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African-American women's perceptions of social workers as helpers

Adriene Lynn Anderson

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AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS AS HELPERS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master
of
Social Work

by
Adriene Lynn Anderson
June 1994
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OF SOCIAL WORKERS AS HELPERS

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated
to my son Malcolm Om Lumumba Moten,
truly, my gift from God.
To Dr. James Bush, my Mentor and Advisor and
to Eric A. Jonas Jr. both of
of whom have been pacesetters
as well as my friends,
my role models and my teachers.
To Sharon D. Oliver, my "Sister Friend"
who always believed in me.
I thank God for all of you.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................... vi
INTRODUCTION ....................................................... 1
  Problem Statement ................................................ 4
  Problem Focus .................................................... 5
LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................... 6
RESEARCH METHOD .................................................. 25
  Purpose of study .................................................. 25
  Research Question ............................................... 26
PROJECT DESIGN .................................................... 28
  Sample ............................................................. 28
  Instrument ......................................................... 29
  Data Collection .................................................... 30
  Protection of Human Subjects .................................. 30
DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY ................................... 30
RESULTS ............................................................. 31
DISCUSSION .......................................................... 45
SUMMARY ............................................................. 49
RECOMMENDATIONS .................................................. 51
APPENDIX A  Interview Questionnaire ............................ 55
APPENDIX B  Demographic Questionnaire .......................... 57
APPENDIX C  Informational Letter .................................. 58
APPENDIX D  Informed Consent ..................................... 60
REFERENCES .......................................................... 62
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Demographics for Length of Time on Welfare ........ 33
Figure 2 Demographics for Marital Status .................... 34
Figure 3 Demographics for Number of Children ............... 35
Figure 4 Demographics for Education .......................... 36
Figure 5 Demographics for Age ................................. 37
Figure 6 Demographics for Employment Status ................ 38
ABSTRACT

African-American women on public assistance are often negatively portrayed by the general public and the welfare system. African-American women have historically been one of the most oppressed groups in the United States. They have been oppressed as African-Americans, as women, and often as members of the lower socioeconomic groups. There is a plethora of research on African-American women from the perspective of social workers. There, however, remains a paucity of research on the effectiveness of social workers as perceived by African American women. This study explores African-American women's perceptions of social workers as helpers.
INTRODUCTION

Women in America have shared a common history of oppression and victimization. Nowhere has the evidence of oppression of women been more pronounced than with African-American women.

African-American women have a history that has been treated differently from other women in America. African-American women have systematically suffered the triple oppression of racism, sexism, and classism by almost all of society's institutions. For example, there has been a pervasive tendency to characterize African-American women as oversexed, ignorant and lazy. Social scientists have often portrayed African-American women as ugly and undesirable when compared to the Shakespearean ideal of beauty—blond hair, blue eyes (Dwight, 1991).

During slavery, these stereotypes made it much easier to view African-American women as chattel, void of "civilized" traits and as sex objects (Davis, 1989, 1983; Hooks, 1985; Walker, 1970). Throughout American history African-American women were constantly violated and subjugated by sexism, pauperism and racism yet, they fought for survival and human rights.

Some African-American women have been denied opportunities for upward mobility such as, access to quality education, decent paying jobs and job training that would move them from the bottom rung of the economic hierarchy.
ladder. Thus, African-American women remain the most economically deprived group according to most major social indicators (Children Defense Fund 1990; Williams, 1984; Young, 1990).

Some African-American women have adapted psychologically to oppressive conditions, lack of employment, decent housing and education by internalizing their oppression (Gainor, 1992). Other African-American women have developed survival tactics which are evidence of strength, inventiveness, and determination (Lipsky, 1977). Often these women have been forced to accept public welfare as a way of protecting themselves and their families against destitution (Jewell, 1988).

The public welfare system designed for "relief giving" has entrapped many in a vicious spiral of dependency, subordination and impoverishment and made it extremely difficult for many African-American women to lift themselves and their families out of persistent poverty (Bell, 1987; Jewell, 1988).

What is it like to be an African-American woman on public welfare? What feelings, attitudes and behaviors do African-American women have about public welfare and social workers whose mission it is to assist them?

