the birth of twin sisters and a couple years later, a brother. As the only child of seemingly wayward parents, all of the family's hopes were placed on Nancy and she had a few hopes of her own.

Nancy would often go to the hospital with her mother who worked a lot and Nancy decided very early that she would be a nurse. She worked as a hospital volunteer and got to know a lot about the inner-workings of the hospital. "I loved working with people and taking care of people," said Nancy. "But one thing I noticed was nurses did all of the work while doctors made all of the decisions." Nancy purposed in her heart immediately that she would be a doctor and that is exactly what she did. Raised in the southwest, she went east for college and graduated at the top of her class from [HBC].

These families represent the African American new black middle class (Landry 1987). They come from families where college was expected not only because their families instilled higher education and "said so" but because they saw models of the benefits of higher education in their parents, their extended families, and their friends. In one of our many conversations about her childhood, Keayba said as early as kindergarten

she knew she wanted to go to college. After meeting a family friend who was a dentist she decided she wanted to be a dentist as well. While she did not become a dentist, Keayba says that early introduction possibly led her to a deeper interest in science and math and she became a physician. Recognizing the influence of professional blacks had on their own development, each of the respondents saw making sure their children had the same exposure essential.

Striving and Arriving: Political Economy of Class Mobility

Most readers versed in the difficulty the U.S. has had in defining class and the subsequent difficulty in defining and classifying the black middle class are most familiar with black middle class individuals being defined as "strivers." This segment of the black middle class was made famous by the New York City designation of a group of homes in Harlem that white collar, professional blacks owned and inhabited in the early 1910s and 1920s, known as "Striver's Row." These homes had been originally constructed for white homeowners but when the white population of Manhattan began to dwindle at the turn of the century (a result of "white flight"), the developer defaulted on the loans and they were returned to the bank. Anxious to sell the homes, they were sold to African American professionals at and above retail and became symbolic not only of blacks ability to garner professional and financial success, but also to attain the status of upper-class whites. The term was later reinvigorated when St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton described the majority of the black population of Chicago in the 1930s and 1940s as "strainers and strivers after middle class status." Since then the term has designated both groups at various times referring to those in professional positions and professional

status and those with ambitions for professional status. Whatever the true population identified by the term, it can be agreed upon that strivers represent those members of the African American population who aspire to professional upper-class status or have already "arrived." While there is a great deal of aspiration towards middle class status, the social and cultural ladder up can be fraught with tension and ambiguity. When public scholars like Michael Eric Dyson ask the book-length question *Is Bill Cosby Right or has the Black Middle Class Lost its Mind* (2005), those striving and arriving cannot help but be a bit confused about their relationship to the black community and as a result, turn inward, anticipating some backlash from those that have not "arrived". In many cases these are the people that the "strivers" have grown up with, are friends with, and in many instances call family and kin.

Migration patterns have an overwhelming affect on constructions of work, motherhood, family life and class identity. During the Great Migration, when thousands of African Americans moved from the south to the north in search of better jobs and better social and economic conditions, blacks followed a migration path that moved whole families, neighborhoods and communities to major cities in the north and south (Trotter 1991). The growth of Harlem and Chicago that are reflected in the use of the term "striver" to identify the black middle class has a great deal to do with migration patterns that brought new businesses and new opportunities for wealth. Following social mobility and migration patterns, people moved where they had family, friends, and acquaintances that could help them to find jobs, housing, and navigate the urban terrain.

Today, people, particularly professionals, move to cities where they may not know anyone because of a new job, a promotion, or company relocation. Studies show

that in order for employees of today to continue to make advancements in their careers they must be willing to move to different corporations in different cities, to travel as part of their job descriptions, and to do so relatively frequently. Gone, at least for the professional middle class, are the days of working for the same company from graduation to retirement. This shift is not only due to professional development and advancement but also to an unstable global corporate structure wherein companies are merging, outsourcing, taking over, and restructuring.

Most of the respondents in this study went to college outside their home state, went to graduate school or professional school in another state, got their first job in a different state, and then settled their families in Atlanta. Only eight of the women who participated in this study are from Atlanta, and only two couples include a husband and a wife who are both from Atlanta. Most people find it pretty spectacular to meet someone who is a native of Atlanta.

Myra

Typical of this migration trend, Myra is from New Orleans and her husband is from Maryland. They met in Washington, DC when they were both completing advanced degrees and later moved to Atlanta. She was 38 when we talked and was the primary care-taker for her two children during the week while her lawyer husband was at work as a private attorney for a major development firm. On the weekends Myra worked as an occupational therapist while her husband kept the children. Myra earned an A.S. in Science Technology, a B.S. in Health Sciences, an M.S. in Occupational Therapy, and has dreams of returning for her Ph.D. She never thought she would be an "at-home-

Mom." But when her husband, who was raised by his grandmother while his mother pursued her education and career, asked her to stay at home and "just try it," she could not say no and reports that she actually enjoyed it. With his salary at over $175k, Myra felt their finances could handle it and she could always return to work. When she was ready, getting back to work did not take long at all as she was able to locate a part-time position that would only have her work some weekends. "It was a perfect scenario although I miss all of us being together on the weekends to do things with the kids. But it is only until they are both in school, then we can have a more 'normal' schedule." Relying on a gender strategy that privileges the desires of her spouse and her spouse's career, Myra has reconciled the difference in the life she envisioned and the family life she has (Gerson 1985). Normal, however, is in the eye of the beholder. Myra lives in a subdivision where homes are priced between $400k and $600k, her children receive private swimming lessons in the subdivision's private pool, and her family's investment portfolio includes rental properties that net a total of $2000 per month, IRAs, stocks, and a well-funded 529B plan for the children's education. These demographics are not normal for the majority of the black population, not even for those who are a privileged few in the upper-middle class.

Scholarly studies and media driven surveys have conveyed a very different story for the black middle-class, a story that is contradictory at best with studies showing a decline in the black middle-class and a simultaneous public policy agenda that limits access to the middle-class and the ability to maintain middle class status. Jobs that used to provide entry and sustainability in the middle-class are declining, cost of college is rising, and other social mobility factors are harder to attain. In Atlanta, as with the rest of

the country, there is a growing wedge not between the middle-class and the poor but between the upper-middle-class and the middle- and lower-middle classes as they get left behind when professionals move to high-income suburbs (Lacy 2007). These trends affect men and women differently and for professional African American women often means "choosing" to stay at home.

"Choosing" to Stay At Home

While most expect to stay in Atlanta until retirement, a few see another move as a necessary part of career advancement in an economy that does not guarantee stable employment even for those who are not on the corporate fast track (Reisinger 2003). Most professionals expect a degree of job security even in an uncertain global economy. However, for several of the respondents, unforeseen events gave them a different perspective on their professional careers. Four women found themselves "choosing" to be at home with their children on a full-time basis when their careers got derailed by corporate changes (Gerson 1985). Gia had been out on maternity leave with her third child when her company, a major telecommunications firm for which she was an IT specialist, went through a major restructuring. "I came back from maternity leave and the next day they laid me off," Gia said. "They knew they could not do it while I was out on maternity leave so they waited until I got back." Gia said she and her husband decided she would stay at home for a while with their three children and maybe she would go back to work later. "The timing was good. We had just bought a new house, my husband was diagnosed with MS and we had two small children in childcare. We just felt like I needed to be home." Gia said they often talk about her returning to corporate America

for financial reasons but when they think about how much her being home helps with family management, the conversations about her going back to work quickly trail off.

Gail and Monica experienced similar setbacks. When Gail and Lawrence were weeks away from their wedding, they had just found out she was pregnant, and she was laid off from her management position with a business solutions firm. Lawrence and she decided that she should stay home until after the baby was born. “We were thinking I would stay home until the baby was about eighteen months.” Now, five years and two more children later, Gail is still at home.

Likewise, Monica, formerly in the computer technology industry, was laid off when her second child was first born and now has a preschooler and an infant at home. Monica and her husband Will worked for the same firm and were both laid-off when the company went through a major restructuring. Both Gail and Monica have since turned these career setbacks into lucrative business ventures. While home with her children, Gail was able to turn a voluntary position as a member of her homeowners association into a paid position as the subdivision’s part-time property manager. She obtained her property management license for the state of Georgia and opened her own property management firm, still from the comfort of her own home. Licensed as a real estate agent before she was laid-off, Monica is working to obtain her mortgage license and runs her own internet distribution business.

Kathleen Gerson (1985) and Pamela Stone (2007) discuss these constrained choices in their studies of career women’s family decisions. Both find workplace shifts have a big impact on these decisions and call for changes in public policy and the workplace.

Ensuring Career Security

Jill

Even for those who have not experienced any changes in their corporate environment, "side" jobs have become a major part of their retirement and wealth portfolios. When asked if they had any additional income outside their place of employment, all but two of the respondents stated that they or their husbands had another source of income ranging from cottage industry crafts to computer servicing. Jill and Paul have both tried their hand at entrepreneurship. Paul has his own computer installation and computer hardware firm and, until 1998, Jill was a co-owner in her own surgical medical practice. While Jill left her practice, it had less to do with the financial risks involved in private practice and more to do with her negotiation of work and family responsibilities. When Jill decided to sell her portion of her practice, she was caught in what's been termed the "sandwich generation." She explained,

> I was in private practice with another MD when I had my first child. I was a general surgeon. The income was very good. I had not really considered staying home. But after I had Dana, I left the private practice and went to the "Medical Center". My grandmother had heart disease and my mother had dementia and I had a new baby. I could not handle all of it.
> - Jill, general surgeon, three children

It made sense for Jill to leave her practice while they maintained Paul's business. "I could still make the most money and I have the health benefits," said Jill who is now a physician with a government health and disease management system, and a medical officer with the Commissioned Corps. "It's a lot more manageable than being in private practice where I was always on call and putting in a lot of hours," she continued. "And with Paul having his own business, we could work to support his business and I could still practice medicine."

The plan has worked for the most part. Paul has now been in business for himself for fifteen years and now makes approximately $70k/year. The combined household income of about $190k makes the income and the time a great benefit to Jill who lost a considerable amount of earning potential when she sold her practice. “I am very family oriented and the Medical Center allows for my family in ways private practice did not. It allows me to keep my family first and not sacrifice.”

Surviving significantly past the uncertainties of the first five years when start-up companies are their weakest, the couple has been able to build their family and their business but not much else. Paul dabbles in refurbishing antique cars for shows and re-sells but there is not a lot of income from the hobby and Jill feels at times there are too many cash expenditures. The family now has three children, with two in private school and pay $900/month for their tuition. As far as investments go, they have a few mutual funds but no college funds.

Jill’s is the type of balance most dream of. Paul’s business keeps him involved with the family and household and Jill’s provides enough flexibility and income to balance it all. Yet all do not have the same ability to develop this type of compromise and most are looking for the best opportunity to negotiate this balance.

Kia

Kia and Trevor met in college where they were both getting degrees in engineering at [HBCU]. Upon completion of their degrees, they accepted engineering positions with a top firm, got married, and moved a few times until they landed in Atlanta. Kia now says she does not plan to leave Atlanta. Upon arrival in Atlanta, the couple moved into one of the city’s premiere African American swim/tennis communities

including $400-600k homes with well-manicured lawns and luxury cars to match. They enrolled their children in one of Atlanta's best known private schools that focused on the education of African American children. They pay approximately $14,000 per year in tuition.

The two currently earn more than $200k per year from the engineering firm in which they are both employed and have recently begun investing in real estate and a multi-level marketing firm which together provide the couple assets worth $1.2 million and additional income totaling $110k through a real estate transaction.

Kia and Trevor have investment holdings in the form of stocks and equity and feel very committed to becoming entrepreneurs. "I come from a long line of entrepreneurs," said Kia. "My parents are business owners. They own real estate, a florist shop, and they have printed newspapers."

At the time of the interview, Kia was pregnant with her fourth child and planned to stay home after the child's birth. Her decision to stay at home had very little to do with being home with the child. She said, "I will not return after the new baby. I want to do a lot more for myself and my family than for this corporation. I have seen the light and I believe the answer is to be in self-employment, not using all of my talents and skills on the corporation."

Kia and Trevor are not alone in their understanding of the current financial picture, particularly for families of color. Being a highly educated, high earning family does not guarantee the ability to maintain status for oneself or one's children for future financial stability and opportunity. Scholars have documented several cases where black and brown people, even professionals, have been laid off due to company downsizing,

reorganizations, and the effects of globalization (Bradford 2003, Marshall 2001, Oliver Conley 1996, and Shapiro 1989). The old adage "last hired, first fired" still rings true for many people of color. While Monica, Gail and Gia experienced the fragility of their position in the workplace, Kia and Trevor may find themselves a bit more prepared. According to Marshall's article "Working while Black: Contours of an Unequal Playing Field," young African American professionals should prepare for the covert racism that often underpins these processes. "Take stock of financial resources. Conserve, save, invest and bolster resources in order to diversify options in the event of sudden "reorganizations," downsizing and/or unexpected job displacements" (Marshall 2001: 149). According to William Bradford, entrepreneurship may be the buffer for African American downward mobility. His 2003, article "The Wealth Dynamics for Entrepreneurship for Black and White families in the U.S." states that in the wealth distribution model, entrepreneurs (both black and white) control more wealth than workers (both black and white) and black entrepreneurs have more upward mobility and less downward mobility than black workers."

However, entrepreneurship is risky and whites are more comfortable taking the risk entailed for successful entrepreneurship and maintaining self-employment due to the historical wealth-disparity between blacks and whites (Conley 1996). The legacy of wealth inequality begins with the legacy of slavery but has continued as a result of the "historical legacy of low-wages, personal and organization discrimination, and institutionalized racism" (Landry 1987).

Sheri

Sheri and Clarence Jefferson are taking a stab at entrepreneurship but have found their niche in real estate. Clarence left his job as an administrator in the Atlanta Public School system to invest in real estate full-time. He had been dabbling in real estate investing for a number of years and once the investing income began to replace a large percentage of his teaching/administrator income, he decided to leave his career of thirteen years in education and buy, remodel, and resell real estate full time. The couple talked about Sheri leaving her career as a financial analyst for a major corporation headquartered in Atlanta but knew they needed to wait until the real estate business was also replacing her $75k/year job. With the birth of their third child Sheri was being pragmatic, "I would love to be home with the kids, especially because of my work hours, but we need the benefits." In fact, when income is not the perpetrator of a fear of risk, it is often the health benefits that factor in more than anything. While Sheri and Clarence are both second generation college graduates, their parents and they focused on getting a good education and good jobs. This was the perceived ticket to financial growth and success for African Americans following the civil rights movement and de-segregation of schools and employment. It too troubles the social mobility directives of the black upper-middle-class so that making entrepreneurial decisions often feels like a much too expensive risk.

Nancy

Nancy and Aaron's parents were counting on them to be successful members of the black professional class. Nancy, a physician and Aaron, a lawyer, were the perfect "Cosby" couple. Aaron, bitten by the real estate and construction boom taking off in

Atlanta following the 1996 World Olympic Games in Atlanta, left the law and started his own construction and development firm. Nancy continued to work as an internal medicine physician in a health facility for under-served populations. They built their own three story colonial style home in one of Atlanta's premiere gentrifying neighborhoods and while Nancy was pregnant with their second child they decided she would quit, focus on the kids, and help Aaron manage what was growing into the family business. "It was stress and believing in the dream that brought me home." That was three years and the birth of another daughter ago and while they struggle to establish the cushion they dreamed of when the two came together as a high-powered, high-earning, professional couple, they know their family is better off for it. "We would be done with our student loans at this point if I had stayed," said Nancy, "now I just work to keep my credentials and certifications up."

The Murphy's have had conversations about Nancy returning to work. They have two of their children in private school, they have a part-time Nanny who does some cooking and cleaning, and in addition to the properties they build and sell, they have a few rentals including an apartment that is attached to their home and a vacation home in Florida that they frequent for long-weekends and school breaks.

Scholars have conducted research on women with home-based businesses who see this as a way to negotiate work and family (Christensen). Participants in these studies have been largely unsuccessful finding that they often end up with a company with no growth or deciding to locate childcare so they can spend more time on company growth. The desire to supplement high-incomes through entrepreneurship is an understudied

phenomenon that is not unique to African Americans yet situates African Americans, in particular, in a complex discussion about generational wealth or the lack thereof.

I'm "Building" Me a Home[57]: Closing the Wealth Divide

What is particularly intriguing about the families in this study is the way in which real estate has become a major part of their retirement and wealth portfolios. Scholars' treatment of the wealth disparities between the black middle class and the white middle class demonstrate that real estate ownership and the equity therein represents a major difference in the two (Conley 1999, Oliver and Shapiro 1995). Real estate investing has been identified as one of the safest and fastest ways to build wealth with the least amount of capital. Buying and renting properties is a lot safer in unstable markets, especially when owners plan to hold the properties as rentals. With the real estate boom of the new millennium, a number of African Americans entered the real estate market. Of the 23 respondents in this study, ten have found ways to become real estate investors while continuing their careers; and three have turned their real estate investing into real estate building/constructing/and management firms like Sheri and Nancy. While real estate is an accessible and potentially lucrative means of entrepreneurship, it can also be volatile. In the age of gentrification, real estate speculation can be a dangerous sport and lead to serious losses as well as profitablegains.

Charlotte

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[57] From the Negro Spiritual "I'm Building Me A Home. Composer Unknown.

Commercial real estate is one of the ways that African American families are entering the real estate market. Through the purchase of large tracts of family land by large global retailers families are able to sell land that has been in their family for multiple generations. Charlotte's grandparents, Myrtle and Henry Davis, own land in what was a rural county in northwest Georgia. They grew up, along with their brothers and sisters in this area working the farmlands along with many other African Americans of the time. They worked the farm while pushing their children to complete high school and college. As family members who had owned property nearby decided to move for better opportunities outside the rural South, they sold their lands to Myrtle and Henry; these transactions provided the couple with a total of 63 acres of land, a large tract of which was located on a major thoroughfare.

Due to the growth in the area, rural farmland has become a hot commodity for new housing developments and commercial real estate. A global discount retail chain offered Myrtle and Henry several million dollars for approximately half of their 63 acres of land. The family had been approached previously but had repeatedly decided to hold out. By attracting this particular commercial retailer with active growth taking place near them, they were able to capitalize in a way that will change the wealth status of a few generations. Charlotte's mother is the oldest child to her grandparents and according to Charlotte, the multi-millions will be split between her mother and her four siblings with that generation being responsible for disseminating the funds to Charlotte's generation, Charlotte expects to receive a very large inheritance in the coming years. "I am in no rush though," said Charlotte. "I want to keep my grandparents and my parents here with me for a very long time."

Cara

Due to an inheritance upon the death of her father, Cara and her husband Anthony have profited in retail and commercial real estate. Cara's Dad, who had only completed two years of college, developed a pretty substantial real estate portfolio over the course of his life. Her mother, considerably younger than her father, trained and worked as a nurse. Since Cara's Dad was self-employed, managing his real estate business, Cara spent most of her time with him while her mother worked long-hours at a high-stress job as a nurse. Cara's Dad stressed that she get her education and she graduated at the top of her class in the magnet program at one of Atlanta's best public high schools, and then graduated from [PWCU] with a B.A. in Psychology. Cara then decided to enter the education field and completed her masters in teaching and in school counseling.

Cara and her husband met in a graduate school class while she was completing her degree in school counseling and he in school administration. The two married and moved to the suburbs of Chicago to take administrative positions. Cara and Anthony, both native Atlantans soon realized they did not like Chicago and moved back to Atlanta. While Cara's Dad stressed higher education and Cara's success in a career of her choice, Cara learned through him that real estate was a lucrative investment. When her father died in 2001, he left her one million dollars cash and the remainder of his real estate portfolio including five properties worth a total of $500k. Cara was 31, had been married four years, and had just had her first child. She was disillusioned with the impact she could have on the school system and decided to leave education. Cara initially took some of the properties and sold them to catch up on taxes and began rehabbing them for sale.

Now Cara spends her time raising her three children and managing a portfolio that includes residential and commercial real estate that on average pays them $350k/year. Cara's husband also left school administration and is now a consultant for federally funded tutorial and after school programs. His income also tops six figures and the two reported making approximately $600k/year including interest from investments in stocks, bonds, annuities, mutual funds, and hedge funds. Cara is also an owner in a multi-level marketing distributorship where she self-discloses making approximately $10,000/year. They own their home, paid cash for a $31k SUV, pay $975/month for their two oldest children who attend a private pre-school and grade school respectively, and have a live-in nanny whom they pay $2,000/month.

From Cara's perspective she is living the life and while she sees the value in her father stressing her higher education, she also understands the value of generational wealth. "My father was a real estate investor. I want to be able to take and build on that. He also led my studies and he spent a lot of time with me and I try to emulate that with my kids." Conversations with Cara revealed that she spends a lot of time thinking about generational wealth. "I want to be the master of my own destiny and I want that for my children." While Cara and Anthony have been able to build their own financial portfolio, Cara is acutely aware that her prosperity has grown exponentially because of the wealth her father left to her.

Cara's situation is precisely what Dalton Conley explores in his analysis of the effects of class and specifically generational wealth on the differences between black and white families (1999). "I remember learning in college that black women were the mules of the world," said Cara referring to the infamous statement made by Nannie in Zora

Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* "When I think of Black women I think of suffering and it should not have to be that way. Why should we have to suffer?" Cara and Anthony are very determined not to allow suffering in their family tree from their generation forward. Nor do they want anyone they know to suffer. Cara says she is drawn to the multi-level marketing industry because it provides opportunities and opens doors for anyone regardless of their education or income.

> I was able to make certain decisions based on my income and professional status and education. But my goal is to be like Tina and David Young. They are owners in "PlantRemedies[58]" and net about $900,000/year. They are black and I think about Tina everyday. She makes $20 - 30k per month residually.

Although real estate investing has been promoted as one of the easiest ways to get rich relatively quickly with the least amount of upfront cash investments, many have found that it is not as sure of a sure thing as they expected. While Cara has been able to stretch the wealth she accumulated from her father, Nancy and Aaron know that, their real estate development company could be more successful if they were not solely dependent upon it for their family's entire income. In fact, Atlantan's have, by many reports, been hit the hardest by shifts in the real estate market largely because of uncontrollable growth and fraudulent industry standards and practices (Crosby 2006).

In January, 2006, a federal grand jury handed down a 181 count indictment for 22 defendants charged with mortgage fraud (Crosby 2006)[59]. When federal authorities began investigating this case and others associated, Atlanta was number one in the

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[58] Pseudonym for a multi-level marketing firm where Cara is an "owner."