This qualitative study will explore African-American women's perception of social workers as helpers. The practical implications of a critical theoretical approach
are to empower African-American women who have and continue
to be negatively portrayed by the social welfare system and
society and to examine how racism, sexism, and poverty
continue to impact their lives.

The Role of Empowerment

Moreau (1991) & Solomon (1976) believe that a central
objective in social work is to empower clients. Moreau
(1991), contends this objective has integrated roles that
are congruent with international social justice, human
rights, and the profession's code of ethics.

Moreau (1991) describes the first role of a social
worker as one of exploration. He believes that social
workers should explore with clients the socio-political and
economic forces at play in their individually experienced
difficulties, in order to collectivize rather than
personalize and individualize their source and solution.
These roles require social workers to act as case and class
brokers, as well as mediators and advocates for their
client's rights.

Moreau (1991) states, that the second role of social
work is to change the client consciousness in order to
reverse the process of self-disempowerment or internalized
oppression. Through consciousness raising, the worker can
help African-American women recognize and modify any ideals,
values, feelings, and behaviors that contribute to their own
oppressive situation and/or that of others (Gainor, 1990;
Moreau, 1991; Solomon, 1976). Clients can then develop strategies, which will empower themselves and others, to become self-sufficient and self-maintained.

**Problem Statement**

The social welfare system, along with society in general, is inclined to portray an unfavorable picture of the African-American female recipient of public assistance as a deserted or unwed mother, promiscuous, unwilling to work, dishonest, lazy and lacking initiative (Giddings, 1988; Grindereng, 1976; Hooks, 1983).

According to Grindereng (1976), "Widespread public acceptance of this image means AFDC recipients as a group, and the program as a whole, have come under repeated public attack in the press as well as in state and federal legislative hearings." Researchers Grindereng (1976) and Jewell (1988), believe that statistics on divorce, desertion and illegitimacy are often used to suggest a connection between AFDC and the increase in socially disapproved behaviors patterns.

African-American women and children account for a disproportionate number of clients on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the largest categorical aid program (Bell, 1987; Grindereng, 1976; Jewell, 1988; National Urban League, 1990). AFDC is one of the most misunderstood and stereotyped of all welfare programs.

It becomes imperative for social workers, whose
profession is committed to serving the underprivileged among us: to educate clients, social work students, professionals and the public about the painful realities of being poor in American. Further, social workers need to address how the impact of political, social and economic societal structures contribute to and exacerbate living for already vulnerable African-American women welfare recipients and helps to maintain their poverty status.

Problem Focus

African-American women on AFDC and other welfare programs, continue to be scapegoated by society in general and public welfare in particular especially, in times of economic retrenchment. This study will focus on African-Americans women's feelings, attitudes and behaviors about public welfare and social workers whose primary responsibility, in the public welfare system, is to provide direct services for African-American welfare recipients.

When African-American women perceive the social worker as a primary agent for the system, they are more likely to conclude that the social worker will offer them fewer options and resources for their becoming self-maintained thus continuing their poverty and oppressive status.

Hypothesis: When African-American women apply for and/or receive public assistance are interviewed in a safe environment, their perceptions of social workers as helpers will be negative.
LITERATURE REVIEW

A Socio-History Of Oppression

"Slavery was the modern genesis experience for African-American women and men in the western world. Contained in this genesis is much about the continued social, economic, political and cultural reality of African-Americans (Akbar, 1991)."

The dehumanization of African men and women required concerted efforts to obliterate culture, value, traditions and institutions (Bennett, 1987; Franklin, 1987; Young 1989). Young (1989) contends that, "Slave ships were crucibles where the alchemy of Anglo superiority, religiosity, and brutality fermented the creation of the African in American."

African slaves were individuals wretch from their people, and forced to make individual adjustments without the benefit of ethnic support (Bennett, 1965; Burkey, 1988). Without an ethnic support system, slaves were left vulnerable and in state of chronic crises. In this state, their strengths and weaknesses were soon measured and the formulas for their complete control work out (Burkey, 1988; Franklin, 1987).

By its nature, the slave system was a system of social control involving total power over the life and death of a slave. The slave apartheid system was closed, routinized, regimented coercive and control by Anglo-American domination.
The slave system was particularly arduous for African-American women. African-American women were not allowed the privilege of being tied to traditional "female roles". Their work and duties were the same as that of men (Amott & Matthaei, 1991). Hymowitz & Weissman, (1978) have implicitly outlined several areas where African-American female slaves were expected to perform. First, most did as much as or almost as much field work as men. Second, they were expected to do "women's work" in the slave quarters. Their third job was to reproduce, childbearing and rearing fell upon them as added burdens (Hymowitz & Weissman, 1978).

Several researchers (Bennett, 1982; Franklin, 1987; Hymowitz & Weissman, 1978) found the lot of African-American women under slavery, in every respect; more arduous, difficult and restricted than of African-American men. Punishment was meted out to them regardless of motherhood, pregnancy or physical infirmity (Bennett, 1982; Cole, 1991; Franklin, 1987).

African-American women's affection for their children was often used as deliberate means of tying them to their masters, for children could always be held as hostages in case of the mother's attempted escape. The chances of escape for female slaves were fewer than those for males (Bennett, 1982; Franklin, 1987). African-American women endured these hardships and did whatever was needed for their survival and
the survival of their families.

No aspect of slavery was as destructive and demeaning to Africans as the sexual attack on African women. The threat of sexual abuse, which usually began when female slaves entered puberty, continued all their lives (Amott & Matthaei, 1991; Giddings, 1984; Hooks, 1981). The slave system robbed African women of their most primary rights—choice (Davis, 1989, 1983; Giddings, 1984; Hooks, 1981, Hymowitz & Weisman, 1974).

African-American women were forced into sexual relationships with the more powerful Anglo-American men (slave owners, overseers, etc.) who abused them and then proclaimed that they were wanton, immoral and sexually degraded (Amott & Matthaei, 1991; Hymowitz & Weisman, 1974). African-American women bore the shame in the form of children, the stigmatized labels of promiscuous, oversexed and overbearing (Dwight, 1991; Hymowitz & Weisman, 1974). Perhaps the most unfortunate consequence of these stereotypes and myths is that some African-American women began to internalized them as true (Gainor, 1992; Jordan, 1991; Helms, 1979).

Some Anglo-American mistresses were particularly cruel and brutal to African slave women and their children (Giddings, 1984; Hooks, 1981). Jealousy led many Anglo-American mistresses to torment African-American slave women whom they knew or suspected to be their husbands' concubines
them to accept that their husbands were having sexual relationships with African-American women. Instead of understanding their common oppression and exploitation, they responded to the unpleasant situation with anger and violence not toward their men, but toward African-American women (Hooks, 1981; Hymowitz & Weissman, 1978).

If social workers are to assist and empower African-American women they must understand the historical forces that have shaped their past and continue to impact their present condition and future. Without a clear understanding of the plight, progress and the present realities of African-American women, many social workers, who espouse middle class values, may inadvertently become part of the systems that continues the oppression of African-American women.

The Triple Oppression of African-American Women

According to Washington (in press), African-American women are long time survivors of the triple oppression of racism, sexism and poverty. Their courage and resourcefulness have been obscured by the present demographic profiles, that find African-American women at the bottom of almost any social indicator (Children's Defense Fund, 1985; Daerty & Myers, 1984; Williams, 1984; Wohoch, 1984).

Compounding this tragedy is the fact that African-American women economically and politically oppressed as a
group, have been unable to shape or influence widespread myths and assertions about themselves (Washington in press; Williams, 1984).