[59] In this case, the defendants were charged with having been fraudulent in the sale of over 40 residential houses and 230 condominiums in the Atlanta area, a multimillion dollar conspiracy. In most instances fraud occurs when homes are sold at an inflated price to "straw borrowers," who would then apply for a mortgage loan based upon the inflated price. This is called a mortgage "flip" and results in homes being sold at inflated prices. The straw borrowers are then paid a large sum out of the excess of the proceeds for the use of their name and credit.

mortgage fraud market in the U.S. As a result of recent efforts to crack down on these practices, Atlanta has dropped to number three on the list (as of 2005), but the market has suffered. According to the Atlanta Board of Realtors, many of the homes are being sold by lenders who took over the properties and a lot of resale inventory is coming from foreclosures.

Selena

Selena and John are real estate investors with rental properties and they have been hit by the shift in the real estate market. They currently have four rental properties but only three are full and two are on the federal government's voucher plan known as Section 8. "Our real estate investments are at a loss right now. They are really draining us," said Selena when I asked about her family's investment portfolio. "We have 401ks and IRAs and we are in the process of liquidating some assets to support our real estate losses." According to Selena, an investment that is supposed to be supporting their retirement plans is now draining them. While Selena and John expect their real estate losses to be a temporary situation, it does not change the fact that there is significant risk in a market touted as stable and secure.

Gia

While Gia's family income has suffered a bit from Gia not being employed, the family has ventured into real estate investments and now makes a sizeable monthly income from home rentals. "We are hoping to support the children's college education this way," said Gia. "We have only set up a college fund for Kevin (the oldest) and so I

am hopeful that the real estate will help us to put some money away for the other two." Gia's family also holds a few stocks and IRA's. But, they, like most of the upper income families I interviewed, do not expect any inheritances from their families and have not received much in the way of monetary gifts or large ticket items from their families that would help to provide additional cushion. "We paid for our own wedding, our parents gave us nice gifts, but most of our financial foundation was established by us and our financial future is dependent upon us."

Linda

Neither of Linda's parents graduated college. Her mother attended for two years and her father graduated from high school. But the couple was determined to have their daughter do well in school and placed her in a math and science academy in one of Atlanta's best public schools. While in H.S. she decided to become a dentist, graduated and enrolled in [HBCU] graduating with a B.S. in Biology. She returned to Georgia for her DMD and attended [HBCU]. Her husband Kenny, a native of Philadelphia had a similar trajectory and instead of going on to graduate school, took a position that placed him on an executive track to operating his own insurance services office. Financially, the couple is doing pretty well but would like to be doing better. They have a nice investment portfolio which includes rental properties, mutual funds, variable life insurance, a Roth IRA, and savings for the children's education, however the rental properties are currently not making any money and they have to pay the mortgages on them. They moved into an in-town gentrifying neighborhood to be closer to the city, work, and the activities they like to participate in but the neighborhood is slow to change

and neighborhood politics continue to keep amenities and schools less than adequate. As a result, they are spending $600/month for their daughter's private school education.

Real estate investing is one of the primary ways the current generation of middle class blacks are "hopefully" insuring their futures for themselves and their families. As social security dries up and the post-baby boomer generations are faced with how they will pay for their retirement, more and more families are tapping into real estate as one of few options that require relatively little starter funds and time commitments that can be managed around full-time careers. However, as the participants reveal, real estate is not always perfect and being placed in a position where you have to pay multiple mortgages on rentals or rehabs can quickly turn a nest egg into a financial drain[60].

There is a position within the upper-middle class that is marked by "choice" and comes full of dreams of wealth accumulation, children's safety and success, and a strong connection to "the black community." Developing the potential for wealth accumulation is another factor in black family decision-making that has a bearing on African American women's career decisions. Black women's incomes have long been important and even necessary to the economic stability, growth, and upward mobility of the African American community. We have already discussed occupational shifts and relational demands as important factors when African American professional women "decide" not to play their "traditional role in the black family and the black community, chapter four

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[60] While completing the writing of *Race, Class, and Marriage*, the global financial markets fell dramatically, and the country entered its longest recession in twenty years. The source of the problem was forecasted in the 2006, Grand Jury indictment as mortgage markets across the U.S. began to crash as lenders realized they were over-extending themselves. Several Wall Street investment banks closed their doors. The events sent a tremor from Wall Street to "Main Street" as several markets became affected. It will be interesting to conduct follow-up interviews to find out how these families faired through this financial crises. Preliminary follow-up interviews have already found many of the wives back at work full-time and real estate ventures closed.

explores how African Americans construct their own social roles in the black community and their shift to the more concerted role of wife and to the companionate marriage ideal.

Chapter 4 Professional Black Wives and Middle Class Mobility

Pregnant at fifteen in rural Texas, Nancy's mother had two options, marry the boy and lead a life of struggle and resentment, or turn her baby over to her mother and try to get on with her teenage life. It was 1970. Just two years after the assassination of civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and six years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law beginning the federal government's intentional efforts to end the tyranny of "Jim Crow". It was five years before the official end of the Vietnam War (1975), and three years before the Roe v. Wade decision which legalized abortion (1973).

"She wanted to be a nurse," said Nancy of her mother's ambitions during that time. "She also did not want my father to be unable to go to college." The two had been dating for over a year. They wanted to get married, but they, their parents, and their community had high expectations. Nancy's father, George, had already been accepted to a small HBCU and the community was galvanized behind his imminent success. Nancy's mother, Patricia, only two years younger, dreamed of college one day too and grew up in a family that supported that dream. Opportunities were opening for young African Americans and in the tradition of racial uplift, they each had a responsibility.

The choice for Nancy's mother was obvious. Nancy, always a bright, ambitious child, became both her maternal and paternal grandmothers' joy. It was no surprise then that Nancy would graduate with honors from her high school, obtain a full scholarship to one of Atlanta's premier historically black institutions and complete an Ivy League medical school.

> I was raised around strong black women. Even my mother, who eventually married my father when I was seven, finished nursing school and followed her dream. She had my twin sisters and my brother after

> they were married and so I was raised as an only child for a while with just my grandparents, my mother, and me. My grandmother, even though she did not have a lot of education, was a pillar in the community. I remember people coming to her for advice or asking her to hold their money. It was clear that she was in charge. I was raised like that. I think they wanted to give me an easier life in terms of work so they stressed education but they also wanted me to be strong and be able to take care of myself.
> - Nancy, internal medicine, three children.

Respectable "Bad" Black Girls

Economic conditions in the black community made teenage marriage an inadequate response to teenage pregnancy. Scholars, most notably, Joyce Ladner and Carol Stack, have demonstrated the fact that young mothers continued to receive support from their maternal kin and fictive kin when they were not married (Ladner 1972, Stack 1974). If marital unions did not provide enough economic support due to employment conditions for both black men and women, marriage was no longer a viable gender strategy particularly in a patriarchal structure that privileged the male "breadwinner" model over female.

Carol Stack's influential study of kin, fictive kin, and extended kin economic and childcare networks, demonstrated the ways in which black families worked together to provide economically and socially for their children (Stack 1997). While her ethnographic study focused on the life experiences of poor, marginalized and disenfranchised primarily female-headed families[61], she demonstrated the fact that African American families' strategies for survival included relying on one another for the

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[61] I am making a distinction here between the contemporary use of the term female-headed household and the previously used female-headed family because the current use of the term female-headed household suggests there is one single individual caring for the needs and well-being of the household. Whereas the previously used term – female headed family meant there may be a senior woman, her children, and one or more of her daughter's child(ren) living with her in her household. In most instances resources came into the home through brothers, uncles, boyfriends and other friends and kin (Ladner 1972).

necessities in life and much of this strategy was grounded in the historical community of slaves (Davis 1995)[62]. Likewise, Ladner's study which placed more emphasis on the effects of racism in the creation of an isolated black community illuminated the impact said racism had on the development of black womanhood. Focusing her attention on black female adolescents in a housing project in St. Louis, Ladner suggested that the harsh realities of living in a racist and sexist society where there are few "protections" for black girls and black women required a certain type of "strength" to ensure survival. Consequently, "black girls are encouraged, in their quest for womanhood, to be the hardworking backbone of the family, and to have children" (Ladner 1995: 102) . If these adolescents are to marry, marriage will come later (Ladner 1995:102). What is not explored in the study is the young women's expressed need to escape childhood, presumably to have some control over their lives. Yet, having responsibility for the child was a less desired result than having ownership of something and ultimately having someone to love and to love them back when they did not have anything else (Ladner 1995: 104) .

These and other studies of the seventies sought to refute the images and myths about the pathology of the black community and black womanhood. These controlling

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[62] In contrast, both E. Franklin Frazier (1939), and later Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965) (following many of Frazier's theoretical perspectives), began their analysis of the African American emphasizing the importance of unemployment as a cause of family disorganization among lower-class African Americans. However they both confused the cause with the effect and this confusion is what has stigmatized the black family and the black community ever since. According to Moynihan's controversial report, the deterioration of the Black society is caused by the deterioration of the black family. From his perspective, the slave household was the culprit due to the fact that they developed a fatherless matrifocal/matriarchal pattern that was carried through the generations because of the harsh effects of slavery on individuals and their children. He went on to say that the extreme urban and rural poverty meant that the Black family made little progress toward the "middle-class" pattern and the migration to the North reinforced social and familial disorganization. Moynihan further asserted that at the center of the pathology of the black community was the black family and he called for a national effort to strengthen the black family (Gutman 1976)

images, "enshrined in the consciousness of white America as either 'Mammy' or the 'bad black woman' in all their iterations,[63] have been developed at different points in U.S. racial history, beginning in slavery, as part of an ideology of domination and oppression. According to Patricia Hill Collins, they "… are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life" (Collins 2000: 69).

Carol Stack (1974, 1997), Angela Davis (1971), Niara Sudarkasa and Herbert Gutman (1976) are some of the scholars who worked tirelessly to counter the image of African American families as deviant and pathological from slavery to the present. Centering their discussion on African American women, Stack, Davis and Sudarkasa disrupted the public policy debate initiated by sociologists William E. B. DuBois (1899, 1903)) and E. Franklin Frazier (1939, 1950) and advanced by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965).

DuBois and Frazier, both eminent scholars, had conducted extensive ethnographic research on black communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Frazier's studies of African American communities described black men and women as

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[63] Since the American slave trade, Black women throughout the diaspora have been portrayed as the "Mammy" who took care of the cooking and the cleaning and the "massa's" children and was devoid of sexuality; and the "jezebel," the attractive, seductive black woman who men (even white men) could not resist. Over time, these images have been modified to accompany the political and economic structure of the U.S. resulting in a myriad of images that are derived from and based upon the "matriarch," the single black woman raising her children and emasculating her men; and the "welfare queen" the single black woman raising her family on government hand-outs and men whom she is not married to (Collins 1990, Mullings 1997). Recent additions to these images include the modern-day mammy who works in office positions and is well-loved and may wield considerable authority in her workplace, but knows her "place". Just as the "welfare queen" relies on public subsidies to support her laziness and hyper-consumption, the "Black lady" has gained access to middle-class success by taking public subsidies in the form of Affirmative Action (Lubiano 1992: 335). The "Hoochie" is a contemporary extension of the jezebel. She is oversexed, materialistic, and stands on the binary between normal and deviant sexuality. Her insatiable sexual desires make her use sex for whatever she wants. Since there are no boundaries, she encompasses lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered women who are deemed deviant because of their choice of sexual partners (Collins 2000: 83-84).

having lost whatever African familial traditions they may have had prior to their arrival on the shores of the Americas. Frazier also suggested that their female centered family structures were constructed during slavery and were deviant due to the fact that they were designed out of economic and social necessity. According to Frazier, the best opportunity for advancement for the black community was to assimilate into the dominant ethos and adopt European-American models of family life focused on the patriarchal model of male head and breadwinner and female subordinate and homemaker. While Frazier and DuBois drew attention to the high rates of female-headed households in African American communities, the importance that women assume in black family networks, and the persistence of black poverty, neither of them interpreted black women's centrality in black families as a cause for the social class status of African Americans. Both saw these family forms as an outcome of racial oppression and poverty (Collins 2000: 75).

According to scholars of the period, more black families were headed by single women than white families. This had been the norm historically. Despite this fact, an ideology that racialized female-headed families as one important cause of black poverty did not exist until the 1960s. Ironically, this discussion began amidst wide-spread black activism and the public depiction of black women as unfeminine patriarchs came at the same time that the women's movement advanced its critique of white male patriarchy (Gilkes 1983: 296, Giddings 1996: 327).

Creating the "Black Matriarch" and the "Welfare Queen"

Introduced and supported by the government, the term matriarch made its way into the public psyche via the report titled *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*

(1965). Written by New York senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The Moynihan Report," as it came to be called, argued that black women who failed to fulfill their traditional "womanly" duties at home contributed to social problems in black civil society (Moynihan 1965). Utilizing U.S. census data, Moynihan found an increasing number of African American female-headed families joining the welfare rolls[64]. Unlike the social scientists it referenced who were asserting that the structural problems rooted in a racist past were causing the demise of stable inner city families, Moynihan argued that black families were being placed at a disadvantage because they were designed around a matriarchal family form disadvantaged by slavery.

Anticipating a critique of his assessment of matriarchy, Moynihan assured his readers that there was nothing wrong with a matriarchal structure if that was the dominant structure. He suggested that what placed the matriarchal structure of African American families at a disservice was the fact that

> It is clearly a disadvantage for a minority group to be operating on one principle, while the great majority of the population, and the one with the most advantages to begin with, is operating on another. Ours is a society which presumes male leadership in private and public affairs. The arrangements of society facilitate such leadership and reward it. A subculture, such as that of the Negro American, in which this is not the pattern, is placed at a distinct disadvantage (Moynihan, 1965:23).

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[64] Prior to the 1960s black women had very limited access to "welfare" benefits. Welfare, as it is now commonly called, began as aid to widows under the Mother's Pension program. Between 1911 and 1921, forty stated passed the Mother's Pension program. By 1932, the program existed in all but two states (Abramovitz 2000). This program and the many configurations that followed it privileged women deemed "worthy" of public support. In a society stratified by race that privileges whiteness at the expense of blackness, this meant the program and its antecedents by and large benefited white mothers and blamed black mothers.

Moynihan, quotes Gunnar Myrdal's *American Dillema* when he states "America is free to choose whether the Negro shall remain her liability or become her opportunity" and suggests the nation's goal should be "the establishment of a stable Negro family structure" (Moynihan, 1965: 2). For Moynihan and many others both then and today, the answer to that more stable structure and the demise of all social ills affiliated with the African American experience is the proper placement of the black male in the black community structure. Accordingly, black men have been placed at a disadvantage, not only by the system that discriminates against them in employment, promotion, and wages, but also by black women who exercise reverse male-female roles, have higher rates of education, and earn higher wages in white-collar professional and labor positions (Moynihan,1965: 29). Based upon Moynihan's findings, this leaves the black male feeling inadequate and alienated and encourages physical and/or mental desertion. Moynihan's attention to children being raised without a father in a society that saw the male head as normative and stable, took center stage and worked to further demonize black women as domineering, promiscuous, and the root cause of impoverished conditions, low education rates, and high incarceration rates in the black community. By describing these conditions as a "tangled web of pathology," Moynihan developed an argument that has gained widespread currency into the contemporary period. These pathologies, all a result of the break down in black families, were later termed the "culture of poverty" and since their inception have been consistently used to describe the poor. According to historian of social policy, Mimi Abramovitz,

> the glorification of Anglo-American motherhood, the belief in childrearing as exclusively women's work, the narrow vision of proper single mothers as widows and the identification of worthiness with assimilation [into

> white-Anglo middle class society] condemned other mothers who did not live up to these ideals as immoral and unworthy of aid (Abramovitz 2000: 59).

Moynihan, Frazier and others into the contemporary period interested in the plight of the black community have been clear in scholarly articulations that the black community is not monolithic (Lacy 2007). Moynihan spoke to the fact that a rift was being created between the black middle class and its lower class counterparts (Moynihan 1965: 24). Accordingly the black middle class, following patriarchal family forms, are in many instances more stable than their white counterparts. Having benefited from professional and economic advances, middle class blacks are eager to conserve their advances and insure that their children do as well or better. In contrast, Moynihan's report argued that the other half of the black community that did not fall into the black middle class was being faced with "desperate and deteriorating circumstances" (Moynihan 1965: 24). Even still, according to Moynihan, the black middle class was not protected as middle class families often found themselves living in or near the "slums" of the less fortunate (Moynihan 1965: 24). While he acknowledges these and other aspects of the black experiences articulating the fact that there are multiple black communal realities, he maintains that at the center of the "tangle of pathology is the weakness of the family structure."

As stated previously, Moynihan was not the first to articulate a problem in the black community that found family structure and form the crime and black women the criminal. This perspective was developed during slavery and permeated the abolitionist and reconstruction periods when white and black women were defined differently. According to Patricia Hill Collins, black women have been oppressed in three key ways –

economically, politically, and ideologically (Collins 1990: 68). Beginning in slavery when black men and women's productive labor were exploited; their rights as citizens were nonexistent, and ideological qualities were used to justify their oppression (Collins 1990: 68). Collins writes,

> From the mammies, Jezebels and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes and ever present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, the nexus of negative stereotypical images applied to African-American women has been fundamental to Black women's oppression (Collins 1990:68).

The Moynihan Legacy and the Problem with Marriage

Moynihan's report, reifying many of the controlling myths and stereotypes developed about black people and black women in particular, garnered significant support and respect. Even within black communities, poor women tried to find ways to dispel stereotypes and become models of stable families for their children and their communities. This notion had an impact on Richelle, a thirty-five year old married mom of three who had aspirations to become a medical doctor but starting a family right after college meant making a choice.

> Mom had all four of us before she got married. They were married seven years and then got a divorce, but they had been together five or six years before they got married. I wanted to be married. I wanted to have children. I met my husband in college. We got married in '98, had our son in '99 and I knew I could not pursue medicine then. Growing up in my house, my father was not around but my mother put a lot of energy into us. Everything was about us, anything else was secondary. Even though I am married, that's how I am about my kids.
> – Richelle, homemaker, three children

Richelle grew up poor in a small town in Indiana on Lake Michigan. Her parents divorced when she was ten and she was raised in a single parent home with the help of her grandmother who was also a single parent and two uncles (mother's

brothers). Richelle's father was in and out of the workforce and often drank a lot. Her mother always says 'if they had been able to move, their marriage would have survived.' Richelle says her father did not associate with other people who were committed to family goals. She knew she wanted something different. Richelle was taught to marry but she was also taught to take care of herself and to take care of her children first.

> I focus on being a mother. That is what I know. That is the example I had. But I also knew it was important for me to get my education and to get married. But I did not know what to expect in marriage. Because my mother put so much time into us, working most of the time as a daycare worker and often part-time so she could be with us, I feel the same way. I am committed to spending time with my kids. My sister was home with her kids too but now she is working as a nurse only on the weekends. She picked a field where she could have flexible hours. We both worked our schedules for the needs of our family. How we were raised affects that.
> – Richelle

Richelle's family of origin, while female-headed, is a good example of how conditions of the poor urban environment had an impact on her family stability. Her mother's statement that her marriage could have made it had they moved, focuses much needed attention on the conditions in which marriages exist not the extent to which there are marriages. Moynihan's report has retained its importance as African American rates of divorce, never-married women, out-of-wedlock births, unemployment, incarceration, and drug abuse have risen in the last fifty years since the release of Moynihan's controversial report (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports 1998)[65]. Additionally,

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[65] See Kay Hymowitz scathing review of academic scholarship, media coverage, and public policy, *The Black Family: 40 Years of Lies* (Summer 2005) in City Journal of the Manhattan Institute. Additionally, eminent social science scholars like William Julius Wilson (1987) have been proponents of the *Moynihan Report* citing not his views but its unedited form (it was intended to stay within the Executive Branch), and the timing of its release as the culprit (Harvard University Gazette October 4, 2007).

policy changes within the last two presidential administrations suggest persistent remnants.

President William (Bill) Clinton's administration changed the welfare system after several years of bipartisan conversation around welfare reform which resulted in the dismantling of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and replaced it with the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). Not only did Clinton's administration change the nature of aid to families and children, it also began the work of using marriage as a welfare reform policy by speaking specifically to family formation initiatives and requiring states to reduce non-marital pregnancies, use marriage as a way to end welfare-dependence, and to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. President George W. Bush's 2004 initiative to promote marriage, particularly for low-income couples codified it as a "healthy marriage" initiative rather than marriage for its own-sake. Encouraged by Christian conservatives as well as liberal social policy analysts, President Bush articulated a vision in which couples would be provided federal assistance in sustaining healthy marriages through premarital education programs. The initiative would also use federal funds for specific activities that publicized the value of marriage through instructional courses that developed marriage skills and mentoring programs that used married couples as role models. In Atlanta this perspective is supported by the Georgia State Supreme Court. The Court sponsored commission on Children and Families says marriage reduces crime and poverty.

Marriage has long been important in the black community; if not in reality, definitely through the ideal, for some not marrying has been a means of protection, a way to save oneself from the pain of the relationship, the abandonment, or the loss of

independence. Kathy, 43, grew up yearning for a "normal" family. She was one of six children born to an unwed mother with only an eleventh grade education. When asked to describe her family of origin she said "wonderful, typical, all got along, and all still get along". I could tell she felt she had had a pretty good life as a child, but growing up in de-industrializing Detroit in a poor female-headed household with five other children had to be a little hard and she alluded to the struggles of growing up. Kathy went on to express the fact that she had gotten pregnant at the age of sixteen and was afraid of a life that mirrored her mothers.

> I was 16 and I had an abortion. I felt horrible, disgraceful. I felt like I had disappointed my Mom. She had us young and she did not want that for us. She wanted us to get an education and move on. She wanted us to have a chance. So she said, 'This is what we're going to do and she took me to get an abortion'. – Kathy, hotel management, one child

Married at thirty, Kathy did not have her first child until she was thirty-nine after having a miscarriage. When asked to describe her current family she had a big, warm smile on her face and looked at her son who was playing quietly in the family room and said, "Wonderful! I never experienced anything like this. I have love from my husband, love from my child. It is a feeling everyone should have."

Gail agrees with Kathy now but did not initially. As a young woman growing up in St. Louis, her perception of married life and motherhood were negative at best. She always knew she would be successful. She was very driven and describes herself as having a Type-A personality. But she was raised in a working-class family where her mother, never married to her father, worked all of the time and had very little time to interact with her five children. When Gail's mother remarried and that relationship proved to be rocky, Gail concluded that marriage was not a good idea and their

subsequent divorce sealed the deal. "There just weren't any good models of how to do marriage and family," Gail stated. The only other married person she knew was her aunt who, in her estimation, was a religious zealot and explained marriage as being submissive to a man. Gail said, "While I understand what that means now, as a kid I did not get it and I knew I did not want what she had… I was totally against being married." Gail saw herself as an independent ambitious woman and prior to meeting her husband, felt companionship would do, but marriage was not worth it. "We met at a party being thrown by a mutual friend. I had just ended an unhealthy relationship and I was not interested in starting another. But he was so persistent, a real gentleman, and really cute." Gail, thirty-nine and Lawrence, thirty-seven married two-years later when she quit her consulting position that caused her to travel a great distance for long periods of time and the two moved in together. Now, they have three children and though its taken some negotiating, she feels it's a pretty good fit and there are finally some models for other people. "If I had known us back then, I think I would not have been so resistant and given him such a hard time."