Murray (1984), argued that welfare programs have encouraged African-American women to leave the labor force and to raise children without husbands. Welfare recipients point out the absurdity of his argument. They contend that even when they are in the labor force most African-American women continue to be confined to low-paying jobs which cannot lift them or their families out of poverty (Amotti & Matthaei, 1991). According to researchers, Amotti & Matthaei, 1991; Davis 1989 & Williams, 1984, nearly half of all African-American women work in unskilled manufacturing, service and private household jobs, and African-American women are over-represented in jobs such as chambermaids, cleaners, child care aides, and fast-food counter workers. One must take a serious look at Murray's argument and critically examine the political, economic and social structures that keep African-American women in low-paying jobs and also helps to maintain their dependence on public assistance. Social policies and programs must seriously address the economic, educational and social needs of African-American women (i.e. jobs training, job skills, child care) that would move them from the bottom of the economic ladder and into the mainstream of society.

Myths and Stereotypes
Myths and Stereotypes

Stereotypes and myths, many originating in slavery, are still a part of the perceptions that many people have of African-American women. African-American women have been referred to as domineering, emasculating, promiscuous, and as superwomen (Davis, 1989, 1983; Giddings, 1984; Hooks, 1983; Jordan, 1991). These stereotypes developed from the failure of society to place the behaviors of African-American women in context. Historically, African-American men have been denied the privileges thought to be inherent in manhood (Franklin, 1987; Hooks, 1981; Jordan, 1991), especially the right to support and protect their families. As a consequence, African-American women were forced to accept the challenge of working hard, most often in menial positions, to take care of the family (Franklin, 1986; Hooks, 1981; Rodgers-Rose, 1980).

During slavery the men were sold, and later denied access to a job that paid enough to support a family. Out of necessity, the African-American women often appeared to be dominating and controlling. It was these behaviors that were also deemed to be emasculating (Bennett, 1982; Franklin, 1987, Giddings, 1984; Hooks, 1981).

The Myth of Matriarchy

The position that African-American women were too dominant and too independent led to emasculation of the African-American male was first developed in America.
of slavery have forced the African-American community into a matriarchal structure (Billingsley, 1968; Coultras, 1989).

The myth of matriarchy however, is still prevalent today. Matriarchy implies power. Thomas & Sillen, (1991) assert, "It is a mockery to use the term matriarchy when considering the African-American family under slavery" (p. 89). They remind us that power was vested in the slaveholder, not in the mother. "Slave women could make no independent decisions about her child's existence or her relation to her husband or companion" (p. 89). The African slave women had little power even to determine the use of her body when it served the pleasure of its legal owner (Grier & Cobb, 1965; Hooks, 1981; Thomas & Sillen, 1991).

Myth of the Inherent Instability Family

Historically, there has been a tendency to view African-American people and families from distorted negative perspectives (Billingsley, 1968; Quarles, 1967; Sudarkasa, 1988). The myth that African-American families are instable and pathological, particularly those headed by women, continues to be perpetrated in society (Billingsley, 1965; Jewell, 1988; Pipes-McAdoo, 1988).

The family continues however, to be one of the strongest and most important traditions in the African-American community (Franklin, 1987; Sudarkasa, 1988). Some African-Americans have different family organization structures that may depart from the Anglo-middle class
structures that may depart from the Anglo-middle class model. Several researchers (Boyd-Franklin & Hines, 1983; McAdoo, 1989; Sadarkasa, 1988) have noted that as a result of the Euro-centric nuclear family model, a man, women, and the offspring of that union, the nuclear family structure became a part of the slave community as slaves assimilated the dominant family values.

Some African-American family organizations can be viewed as "adaptive strategies," an outgrowth of the slave system in American and as an African antecedent. Some African-American family patterns (i.e. extended, multigenerational) do not reflect middle class Anglo-American family patterns. These family patterns, which are often viewed as deviant and pathological, must be examined in the proper context of their socio-historical perspectives (Billingsley, 1982; Smith, 1989; Sudarkasa, 1988).

Historically, the extended family played a significant role in the survival and advancement of African-American people (Smith, 1981). Franklin, (1987) recognized the importance of the family in the slave community. The family was the only institution to which slaves could openly be committed. As a result, the family system provided slaves with the mutual support so necessary to withstand the abuses, cruelties, and atrocities of slavery.

One of the atrocities of the slave system was the general lack of respect for the African slave family.
Fathers, mothers, and children were often separated and sold to different plantations and regions, sometimes at the whim of the master (Burkey, 1978; Franklin, 1987; Genovese, 1977; Gutman, 1976). One of the outcomes of the splintering and selling of family was the development of a system of "fixtive kin" (non consanguinity family members) and extended family networks (Bennett, 1982; Franklin, 1987; Nobles, 1981; Sudarkasa, 1988) many headed primarily by women who made up at least one forth of the slave families.

The extended slave family organization, which can be traced to African (Fraizer, 1939 [1966]; Herskovits, 1941 [1958]; Sudarkasa, 1988), provided emotional, economic, social and structural support for families sold and torn apart during slavery.

Social scientist have continued to view African-American families in terms of deficits (Billingsley, 1968; Sudarkasa, 1988) and not in terms of the enormous strengths and tenacity in the face of often overwhelming obstacles for survival. Billingsley (1989; 1968) has noted that African-American families as a group have shown an amazing ability to survive in the face of impossible odds. "That the Negro American has survived at all is extra-ordinary--a lesser people might simply have died out, as others have," as the Moynihan (1965) report correctly notes. Thomas & Sillen (1991), state:

But instead of highlighting and exploring the
sources of African-Americans strength, Moynihan exaggerated African-Americans' vulnerability. Instead of viewing the African-American family in terms of the adaptive strategies that enabled them to survive. The Report characterized the family's departures from the 'rest of American society' as evidence of its pathology (p.89).

There has been a general failure to examine the pervasive and insidious myths of pathology and instability of African-American families since the Moynihan Report namely, the impact of institutionalized racism and oppression on some already vulnerable, fragile African-American family systems. The attack is especially strong for those families headed by females.

African-American Female Heads of Households

Sudarkasa, (1988) argues that until recently, female heads of households were mature women who were single mothers by choice or by force of circumstances (i.e. divorce, or widows). She contents that the phenomenon of teenage mothers living alone with their children is recent among African-American families. "The rise of isolated households headed by young women and teenage mothers is directly related to public welfare policies and housing policies that discriminate against large and multi-generational families" (Sudarkasa, 1981).

Smith, (1989) & Sudarkasa, (1981) argue that the
welfare system has been a major contributor to female head-of-households because of its social policies. For example, if a able-bodied relative moves in with a welfare family, the amount of support is cut because it is assumed that the party is contributing to the support of the family. Policies of this nature, continue to negatively impact African-American families.

Contemporary American Social Welfare

Billingsley & Giovannoni (1970) state, "Aside from a brief time during Reconstruction when the Freedman's Bureau provided goods and services to African-American men, women and children, African-American families received a modicum of institutional support until the 1960s." Because of strong public opposition to federal government providing for the needy, the Freedman's Bureau was disbanded in 1872, seven years after its inception (Bennett, 1982).

It was not until 1935 that the federal government was forced to formulate a national social policy to relieve economic pressures brought about by the Depression. The passage of the Social Security Act in 1935 marked the federal government's first attempt since Emancipation to address the needs of the economically disadvantaged on a massive level (Jewell, 1988, Bell, 1987). Because of racial discrimination in the administration of social services African-American families had difficulties receiving public assistance (Axinn & Levin, 1992; Bell, 1987).
Benefits derived from social security were not extended to individuals employed in service industries and agricultural occupations, thereby excluding the majority of African-American women and men, where 34 percent of all African-American workers were employed in service jobs and another one-third were farm workers (Jewell, 1988).

Aid to Families with Dependent Children

The Aid to Dependent Children Program (ADC) did not significantly affect the stability of African American two-parent families, including those with unemployed males heads. Initially, since the beneficiaries of ADC were children, both husbands and wives were excluded from obtaining monetary benefits. Research conducted by Jewell (1988), revealed a decrease in the proportion of African-American families headed by women. She contends that the new ADC program had virtually no effect on African-American families. For example, in 1940, 17.9 percent of African-American families had female heads, compared to 1950 when African-American women maintaining families accounted for 17.6 of all African-American families (Jewell, 1988).