"Aria of the Matriarch[66]": The Strong Black Matriarch: Afro-Caribbean Articulations of Motherhood

Gail's ability to think about remaining single is rooted in the African American experience that centers motherhood. While the previous section drew attention to the fact that this centrality, even into the contemporary period, is a result of the remnants of

[66] "Aria of the Matriarch," comes from the anthology by Cecelie Berry, *Rise Up Singing: Black Women Writers on Marriage*. She develops this heading in honor the black matriarch in her various manifestations: uneducated and proud, a society matron, a political prisoner. ..in all her forms, she is both a quiet sufferer and an inexhaustible warrior" (2004).

slavery, "Jim Crow" segregation, de-industrialization and racialized stereotypes, Moynihan's ability to characterize black families as pathological is due to the fact that they have historically been "mother-centric."

Careful not to minimize the ways in which black motherhood has been inaccurately portrayed either as a pejorative image of the black matriarch or an idealized image of the strength of black mothers, research within Africa and the African Diaspora has repeatedly suggested and demonstrated the centrality of motherhood in black women's lives often alongside marriage but often without it. Scholars have articulated several formulations of motherhood for African, Afro-Caribbean, and African American women. There is extreme diversity between these African-Diasporic groups linked by the Atlantic Slave Trade as well as intra-group diversity. What scholars have recognized as a prevailing under-girding theme in African Diasporic motherhood is the mother-child relationship.

Several theories have been offered to explain this theme. Scholars often assert that the pre-slavery polygamous nature of the West African marriage made bonds between husbands and wives less of a priority and placed the emphasis on mothers and children (Rodgers-Rose 1980). Additionally, the consanguineal nature of the African kinship structure meant that women were more dependent on their natal kin (mothers, grandmothers, sisters) than on their conjugal kin (husband's kin) (Sudarkasa 2007). Post-slavery, the restricted opportunities of black men have made it difficult for them to achieve the breadwinner role in their families thus making marital bonds brittle at best and reinforcing black women's focus on the mother-child bond and dependence on maternal kin (Hamer 2001, Stack 1997 [1974]). Moreover, black women have been

placed in a caring role within the black community in which it has become a part of the family structure to show responsibility for a wide range of unrelated "others." Their caring role has in many instances extended from their own families and communities and has been used to form the core of their existence and economic survival (Davis 1995, Rodgers-Rose 1980).

Kalia grew up in this type of family and remembers it fondly. She and her brother were born to an African American mother and an Ethiopian father, both Ph.D. students at [HBCU]. Their parents never married. Kalia and her brother grew up in a single parent family with a lot of family and friend support and one of her mother's friends lived with them until she was ten.

> There were no men around until I was ten when my mother married my step-father. It was my mother and my Godmother and a bunch of friends. We lived in DC and when my brother went away to boarding school it was just us girls. We were culturally involved in DC. We went to museums and plays. I was in ballet, piano and Girl Scouts, and I had lots of great opportunities. I stayed busy and active. We didn't have a lot of money but we had a very close relationship with my Mom's mother and she would offer my Mom support. I grew up with a single black woman and children. There were very few male images and very few marriages.
> - Kalia, nonprofit administrator, one child

Responding to the Moynihan Report's characterization of the black matriarch, Paule Marshall, noted Afro-Caribbean woman writer whose classic novel *BrownGirl BrownStones* ([1959], 1996) discussed the life of Barbadian immigrants, challenged white articulations of the black matriarch. Refuting this construction as another in a long line of stereotypes meant to turn adaptive strategies into deviant aberrations, Marshall suggested,

> The white man suspects we have something going for us that he doesn't have anymore. How shall I define it – an expressive quality, a strength that comes from suffering, a feel for life that hasn't been leeched out of us

> by a fat, complacent, meaningless existence; a basic health in the midst of the sickness around us, and that once we are given the opportunity for this to come to flower, we would be a formidable people (Marshall 1966: 297).

Anthropologist and Barbadian scholar, Carla Freeman, found similar constructions in her treatment of Barbadian women informatics workers. In Caribbeanist constructions, long held to be deeply matriarchal and celebratory of the combination of black motherhood and work, "the black matriarch [that] equates femininity with strength, resilience, and fortitude" is at odds with the "respectability" image that promotes "formal marriage, monogamy, and a 'modest' demeanor (Freeman 2000:10). The geographic distance between the U.S. and the Caribbean is bridged by social theorists' careful articulations of the ways in which black womanhood and manhood have been formed through real and ideal gender roles and strategies. Caribbeanist anthropologists have long studied motherhood and work as part of their ethnographic treatment of Afro-Caribbean nations yet these articulations have also fallen victim to ideologies that privilege Euro-American dichotomies. Given the history of slavery in the region and the colonial European past, an ideological construction of European "ladies" and African "workers" has been a predominant gender construction.

Matrifocality is the term coined by Raymond Smith to explain the absence of men in Afro-Caribbean households in the research on Afro-Caribbean working class families in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, the term has gone in and out of usage and has most recently been used interchangeably with female-headed and woman-headed households as these households become identified with poverty in the era of global capitalism. While matrifocal was coined to describe women, in their role as mothers, as the focus of kin relationships, female-headed and woman-headed households take on a more negative

connotation. In matrifocality, while men may be present, they are viewed as marginal to the kin relationship, whereas in woman-headed or female-headed households men as husbands are absent (Blackwood 2005). These households, whether termed matrifocal, female-headed or woman-headed have all been depicted as non-normative at best, and pathological at worse due to that fact that there is an assumption of a male breadwinner in the middle-class Western construction of marriage, family, and household or at least an active male participant (Freeman 2000).

Theoretical perspectives on reputation and respectability do not translate perfectly from the Afro-Caribbean to the African American context but they are instructive. They differ most because Afro-Caribbean men and women, are the majority population in their nations, and having more control over the ways in which images and stereotypes are appropriated or misappropriated.

Converging Respectability, Containing Strength

The analysis of Afro-Caribbean respectability and reputation converge within the U.S. context with Freeman's articulation of the "responsible high-tech worker" or "Pink-Collar Bajans" and Collins' discussion of the "black lady." For Freeman the image of the high-tech worker is that of

> the dependent daughter who diligently preserves the moral fabric of society, here, through hard work… For this version of femininity, as for that of the matriarch, family and home are the motivating force behind the women's responsible performance as workers, and thus, wage work is interpreted solely as an expression of familial obligation… a vital contribution to household survival (Freeman 2000: 111).

In similar vein, the "black lady" refers to middle class black women who represent a modern version of the politics of respectability. According to Collins, the "black lady" is

another version of the modern mammy (Collins 200: 81). She is the black woman professional who is characterized as working harder that everyone else but knowing her place. However, she also resembles aspects of the matriarchy thesis – competing with men so she is seen as less feminine, having jobs that are so consuming they do not have time for a man, and too assertive so despite the fact that they want a man, they cannot get one to marry them" (Collins 2000: 81).

Christine Barrow's study of Barbadian men's stereotypical constructions of black women suggests the perceived accuracy of these constructions. "Most argued that with greater educational and occupational opportunities, women are becoming aware of their potential and wanting equality with men. Some went further expressing concern that women are progressing faster than men, and want to take over" (Barrow 1986: 50). Since gender ideologies are constantly in-flux, new modes of control must be incorporated.

Marking the difference in locale, Barrow's Barbadian men suggest government action relating to the rights of men while Collins African American context calls these stereotypes the "politics of containment" where new surveillance controls perpetuate the same old power arrangements (Collins 1998: 42). According to Collins, since segregation no longer exists in the same ways, power arrangements are exerted through surveillance. This surveillance operates in three different, yet interrelated ways. For poor black women it operates by making individual women feel that they are being "watched," either by the state or by stringent, inflexible work environments. Surveillance also operates via media representations that depict the success of selected high-achieving black women like Oprah Winfrey, who has been called a present-day black mammy due

to the ways in which her viewers – middle class white women – described their perceived relationship with her (Harris and Watson 2007).

> Middle class women who want to stay in these spaces must work hard to make certain they are not confused with poor black women, while at the same time paying close attention to the appropriate text as they are showcased as the "Black Lady Overachiever" and contrasted with the "Welfare Queen" (Collins 1998: 42).

Roles and Role Models

The women in *Race, Class, and Marriage* are resisting the myth of the strong black woman and seem to favor the respectable lady construct. They think about what it means to articulate their class position. They seek to develop, within these controlling images, some creative expression for defining themselves as mothers, wives, and career women. They experience fractious images of themselves from their workplace and the society at-large, but also, and often most painfully from their friends and family.

> There is a need for black female doctors to be visible. For young black girls this is really important. But you reach a point where you decide what things need to be done. Yeah, you want to contribute but that is what contributes to the imbalance. For particularly white/caucasian women some of them are driven and want to excel in their careers. Those who choose careers like that don't have family as a priority. Those who do take family as a priority make decisions on the front end that take family into consideration, For Black women it is an attempt at doing it all that forms the imbalance. You want to be a model and break the stereotypes but you also have your own children and your husband that need your time and commitment. I think this is one of the reasons for me to do something differently for my career [balancing career and family] it's because I have been an over- achiever and to do things with excellence and some of that is based on feeling the need to contribute.
> - Keayba, family physician, two children

Keayba and other moms in the study often felt conflicted about their status and privilege as members of the African American middle and upper middle class and sought

ways to mitigate the influence of stereotypes about black women and black families. When asked about the perceived effects of race on their decisions about career and family, the respondents in the study spoke at length about the remnants of overt racism and the impact of covert racism. Respondents were particularly aware of the media's portrayal of stereotypes of the black community and how those stereotypes, although enduring, are more insidious in contemporary popular culture which sensationalizes a hyper-sexualized and violent ghetto culture and tags it black. Kalia said "I am always mindful about the way I carry myself. About not feeding into a stereotype and trying to improve the stereotype. [At work] I try to focus on girls who are my mirror to show them they could be me in 10 years. It does not have to be the stereotypical image." Similarly, Jill said, "Race definitely affects my decisions. I am probably more cautious because we are criticized more often. I try to teach the children to be critical thinkers because we are being watched more carefully."

The families in this study formed their own formal and informal communities in response to overt and covert racism. They often selected predominantly black neighborhoods for their half-a-million dollar homes, black schools for their children, and reified the truism that Sunday morning at 11am is the most segregated hour in our nation (Lacy 2007). The fact that these homes are often in gated subdivisions, the schools are often private, and the churches are massive cathedral-like structures with multi-million dollar budgets cannot be overlooked. The respondents in this study do not always see themselves reflected in images of the black community and are often penalized for this seeming displacement. As a result, they often feel a sense of ambiguity and intermittent ambivalence; particularly as it applies to their "integration" into the mainstream

American context, their relationship with the rest of the black community, and their ability to enculturate their children with black middle class values. By exploring select respondents' residential choice, school choice and self-proclaimed identity and participation in black culture, some aspects of black and middle-class identity formation are explored.

Sara, an African American mom of two, who frequented one of the stay-at-home mom support groups that was predominantly white, said she wrestled with locating a space within the group that resonated culturally. While she went to the meetings, she never went to the social events that were designed to help the women make friends outside the meetings. "I often feel out of place and I feel like people are wondering why I am out at a playdate or strolling through the park in the middle of the day." She stated,

> When I was in graduate school, I did not want anyone to think I was an unmarried pregnant student or even think I was an undergraduate student. I worried about that everyday as I took the shuttle to class. Once my fingers had swollen and my rings did not fit anymore, I started wearing my rings on a chain around my neck, kind of like high school girls do when their senior class boyfriends give them their class ring. I just did not want to be seen as the stereotype.
> -Sara, stay-at-home mom group participant, two children

The images of the "Welfare Queen and the Black Lady Overachiever" lock professional black women in an uneasy space. They are simultaneously asked to denounce their associations with the plight of poor black women, often members of their family of origin, and denounce associations with their white professional counterparts. Both obscure the workings of institutional power. The story of Leanita McClain is a good, though unfortunate, example of this fractured relationship. Fully aware of the fact of racism, sexism, and classism, and the ways

in which they converged in her life, McClain, a prize-winning black journalist, took her own life after dealing with years of negotiating a race- and class- specific gender strategy. In the end, she could not reconcile these multiple identities and felt alone in her struggle to do so (McClain and Page 1986).

While class tensions have been duly noted, scholars have also located some circularity in the relationships between African American elite women and poor women. Notions of respectability have been a large part of the gender ideology of African American women regardless of class since the ethic was often presented in response to negative stereotypes of black women. "Respectability" for African American women was more than an attempt at the assimilation of white bourgeois feminine ideology into a black female identity. African American women used it as a survival strategy and to re-define themselves. Where whites saw black women as hypersexual and unchaste, notions of respectability made them and presented them as "proper women" with high sexual mores and values. Where the perception of African Americans as unclean and unkempt was the norm, black women focused on cleaning their homes better than they did for the white women that employed them. And where the assumption was that black families were deviant and black children were criminal, black women focused on teaching their children the value of an education that would allow them to achieve professional status that would in essence protect them while simultaneously uplifting their communities (Harley 2002, Jones 1985, Landry 2000, Mack 1999, Shaw 1996, White 2001).

"My grandmother was an awesome woman, said Gia when we discussed the influence of her parents' attitudes on her identity as a woman. Gia was raised by her grandparents because her mother was in college and her father was married to another

woman. Her grandparents worked hard to protect her from the brutal opinions of her community surrounding her birth. Gia says she learned respectability, humility and compassion. "She [her grandmother] was humble and cared for my grandfather. He was a womanizer but she dealt with it. I could not do what she did. She was dedicated to the church. No matter how people treated her she would show so much love. She kept a smile on her face. She is a hard act to follow. No matter what was going on she would read the Bible."

The convergence of middle class respectability with working class aspirations defended African American women against sexual harassment and rape, and imparted racial pride. According to Wolcott, "black women throughout the twentieth century have used respectability to enhance their reputation, ensure social mobility, and create a positive image for their communities (Wolcott 2001).

Becoming Respectable Wives and Mothers

Just inside "the Perimeter" (the term used by residents to denote the circular interstate highway that goes around the city of Atlanta), as you pass one of the city's most prestigious black land-owning areas, sits a large church. The church was established in 1927, but this location just inside the Perimeter is new, built in 1994, and it mirrors the church's ascendance from a middle-class white congregation to an upwardly mobile, professional, middle-class black congregation. This church was home to one of the stay-at-home mom support groups observed for this study.

This group claimed as its mission: "a biblical focus for women who were transitioning from professional careers to being stay-at-home mothers." This was

uncharted territory for many of these women, who had left their expensive educations, careers, and salaries behind to be full-time caretakers of children. Many of these women's mothers had worked full-time (often as single parents), managed a family, and encouraged their daughters to excel academically, to obtain prestigious careers, and to create two-parent dual-income families so they could have a better life than their parents. But the women who met in this room once a week were among the ranks of a growing number of African American women who are choosing to stay at home with their children. They found themselves in an ambiguous position, trying daily to decipher whether they were doing the right thing, with no clear model for success.

They, like the women of the black women's club movement, took refuge in biblical teachings, and Victorian ideology. According to Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "while adherence to respectability enabled black women to counter racist images and structures, their discursive contestation was not directed solely at white Americans; the black Baptist women condemned what they perceived to be negative practices and attitudes among their own people" (Higginbotham 1993: 187).

The lesson for the day was "The Treasures of the Proverbs 31 Woman," a text based upon the scripture, Proverbs 31: 10-31, in which King Lemuel's mother admonishes him to look for a wife who is a "virtuous woman, a rare treasure". Seven women present at this meeting: a physician, a fundraising manager for a national non-profit research center, a hotel management executive, two teachers, a small business owner, and a cosmetologist. All of the women were college graduates, married, and considered themselves stay-at-home moms. The group was moving chapter-by-chapter through the book *Beautiful in God's Eyes* that included a study guide. Looking through

the book, I was amazed at the fact that the author, Elizabeth George, offers words of encouragement in the first chapter for women who may think it is too hard to meet this standard. "First of all," she says, "Proverbs 31 was spoken by a woman" (George 1998: 12). This statement is meant to dispel any idea that the pursuit to become a virtuous woman is the "personal and unrealistic fantasy of a man" (12). Second, the quest to become a virtuous woman is attainable (13). This focus on biblical understandings of marriage and motherhood was meant to provide models for women who had none. Of the seven women present at the meeting, only two had been raised in married couple households their entire formative years. This had a tremendous impact on women who were ambitious career women but had few if any role-models for positive marital relationships. In addition, these women saw their relationship to the church and their commitment to marriage as emblematic of a stable middle-class lifestyle that few had known as children. The uncertainty of their position as newly minted respectable ladies was reflected in the women's discussions.

Following the opening pleasantries and an update on families and careers, the meeting began with the topic for the day. The group leader (one of the members, who had volunteered to lead) began the meeting with the topic "friendship." The biblically based workbook used to guide the class introduced the story of Nancy and Ruth and the friendship that developed between mother- and daughter-in-law. As the respondents talked about the text (Ruth 1:6-2:23) and explored all that Ruth had given up for her mother-in-law, the conversation quickly turned to a more personal discussion of the relationships the women had with their mothers-in-law, which in turn moved to the fragile relationships some of them had with their mothers. They discussed how they had

been raised to think of family life in one particular way, but were working hard in their own marriages and as mothers to do something different. Nancy, whom we met earlier in the text, was one of the women I met through this support group. She had been attending the support group meetings for over a year and felt they helped her reconcile her upbringing with her desire for a stable, peaceful family.

> It's like my Mom does not want me to be happy or she thinks I am an idiot. She thinks my husband is taking advantage of me or something because I try to be the type of wife God wants me to be and she does not understand that . . . to her it is about being in charge with my Dad . . . for me it is about being submissive and letting my husband do what he needs to do for our family and supporting him.
> -Nancy, internal medicine, three children

Many of the women could relate to what Nancy said. They suggested that there were generational differences in how they and their mothers understood their roles as mothers and wives. Kathy, a hotel conference manager with one child said:

> Our mothers did not know how to be wives. They were focused on their careers and their children, but they did not realize that not having a supportive model of marriage would negatively affect us and how we raised our families. We just have to stay prayerful.

Prayer is a major part of all twenty-three of the respondents' lives. While they are not members of this particular support group, or any other religiously based support group for mothers, they are all members of formal religious organizations and all attend regularly. Many organize their family life around church activities, choir rehearsals, Bible study, and Sunday School, and keep in touch with many of their friends and family members through church attendance.

> It was the Kingdom Hall that brought everything back together for me. When I got pregnant with Marlena, I was a teenager and I was not married. In the Kingdom Hall, you have to repent to be allowed to come back. I was not sure I wanted to go back but I knew if I decided to [come back]I would not be able to waver and I would have to be more committed

> to the doctrines than I was before. I had sinned before and had an abortion. I knew if I was going to go back I had to really change my life and focus on my relationship with God. Once I made that decision it was automatic that my children would too.
> - Natalie, independent school science teacher, three children

Natalie George credits her being Jehovah's witness with centering her role as a wife and mother. She is thirty-six, a mother of three, and a middle-school science teacher. Natalie grew up is a difficult family situation. She never really knew her biological father, and the man who raised her and she knew as her father committed suicide. Natalie and her mother, a native of rural Georgia and one of six children, struggled to make ends meet. While Natalie's mom wanted her to be successful in her adult life, her primary focus was on raising her daughter to take care of herself, whatever that entailed. As an only child with a single mother who worked full-time, Natalie admitted she had a lot of independence. As a bright young woman who showed considerable promise, she had several mentors who helped her along the way. "People were looking out for me and making sure I was going to be successful. When I got pregnant there were so many people who were disappointed in me but they encouraged me to keep going because they could see my potential."

As a Jehovah's Witness, Natalie is outside the black church tradition referenced in the discourse of respectability. However, like her contemporaries, she grew up in a black communal environment that placed emphasis on manners and morals and knew that marriage was important to her image of herself as a professional woman. She did not grow up with a strong model of career and marriage and struggles to reconcile the two.

Each of the women discussed their own predicaments as daughters of "strong black women" who expected them to be independent—able to take care of themselves

and their children—first and foremost. From the slave past, to the Great Migration, to contemporary structural inequities, there has been relatively little concern over men who may or may not be present. For black mothers, teaching their daughters to be "strong black women" was more about basic survival than gender equality. Black mothers have traditionally felt that they must maintain a delicate balance of preparing their daughters to survive in interlocking structures of race, class, and gender oppression, while rejecting and transcending those same structures.

The model of the strong black mother was what sustained many of these women through college, graduate school, or professional training, often while they faced subtle racism and sexism. However, what researchers are beginning to understand is that the "strong black woman" myth can also be detrimental to African American women and their families because it expects them to single-handedly take on all of the ills that plague their communities[67].

Black People Live Here? 21st Strategic Assimilation and the Black Class Divide

Two large brick walls on either side of the drive emblazoned in gold trim, gold lighting, and gold lettering announces the name of the subdivision. As I pass the signage and turn into the subdivision I am immediately greeted by what appears to be a "smaller" home with a parking lot, a pool, and a playground to the right. As I continue down the stretch of road, massive brick homes sit on either side with neatly edged yards and

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[67]It is not my intention to liken the experiences of the women in this study with those of Leanita McClain. Nor do I want to give the impression that professional black women are depressed or suicidal. I include Leanita McClain's life story, as others have, as a useful example of how the workings of institutional power are obscured and how powerful they can be even when they are known (see McClaurin 1992, Malveaux 1994, Feagin and Sikes 1994, Collins 2000, Benjamin 2005).

trimmed hedges. "Keep straight, through the stop sign. Turn right at the first street on your right. We are in the cul de sac to the left," I recalled Sheri telling me when she gave me directions to her house for the interview. I could hear the distinct sound of water sprinklers gently spraying water to and fro through underground irrigation systems, the faint laughter of children playing and balls bouncing, and birds chirping in the trees. It was a beautiful early summer day in Atlanta. As I pulled up to the house, which took up half of the cul de sac by itself, I parked in the driveway leading up to the three car garage. I could see Sheri's five-year-old son through the ornate lead glass door as he seemed to be expecting my arrival. I walked up the path, sprinkled with bikes and scooters and waited as Larry ran to the back of the house to get his mother. I could see the deep colors of the great-room through the front door and was excited about seeing the rest of the interior. Sheri came to the door and gave me a warm hug and smile. "Come on in," she said. "Excuse the mess." I could not see a mess. The house was immaculate, warm and inviting with all of the right variations of mahogany and auburn, with gold accents. "Would you like a cup of tea?" Sheri asked after she had sent her curious son and older daughter to their rooms and sat down to feed her six month old infant daughter. I accepted and continued to look around her home as she busied herself in the kitchen. The windows in the back of the house gave a panoramic view of the "backyard," which was much more than a yard and since the foundation of the house sat on a slight hill, the views included an expanse of beautiful blue skies rising above the treetops. "Wow!" I exclaimed to Sheri. Is all of that your land. "Yes," she replied. "Remember I told you my family was here?" I remembered the conversation in which she informed me that her family had just returned to their homes from their family reunion but I assumed it was a

small affair since it was at her house. We sat down to talk over the wonderful aroma of spiced tea and one of the first questions I asked was “how did you choose this neighborhood?” For Sheri and most of the respondents in the study, being in a professional black community was a huge selling point.