With the expansion of the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program to include a relative with whom the child was living, states began to implement punitive policies and procedures to limiting welfare rolls. For example, "man-in-the-house", suitable home," and residency policies were adopted by numerous states to remove recipients from the
rolls. The policy that was used most effectively to eliminate African-Americans as welfare recipients was the requirement that welfare recipients be a resident of the state (Jewell, 1988, Rose, 1994). By enforcing residency policies, states were able to prevent African-American migrants who moved from the South to the North from acquiring public assistance (Bell, 1987; Jewell, 1988).

**Racism and Discrimination in Social Programs**

Social work has a history of discriminatory treatment of immigrants and African-Americans. Specifically, in the small Mother's Pension programs organized in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Bell, 1987). African-American women were rarely admitted to this elite program for fatherless families. Bell (1987) report, ..."That as late as 1922 social workers reported that "low-type" families like Mexicans, Italians and Czechoslovakians were seldom helped. If they were, they usually received lower grants than "High type" Anglo-Saxon."

AFDC has been stereotypically viewed as a parasitic program for African-American women, their mates, and children. Persistent inaccuracies have resulted in the proliferation of myths about AFDC recipients (Jewell, 1988). Some of the most popular misconceptions include: most AFDC are African-American, have large families, and consist of able-bodied individual who are not willing to work. Since efforts to dispel these myths have been restricted to
academic circles, the general public continues to hold negative attitudes toward government assistance and recipients (Davis, 1989, Jewell, 1988).

When the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program began in the 1930s, the public was sympathetic toward the recipients. Grindereng (1976):

Explained that most of the women were Anglo-American widows and the popular image was one of a middle-class woman who reluctantly accepted welfare assistance to prevent the breakup of her family. This situation was considered temporary until other arrangements could be made for the family to become self-supporting. This favorable picture of the recipient changed after World War II when AFDC case loads rapidly expanded.

During this time period large numbers of African-Americans migrated from the rural south (Piven & Cloward, 1971) to Northern and Eastern cities in search of employment, equality and a better way of life. Because of discriminatory hiring practices, racism and segregation some African-Americans were forced to return to the South or receive public assistance (Bell, 1987) in order to survive.

The word "welfare" recipient seems to conjure up one of two images in the minds of middle Americans, particularly Anglo-Americans (Pohlman, 1990). First, is the African-American female heading up a house with numerous small
children or adolescent children. Second, is that welfare recipients live quite comfortable on "welfare" and have lived somewhat comfortably on public handouts for years. Third, the welfare recipients probably is receiving more than she is legally entitled to receive (Bell, 1987; Jewell, 1988; Pohlman, 1990).

According to Pohlman, (1990) the typical American relief-receiving family resides in a non-metropolitan area, is Anglo-American, has one dependent child, is on public assistance for less than one year, has a father who is deceased and has on one child under the age of 6 years old.

Service Delivery

Cohen 1969) states:

Race exerts a pervasive and powerful influence on the delivery of professional services. They believe barriers to effective service integration of African American into social service efforts, on one hand, run the gamut from overt, active, and deliberate expressions of discrimination. On the other hand, barriers can be subtle, passive, inadvertent, or unwished-for arrangements that tend to lump them all together. They contend, No social service efforts are entirely free from distortions by the variable of race. Even the referral systems in social welfare are class and race conscious, as Cumming (1969) showed in her study of agency networks. Other evidence of class and race bias
abound for example. Too often under the guise of "helping people accept reality," counseling services press their clients to accept their "lot in life," however miserable it may be (Mandell, 1975). AFDC has been known to reject unmarried mother in masse without referring one to prenatal services (Bell, 1987).

Bell's (1987) study of AFDC eligibility rules showed that some rules were discriminatory, barely disguised devices for disproportionately rejecting African-Americans and illegitimate children. The parent legislation did not mention or intent to exclude needy children on moral or racial grounds.

When the federal government entered the welfare scene in the 1930s, the law was meticulously negotiated to permit states maximum flexibility and discretion. States controlled financing levels, staffing patterns, administrative procedures, standards of need, appeals, and many eligibility rules (Jewell, 1988; Cloward & Piven, 1971). Quite naturally, AFDC soon reflected state and local prejudices and wage structures. Not until the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a unanimous decision in King v. Smith in 1968 was the rampant racism in the AFDC program effectively reduced (Jewell, 1988). Within the next few years, as a direct result of the Decision, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 children and parents, most of them African-Americans became eligible for grants (Bell, 1987; Cloward & Piven, 1971).
children and parents, most of them African-Americans became eligible for grants (Bell, 1987; Cloward & Piven, 1971).