Being from Atlanta, I have often had instances in which friends were visiting from elsewhere, and after I had driven them around the city of Atlanta, they were always astonished at the neighborhoods and homes where African Americans lived. In fact, tour companies who specialize in providing their customers with an understanding of the city’s African American history will most often include the King Memorial, the Atlanta University Center, and Atlanta’s southwest corridor as must-see attractions. As discussed previously, while Atlanta has boasted a strong black elite for several generations, an increase in northern migrants in the 1990s created an influx in the black professional population and brought new housing construction and new retail outlets to the southwest and south Fulton areas of the city that had been predominantly and historically black. While many of the respondents had come to Atlanta for college or graduate school and decided to stay, some were previously mentioned career re-locations. Charlotte, who graduated from [HBCU], said she had college friends who were from Atlanta and she had always heard about southwest Atlanta so she knew if she ever got back to Atlanta that was where she wanted to live. “I heard good things and I wanted to live close to downtown without heavy traffic. Being able to live around black professionals made it ideal.”

Cara and her husband Anthony, Atlanta natives, moved back to Atlanta from Chicago. “We wanted to be in an all black neighborhood with positive, progressive,

individuals. There is a lot of history in this neighborhood and a lot of shakers and movers. We lived in an all white neighborhood in Chicago. It is a great feeling knowing you can live in an all Black nice area. I thought all cities had that having grown up in Atlanta, but that is so far from the truth. It is healthy for kids to grow up here. The new suburbs of Chicago do not blend races. They are predominantly white. There's nothing wrong with it but for us, that's not what we wanted." These sentiments were echoed by Keayba, a transplant from Ohio. "We wanted a predominantly black neighborhood. We liked the house and the general area with other African American families, like-minded, similar in terms of career types with resources. And also close enough to things we enjoy doing."

Arguing if Brown vs. the Board of Education is experiencing major setbacks at the hands of those it should have benefited the most, scholars waiver on the trend toward "self-segregation" that has cropped up among professional African Americans. Charles Willie, noted professor of education and urban affairs at Harvard University, found in his work with the African American middle class that many thought they would be able to move to the suburbs and experience integration. What they have found instead, in many instances, is a general sense of displacement in which they are unwelcome at best and shunned at worst. Willie states that, in many instances these families choose to withdraw from what feel like a hostile situation and withdrawal often means when a space arises in which you can separate yourself with likeminded people you do so (2003). Lacy echoes this sentiment when she coins the process strategic assimilation in which the black middle-class has access to predominantly white spaces yet continues to consciously retain the values and culture of the larger black community. In this way members of the black middle-class are able to construct and maintain black racial identities (Lacy 2007).

Scholars interested in race and racism and the mental health effects of each agree with Willie and suggest there is nothing wrong with this type of separatism citing the fact that many ethnic groups have racial enclaves. According to Robert Woodson of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, it only becomes something negative when black people do it (1989). When white people self-segregate it is looked upon as a natural demographic with no inquiry into why there are no blacks attracted to that neighborhood. Prince Georges County in Washington, DC, featured in Karyn Lacy's book on middle class black identity, gives the appearance in the census that it is an integrated community. A more careful look reveals the fact that while the county is approximately 50% black and 50% white, each has its own ethnic enclaves and the only depictions of integration is in the form of predominantly white neighborhoods with a few black families. One rarely finds a situation in which African Americans are the majority or even 50% as studies have shown that as soon as a neighborhood reaches a tipping point of about 20% black, white families begin to relocate. While scholars and laypersons see a psychological and social benefit to middle-class African Americans in being in a race and class segregated community, Massey and Denton suggest that economically it does not make much sense. In their book, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Under Class* (1992), they support much of William Julius Wilson's argument that black racial segregation, manufactured by whites, remains the primary cause of black poverty and disadvantage. They suggest that even for the black middle class, racial segregation places African Americans in a disadvantageous position because they end up living in neighborhoods that are far less advantageous. As whites withdraw, housing values decline, and tax hikes are needed to maintain the same

level of public service. Correspondingly, as housing values decline, the "like-minded" neighbors professional middle class blacks thought they had begin to shift. A reoccurring anecdote since Atlanta began experiencing a downturn in the housing market is the story of Section-8[68] tenants renting homes in half-million-dollar subdivisions because the owners are unable to sell and need a guaranteed source of income to maintain the mortgage or risk foreclosure. While respondents do not see anything inherently wrong with Section-8 tenants, they are cautious about a host of cultural capital cues that are at risk and the fact that any rental units in their subdivisions decrease housing values.

For many of the women in this study, the accessibility, primarily because the community is African American, places their neighborhoods and their property at risk. For mothers who are struggling to maintain a cultural divide between middle class respectability and the media-hyped glamorization of the ghetto, self-segregation could create even more of a threat since the black middle class has always included a range of incomes and professions. Selena, a financial analyst with the federal government, articulated her displeasure with the changes she has seen in her $350,000 neighborhood. She expected a quiet enclave with like-minded neighbors but fears the entry of people with less money and less cultural capital will have a negative effect on her family and her property values.

> I wanted to be in a neighborhood with people like us, African American professionals. I wanted to be with upwardly mobile black people. What I was looking for and what I have are two different things. There is no way

[68] Section 8 - The Section 8 Rental Voucher Program increases affordable housing choices for very low-income households by allowing families to choose privately owned rental housing. The public housing authority (PHA) generally pays the landlord the difference between 30 percent of household income and the PHA-determined payment standard-about 80 to 100 percent of the fair market rent (FMR). The rent must be reasonable. The household may choose a unit with a higher rent than the FMR and pay the landlord the difference or choose a lower cost unit and keep the difference.
- http://www.hud.gov/progdesc/voucher.cfm

> to avoid the 'ghetto'. I thought I was in a more sterile environment but it's not that at all. It is a fairly new subdivision. Real Estate investors got in early.
> - Selena, Financial Analyst, three children

Denise felt the same way when her community pool was overrun by young boys who did not live in the neighborhood and would jump the wrought-iron fence to get in when none of the homeowners were around. "They have this bravado about them and this entitlement like it is theirs but we worked for it and then they want to come in and tear it up."

Likewise, Gail had to call her local police department on her next door neighbor's son who would have friends over while his mother was at work and sit on the front steps and smoke weed. "They are not going to bring my property values down," she exclaimed! Gail and her husband set up a neighborhood watch program, put a code on the community pool gate, and are thinking about having an entry gate installed at the entrance to the subdivision. Gail, Selena and Denise have each expressed some discomfort with how elitist and, in some respects, racist their statements sound. They contend, however, that their interest in maintaining their communities does not detract from their allegiance to and responsibility toward the rest of the African American community.

Gail and Selena are both active members of community service organizations and their households contribute significantly to the financial resources of family members who require economic assistance. Theirs is a conundrum many of the respondents face and is part of the recent discourse on race and class identity espoused in the Bill Cosby/Michael Eric Dyson debate. While these families choose to live in self-segregated

communities and be a part of the black community, they are not exempt from the racial discourse around "acting white," particularly as it affects their children. Selena and others are trying to maintain a cultural divide that resonates with the "respectability" of the black community that historically became a distinct identifier and marker even if one was not a member of the black middle class. In fact, respectability is what you strived for if you were not an original member of the "Talented Tenth"

While class tensions have been duly noted, scholars have also located some circularity in the relationships between African American elite women and poor women. Notions of respectability have been a large part of the gender ideology of African American women regardless of class since the ethic was often presented in response to negative stereotypes of black women. "Respectability" for African American women was more than an attempt at the assimilation of white bourgeois feminine ideology into a black female identity. African American women used it as a survival strategy and to re-define themselves. Where whites saw black women as hypersexual and unchaste, notions of respectability made them and presented them as "proper women" with high sexual mores and values. Where the perception of African Americans as unclean and unkempt was the norm, black women focused on cleaning their homes better than they did for the white women that employed them. And where the assumption was that black families were deviant and black children were criminal, black women focused on teaching their children the value of an education that would allow them to achieve professional status that would in essence protect them while simultaneously uplifting their communities (see chapter four and five and Jones 1985, Shaw 1996, Mack 1999, Landry 2000, White 2001, Harley 2002. See Freeman 2000 for discussion on Afro-Caribbean women).

“My grandmother was an awesome woman”, said Gia when we discussed the influence of her parents’ attitudes on her identity as a woman. Gia was raised by her grandparents because her mother was in college and her father was married to another woman. Her grandparents worked hard to protect her from the brutal opinions of her community surrounding her birth. Gia says she learned respectability, humility and compassion. “She [her grandmother] was humble and cared for my grandfather. He was a womanizer but she dealt with it. I could not do what she did. She was dedicated to the church. No matter how people treated her she would show so much love. She kept a smile on her face. She is a hard act to follow. No matter what was going on she would read the Bible.”

The convergence of middle class respectability with working class aspirations defended African American women against sexual harassment and rape, and imparted racial pride. According to Wolcott, “black women throughout the twentieth century have used respectability to enhance their reputation, ensure social mobility, and create a positive image for their communities. To be "respectable" was an identity that any African American could embrace whatever his or her economic standing” (8).

Enculturating Middle-Class Blackness

In May 2006, just before high school graduation season, one teen was killed, one was in the hospital and three were behind bars charged with aggravated assault, and armed robbery with a firearm. The person they tried to rob was an ex-marine who after trying to flee their attempts was forced to defend himself and ultimately killed and wounded two of his assailants in a section of Atlanta called Midtown. One of the

students was due to graduate with the rest of his class from one of the city's best high schools, and another was the son of a nearby middle school teacher. The local community was astonished. Students and school administrators reported they would not have expected this behavior from these youths and the general population was in shock. What had gone wrong with these youths who were obviously from middle class families and did not present the common profile of youths who would engage in this type of activity? Opinion articles, editorials and letters to the editor decried the influence of hip hop and its violent, materialistic message that disparages delayed gratification. Family and youth advocates criticized middle class parents who strive for consumable goods, often neglecting their children to increase their paychecks. At the heart of the discomfort, not with the crime but with who committed it and what their background should say about them, was a concern by the black community that the white community will continue to think "we are all the same." Denise, the former attorney who presumably watched the case pretty closely said, "I always have to put a positive out to society. It is a burden. I am educated so I have to put my best foot on the street and the children have to be the best of us. We owe our children enough not to listen to the music. We cannot show them the Imus[69] thing."

Kalia's nonprofit organization specializes in youth services and she concurred,

> I work with African American families. I struggle with that environment that is not always understanding of African American families. The volunteers are mostly Caucasian. Staff and volunteers have to be prepared

[69] "Imus thing" refers to the comments made by Don Imus about the predominantly African American Rutgers University basketball team during an April 4, 2007 discussion about the NCAA Women's Basketball Championship. Imus characterized the Rutgers players as "rough girls" and then went on to describe the girls as "nappy-headed hos." He later apologized publicly and in a special meeting with the Rutgers team and their coach Vivian Stringer.

> to work with African American families and understand family history. They have to understand that these families are hardworking, building on our ancestors. They have to know the history.

However, it appears that many African Americans do not know the history and the economic wedge between the black elite and the black poor and working class could begin to disrupt the "community" of American blacks as scholars have long predicted. Without the now defunct "uplift movement," and the close proximity enforced by racial segregation, class positionality often produces a polarization between the black haves and have-nots. Familiar notions of respectability previously gave most ambitious blacks, regardless of class, common ground. Poor and working class blacks are presumed to have forgotten or given up on the benefits of respectability while the middle class tries to renew them. In the current milieu where "acting white" has become a racial epithet of blacks towards blacks, African American middle class families are caught in the crossfire between tweens and teens who want to appear "black enough" when ghetto culture is glamorized, but live in a culture that, while black, is anything but ghetto.

Richelle, grew up in a single-parent, poor household that was very ambitious and stressed education. She and others are confused by the way that youth respond to rules and discipline today. She said, "There has to be differences in the way we raise our kids." Her third grade son is just beginning to show some interest in popular hip-hop culture. "There are things we do for black kids because it's the culture I was raised in and that's the model you have. Little white boys out playing pranks are just being boys. Black boys do it and they're in jail. We can't raise kids thinking they can be out in the world doing whatever. Ethnic groups are different and of course you're going to do things according to that."

There is no I in We: Focusing on Marriage

As discussed previously, race and class come into play for African American middle class women. These women have been raised with the common notions of respectability regardless of the class position but respectability and the "strong black woman" often converge. They contend with different perspectives on race, class, and gender that require different viewpoints and actions.

Marilyn, the daughter of a dentist and an educator, was raised to be an independent career woman. She said she was ambivalent about marriage and family until she met her husband. "I never daydreamed about my wedding day or what my husband and kids would be like," she said in a matter-of fact manner. But then she met her husband. "We had been dating for a couple of years, I loved him and he asked so it seemed like a good time to get married. Then a few years later it seemed like a good time to start having kids." But Marilyn and her husband separated after their seventh year of marriage. Marilyn attributed their separation to having too much "I" and "me" in their relationship.

> I was going through a point where I was redefining who I was and we hit a point where he did not connect with me at all. I felt exasperated. We learned valuable lessons during that period. We learned that we need to grow and change but stay connected to each other. Too much "I" and "me" makes it hard on a marriage.

Marilyn was a very achievement-oriented woman. Before reducing her hours, for the second time, as an account executive for a national health insurance firm, she also managed her church bookstore, served as moderator for several women's groups, volunteered as a class parent at her children's school, and dabbled in an at-home

marketing firm. Working part-time for her insurance firm eight to ten hours per week, Marilyn continued the same "extra-curricular" activities. "The only difference is I get seven hours of sleep per night instead of five and we are not rushing around as much," she said. Marilyn's three children were in school, ranging from pre-school to fifth grade. She kept a tight grip on their organization and time management. In previous years, Marilyn was the president of the P.T.A. During my research, she served as her three-year-old's soccer coach and her seven-year-old's team parent. Her husband was the coach.

Marilyn and the other mothers in this study were engaged in "concerted cultivation," as defined by Annette Lareau (2003). Again, while Lareau suggests these efforts are not racially motivated, the African American women in this study felt the stakes were even higher for their children (as Lacy suggests 2007). The families in this study were faced with the challenge of remaining an integral part of the black community while simultaneously mediating many of the seemingly negative influences that are currently and historically associated with blackness. With school children taunted for "acting white" when they are high-achieving students, and blackness identified as speaking in Ebonics, demonstrating little motivation in school, and following hip-hop fashion trends, black middle-class parents are in a quandry. While strategic assimilation defines the process blacks go through to ensure a class-appropriate connection to an African American cultural experience it does not help us to formulate a way to handle the ambivalence created through the class divide.

Gia worried for more than a year about where her son would go to middle school. She was concerned about the environment of her neighborhood school, where delinquent behaviors instead of academic success were celebrated. She opted to send her son to a

school almost an hour's commute on the other side of town because it was a math and science magnet school where her son could excel in the subjects he liked and receive encouragement from parents, teachers, and peers.

> I would love to do public school but Georgia is #49 on test scores and the schools are overcrowded. A new middle school in our area opened over-crowded. You can tell Georgia is still segregated. A new school in Alpharetta would not be overcrowded when it opened. Parents take control and run their schools. The school in our area dropped science lab. My son loves science. He goes to school so he can do science so I cannot send him to a school that does not have science lab. We love this area but the trade-off is the schools.

One of the reasons Gia chose to live in Southwest Atlanta was so that her son could see African American professionals on a regular basis and have visual role models of African American success. She has to juxtapose this agenda with combating the youth culture that threatens to undo all that she is preparing him for. "What their friends think is so important to these kids and I need to make sure that what his friends say lines up with what we are telling him." Gia also struggled with what she saw as the reality of raising an African American boy into a man. "He needs to be prepared for a lot of things his white counterparts will not have to think about. He has to excel at school but he also has to know how to cope in a world that will always see him as black no matter how successful he is." Gia believed that to make sure he was well-prepared she had to be at home.

Charter Schools, Private Schools and the Children Who Get Left Behind

Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Muhammad Ali, Harriet Tubman, Colin Powell and a host of other African American heroes and historical figures took turns coming to the podium to introduce themselves to a standing room only crowd. Parents stood in the aisles and on the side ready to take a picture or get film footage of their two-year-olds'

debut as a public speaker and scholar. In 2003 the Simpson School, a private pre-school and elementary school, celebrated its twenty fifth anniversary by highlighting the African American ancestors whose legacies the school had been built upon. The Black History Program, International Day, Grandparent's Day and the Pre-Kindergarten and Fifth grade promotional ceremonies were highly anticipated events each year in which parents, grandparents, friends and neighbors packed the auditorium of the building which houses 250 students and 22 teachers. The school was founded by an African American educator and her husband in 1978 and was based upon the belief that "students excel when placed in an academically challenging environment that maintains high expectations."

Forty-eight percent of the families in this study had at least one child enrolled in the school and chose it for its academic standards and its attention to the self-esteem of African American children. Linda, a dentist with two children enrolled at Simpson said, "We sent them to [Simpson] because we wanted them to have a strong foundation. In these times our kids have to get a jump. We wanted to get our children exposed earlier. Be on point. We will look for public schools but we wanted the early education to set the foundation for public school." Kia agreed and having attended majority white schools through her formative years, the focus on black history and pride were paramount for her and her family. "[Simpson] is excellent, said Kia. "It reinforces our ideas of producing a positive self-image. We went to predominantly white schools when we were kids. But we want them to go to school where our ideas are reinforced."

For the rest of the respondents school choice has been a major concern. Natalie and George sent their three children to private school through kindergarten and then did a mix of public, independent and magnet schools. Natalie relayed, "They all went to

private school for first years. It had more to do with controlling the environment and giving them a leg up on the competition." Selena and John initially had their children enrolled in private school. When their middle child was ready to go to first grade, they moved him and their oldest daughter to a sought after public elementary school outside their $350k home's school district. Selena anticipates sending her kids to private school again for middle school. "Imani, my oldest, likes to be cool. She needs to be in a strong structured, small, strict, environment. She needs a structured Christian environment (speaking of one of the area's well-known Christian academies)."

The eight remaining respondents have children who are too young to enter public school. They are currently using day-care, group home care, nannies or operating as their children's primary caretaker and are beginning to think critically about their school choices. Most have some trepidation about public school citing poor academic conditions, deficiencies, low test scores, discipline problems, and over-crowding. While academic performance is a major concern for all of the respondents, most seemed to feel that providing students with an academic environment that was conducive to learning, celebrated the child's strengths, and kept discipline issues at bay were wonderful foundations for whatever academic rigor they may need post elementary school. In fact, protecting their children from racial incidents from whites, and cultural incidents from blacks is a large part of their concern and focus. Myra said, "I am really concerned about school and I factor [race] in when I look at schools. The places we go I make sure there is no rebel flag. I know that there are certain places where we are not accepted. I am conscious of that." Linda said, "I expose my kids to black history but I do not teach

prejudice." Kia, Selena and Jill concurred when they said they wanted their children to be proud of their heritage. "Maintaining their self-esteem is of the utmost importance."

While private schools are seemingly a great alternative, particularly when they can address all of a parent's needs, they can also be quite costly. Denise and her husband pay $22k per year for their elementary age daughters to attend an area private school. Denise says it is well worth it because the public schools in her area are deplorable academically. Kalia has chosen a charter school as a viable option for her kindergarten son because it has "public school diversity and private school standards without the cost." Sheri and Clarence had both of their school-age children enrolled in The Simpson School, until their daughter's speech therapy needs became too much for the school to handle. "By sending her to the neighborhood school we are able to get free speech therapy, they will come to her school, and we do not have to deal with the logistics of the therapist at [Simpson] and then seek additional therapy outside of school for what [Simpson] is unable to do."

Much of what these families are experiencing is exactly what Mary Pattilo-McCoy (1999) and Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) discuss in their books. Both demonstrate what happens when the combination of racial and economic disadvantage converge upon a neighborhood or school district. Even when a subdivision is middle class or upper middle class black, it is rarely in a school district by itself or completely among other subdivisions with the same demographics. With the mix comes a school setting where the school's overall poor performance, low teacher expectations, and less challenging instruction limits the abilities of all students but particularly those of the middle class who should be buffered from these weaknesses. As suggested,

purchasing (through private schools) or finagling (through magnet schools or NCLB[70]) a "better" education is only beneficial in the school setting if youth are not still intrigued by outside forces which beckon them to mimic "ghetto" culture as authentically black in defiance of what their parents teach them.

[70] NCLB refers to President Georgia W. Bush's No Child Left Behind education reform initiative signed into law in 2002, to address the achievement gap in U.S. public schools by requiring states to implement statewide accountability systems covering all public schools and students.

Chapter 5 Choices, Demands and Expectations

"I did not know any black women who stayed at home when I was growing up," Gail related, "Now I stay home…my mom…says she did not raise me to be dependent and thinks my husband will grow tired of it too." Her situation is unusual among middle-class black women and invisible in mainstream scholarship on black families and on work-family conflict. However, the existence of a growing group of middle-class black women who feel they have choices about how to balance their work and family commitments, including the option of staying home, signals a critical change in the situation of black families. It means that African American, middle-class women find themselves at a new point that has great implications for the ways in which they view motherhood, family, and work.

This chapter explores how African American professional women make decisions about and negotiate work-family conflict. This chapter also examines how racialized stereotypes and expectations inform black women's motherhood ideology and gender strategy. By focusing on the particular themes and struggles articulated by women who have left or changed their relationship with their professional careers to stay home with their children, I illuminate the changes in gender strategy and family strategy they are creating through their choices. I demonstrate the problem with creating a dichotomy between "stay-at-home" moms and "working" moms. I explore why some professional black women opt to "stay-at-home" and some do not revisiting the affect of contemporary shifts on professional black women's decisions (professional migration, changes in social networks, race, class and gender ambiguity, and ideological change in marriage). I find that similarly to white women, black women make decisions by

filtering and interpreting their experiences through cultural models. For black women, the cultural model of partnership marriage has been replaced and the model of respectability and racial uplift has been modified to include preservation of in-tact families. Decisions that ensure this goal are enlisted regardless of the problems inherent within this strategy.

Career and Children: Just In Case He Acts Crazy

The respondents in this study rarely saw themselves as having “dreamed” of marriage and instead had high educational goals and career ambitions. While individuals describe these trends as personal choices, researchers are finding that the delay in marriage and child-bearing for middle class women has to do with shifts in the economy that make delaying marriage and family more beneficial economically and socially. Research which studied women’s entry into the work force and delays in marriage following the women’s movement found that women who delayed marriage typically did so because they saw education and/or career as more favorable and acceptable alternatives than marriage (Allen and Kalish 1984, Elder 1974). In addition, more recent research found that highly skilled women pay a steep penalty for having children, often significantly decreasing their potential earnings and opportunities for advancement. The fact that most women desire a mate who is stable, mature and has high earning potential means postponing marriage until completing one’s education or establishing one’s career is even more beneficial. Likewise, men’s stagnating wages and tentative positions in the workforce make career stability that much more important to couple’s ability to provide resources for potential children as well as to sustain healthy marriages.

Kalia

Kalia at thirty is the primary earner in her family. She is an executive with a national non-profit organization that provides programming for under-privileged children and manages a team of ten full-time employees and a hand-full of part-timers who design and implement the programming for the metropolitan Atlanta area offices. She earned bachelors and masters degrees in social work from one of the top-ranked HBCUs, in the nation and earns approximately $50,000/year. Her income is low for the study population but high for nonprofit management and middle-class socio-economic status designation. She and her husband Booth live in one of the oldest African American middle class communities in Atlanta, known for being home to many of the city's elite of the 1960s and 70s. It is an older established neighborhood unlike the homes of most of the other respondents, with beautiful modernist period homes sprinkled throughout. Kalia's husband Booth, completed his BA from a PWCU, and currently works in manufacturing. They have one child and live a quiet middle class existence in which she spends most of her leisure time reading and meeting with friends and he spends most of his leisure time listening to music, playing poker with friends, and leisurely watching football.

Kalia and Booth went to the same high school and met when she was 15 and he was 17 but they come from very different backgrounds. Booth is white. Booth was born to "hippie" parents in the 1970s who traveled together in somewhat of a gypsy lifestyle having Booth in a small province in Latin America. They lived there until he was three and then moved to a mid-size city in the northeast where they were originally from.

Growing up a bit, but continuing their working-class lifestyle, the two raised Booth there and moved to Atlanta just in time for high school. Kalia on the other hand was born in a large metropolitan city in the northeast to two doctoral students in physics. Her mother, is African American, and her father is an Ethiopian national. The two never married due to some cultural differences and Kalia and her younger brother grew up primarily with their mom, her friends, and later their stepfather. Kalia and her family moved to Atlanta when she was twelve and settled in a well-established middle class African American neighborhood inside the city that was experiencing some changes in demographics due to the influx of drugs in the late 1980s. The local high school was not the place to send your children if you had middle class sensibilities so Kalia was sent outside the neighborhood. It was Booth's neighborhood.

Although the high school was very good, it served two different purposes depending on if you were black or white. The school was very close to downtown Atlanta. For many years it had been segregated and only open to the children of Atlanta's elite. Shifts in residential patterns caused by desegregation created white flight and caused several schools to be re-zoned leaving Davis High School to be populated by working-class whites and very few poor blacks. For white kids, it was the neighborhood school in a community that had transitioned into lower income and white. For black kids who were bused in, it was the white school that offered more opportunities for success than the inner-city neighborhood schools.

So Booth used his college degree and his working-class sensibilities and became a production worker in a small manufacturing firm where he makes less than $30,000 per year and Kalia manages their income and their aspirations. "He is very talented and I

know he wants to do more," she said when trying to explain why her husband seems content in his blue-collar profession. "I think he is just trying to figure out what he wants to do." But Booth seems to be caught somewhere between the expectations his education places on him (middle-class) and his comfort with being and staying right where he is (working-class). "His Dad's a nurse," added Kalia. "But his mother just finished her Ph.D in Sociology. I know she wants him to do more with himself and they want me to be at home with Khalid but I remind her that I am the one supporting the family financially, not Booth."

Their issues have more to do with class identity than with racial identity. For the most part, race provides differences in the way they move through the world, but not the way they interact with each other. It is their class differences that demonstrate most of their conflict and it is not just about his seeming lack of ambition. Kalia is a vegetarian and is raising her son Khalid to be vegetarian as well. Booth is a proud meat-eater. Kalia has never been a smoker and has been trying to provide incentives for Booth to stop smoking. Her idea of a good time is meeting a friend at Whole Foods for a cup of herbal tea and biscotti, while Booth's good time is listening to hip-hop while playing poker and smoking a bit of marijuana with friends. And while Booth is content with sending Khalid to traditional schools in or near their neighborhood, Kalia enrolled him in a co-operative pre-school in a gentrifying neighborhood from ages 3-5 years and then for kindergarten enrolled him in a new charter school that promised to teach children immersion Chinese in an International Baccalaureate curriculum.

Making a little less than $80,000 together, Kalia and Booth are well-established in what is traditionally considered the "middle class." According to the U.S. Census report

a middle class median household income is $46,242 nationally. It is $44,439 in the state of Georgia. However, Kalia and Booth fall considerably below the median household income for this study population at $150,000. Kalia and Booth bought their $130,000 home weeks before they were married and moved into the home together after their wedding but they have no investment portfolio, no college fund for their son (although Booth's parents have suggested they have started one), and only go on vacations around extended family events. Their financial status is not as secure as Kalia would like and at times she is a bit resentful. "We are working through not separating. We are making adjustments and trying to find common ground but it is difficult," said Kalia. "Sometimes I feel like I do not really need to cater to him. I can take care of Khalid. He is an adult; he can take care of himself. We just remember how much we love each other and how long we have loved each other and we try to make it work." Kalia's attitude is similar to many of the respondents who were raised to be independent women who can take care of themselves and their children. Kalia's mom raised her and her brother for many years by herself with a collective of friends Kalia calls Aunties. For Kalia and many others, while being a wife was desirable they had no real training in how to maintain a marriage, a career, and children. Although this observation is definitely class-based, this study asserts race and class are important in determining gender strategies.

When asked if they were raised by their parents (or guardians) to be more career women, wives, or equal parts both, all of the twenty-three women in this study responded that they were raised to be career women, with twelve responding that they were raised to be equal parts career women and wives. Six women made a point of saying they felt they had not been prepared to be wives. Charlotte's response was reminiscent of several of the

respondents when she said, "maybe both of my parents wanted me to have a good education; to have a strong career and be independent. My mom always taught me to be able to take care of myself in case the man acts crazy."

While women, particularly middle-class women, continue to be encouraged to marry, and in fact, want to marry, these "mother-wit[71]" cultural cues do a lot to disrupt marriage by suggesting that marriage is not expected to last. One participant expressed her own exasperation when, as she was preparing for her marriage, her mother encouraged her to keep her maiden name, saying that it was difficult and expensive to change your name back once you got a divorce. From this young woman's perspective, planning for a divorce before you were married was not a good sign. The women in the current study were members of couples who had made it to the altar. Now they were learning that lasting marriages were built on negotiation. This was a difficult lesson when earlier representations and personal understandings of male and female relationships had been antagonistic. These women had to negotiate the larger society's expectation that they would contribute to the rising divorce rate and make another female-headed household. They also had to make sense of centuries-old warnings that black men will leave, won't work, and will cheat – the weak man myth – and they had to maintain their own independence—never depending on a man—if they wanted to be good, strong, black women and mothers.

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[71] According to Joy Bennett Kinnon, "mother wit" is referred to in the dictionary as simply "common sense." In black history, the word usage began in the seventeenth century. Thus the word was born and distilled in the brutality of slavery and has survived to enter the new millennium. It was a code word then, and is still a code word for the knowledge you must have to survive. Kinnon states, "It is, as author Toni Morrison says, "a knowing so deep" that the lesson has been instilled and distilled to its essence. Collectively these words are a gift—from your own mother, or anyone's mother. They are wise words for life's journey" (1997).

First Comes Love Then Comes Marriage, What Happens After the Baby Carriage? Professional Black Women and the Question of Ambition

Richelle

"Yes," said Richelle when I asked her if there was a mismatch between what she thought she would be doing with her life at thirty-two and what she is actually doing. "If you had asked me years ago I would have said yes. I was more on a career track, more career-oriented. I was young and my mind was different. Now I see life differently. I don't regret it. If I had done what I thought, I might not be as happy as I am today."

Richelle planned to be a doctor. She graduated from high school with a scholarship to a small female school in Indiana where she majored in Biology. She met her husband, an engineering student at a neighboring University. Upon graduation, the two relocated together for his first job. "He moved, I moved," said Richelle. She took small jobs, never really using her degree, and focused on being a wife and mother after their 1998 wedding and the birth of their first child in 1999. Richelle has been at home for seven years and says she does not want to be a doctor any more, although when she saw the Oprah show where the woman went back to medical school after her children were grown she knew it was not too late. Instead, she said she no longer wants to be a doctor. She is not willing to make the sacrifices necessary to be a doctor but she thinks she does want to do something where she can help people. Right now she is helping her husband to build their own business. She says her husband would like to be able to leave his job too and they are working to make that happen. But Richelle did not always have this attitude.

Her mother, who struggled to finish community college and achieve a degree in Early Childhood Education after her children were grown, expected Richelle to achieve

more. Richelle said her mother does not approve of her being a stay-at-home mom, "She has said that I am letting the children get in the way of what I really want to do. It bothered me at first because the children aren't in the way. That's what I want to do right now and if there was something else I really wanted to do I would do that. But that bothered me I was really upset by that."

At the heart of mainstream conceptions of the work-family conflict debate is the assumption that women are newly engaged in the private-sector economy. As such, they are ambitious about their potential careers now that the ceiling is more like cellophane than glass. However they have very little experience with managing an ambitious career and home.

Most of the women, even when they have not completely exited the work-force or altered their professional positions, feel they have placed less emphasis on their careers than their families. Cory recounted a corporate meeting of executive women when she was working for a multinational corporation in their marketing department. "They had a female executive speaker and I remember that she basically told us we could not have it all. She said we would have to make choices about our careers and our families. Something would have to give." Cory says that meeting changed her perspective on attaining corporate success and having a family. She said, "This woman was white and she was saying you could not have it all. I knew it would be that much harder for a black woman."

Cory thinks all educated black women make a decision really early in their careers whether or not they are willing to climb to the top of the corporate ladder and be a corporate tycoon like Oprah. She thinks black women make the trade-off really early.

This idea is convergent with the "black lady" myth. However, most of the respondents said they had no idea. "You never think about how tough it is," said Jill who sold her shares in her private practice after the birth of her daughter. "It is work. I probably didn't appreciate the balance of work and family. You don't really appreciate it until you are in that setting. I never thought I would stop private practice. I just figured they [the kids] would fit in." Gia agreed.

> I thought I would be corporate. I thought I would be running my own business by 42. I am a stay at home mother. I never thought I would be a stay at home mother. I dreamed of high power. I am high power right in my kitchen. I thought I would be more glamorous. Now I just wish I could be a better mother, dynamic mother. I try to teach my kids about life. I teach the word of God, that they must triumph over adversity. I teach my kids to be successful. I say to them success in academics will be driven by success in your relationship with God.

Most of the women in this study realized that they have to work at their family lives just as much or even more than they work at their professions. Much of the mismatch in perception had to do with the way they envisioned marriage. Myra said, "I thought you go with the flow as a wife or as a married person. The reality is that you have to work. You have to change yourself to fit with this other person."

Monica

Monica, a stay-at-home mom of three children between her and her husband and two he has from a previous marriage, is frustrated with her current work and family situation. "I thought I would have a nice, romantic, affectionate husband. Spend time with my family and have a perfect family." Selena felt her parents shielded her from the realities of having a family. "I did not understand what it took to maintain a household. I thought it would be la-la land and it is not. It's a lot harder than I thought it was." Much

of the mismatch for African American women lies within the duties of being a wife. These women have some expectation about working, maintaining household(s) and raising children, having watched their mothers and grandmothers manage it, often on their own. However, managing all of these roles and the expectations that accompany them once one has reached the middle class can be stressful at best, debilitating at worst.

Making Black Marriage and Family Work

Nancy

Despite all of the "baggage" that weighs down young black couples, many hope that marriage and family can work and are willing to give it a try. It is in this attempt at reformulating marriage within the confines of a matrifocal marriage and family system that women like Nancy reveal how different the work and family conflict is for African American women and their families than what is commonly depicted in contemporary treatments and understandings of family formation.

Nancy said her parents' marriage was terrible and she knew she did not want a marriage like theirs. But, instead of believing she would never marry, as other respondents did, she hoped to be married in a much better relationship.

When I spoke with Nancy she did not self-identify as a stay-at-home mother, although she was her children's primary caretaker. When I asked her how she identified she was not sure how to answer but she knew she did not identify with women who sat at home and ate "bon-bons." "I am too busy to be a stay-at-home mom!" Nancy exclaimed. When Nancy first left her position as a medical doctor, her family was very supportive. Her mother had recently become a fan of Dr. Laura Schlessinger and would often quote

the popular radio personality's famous motto "I am my kid's mom."[72] Nancy lived many miles away from her family, and they certainly did not want a stranger taking care of the first grandchild. However, when one year turned into three, the women in her family decided Nancy had been home long enough: "I can remember being home for Christmas and I was taking care of the kids and it was difficult because the baby was really small. My grandmother walked by and said, "I don't know why you doing all that, they ain't gonna appreciate it." Nancy continued:

> It hurt a lot when she said that and I decided that, even though I appreciated my mother and my grandmothers and all that they had done for me, I did not want to raise my family the way they had raised theirs and I battle with that every day.

Nancy's grandparents and her parents were married, so she did not fall into the category of having been raised by a strong black *single* mother. But she had watched both her grandmother and her mother interact with their respective husbands in ways that were often conflictual, argumentative, and stern. "There is no love," said Nancy. "I mean there is. I know my grandmother loved my grandfather and my mother loves my father but you cannot see their love in how they interact and how they treat their husbands. There is no respect. I do not want that kind of relationship with my husband."

Even though Nancy critiqued her mother and grandmother, she realized that the interaction they each had with their husbands was directly related to the strength they had to have to maintain their families. Nancy was taught this same strength when she saw her mother work days and nights to earn her license as a registered nurse. She saw it when

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[72] Dr. Laura is a national radio talk show host who advocates men and women putting all of their focus on what is best for their children. When listeners call with a dilemma about work or family or extended family, her response is usually "Be your children's parents." Listeners often call in and begin their question by saying "I am my kid's mom."

she worked as a volunteer at her mother's hospital and saw her mother take orders from doctors while her mother did all the work. It was Nancy's mother and grandmother that provided the encouragement and finances to go to college and become a doctor, not a nurse. And Nancy knew it was that strength that they thought they had passed on to her and expected her to exhibit. That strength was not demonstrated when Nancy stayed home, seemingly forsaking all that they had given her, to help her husband manage his business and take care of their children. For African American professional women, such as Nancy, their worth as black women is deeply connected to the strength of their mothers.[73] For women who struggle with standing on their foremothers' shoulders while making new decisions for themselves and their families, a disapproving statement can be demoralizing.

Nancy articulated a purposeful position of building a "healthy marriage and family," in which the needs of her family, and particularly her husband, were foremost. She saw this as a way to break what was seemingly a multi-generational pull on her and her contemporaries that helped to elevate divorce rates and diminish marriage rates. What Nancy called for in her decision to leave her career as a medical doctor, co-manage her husband's company, and be the primary caretaker for her three small children, was a change in the black community from an emphasis on career and individual achievement to family centeredness. This perspective supports an ideological shift for these women in which their families do not simply move to the middle class in income while maintaining African American family models. Instead, these women are developing a gender strategy

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[73] "Strength of their mothers" refers to the book penned by Niara Sudarkasa, *Strength of Our Mothers*, in which she discusses the strength African American women have had to demonstrate from slavery to the present to preserve their families.

that reconfigures the image of the respectable black woman who is able now to reap the rewards of her class standing.

"Availability" as a New Cultural Model

> I never saw myself as a stay at home mother. I thought I was going back after I had my son. It was my husband who wanted me to stay at home. No one in either of our families had stayed home. My husband and his mother said give it a year and see how you feel after a year. I resisted it for a while but I respected their opinions. My husband was raised by his grandmother and I never knew why except that his mother was busy with her career. He would only see her on weekends. I think that is why he thought our kids would benefit from my being home and his mother did too. -Myra, occupational therapist, two children

The women participating in this study do not face some of the financial difficulties discussed previously. These women have professional degrees and either hold or have held managerial, executive, and professional positions. While some identify as full-time stay at home mothers, they all in actuality work full-time, not just in the politically correct sense that managing a home and children is a full-time job, but that they are also earners counted by the US Department of Labor. The department's mandate is to keep track of people who work, regardless of how they choose to participate in the labor market. According to Tracy Thompson (1998) of the *Washington Post Magazine*, "this way of counting the labor force – which doesn't distinguish well between part-time and fulltime, home-based, and office centered – is an increasingly bad fit with the real world. More people are using nontraditional arrangements to structure their workweek and the line between work and home is blurred by voicemail pagers, portable faxes, and laptop computers."

While the general American public questions women's (i.e. white women's) commitment to walking through the proverbial doors opened for them during the feminist movement, and African American women know "to whom much is given, much is expected," the media incited "mommy wars" do not adequately depict mother's decisions to stay home or return to work. The overriding question of how women decide and how African American women's decisions are affected by race and class does not judge women by asking them why. Rather it probes for the cultural changes that have taken place in our society that have seemingly gone undetected. One of the discussions that is not taking place in popular and scholarly attention to the question of career and family decision making but was revealed during the course of this study is the fact that in many ways "stay-at-home" moms are saying they would like to work and "working moms" are saying they would like to be at home. But neither of them critique the other in the ways in which the "mommy wars" have depicted it (Pleitcha 2004). What they both say they long for is a way or ways to combine career and family that does not create financial hardship or marital and personal stress.

A return to chapter one reveals that nine women are characterized as stay-at-home moms including those working for a husband/family owned business, nine of the women are engaged in full-time employment, and five women have developed a flexible relationship with their employers either as part-time workers, working from home, or supporting their own businesses.

Cory

Cory articulated her feelings about her work and her family that sees the benefit in committing to both. "I enjoy working. I like what I do. I think black women make adjustments to their professional goals before they get high enough for there to be an impact. I think it is good for my daughters to see me working and to see me being involved in our family financially but I do not want my work to interfere to the point that I cannot be available to them."

Ethnographic interviews and observations revealed that of the 23 families who participated in the study, seventeen of the self-proclaimed "stay at home mothers" work – meaning earn an income providing goods and services. Additionally, thirteen of the "working mothers" have changed their relationship with their employers such that they participate in flex-time, job sharing, compressed work weeks, telecommuting, or part-time/voluntary reduced time so they can have more flexibility with their families. All of the mothers, whether "working" or "stay at home," are the primary child care-givers when their children are at home; provide most of the housekeeping and meal preparation in their homes, and continue to be the family planners and organizers whether they manage the household income/budget or not. They refer to themselves as "command central", COO (Chief Operating Officer), and family manager, and pride themselves on being available to their children and their husbands. Given the research that had been done to explain these phenomena (Milkie and Peltola 1999, Moen 2003, etc.) it would appear that we are returning to a more 1950s notion of a "traditional" way of doing family. The interviews and observations conducted with these families however, reveal a more nuanced assessment that suggests being concerned with home and family is not at

the expense of a viable work-life or career. In fact, as articulated by Cory above, "being available" has replaced these women's desire to be "at home" or "at work" and results in the exploration and negotiation of more flexible work structures.

When Cory's oldest daughter was born she was working for a major soft-drink company in their advertising department which required her to travel every week. She took three months off for maternity leave and then went back to work. Many of her co-workers expected her not to return but being a "stay at home mom" had never been part of her self-concept. "My mom had a career in education, she did a lot of things she enjoyed doing, she never let having my brother and I disrupt her desires for her self." But Cory's busy schedule up the corporate ladder was hard on her infant daughter. "She hated it," said Cory of her daughter. I asked Cory how she knew having met her daughter on several occasions and viewing her as a mild-mannered pre-adolescent. She did not seem like the type of child who would complain much.

> She would get so worked up when I left, my husband would pick her up from the babysitter when I was traveling and it's like she knew when she saw him that Mommy was not home and she would basically cry and be upset the entire evening. Then if I still was not back when she woke up the next morning, she would give my husband a hard time. I knew I had to do something different.

Cory found something different. Knowing she loved to work and did not feel like she would enjoy being a full-time "stay-at-home" mom, Cory explored a couple of leads and found her dream job. "I don't know how I would manage without it," said Cory after completing her regularly scheduled 9:30am workout at the gym. "I thank God everyday that I got this opportunity."

Cory found a small marketing firm based in Chicago with employees in cities all over the country. The firm hires top marketing professionals who work out of their

homes but they are not contract employees, or part-time workers. They are full-time marketing directors, with full-time salaries, and benefits, but they travel 95% less than most marketing professionals. Most of their business is conducted over the phone via conference calls, and they set their own hours. In fact, Cory is able to drop her infant and four year old off at daycare and preschool respectively by 8:30am, make it to a 9:30am step aerobics class, pick up her oldest daughter at 2:30pm from her elementary school, and manage her successful $70k+ income career where a major soft-drink company (not the same one she worked for previously) is one of her primary clients everyday.

Cory is an example of how women are finding ways to make the workplace more flexible and make themselves more available. Being available in this context refers to constructing a nonstandard work day in which one is present at most and able to be present at the least. For instance, for the "stay-at-home" moms I talked to, being home with children under the age of five was less about intensive, structured learning for their small children, and more about just being present, letting the child know that Mommy is there even if she is not actively engaged in the child's every activity. For the "working" moms, available meant being able to be present when it mattered; not having to worry about taking off from work if a child were sick, or out of school, or had a special program at school. They could be present when it mattered and the child could rely on the fact that Mom and Dad were out being busy with work while they were at "school" but when they needed them, Mom (most likely) would be there.

Creating a situation wherein Mom can be available is a little trickier. In most instances the professional middle class women who choose to "stay-at-home" with their small children generally make the decision considering two factors: a) belief that they

should be the one raising their child if they are financially able; and b) devaluing the job as it relates to their children. In most instances, they either did not like the job they left, found the time requirements of the job inflexible, and/or they found more meaning in caring for their child than in maintaining their before-children career. These findings are important in that they point to the notion that professional women are not opting out because they do not want to work. Studies show that even among working class mothers who idealize the "stay-at-home" mom prototype, there is no real desire to be at home full-time. These women would rather be able to work part-time and have some flexibility in their schedules. Likewise, each of the "stay-at-home" moms in this study, like most mothers either found professional work in other types of venues (i.e. volunteerism, organization membership), or made career changes while being at home. This notion of flexible work holds true across race (see Pamela Stone's 2007 release) but what is particularly interesting is the way black women continue to connect it to remnants of the myth of the strong black woman/mother.

What's In a Name? The Ambiguity of Career and Family

Based upon content analysis using magazines and books geared towards readers who are mothers, and a preliminary study that asked participants how they would describe themselves as career women and mothers, each respondent was asked the following question:

"Which of the following terms would you use to describe yourself?"

a) working mom, b) home-maker, c) stay-at-home mom,

d) part-time mom, e) part-time-stay-at-home mom.

Figure 3: Defining Motherhood

Category	Working Mom	Homemaker	Stay at Home Mom	Part-time Working Mom	Part-Time Stay at Home Mom
Response	9	1	4	7	2

The results (see Figure 3) were telling but what was even more telling was the response to the follow-up series of open-ended questions:

1. "What do you think about these categories?"

Most of the women felt the categories were too limiting and did not adequately define what they do on a day-to-day basis or how they prioritize their time. As mentioned previously, many of the women who would be considered "stay-at-home" moms by sociological standards (since they have left the work force) do not consider themselves "stay-at-home" moms and do not identify with images of "stay-at-home" moms as "bon-bon" eating, sit around the house all day mothers. However, even women who do adopt the title still see problems with its articulation. Gia who identified herself as a "stay-at-home" mom saw the term as too limiting. She said, "stay-at-home" mom is too simplified, it makes me think of la-la-world." Likewise, Richelle, a self proclaimed "stay-at-home" mother of three who states she is also "homemakerish" since "I am a mom and I do not work outside the home" asserted:

> Moms do work. Every woman is working. Those who have made homemaking their life that's not real to me it's commercial. Even though I build our business it's not part-time. It's all or nothing. I don't know how you're a part-time stay at home mom. You're at home or you're not. You can't do that or you work part-time.

2. "Do they adequately define who you are?"

Only five of the twenty-three respondents felt the categories adequately defined who they were and they were primarily identifying themselves as "working moms" and "part-time working moms." The other eighteen participants gave a resounding "No!" to the question followed by explanations that in most instances had to do with feeling like they were more than their work or career. Natalie replied, "No. I don't look at myself as defined by my work. It should have and has more to do with my overall purpose of life as opposed to the things I'm doing to get there." And Cara, a former school administrator who owns her own real estate business but self-identified as a part-time stay-at-home mom of three exclaimed, "No. No. I don't like homemaker. My education does not allow me to be a homemaker. I can be a domestic engineer but not a homemaker." Cara went on to suggest "domestic engineer" be added as a choice on the questionnaire.

3. "How would you define yourself?"

Selena, mother of three, said "I am a working mom, but I also establish and maintain my household. I am an individual and a wife. I guess I am multifaceted." The words used to define themselves demonstrate how limiting the categories are. These women, like most, wear multiple hats, with multiple responsibilities and expectations from others and for themselves. Gail who typically takes her children with her when she is involved in her organizational activities explained,

> I like being available and I think my husband likes it too. I would rather give up on a lot of things, you know, buying things so I could be home and available. I can take care of my family's needs myself. I consider myself command central. Everything that comes through this house comes through me.

Marilyn

Marilyn, a manager for a state insurance agency with three children ages nine, seven, and four, describes herself as the COO of her family. She explains, “I handle everything. I plan everything. Every piece of paper, I organize. Every party, I plan. Everything that has to do with this family, I manage.” Marilyn holds a Master of Public Health from a southeastern PWCU. She has worked with her current employer off and on for eleven years, and changed to a part-time schedule when she returned after having her last child. Has she been penalized professionally for her movement in and out of the company? “Absolutely!” she says, but she is willing to take those setbacks as long as she can be available to her family. Marilyn is also the manager of her church’s bookstore, PTA Vice President at her children’s school, a class parent for both of her sons classrooms, and has been the basketball mom, the softball mom, and the soccer mom for her sons’ sports teams. She adds:

> I like working. I like what I do. But I want to be available for my family. My biggest concern as a mother is instilling good values. So I try to be involved in their lives. I did stay home for a while but that was not me. I hung out with some women who shopped a lot and I just did not see myself living the way they did. I think as the kids get older I will come out again to be more available with their activities and stuff like that. Right now this works and as long as it works I will do it like this. After that, I will make some more changes.

Denise

Denise, an attorney with two children, restructured her profession by becoming a community liaison in the public defenders office. She says she enjoys this work because she is “doing a good thing in the community and [I] show my children that I am really making a difference in the community.” While Denise is committed to the work she does, she is also committed to being available to her family. She says “I am structuring my

days so I do not have to use before and after care. I allow my children to recognize me as their mom. I take off from work to go to their school events and I occasionally surprise them for lunch time." This is why "being available" is a much more telling description of how they view and identify themselves than working mom, stay at home mom, and everything in between. Not only is their identity reformulated as it relates to the legacy of black women being less than emotionally and physically available to their children but also speaks to the changes in the labor market that disproportionately affect women and people of color.

Jill

Jill, mother of three, and a general surgeon who sold her part of a lucrative surgical office after she had her first child so she could work in a more stable nine-to-five capacity devoid of business owner responsibilities and patient emergencies summed it up best when she defined herself. "I am a responsible adult who cares for her family and her home and has the best interest of her family in mind."

As more and more families grapple with the mismatch of work and family structure and commitments, families and work places are finding ways to be more flexible. This does not always happen in the shape of structured flextime. In fact flextime can often be more stringent on growing families than standard time. What professional middle class families seem to be screaming for is flexibility and the ability to structure their time themselves. Not only would this prospect maintain higher levels of productivity for employed mothers, but it would give men an opportunity to step outside their "predetermined" roles as unavailable breadwinners.

Keayba

Keayba, 36 and a physician, with a husband in business for himself, is battling feelings that her career is impeding her success as a wife and mother. For Keayba however, it is difficult to leave her career as a physician because she has garnered a great deal of success and the income that goes along with it. With a family income of just under $200k, and an individual income of $130k, Keayba is one of the Pre-Doctoral Directors at the medical school she works for. Trained in family medicine, she is affiliated with the maternal and child health division which means she is often working in obstetrics and as a result, on-call. Having completed her masters in research earlier this year, she is now expected to write grants and research proposals. While her husband Kareem has his own architecture firm, he is the more flexible parent in their relationship and often finds himself picking up their three year-old-son from childcare and starting their dinner alone. “I don’t want that anymore,” said Keayba. “One of my goals is for us to be able to eat dinner together as a family and not have to worry about work or time.” The couple has talked about Keayba leaving the medical school and teaching hospital and either going into private practice or taking a position with the national health corporation that acts as a private practice, hospital, and insurance provider all at the same time. “I am hoping that I will be able to find a position where I can leave work there and not be on call.”

Keayba’s self-disclosed desire to be more available to her family is rooted in the way that she was raised. As the middle child, and the oldest daughter born to actively engaged parents and community educators, Keayba knows she benefited from the

presence of both of her parents in her formative years. While she got the part about education that her parents stressed that led her to graduate from prestigious institutions and become a celebrated medical doctor, she says she did not see how they kept the family part going. "I wish I had been paying closer attention to take things away," said Keayba as she tries to figure out her desire for career success and family closeness. "I recognize that to provide the same quality (referring to what parents did) it requires me to be more present physically and emotionally. Having a better balance is extremely important to me. They were my primary teachers I want it to be the same for my children." Keayba's desires also have a good deal to do with the fact that she grew up with extended family nearby while she and her husband, Kareem, have no family nearby. "My parents are still in Ohio, my brother is in North Carolina, and my sister is all over the place. Kareem's parents died before we married and so our family is really all he has."

"Choosing" Kin When You Leave "the Flats"

Professional migration patterns, discussed in chapter three, have an effect not only on professional development but also on family and social networks that have been a proven long-term solution for African American families, particularly for communities of women and children. As Carol Stack's classic study of the "Flats" demonstrated, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and women friends (often referred to as other-mothers, play-mothers, or Godmothers) are an intricate part of the family structure in the African American family, developing intricate systems of kinship and reciprocity that protect children from the harsh realities of poverty and racism. Scholars have written extensively

on the subject, either finding it an effective adaptive strategy or a deviation from the "normal" family pattern, that others have theorized that as African Americans attain higher location on the socio-economic ladder, reciprocal relationships between fictive kin and extended family practices will be replaced by the "traditional" nuclear family model representative of middle class white families.

On the surface, this theory appears plausible. All of the respondents in this study grew up near extended family and their parents relied heavily on friends and family in the development of their children's family life. However, today, fifteen of the women in this study do not live in the same state as their family of origin and of the remaining eight, only one relied on her mother for childcare. Based upon the respondents' reports, it is not so much that class mobility has made professionals less likely to seek assistance from extended kin, but rather depending on parents and extended kin for childcare is not as automatic as it once was. Seniors (most of whom are the much-researched baby-boomers) are staying in the work force longer, developing their own social calendars that do not include babysitting grandchildren, or are falling ill as their children prolong their age of first birth, often waiting until they are well into their thirties. Only eight of the women had their first births before the age of 30, most had first births between thirty and thirty-four, and three of the respondents were between ages 37 and 39. While migration and lifecycle changes limit social and communal activities with extended kin, the respondents in this study demonstrate that while the need for fictive kin and extended kin changes it does not dissipate. In fact, kin become that much more important and when there are none to be found or relied upon, study respondents move them in, "choose" to stay at home, or "create" them.

Kathy moved her parents to Atlanta when her executive position required that she be less available than she would have liked. Selena's in-laws moved to Atlanta from Detroit when they retired and can often be seen picking the children up from school or standing on the sidelines at Saturday afternoon soccer games. Most of the respondents relayed times when their families had come to "help" with the kids. These prolonged visits were usually when the kids were first born, when they had a pressing deadline; or when they to be out of town for an extended period of time. While many reports have suggested that members of the professional class would rather utilize professional childcare agencies for their children's needs, recent scholarship has condemned childcare agencies, citing the difficulties parents have in locating childcare (Hertz and Ferguson 1996, Hertz 1997, Uttal 1997; 1999, Hart and Kelly 2006), as well as the poor conditions childcare practitioners work under (often low pay, no benefits, and inability to afford childcare for their own children). In addition, the media outlets have drawn attention to the hidden problems found in expensive nanny and au pair agencies (see recent reports on child abuse). Given the literature, both popular and scholarly, it makes sense that many of the respondents said they felt hesitant with locating spaces that would be convenient, affordable, safe, nurturing and with low turnover. In response, nine who were concerned utilized a family member, usually their mother or their husband's mother, or a home-based center independently run by a church-member, friend of the family, or referred by a friend for childcare. Even for babysitting needs, most of the respondents relied on family or very close friends for short-term care. However, only one of the study participants cited concerns with childcare as her primary reason for not returning to work and even that reason was seasoned with other changes in her career, work, and family balance.

"We were in Chicago at the time," said Cara. "I didn't feel comfortable with child-care, that is why I never returned." However, Cara's father was ill and died shortly after she had her daughter. Cara received a substantial inheritance that allowed her, after some wise investments, to leave her career. "I was no longer happy with my job. I had worked for the school for seven years and had never received an unsatisfactory. Towards the end of my pregnancy, I received an unsatisfactory evaluation and it seemed to be connected to my pregnancy. We decided to move to Atlanta and I decided to become self-employed."

Cara continues to live in Atlanta a short distance from her mother, however, her mother continues to be very active with her career and activities and only occasionally baby-sits for Cara's three children. While Cara employs a nanny to assist with the children while she is working, most of her support comes from being a member of a support group for African American mothers called Millennium Moms. This group, similar to the nationally recognized Mocha Moms (a support group for stay at home moms of color), began for career moms and now focuses on the needs of employed moms and stay at home moms. The mothers periodically join together for meetings, mom's night out, play-dates, and networking opportunities. While the organization has no charter and is not yet nationally recognized, Cara and other participating mothers say they do not know what they would do without it. Cara has been a member since her daughter was born and sees it as the friend she needed when she was negotiating being "at home," and starting her own business. "It was great to be around like-minded women. These were women who were trying to do things we have not seen before. I had not seen a stay

at home mom/entrepreneur before. I look for women to be in empowering situations. This [Millennium Moms] gives me a support group for that."

To address the need for social, emotional, and "child-keeping"[74] support, Cara, like most of the respondents in the study have formed friendships through formal and informal support groups and have created their own version of the reciprocal, extended and fictive kin relationships Stack describes (Stack 1992). Instead of adaptive strategies that focused on financial concerns in impoverished conditions, these women maintain the cultural legacy by investing in and enacting relationships that support familial needs for professional women who negotiate new constraints.

Such was the case for Jill. When she had her second child, her mother and grandmother were ill and she was co-managing her private practice. "If my mother's health had been better that would have helped. She was retired and I had hoped to keep my practice, and use my mother and maybe a Nanny to keep the children. But once she was ill I could not do it all." Jill's grandmother had heart disease and her mother had dementia. She could not depend on either to manage a preschooler and an infant. But Jill had a friend that she now calls her Godmother, who made herself available to her family in much the same way her mother or grandmother would have. Jill met Sara, a woman her mother's age, through a casual friend. "She basically adopted us into her family and treats us like family. I talk to her or my bestfriend when I need advice, we celebrate holidays with her and her family, and she often keeps the kids." Jill continued. "I remember just after those first few weeks when you stay inside with your new baby, Sara called and said, "bring the baby over and you and Paul go out for the evening." It was

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[74] Child-keeping was used by Carol Stack

just what we needed but we would never have asked. She has definitely been like a mother to me and a grandmother to the kids."

Creating the Village

While most of the women who participated in this study do not live in the same neighborhood, as the participants in Carol Stack's study did, they live in the same geographic area of the city of Atlanta and their paths cross frequently. In fact, Cara recently met Kia, another mom, who has left her career as an engineer to focus on family and entrepreneurship at an informal meeting of mothers, most of whom were in Millennium Moms. The two discovered that they lived in the same subdivision, and five of their seven children attend the same school[75].

Frances, Monica, Kathy, and Richelle all live within minutes of each other, met at the Bible study and support group for professional women who are at home moms being sponsored by Cornerstone church (mentioned previously),and are also members of Mocha Moms. The four, while connected through their common status as mothers, wives, and former career women, depend upon each other for a myriad of concerns ranging from improving their relationships with God, to deciding whether or not they should "go back to work." Kathy and her husband moved to their West Cobb County subdivision when

[75] I met the two individually through their children's school. In the interest of confidentiality I never told study participants the names of other women I was interviewing. If I used informants to locate additional respondents I never informed them that I had interviewed the person they referred. This worked to maintain confidentiality since study participants knew participation was voluntary and I may or may not move forward with a referral. In fact, many more women than are included in the study were referred as study participants and often declined to participate or had scheduling conflicts that prevented their participation. Cara and Kia met after I made initial contact with both. When I interviewed Cara about Millennium Moms and asked her for potential informants she suggested I talk to her "friend" Kia whom she had just met. To maintain Kia's confidentiality, I did not tell Cara I had spoken with Kia and instead asked her for more details about Kia to assess the extent to which informal networks around children and career provide more opportunities for the creation of fictive kin relationships.

she was still pregnant with her son. Her husband asked her to take some time off from her hotel conference manager position to stay home with their son. She initially thought she would want to go back to work. "My biggest concern was knowing someone," she said. "I did not want to feel like I was by myself. Before we had my son we lived on 14th street [downtown Atlanta]. I walked across the street to work. I had access to everything. Even though we did not want to live down there and raise our family I thought I would be so alone out here. Once we got settled out here I met someone at story-time, got involved with Mocha Moms and the neighborhood association it's been great." Kathy is now the treasurer for their chapter of Mocha Moms, chair of the neighborhood recreation committee and spends most of her time with friends from the support group and from Mocha Moms. "I seek advice and hang out with people who are married." That is where I need most of my support and since the women in Mocha Moms are married and have kids and stay home, I get a lot of help."

Richelle feels the same way. Her parents are divorced so she does not feel she can get good advice from her mother. "My mother raised us to be independent. Her focus was on raising us, not on being a wife. There are some things I do not want about my parents' relationship so I do not get advice from my family." Richelle uses her relationships with the mothers at Mocha Moms to support her parenting and her marriage, She, like many of the women in this study, has created means of support that give her the community she needs to support her values.

Myra is from New Orleans and her husband is from Washington, DC. Neither of them are near family. But they both grew up in families where fictive kin and extended family were very important to their development and chose their neighborhood for

precisely that reason. As previously discussed, Robert was raised by his grandmother only seeing his mother on the weekends until he was about five years old. Asking Myra to stay at home when she had their son did not preclude his desire for a large, close, extended family, he expected the two to work hand-in-hand. Likewise, Myra grew up with not only close-knit family, but also a cohort of neighborhood friends whom she says were like siblings. Being away from her own family and wanting a "village" for her children made southwest Atlanta and her particular neighborhood very appealing. "In New Orleans we had a lot of extended family. My parents had a lot of support from my aunts and uncles. There were four of us [siblings] growing up and we were very close. The neighborhood kids were also very close. There were about twenty of us and we all played together when we were kids and we looked out for each other, we treated each other like brothers and sisters and we could not even date each other," she said with a laugh. "It was like incest." Myra and Robert have worked hard to create what Myra remembers as a small village that included close relationships with family and friends. "That is why I like Southwest [area of Atlanta that was the primary focus of the study] so much. We are hoping we can recreate that here." Myra is well on her way to doing just that. She is one of the founders of the group Millennium Moms and lives next door to her co-founder. "This neighborhood reminded me of the neighborhood I grew up in… In this community we look out for each other."

As stated previously, distance keeps many of the respondents away from extended family, however all except two of the mothers said they had extended family that they visited on a somewhat regular basis, whether they were in town or not. Despite the difficulty of maintaining close relationships with family and childhood friends, all of the

respondents said they had friends they considered "like family" that they spent time with. "I am all about the village…" said Kathy, "the community." While these career women, moms, and wives continue to maintain vestiges of the communal structure of black people in the U.S., their membership in "the black community", and that of other upper-middle-class blacks, becomes ever more precarious as the divide between the middle class and lower class widens and thickens[76]. In this vein, support groups arranged around "networking", church groups, sororities and neighborhood associations make it easier to locate and form bonds with like-minded women who struggle with the same types of shifts in their identities when they become professionals, wives, and mothers simultaneously.

These struggles are a form of black feminist scholar's treatment of race, class, and gender but affect daily life in a myriad of complex ways. Whereas black feminist theory has illuminated the differences experienced by black women as a result of their race, gender and class, black feminist theory has been complicit in the conflation of race and class citing a difference between the black woman's experience and the white middle class woman's. This study shows that African American women must simultaneously be "authentically black" and maintain "respectable" decorum where the two seemingly no longer meet[77]. Chapter six explores the ambiguity and intermittent ambivalence experienced by middle and upper-middle class women who must negotiate and

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[76] Widens – refers to the wage gap. Thickens – refers to ideological and cultural differences

[77] "Being black" is used to denote popular statements that question a black persons status as "black enough" or having behaviors that are characteristically white. It works in conjunction with "acting white" which is a derogatory phrase used to accuse a person of betraying his or her culture by incorporating the social expectations of mainstream white American into their behaviors and practices.

enculturate their's and their families' movement between three worlds: white, middle class black, and "authentically" black.

Chapter 6 Which Black Community Are We Uplifting?

The previous chapters have presented the findings of this exploratory ethnography highlighting the ways in which African American professional wives and their families negotiate career and family amid a host of ambiguous race, class and gender stereotypes and ideologies. A consistent theme throughout the project has been the seeming conflict over being black and middle class at one and the same time. Internalized racism and classism have made it difficult for African American professionals and their families to embrace the American Dream as it has been fraught with a black community identity that seeks to divest itself of American culture while selectively embracing it. As was demonstrated in the previous section, reformulating these antagonistic identities by focusing on sustaining their families comes at a cost to these mothers, especially in the arena of gender equity.

When asked to categorize household tasks by the person responsible for completing them, all the women in the study stated that they completed more of the tasks than their husbands. While they were dissatisfied with how much of the responsibility was their own, when asked if and what they would change, some of the women suggested their husbands do more while others indicated they would like to outsource more. Denise, an attorney who works part-time in the county district attorney’s office said, “I would hire a nanny. I can't change his schedule because his job allows us to do what we do. Maybe a housekeeper would be good. But we pay almost $30k for tuition so I don't want to press the issue. Is it worth the argument?” Linda, a dentist said she would pay someone to come in and cook everyday. “That is the biggest thing after work.” And for Karen, a pediatrician who moved to Atlanta following Hurricane Katrina, calling upon

the forces of Oprah was her answer to the change in household duties since she and her attorney husband and three children relocated.

> It's been the biggest difference in our roles since we got here because our jobs changed. He did much more in New Orleans because he had his own practice and I worked full time. Once we moved here we decided he would get a full time position and I would work on a contract basis. Until two months ago he did nothing. We've been renegotiating. He's been more open to reallocating the household responsibilities with some arm twisting but he says he's had an epiphany. If I could, I would have a maid at least once to get everything organized and then I would maintain. Just to get organized. I need Oprah!

There were other women who expressed the trepidation in outsourcing domestic responsibilities that Karen relayed. Many said they were not willing to hire help until someone else had convinced them or they knew friends who were doing it. “My mother did it all,” said Keayba, a physician and instructor at the Morehouse School of Medicine. Keayba felt very apprehensive about hiring someone to clean her home after the birth of her first child. “Kareem had to convince me to let someone help and I still wasn’t comfortable until I remembered my mother was a teacher. She was off when we were.” Others expressed feeling awkward. One respondent stated that she often “cleaned” before the housekeeper arrived, “I just feel uncomfortable if I do not pick up something.”

This discussion speaks to an ambiguity reported by Pei-Chai Lan in her study of Filipina migrant domestic workers entitled “Maid or Madam: Filipina Migrant Workers and the Continuity of Domestic Labor.” The Filipina women in Lan’s study are migrant workers in Taiwan where they travel through a type of maid/madam boundary wherein housewives in their home countries become breadwinners by doing domestic work overseas, and foreign maids turn into foreign brides. Lan presents this study as an attempt at gaining insight on the complexity of gendered domestic labor in the context of

global migration citing the fluidity of the roles of maid and madam wherein women may shift between positions or occupy both at the same time. While Lan's work reiterates some of the issues of domestic migrant labor previously researched for black West Indian women and Latina women performing services for white women in the U.S (Colen 2001); where Lan provides new insight is in the simultaneous role of maid and madam. For African American middle class women, this fluidity is not experienced in their personal employment as domestic workers but in the confluence of their experiences as "madams" and their foremothers' experiences as maids. Since domestic labor was not a choice for African American women (during slavery) or was the primary choice (during the Jim Crow South and Northern discrimination), being in a position to purchase domestic services is wrought with a good deal of uncertainty as black women are conflicted over issues of race and class.

At first glance, the gendered inequity evidenced by continued uneven distribution of household labor and the legacy of racialized domestic service, appears to be a manifestation of what has been termed neo-traditional gender roles in the African American community. However, a conversation with another respondent suggests other identity formulations may be materializing. Cara Sanders, a thirty-six-year-old mother of three and former school psychologist turned real estate investor, related that when people learned she worked from home, her children attended preschool, and she employed a housekeeper:

> They say "What do you do all day?" But I say why shouldn't I have a housekeeper or someone to help out around the house? White women have been doing it for years . . . When I think of black womanhood I think struggle and I don't want to live like that. We shouldn't have to.

While Cara pushed against normative expectations of African American women, her sensibilities were a little ruffled. Cara continued,

> White women have an option. We have to work. I never thought about it but if black wives wanted to stay home husbands would say no you have to work. There is a different mentality. When you've always had to work hard to attain it [wealth/status] has a different feeling. We can have the same as Caucasians but it still seems harder for us. When you don't have to struggle it's easy to sit back and wait for someone to give you something.

Cara is visibly defensive. She wants what she perceives middle class white women have in the way of freedom and flexibility but understands that most black women do not have that option. Again, for African American women, hiring help is mired in social dictates that are not easily overcome. Many are daughters or granddaughters of domestic workers, nannies, or washer women, and they find hiring women to do similar tasks synonymous with hiring their own kin. They are well aware of the history of the exploitation of black women's labor and understand that women who provide productive labor for one household are typically unable to afford household services for their own families (Dill 1994, Mack 1999).

The conundrum for professional African American women in general and the women in this study in particular involves a rearticulation of race, class, and gender. In most instances they are faced with reconciling a connection to the black community which has in most instances supported them emotionally and financially, while simultaneously withdrawing from many of the parts of the culture that are deemed "black." As Baldwin suggested, the great wealth of the Negro, Colored, Black, Afro-American, African American, and N-word is the double-edgedness an extension of DuBois' double consciousness.

Strength of Our Mothers

The twenty-three women whose lives are explored in *Race, Class, and Marriage* are upper-middle-class. They are educated professionals and so are most of their husbands. They do not have to work outside the home to "make ends meet" or be a part of the middle class because their husbands are educated professionals as well. They live in homes ranging from $130,000 to $450,000 in neighborhoods where homes can be listed for as much as $600,000. When compared to incomes on the nation's household income profile, the families presented range from the upper-middle-income range to the top twenty percent of all incomes (see Table 6). Yet the women in this study struggle with the decision to stay-at-home with their children under the age of six, or to continue in their careers, even if it is temporary. These twenty-three women face conflicts balancing work and family just like the rest of American families. Their realities are not outside this notion of conflict as either protected from it or too deeply entrenched in it. Yet their particular stories are unique to it. What makes African American professional women unique to the discussion of work and family conflict is that they have always been engaged in the complex negotiation of work and family.

bell hooks, Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith were among the first black feminist scholars who critiqued feminism's focus on the issues of white middle class women as representative of all women regardless of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, or marital status. These eminent scholars drew much needed attention to the fact that even when the sample is small (African Americans only make up 12.9% of the U.S. population) black women's realities and experiences are largely different from those of white women

just by virtue of their minority status in this country which was built upon a brutally oppressive institutional and cultural relationship based solely on race. At the heart of this study is recognition that professional middle class positionality does mitigate some of the effects of race among African American professional women. Both black and white women are making decisions to “stay-at-home” or return to work following childbirth. Both black and white women are often responding to economic down-turns in their companies when making these “decisions.” Both black and white women are responsive to the culture of “intensive mothering” that places the entire onus on mothers for children’s social, emotional, educational, physical, and psychological needs. Both black and white women are responding to shifts in the U.S. political economy that require nuclear family migrations away from extended kin and family and friendship support systems. And both black and white women face the challenges of locating and securing affordable childcare.

African American women and more specifically, African American professional women have a long-standing relationship with work, family, and community that is instructive for understanding black women’s contemporary negotiation of career and family conflict. The nineteenth century “uplift movement” and the early twentieth century Black Women’s Club Movement developed an ideological framework in the African American community that combined marriage, career and family. Following a Victorian Model of respectability while simultaneously developing an ethos they believed would uplift the black community, late nineteenth and early twentieth century professional black women argued for strong Christian mores, sexual purity, chastity, and community empowerment. The question is not how many black women are modifying

their relationship with work and if that number is statistically significant in relation to white women or black women of lower socio-economic standing. The question is what happens to the cultural model when there is a significant change in the economic structure which then impacts perceptions, expectations and everyday lived experiences. How is one strong and independent and simultaneously submissive and dependent, especially if her race specific gender ideology taught a model rooted in independence and her class specific gender ideology expects a model rooted in dependence?

It is within this context that the women in this study found themselves juxtaposed between an educational and family-of-origin background and an upper-middle class social location. Their family of origin background thoroughly prepared them to be professionals and mothers, often at the expense of marriage. Their class location expected, and often demanded, two-parent homes. These are conflicting cultural models that can only be illuminated in a race and class specific context. However mimicking the idealized white middle class model does not eradicate all of the problems as their lives are irrevocably racialized as well.

Gail and Nancy were two of the respondents whose perspectives represented many of those articulated throughout the study. They clearly articulated the contradictions inherent in their desires to be good wives and mothers and their educational, professional, and family background. Marilyn and Gia grappled with enculturating middle-class values into their pre-teen children, who were often inundated with a view of African American youth culture that focused attention on violence, misogyny, hyper-sexuality and hyper-consumption. They too reformulated their identities as high-achieving corporate women to nurture their families, taking a reduction in hours

in Marilyn's case, and in Gia's, staying at home. But managing grade-schoolers and middle-schoolers introduced different challenges, particularly for black males, who continue to be the highest percentage of individuals in the justice system, and the lowest percentage in college.

The mothers in this study were faced with the challenges of remaining an integral part of the black community while simultaneously mediating many of the seemingly negative influences that are currently and historically associated with blackness. It was the conversation with Cara that provided the most telling depiction of the ambiguities inherent in these women's lives as each respondent in the study made some reference to being a strong black woman, an independent woman, or a woman who could take care of herself and her children. The mythic view of the strong black woman has been passed down within families and communities. Its origins are in African tribal customs and in the capitalistic nature of the slave trade, which designated black men and women as perfect chattel. The title, although a badge of honor, has dictated through cultural memory that black women must be able to do it all. As Freeman suggests, the strong black matriarch in the Afro-West Indian context draws on the cultural memory of women who, "through self-sacrifice, ingenuity, and sheer hard work, have pieced together a living in order that they may nurture their families. This has taken shape in the creation of a competing ideal to that of the domesticated and frail white housewife" (Freeman 2005: 111).

However, what is carried forth along with the apparent strength of the black woman is the constant sense of struggle. While these women want to be responsible to their communities, their families, and themselves, often choosing to live in racially

segregated, black, middle-class neighborhoods, they also want a bit of reprieve, a "lighter" way of life, wherein they are not constantly called upon to carry the weight of the black family on their backs. African American middle class women's ability to hire domestic assistance and to grapple with what it means for individual families as well as the black community as a whole is steeped in lessons in class and social mobility. They were working to build strong marriages, however, this framework often meant rejecting the good advice of mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and friends, who traditionally have been the people African American women depended on when the men were not around.[78] It was difficult to turn away from the cultural models they had always known and that they identified with and built their futures on. But these women recognized that the framework in which African American women were taught to expect to be alone, while praying not to be, was bad for their well-being. While it was not an easy statement to make, and felt like betrayal, Cara and the other women in this study were beginning to assert, "I don't want to live like that. We shouldn't have to."

Cara was candid when she made her remark although it was clear that it scared her. We had met a few times to talk. I had been to her home and had accompanied her to drop-off and pick her kids up from school. She felt comfortable telling me about the way she was organizing her life for herself and her children but she still felt like she had to explain. That is what made it worse. She had been asked repeatedly "what she did all day" from people she knew. Denise was asked by her father "when are you going back to

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[78] See Angela Davis' (1971) "Reflections on the black woman's role in the community of slaves" (reprinted in Beverly Guy-Sheftall's *Words of Fire* (1995)). Davis discusses the importance of the black slave woman in the maintenance of the domestic sphere, how that sphere was seen as a place of resistance, and how black women worked together to take care of the needs of children and men around them who were often not members of their immediate family.

work?" Gail's mother asserted she was being lazy. Nancy's grandmother told her that children would not appreciate it. For those who stayed in the workforce even in some small capacity, it was out of a sense of responsibility, order, being in control, or "just in case he acts crazy."

These statements and the sentiments behind them were given in love, to protect the wayward daughters who had forgotten a man could walk out on them and their children and they needed to be prepared. This perspective is consistent in the black community across class and among black women in particular. Know how to take care of yourself and your children no matter what. The women of the Progressive era who employed the politics of respectability did not pass this mantra to their daughters or to the lower class women who were migrating to the urban areas. Black women community leaders and club women encouraged their daughters and charges to have sexual purity and Christian ethics which meant marriage, even if they could not complete their education as was often the case. These women, like Mary Church Terrell, Ida Wells, and Lugenia Burns Hope found safety from the degradation of racism in marriage. As African Americans secured more rights and incurred more government surveillance, family structures that were never the ideal were forced to justify themselves. In an effort to mitigate the damaging effects of growing up in a "stigmatized" family formation, black educators, politicians, ministers, and community members constructed a cultural model that accepted single-parent family formations. The community continued to recognize education and community engagement as key to "racial uplift" allowing the new cultural model to embrace some elements of the respectability era merged with the protectionism of independence.

Do the findings in *Race, Class, and Marriage* support the culture of poverty theory? The women in this study reported being socialized to focus on their own independence and the survival of their children with less attention to marriage and traditional family norms. Does such a family history blame the women for failed marriages? It is more useful to define the institutionalized racist and sexist policies and actions that led to the development of a cultural model meant for a group's survival. The families I studied were denied access to the normative model and they created a model that worked for them. I am hopeful that having established this fact, we can talk about what needs to change in the policies and in the reality of experience to change those cultural models to look more like the normative model. This is what I have done in *Race, Class, and Marriage*. However, finding a way to the "ideal" white normative model is not the goal of this study. In fact there are two problems with pursuit of the white normative family model. First, women portrayed in this study continue to be committed to the communal nature of the black community and are seeking ways to strengthen and preserve it. Second the normative white family model continues to operate within and perpetuate a matrix of oppression that is elitist, sexist, and racist.

The women portrayed in this study want to be a part of the black community and do not see themselves as integrationists or assimilationists. However they do not embrace all of the community at all times. There is class segregation and socialization for their children is focused only on respectable ideals. For the women in this study, the promise of "respectability" holds the highest esteem. It is not an elitist notion in which they are representative of the race on a national, local, or community platform (Gaines 1996, Ferguson 2002). Their work within their communities is quiet and behind the

scenes. Despite women in this sample being much more focused on themselves and their families, about half continue to be engaged in the community. While community service through the church or sorority was the way most of the women engaged in public service, some made service their profession (Kalia), and some were purposefully engaging in relationships with poor and working class women (Gail, Gia, Nancy).

What likens them to the respectable middle class of the early twentieth century is their desire to change the way African Americans continue to be depicted in popular culture, academia, and media outlets. While they do not blatantly articulate this desire, it is clear that countering the myths and the stereotypes about black women, black families, and black youth directs the thoughts and decisions of most of the group. What they do not realize, according to Patricia Hill Collins, is even though this cultural model is designed to offer some reprieve from the racist ideologies perpetuated against them, it is complicit in that process. At the time of her death, Leanita McClain was divorced and did not have children. In one of her most seminal editorial pieces she wrote,

> I am burdened daily with showing whites that blacks are people. I am in the old vernacular, a credit to my race. I am my brothers' keeper, and my sisters', though many of them have abandoned me because they think I have abandoned them… I have a foot in each world, but I cannot fool myself about either. I can see the transparent deceptions of some whites and the bitter hopelessness of some blacks. I know how tenuous my grip on one way of life is, and how strangling the grip of the other way of life can be (McClain and Page1986: 14).

Collins suggests middle class black women have a decision to make. Will they join in solidarity with their working-class and poor sisters or will they become the "mammies" of the corporate structure who know their place and maintain the class structure (Collins 2000: 67). A black feminist standpoint asks how our cultural models will change to ensure our collective survival. If professional black women are concerned about

representations of black womanhood and black culture and that concern is rooted in the racist ways our community continues to be stereotyped out of opportunities, what is the enduring theme that will respond? In this case, the legacy of respectability has endured and is particular to professional black women's standpoint. The legacy of respectability that these women are reshaping can be viewed as a radical standpoint for black women to decide to focus on the health of their marriages and to reject the model of the "strong black woman" (because it adds stress to an already tenuous status of black), or is it just another manifestation of patriarchy? The ideal white normative family model would tell us that it is a manifestation of patriarchy. This cultural discourse works to dominate not only African Americans and other minority groups whose models exist outside or in resistance to the idealized model. The white ideal works also as an oppressive force in the lives of white women who do not or cannot meet the model.

In academic and popular press publications, scholars have been placing more emphasis on the flaws in the nuclear family model and the middle class normative model (Gerson 1985). Scholars have critiqued placing husbands and children before personal career and professional goals as neo-traditional (Hochschild 1989). Scholars have been interested in the ways in which men are disadvantaged in the current mythic model since they are less able to make similar decisions about employment (Moen 2005). Some scholars and lay-people interested in gay and lesbian issues find trying to achieve the normative model by asking for legal rights to marry is not beneficial to an oppressed group since the model is already flawed (Lehr 1999). Scholars view the traditional family form as detrimental to some groups and privileging for others. Instead of reifying these models and perpetuating the hegemony of the nuclear model, scholars suggest more

democratic ideals that allow for a more compassionate society where all of the care work is performed by all (Fineman 2001, Williams 2001).

Black women have long engaged in an ethic of care that included many. Their take on respectability does not change that relationship.

> It is not my child who tells me: I have no femaleness white women must affirm. Not my child who says: I have no rights, black men must respect. It is not my child who has purged my face from history and herstory, and left mystory just that, a mystery; my child loves my face and would have it on every page, if she could, as I have loved my own parents' faces above all others… We are together, my child and I. Mother and child, yes, but *sisters* really, against whatever denies us all that we are (Walker 1979: 75).

Future scholarship should look to the black family model for lessons to be learned, recognizing that mothers are not the cause of the problems in the black community but rather have been the strength and the glue that has held them together, whether a man was present or not.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

In the current study I ask how African American professional women construct a race- and class- specific gender identity and strategy. I place these articulations within U.S. constructions of race, class, and gender which have historically exploited black women's productive and reproductive labor while simultaneously creating and reifying myths that call African American women's life strategies into question. Given the necessity and importance of work for the black community since slavery and the ideology that accompanied it making black women's work important and necessary to black racial uplift, there is a work and family conflict for African American women. However, that conflict is in African American women's ability to negotiate their roles as wives more so than their roles as mothers and professionals. Most of the women interviewed clearly articulated their lack of knowledge about their roles as wives and operating within marriage. They explained that they were raised to be able to take care of themselves. In this way, being able to take care of ones self meant achieving educational and career success and being responsible to children as an extension of self. The research shows that African American women's attention to education and career success was developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in response to white America's derogatory opinions of African Americans and the job and housing discrimination that were a result. Additionally, these disparaging views locked African American women out of the white woman's "cult of domesticity" and "true womanhood" and forced black women to develop a way to protect and advance themselves and their race. This ideology was developed as the "politics of respectability" and was adopted by African American women and supported by the black community. The politics of respectability fostered the

development of a more egalitarian gender strategy as the African American family structure relied upon the efforts of men and women for economic and social support. When it was not readily available black women knew they could rely upon themselves.

As studies have shown, the Western ideal of companionate marriage has traditionally accompanied economic advancement. Likewise, in this study I suggest, as African Americans have achieved greater economic success affectionate and emotional bonds have been the expectation. In addition, the derogatory opinions of African American families persist, and middle-class and upper-middle-class African Americans continue to hold the belief that they should represent the race. The result of these opposing views, independence as a career woman and mother, and simultaneously, dependence as a wife, renders African American women in a contradictory state that is not experienced by middle-class and upper-middle class white women, nor working-class and poor black women.

The desire to "have it all" and learn that "having it all" is not possible or is extremely difficult at best is one that many women of the twenty-first century share. What makes African American women unique is the ideology of black womanhood already accounted for the combination of career and family, and, greater gender equality through the early twentieth century "politics of respectability." In fact, it appears that African American professional women, by modifying their relationship with work, have taken a step backward in their career advancement, lost tremendous ground in terms of gender equity, and have disrupted the communal importance of "racial uplift" in the black community. Instead this study shows that African American professional wives and mothers see their focus on marriage and family as important to the "racial uplift," and

respectability goals of the early twentieth century. By turning to the companionate marriage ideal, and representing an intact African American family, they positively represent the race, reinforce middle-class ideals, and reproduce their social-class position.

The results of this important study disrupt ideologies about race, class, gender, and motherhood, illuminate intra-group difference and inter-group similarities, and by focusing on an understudied and under-theorized group within a group (African American professional married mothers), questions of class privilege as they are influenced by race and racism are further explored. *Race, Class, and Marriage* focuses on African American professional middle class women with an eye toward first, centering the margins, as stated by bell hooks (1984), and second, utilizing theoretical constructions of race- and class- specific gender strategy, to highlight the ways in which African American women continue to be influenced by the collective cultural memory of the politics of respectability. While this study isolates a relatively small, little-known and under-theorized group, the promise is in its ability to not only de-center the experience of "whiteness" as a race- and class- specific norm but to add complexity to the gender, race, and class ideologies around motherhood that are pervasive and prevent the development of cultural and political solutions to the conflicts embedded in negotiating career and family in our society across race and class. This study shows that while there have been important studies on white women's negotiations of work and family, and valuable explorations on middle class African American families, there have been no studies that present the ways in which middle- class and upper-middle-class black women construct and enact their gender strategies in relation to marriage, career and motherhood. Inclusion of middle-class and upper-middle class women in discussion of motherhood

ideology, gender strategy, and race and class-based identities contributes to a more nuanced view of the nexus of race, class, and gender in contemporary family lives. This study takes into consideration the gender ideology developed out of black women's varied work and family history as well as the race- and class-based identities developed as a result of persistent social, economic, and political discrimination. As a result, this study empirically demonstrates that professional African American women and their families are experiencing a shift from older models of marriage and parenting obtained from their own parents (and others) that privileged education and careers as the key to African American communal success. African American upper-middle-class women are modifying their relationship with work and changing their understanding of marriage and motherhood to an ideal of companionate marriage as a marker of upper-middle-class social position and attention to race and class reproduction. This shift, while solidifying their class-based identity, complicates their racialized and gendered identity therefore creating ambivalence and conflict in their view of themselves as professional black women historically identified as committed to gender equality and the success of the race. This exploratory ethnographic project reveals that upper-middle class African American women construct their gender ideologies and identities as mothers alongside their position within the black middle class. The conundrum for professional African American women in general and the women in this study in particular involves a re-articulation of race, class and gender. In most instances they are faced with reconciling a connection to the black community which has, in most instances, supported them emotionally and financially, while simultaneously withdrawing from many of the parts of the culture that are deemed "black." Again, where conflict in the mainstream literature is

in women's role as professionals, for African American upper-middle-class women it is in the role of wife. All twenty-three of the women in the study believed their parents had raised them with a focus on developing their education and careers. Twelve believed that they had received instruction on being career women and wives while six made a point of saying they felt they had not been prepared to be wives. While women, particularly middle class women, continue to be encouraged to marry, and in fact, want to marry, these "mother-wit" cultural cues do a lot to disrupt marriage by suggesting that marriage is not expected to last. What most realized is that they have to work at their family lives just as much or even more than they work at their professions. In fact much of the mismatch in perception had to do with the way they envisioned marriage. Myra said, "I thought you go with the flow as a wife or as a married person. The reality is that you have to work. You have to change yourself to fit with this other person." This perspective supports an ideological shift for these women in which they and their families do not simply move to the middle class in income while maintaining African American family models. Instead, these women are developing a gender strategy that reconfigures the image of the respectable black woman who is able now to reap the rewards of her class standing. African American professional women disrupt intra-cultural expectations of career success previously used to represent and "uplift the race" and focus their attention on family stability, defined as remaining married and raising successful children. This individuated focus on marriage and family, more in line with the companionate ideal, sets forth a new interpretation of "racial uplift" through the ideal of a stable black marriage and family.

As previous studies have shown, black middle-class families straddle white middle-class work and public spaces and desire to maintain and nurture racialized black identity. For the women in this study, double consciousness was articulated in choice of neighborhood and often in choice of school and activities for their children. By selecting these spaces, these women defined safe spaces where they could focus on racialized identity while also gate-keeping the types of black identities they wanted to privilege. As a result, some families privileged black neighborhoods so they could provide examples of successful professional blacks to their children. In addition they sent their children to predominantly black private elementary schools where parent involvement was high, and academic standards, and a focus on black history and self-esteem were all high priorities. Some families privileged black schools because they wanted children to have a strong foundation. The focus on black history and pride were paramount to some families who wanted to make sure that education and positive self-image are important goals that are reinforced.

Professional black mothers are also concerned about protecting their children's class identities. Many worried about neighborhood schools where delinquent behaviors instead of academic success were celebrated. Some carpooled or planned to carpool their kids to the schools on the other side of town where children could excel and receive encouragement from parents, teachers, and peers. Often these goals were contradictory as parents wanted their children to see African American professionals on a regular basis and have visual role models of African American success yet at the same time had to be concerned with combating African American youth culture that threatened to undermine all they were being prepared for. For many of the women in this study, the accessibility,

primarily because the community is African American, places their neighborhoods and their property at risk. For mothers who are struggling to maintain a cultural divide between middle class respectability and the media-hyped glamorization of the ghetto, self-segregation could create even more of a threat since the middle class has always included a range of income and professions. Several respondents recounted run-ins with neighbors with less money and less cultural capital whose practices threatened to bring property values down and found themselves calling the police and instituting security measures to cut-down on class-based problems. Respondents expressed some discomfort with how elitist and in some respects, racist their statements sound. They contend however, that their interest in maintaining their communities does not detract from their allegiance to and responsibility toward the rest of the African American community. In fact, where studies have suggested African American families will become less communally oriented with an increase in income, social-class position, and status, this study found that respondents continued to be committed to their extended kin ties. In many instances they created friendship networks in their neighborhoods and churches, through support groups, and through interactions with "like-minded" people. Although most were not from Atlanta, these friendships and extended-kin connections provided an opportunity for them to re-create the communal village that they were accustomed to when they were living closer to their families of origin.

This study complicates the omissions in the career and family choice and conflict literature. By exploring the experiences of primarily upper-middle-class African American women and their families who have traditionally had a very different relationship with work than is presented in media and scholarly articulations and by

focusing our attention on African American upper-middle-class professional women, we are able to identify other groups that have been left out of the discussion. Each offers new insight as the country grapples with theory and policy that will alleviate the concerns of all working families. Additionally, this study updates our knowledge of the way in which the "racial uplift" strategy operated and continues to operate in the black professional and upper-middle class. It explores how respectability shapes the experiences, choices and opportunities of black middle and upper-middle-classes. This study also pulls professional black families into a discussion of the global movement toward the ideal of companionate marriage. Scholars have critiqued companionate marriage as a Western construct that changes economic and social relationships in nonwestern societies. Likewise for African American families whose kinship structure has traditionally been a consanguineal kinship or partnership marriage model, this study explores the reasons why a focus on companionate marriage is increasingly viable and selected for professional black families. It also highlights the pitfalls of companionate marriage as a pitfall for individual couples as well as the black community as a whole.

This study calls for the future exploration of the viability of the ideal of companionate marriage as a strategy for professional black families and professional black women in particular. An exploration of how African American professional men understand their choices and constraints, an exploration of the black professional/middle-class in other locales to create a more nuanced picture of the black middle-class and the black upper-middle-class. Finally, a study of the respondents' mothers' generation could potentially provide additional insight into how decisions have changed over time.

APPENDIX

1. STUDY RESPONDENTS AGE/OCCUPATION/EDUCATION/CLASS

Stay-At-Home Mom Respondents

Respondent	Age	Occupation	Children	Family of Origin
Gia	42	B.S. Computer Programmer	2 boys 1 girl	working class
Nancy	38	M.D. Physician	2 girls 1 boy	working class
Frances	32	Some B.A. Business management	2 girls	core middle class
Kathy	43	Hotel Management	1 boy	poor/working class
Charlotte	44	M.B.A. Public Relations, Book Author	1 boy 1 girl	core middle class
Karen	47	M.D. Physician	2 girls 1 boy	core middle class
Richelle	33	B.S. Homemaker	2 girls 1 boy	poor/working class

Full-Time Employed Respondents

Respondent	Age	Occupation	Children	Family of Origin
Natalie	36	B.S. Physics Teacher	2 girls 1 boy	Poor/working class
Kalia	33	M.S. Nonprofit Management	1 boy	upper middle class
Linda	38	D.D.S Dentist	1 boy 1 girl	core middle class
Kya	34	M.A. Education Consultant	1 boy 1 girl	core middle class
Kia	35	B.S. Engineeer	2 girls 1 boy	upper middle class
Jill	46	M.D. Surgeon	2 girls 1 boy	upper middle class
Selena	40	M.B.A. Financial Analyst	2 girls 1 boy	core working class
Keayba	38	M.D. Practitioner and Researcher	2 boys	upper middle class
Sherri	38	MBA Financial Analyst	2 girls 1 boy	core middle class

Respondents with Flexible Relationship with Work

Respondent	Age	Occupation	Children	Family of Origin
Gail	39	B.A. Business Owner	2 boys 1 girl	working class
Cory	44	M.B.A Marketing Executive	3 girls	upper middle class
Marilyn	38	M.P.H Medical Insurance Management	2 boys 1 girl	upper middle class
Myra	39	M.S. Occupational Therapy	1 girl 1 boy	core middle class
Cara	38	M.A. School Psychologist	2 boys 1 girl	core middle class
Monica	38	M.P.A Public Relations	2 girls 1 boy	core middle class
Denise	36	J.D. District Attorney's Office	2 girls	working class

2. Interview Guide: Contemporary Married Women and Work/Family Decision Making

Statistical Data:

1. State your gender ________________ 2. State your birthdate ________________
3. Wife's Race/Ethnicity: ________________ 4. Wife's birthdate: ________________
5. Husband's Race/Ethnicity: ____________ 6. Husband's birthdate: ________________
7. Wife's employment: ____
8. How long have you been with this employer (if stay at home state how long)____
9. Husband's employment: ____
10. How long have you been with this employer (if stay at home state how long)____
11. Wife's birthplace: _________________12. Husband's birthplace: ________________

Wife's education background secondary and post secondary:

Institution	City/State	Degree Obtained	Year Obtained
13.			
14.			
15.			
16.			

Wife's parents highest level of education:

17. Mother_________________________ 18. Father___________________________

19. Husband's education background secondary and post secondary:

Institution	City/State	Degree Obtained	Year Obtained
20.			
21.			
22.			
23.			

Husband's parents highest level of education:

24. Mother ____________________________ 25. Father___________________________
26. What year did you move to Atlanta? If from Atlanta state native:
    ____
27. How long do you plan to live in Atlanta? ____________________________________
28. Year married: _______________________________
29. Age of first pregnancy:________________ 30. Year of last pregnancy: ______________

31. Did you experience any miscarriages, abortions or infant deaths?

Yes _______ No _____________

32. How did that experience make you feel? _______________________________________

____

Children's birthdates:

33. a) _______________ b) _______________ c) _____________ d)_______________

Children's Ages:

34. a)_______________ b) _______________ c) _____________ d)_______________

Financial Analysis

35. Household Income range/yr before taxes:

a)___ less that $25k b)___ $26k-$30k c)____ $31k-$38k

d)___ $39k-45$k e)____ $46k-$60k f)____ $61k-$75k

g)___ $76-$90k h)____ $90k-$110k i)____ $110k-135k

j) ___ $136k-$150k k)___ $151k-$175k

l)____ $176k – $200k m)___ $200k-225k n) $226k+

36. Wife's income range/yr:

a)___ less that $25k b)___ $26k-$30k c)____ $31k-$38k

d)___ $39k-45$k e)____ $46k-$60k f)____ $61k-$75k

g)___ $76-$90k h)____ $90k-$110k

i)____ $110k-$135k j) ___ $136k-$150k

k)___ $151k-$175k l)____ $176k+

37. Husband's income range/yr:

a)___ less that $25k b)___ $26k-$30k c)____ $31k-$38k

d)___ $39k-45$k e)____ $46k-$60k f)____ $61k-$75k

g)___ $76-$90k h)____ $90k-$110k

i)____ $110k-$135k j) ___ $136k-$150k

k)___ $151k-$175k l)____ $176k+

38. Any income generated outside place of employment? Yes_______ No_______

39. What is the nature of the income generator? ____________________________

40. Approximately how much income is generated per year? __________________________________

41. Are any monetary gifts (over $500) received from outside sources?

Yes________ No ________

42. What is the nature of the gift received? ________________

43. Who is the gift giver? ___________

44. What is the largest expenditure your family has experienced in the last 6 months?

____

45. Do you a) ______ rent b) _____ own c) __________ lease/share your home?

46. Rent/Mortgage expenditure range/month:

a)____ $0-250 b)____ $250-500 c)______ $500-1050 d)______ $1050-1500

e)____ $1500-2300 f)_____$2300-3500 g)______ $3500-6000 h)______ $6000+

47. What are your Daycare/Nanny/Tuition costs per month? _______________

48. What are your Babysitting costs per month? _________________________

What did your parents give you for a wedding present?

49. Wife's parents ________________ 50. Husband's parents ________________

51. Approximately how much did your wedding cost? ____________________

52. Who paid for your wedding? _____________________________________

53. How many people were in your wedding party? ______________________

54. Approximately how many people were in attendance at your wedding? ____

Was your wedding held in wife's or husband's home state?

55. ________________ wife 56. __________________ husband.

What are your home states?

57. wife:____

58. husband: ____

59. Besides immediate family, how many of the people who were in your wedding party are you still in touch with?

a)All ____ b)None ____ c)1-3 ____ d)4-6 _____ e)7-9_____ f)10-14______

60. Besides immediate family, how many of the people who were in your wedding party is your spouse still in touch with?

a)All ____ b)None ____ c)1-3 ____ d)4-6 _____ e)7-9_____ f)10-14______

61. Do you have any investment holdings? Yes ______ No _______

62. What type? ____

____

63. Have you received any inheritances? Yes ________ No _______

64. Do you expect to? Yes _______ No _______

65. Have you established a college fund for your children? Yes ________ No ________

Social Supports and Networks:

66. Whom do you consult first/most often for advice about your marriage? (in addition to spouse)

____

67. Whom do you consult first/most often for advice about your children? (in addition to spouse)

____

68. If you and your spouse have to go away for business, with whom do you leave your children?
 a)wife's family _____ b)father's family _____ c)friend of parents _____
 d)friend of children _____ e)babysitter _____ f)nanny _____
 g)childcare service ______ h)other (name) ___________
69. Besides you or your spouse who would you put down as an emergency contact in the event something happened to you or your child(ren)? (include names and relationship):
 ____
70. Are you or your spouse a member of religious affiliation? Yes ______ No______
71. What is the name of your affiliation? ____
72. How often do you attend services?

a) Every Meeting _____ b) Twice a month_____ c) Once a month ______

d) Every 6 months ______ e) Holidays/Special Occasions _______ f) Rarely_______

g) Never ________

73. Do your children participate in religious services/activities?

Yes ______ No_______

74. Are you a member of a professional organization?

Yes ______ No ________

75. Name of organization __________________________________
76. Are you a member of a community organization?

Yes ______ No ________

77. Name of organization ____
78. Are you a member of a civic or service organization?

Yes ______ No ________

79. Name of organization __________________________________
80. Are you a member of any other organizations?

Yes ______ No ________

81. Name of organization __________________________________
82. Do you attend any of these meetings regularly?

Yes ______ No ________

83. Which ones?
 ____
 ____
84. How often do you spend causal time with friends?

a) Once a week _____ b) Once a month ____ c) Special Occasions _____ d) Rarely_____

e) Never _____

85. With whom do you normally go out? (state names and relationship):

____

____

86. In which venues do you interact with most of your friends?

a) Work _____ b) Religious affiliation ____ c) Neighborhood _____

d) Family events _____ e) Children's activities ______

f) Organization (name) ____________________________

Work and Family Relationship

87. Do you plan to continue on with your current employer (if stay at home state)?

Yes ____ No ____ Not sure _____

88. Why/ Why Not?

____

____

88. After your child(ren) were born, what was the primary reason you chose to stay home/return to work? ____

____

89. Would anything have changed that decision? Yes _______ No _______

90. Explain ____

____

91. Did you experience any difficulties with your employer (work policies/supervisor) once you were pregnant and/or gave birth to your children? Yes ______ No _______

92. Explain ____

____

93. Did you experience any difficulties with your co-workers once you were pregnant and/or gave birth to your children? Yes_______ No_______

94. Explain ____

____

95. Did you experience any problems locating childcare or feeling comfortable with childcare?

Yes______ No______

96. Explain. ____

____

____

97. Do you think your career choice conflicts with your family goals?

Yes ______ No ______

98. Explain ____

____

99. What strategies have you implemented to help minimize potential career and family conflicts?____

____

____

100. Do you think they work? Yes _______ No_______

Marriage and Parenting

101. How often do you go out with your spouse without your child(ren)?

a) Never _____ b)Rarely ______ c) Somewhat often ______ d) Often _____

e) All of the time _______

102. What was the date of the last time you went out with your spouse without the child(ren)?

____

103. Where did you go? ____

104. Do you think you are responsible for more or less household responsibilities than your spouse?

a) More _______ b) Less ______ c) About the same ______

105. Before you had children were you responsible for more or less household responsibilities than your spouse?

a) More _______ b) Less______ c) About the same_______

Place an "M" by the household tasks in your house that you do most often (primary responsibility). Place an "S" by the tasks your spouse does most often. Place a "B" by the tasks you share pretty equitably. Place an "O" by the tasks you outsource. Place a "C" by the tasks you assign your children:

106.	wash clothes	107.	meal planning	108.	Meal Preparation
109.	clean dishes	110.	grocery shopping	111.	cut grass/hedges
112.	gardening	113.	fold clothes	114.	pay bills
115.	budgeting	116.	investments	117.	file/organize taxes
118.	washing car	119.	social calendar	120.	car maintenance
121.	iron clothes	122.	mop floors	123.	vacuum floors
124.	gift buying	125.	schedule doctor appts.	126.	correspondence
127.	diaper changes	128.	bathe/dress children	129.	dusting
130.	bathrooms	131.	takeout trash	132.	clean gutters
133.	entertainment	134.	schedule kids activities	135.	transport kids
136.	discipline children	137.	arrange for babysitter	138.	interior decorating
139.		140.		141.	

142. Pleased with the allocation of responsibilities? Yes _____ No ______

143. What is the biggest difference in the allocation of responsibilities since you had children?

____

____

144. If you could change anything what would you change?

____

____

145. Does your family go on planned vacations? Yes ______ No ______

146. Where was the last place you went as a family (in-town or out-of-town)?

____

____

147. What do you do for leisure time?

____

____

148. What does your spouse do for leisure time?

____

____

149. How is your sex life on a scale of 0-10 with 10 being outstanding/frequent, 1 being pretty bad/infrequent and 0 being nonexistent? __________________________

150. How does this affect your marriage life?

____

____

151. Would you do change it? Yes _________ No_________

152. Explain ____

____

153. How do you most often relieve stress?

____

____

154. What do you think is the source of most of your stress?

____

____

Gender Roles and Strategies

155. What do you think is the problem most affecting families today?

____

____

____

156. Do you think your parents experienced the same problems?

157. Yes _______ No _______

158. Explain____

____

159. Do you think your grandparents experienced the same problems?

Yes _______ No _______

160. Explain ____

____

161. Do you think your gender affects your decisions about your family and your career? Yes ________ No _______ Somewhat _______

162. Explain____

____

____

163. Do you think your race/ethnicity affects your decisions about your family and your career? (probe for any responsibility to/for racial/ethnic community?)

Yes ________ No _______ Somewhat _______

164. Explain____

____

____

165. Do you think your income/professional status/education level affects your decisions about your family and career?

Yes ________ No _______ Somewhat _______

166. Explain____

____

____

167. Name the roles you use to describe yourself? ______________________________

____

168. Rate yourself on how you do in those roles? ______________________________

____

169. Do you think there are conflicts between marriage, career and children?

Yes _______ No ________

170. Explain ____

____

____

If No, skip to 171.

171. If Yes, who helps you through those conflicts? __________________________________

172. Do you ask for help? Are you comfortable with asking for help?

Yes ________ No _________

173. How do you think you are doing as a :

______a) wife (scale of 0-10, 10 being highest)? _____b) mother

______c) career woman/homemaker/stay at home mom

174. Which of the following terms would you use to describe yourself?

a) working mom b) homemaker c) stay-at-home mom

d) part-time working mom e) part-time stay-at-home mom

175. What do you think about these categories? ________________________________

____

____

176. Do they adequately define who you are? __________________________________

____

____

177. How would you define yourself (Do you find images that support who you are)?

____

____

178. What were your thoughts and feelings when you first came home from the hospital with your first child? ____

____

____

179. Do you subscribe to any newspapers or magazines? Yes ________ No ________

180. Which ones? ____

____

181. Who do you look up to or aspire to be most like? __________________________

____

179. Do you think of yourself as a feminist? Yes _______ No ________

180. Why/Why not? ____

____

181. What does feminist mean to you? _____________________________________

____

____

Family Life History

182. How would you describe the family you grew up with (mother, father siblings or others)?

____

183. Were your parents married when they began having children?

Yes _______ No _______

184. Did your parents divorce or separate?

Yes _______ No _______

185. What were the circumstances surrounding their divorce/separation?

____

____

186. How did it affect you and the way you viewed family life?

____

____

187. Were you a part of an extended family? Yes _______ No ______

Probe (who? financial/emotional support?): ____

____

____

188. Do you think the way you were raised affects your decisions about your family and career? Yes _______ No _______

189. Explain. ____

____

____

190. Do you believe you have emulated your parents in your career and/or family life?

Yes ________ No ________

191. Why/Why not? ____

____

____

192. What do you think your parents relied on to develop their family and career beliefs and practices? ____

____

____

193. Do you think your parents raised you to be more a:

_____a) mother and wife, _____b) career woman, ______c) equal parts both,

d) other _________________

194. Explain. ____

____

____

195. Did you always plan to go to college? Yes _______ No ________

196. Explain. ____
____

197. How did you decide what college you would attend? ______________________
____

198. How would you describe your family now? _____________________________
____

199. Have you and your spouse ever separated or seriously considered separating?
Yes ____________ No ___________

200. What were the circumstances?

201. Why did you choose the neighborhood you currently live in? ________________
____

202. Do or will your children attend private schools? Yes _______No _________

203. Why/Why not? ____
____
____

204. What programs and activities are your child(ren) attending or will they attend?
____
____
____

205. Are you a part of a social network that integrates children and parents?
Yes _______ No ________

206. Does your family have and/or interact with your extended family or friends who serve as surrogate family? Yes _______ No ________

207. Explain. ____
____
____

Couple History

208. How did you and your spouse meet?
____
____
____

209. How did you know you would marry your spouse?
____
____
____

Perceptions of Self

210. Is there a mismatch between what you think or thought your future would be as wife, mother, professional, and your reality? Yes ______ No _______

211. Explain. ____

____

212. What or who provides the most images about what you should be doing as a mother, wife, etc.? ____

____

213. Are these images contradictory to what you expect of yourself/What others expect of you?

____

214. Who or what most impacts your understanding of yourself as a mother, wife, career woman? Why? (Positive and negative.) _________________________________

____

215. Do you believe you self –actualize your ethnicity through your career and/or family decisions and practices? Yes ________ No ________

Explain. ____

____

216. Is there anything you would like to add? __________________________________

____

____

217. Any questions?____

Figure 4: Determinants of Whether Women Return to Work After Childbirth

Author(s)	**More Likely to Return to Work ...**	**Less Likely to Return to Work ...**
Garrett et. al	Worked during pregnancy **Black** Married Higher income Other adults in household Mother's relative income	Left labor force while pregant Additonal child
O'Connell	Worked during pregnancy Employer provided maternity leave **Black** Teenage birth	Left labor force early in pregnancy
Leibowitz and Klerman	Older Higher education **Black** Mother's relative income	Young children Men's higher earnings Higher unemployment rates

In every study reviewed by the Population Division of the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Women's Labor Force Attachment Patterns and Maternity Leave being black is listed as a determinant for whether women will return to work after child birth but there is no explanation for why. *Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Fertility & Family Statistics Branch* (http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0032/tab05.html accessed July 2008)

Figure 5: Educational Attainment of Female Population

Educational Attainment	Total		Black Alone		White Alone, Not Hispanic	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Female	97,319	100.0	11,644	100.0	69,666	100.0
High School Diploma or Less						
Some college or associate's degree	25,809	26.5	32,888	28.2	19,317	27.7
Bachelor's degree	17,134	17.6	1,516	13.0	13,198	18.9
Advanced degree	8,279	8.5	632	5.4	6,578	9.4

U.S. Census Bureau, Population of the Census, The Black Population in the United States: March 2004 (PPL-186)

Figure 6: Educational Attainment of Metropolitan Atlantans

Educational Attainment	Total Black	All Atlanta
Population 25 years and over	882,853	3,104,099
High School Diploma or Less	44%	39%
Some College or Associates Degree	31%	26%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	25%	35%

2005 American Community Survey; processed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)

Figure 7: Atlanta Income in the Past 12 Month (2005)

	Black	All Atlanta
Households	545,550	1,781,766
Median Household income (dollars)	$39,530	$54,066
Mean earnings (dollars)	$50,558	$71,027
Families	352,101	1,216,245
Median family income (dollars)	$44,841	$63,484
Married-Couple Families	47%	73%
Mean income (dollars)	$67,236	$75,943
Male householder, no spouse	10%	7%
Median income (dollars)	$37,041	$42,969
Female householder, no spouse	43%	2%
Median income (dollars)	$28,151	$31,642

The average median household income for Black residents in metro Atlanta (28 counties) is $39,516, which is roughly 73 percent of that for all residents of metro Atlanta. Nationally, that ratio is 67 percent (US median household income for all residents is $46,242; for black residents it is $30,939). US Census Bureau – 2005 estimates; processed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)

Figure 8: Employed Persons by professional occupations, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity

Occupation	2007				
	Total Employed in thousands	Percent of total:			
		Women	Black or African American[79]	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
Total, 16 years and over	146,047	46.4	11.0	4.7	14.0
Management, professional, and related occupations	**51,788[80]**	**50.6**	**8.4**	**6.4**	**7.0**
Management, business, and financial operations occupations[81]	**21,577**	**42.7**	**7.5**	**5.0**	**7.3**
Professional and related occupations[82]	**30,210**	**56.2**	**9.0**	**7.3**	**6.8**

Adapted from Household Data Annual Averages Table #11 Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity p. 212-214. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings,* Annual Averages, Table 11, "Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity", 2008.
(accessed January 11, 2009 http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf)

[79] Number of African-American women employed in management, professional, and related occupations: 2,671,000 (5.2% of all people employed in management, professional, and related occupations) *Catalyst Inc.* released December 10, 2008 http://www.catalyst.org/publication/222/african-american-women accessed January 11, 2009.
[80] The totals for management business and professional related occupations do not add to the stated total of "management, professional, and related occupations. The author assumes this is due to rounding errors when aggregating total numbers in each profession.
[2] Professions in this field refer to chief executives, managers in various professional fields, education administrators, financial analysts, accountants, etc.
[3] Professions in this field refer to computer and mathematical occupations, architecture and engineering occupations, physical and social scientists, lawyers, judges, educators, arts, entertainment and media occupations, healthcare practitioners, etc.

Figure 9: Overview of Black Population in Metropolitan Atlanta (2005)

Total Population	4,828,838
Black Population	1,502,745
Median Home Value	177,200
Percent Blacks Owning Homes	48%
Median Black Household Income	39,516
Percent Black Households $100k+	15%
Percent Black College Grads	25%
Black Owned Businesses	63,940
Black Unemployment Rate	8.6%

US Census Bureau - 2005 estimates; processed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) accessed)

Figure 10: Black Marital Status Metropolitan Atlanta (2005)

Marital Status	All Blacks	Male	Female	All Atlanta
Population 15 years and over	1,110,372	503,642	606,730	3,740,179
Now Married	36%	42%	31%	53%
Widowed	4%	2%	6%	4%
Divorced	13%	10%	15%	11%
Separated	4%	3%	5%	2%
Never Married	43%	43%	43%	30%

(US Census Bureau - 2005 estimates; processed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC))

Figure 11: Metropolitan Atlanta Management, Professional and Related Occupations (2005)

Occupations	Total Black	Black Males	Black Females	All Atlanta
Management, Professional, and Related Occupations	31%	25%	36%	37%

(US Census Bureau - 2005 estimates; processed by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC))

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