Dynamics of Racism in Social Work Practice

Thomas & Sillen, 1991 assert:

The social service professions has been undergoing a painful reassessment of its own role in perpetuating and reinforcing racist attitudes and practices. The extent of such involvement has come as a shock to most Anglo-American psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other professionals. While they had long recognized that racism was endemic in our society, they have assumed that their special training and their dedication to humanistic values made them immune (p. 89).

Anglo-American social workers and other human service professionals have often miscalculated and underestimated the tenacity of tradition and the deep roots of racist thinking in the history of the disciplines concerned with human behavior (Sue & Sue, 1990). The most crude and blatant forms of prejudice were supposed to be safely buried in the past. Often overlooked, was the institutionalization of racism, and the fact that oppression of African-American people was so thoroughly built into every social substructure (Thomas & Sillen, 1991) in the United States.

Power Differential Between Worker and Client

Wilhorn, (1988) states:
Recently, Feminists and Marxists have paid new attention to the welfare state. Many have found it a "public patriarchy" deserving women's distrust and avoidance. For such critics the overriding purpose of all human service activities is to continue women's dependence outside of the patriarchal family (p. 222).

There is a basic feminist thought that women can identify with, understand, and support one another. This belief or assumption does not take into account that although many women have a common history of oppression, many women come from different class backgrounds and racial groups where they are already socially distanced from each other (Davis, 1989; Pinderhughes, 1989).

Most social workers come with class backgrounds and or professional training that already distance them from women clients (Wilhorn, 1988). Social workers and other human service workers are likely to be influenced by all the stereotypes that abound in this society about their separateness from "people in need of service." (Sue & Sue, 1990; Pinderhughes, 1989; Wilhorn, 1988).

Pinderhughes (1989), states that "Power is an often unspoken by central dynamic in cross-cultural encounters. We observe its presence in the associations of dominance, superiority, and denigration, with ethnic identity, and group status...", (p. 109). Power positions, can create a complex dynamic, which limits the potential for positive
relationships between women clients and women social workers. It is imperative for social workers to acknowledge power differentials. Social workers need to understand how the dynamic of power can affect their clients, themselves and their work together.

Friere (1990) reminds us that when any oppressed group rises to or is given power there is the potential of that groups and individual will themselves become oppressors. Social work is a profession dominated by middle-class Anglo-American women who share a common history of oppression with all women (Morales & Scheafor (1992). Social workers must be aware of the power their position holds in their interactions with economically poor women and women from different racial/ethnic groups. In almost all social service encounters, the direct service worker is the "gatekeeper, the person who can deny or provide needed resources, lessen or intensify state harassment and in myriad ways affect the quality of life for her clients (Wilhorn, 1988). Clients always recognize that power relations are real and direct although, some social workers may try to deny them.

Pinderhughes (1989) & Wilhorn (1988) state that race, class, and functional roles of many women social workers pose barriers to achieving cooperation with most clients. The classic image of "white, middle-class social workers," removed from their clients' lives and issues is all too
accurate (Gibbs & Huang 1989; Pinderhughes, 1989; Withorn, 1986). Wilhorn, (1991) asserts, "When built-in role conflicts interact with class and race differences, the result can be devastating, even in alternative agencies (p. 224).

For women social workers to honestly assist African-American women, class and race differences, must be recognized, openly examined, and understood. No matter what the setting, the imbalance of power between women social workers and African-American women clients is a reality. The primary responsibility of social workers is to empower the client. Empowerment requires the use of strategies that enable clients to experience themselves as competent, valuable, and worthwhile both as individuals and as members of their cultural group (Pinderhughes, 1989). The process of empowerment requires social workers to use their power appropriately to facilitate a shift in the clients subordinate status. Empowerment cannot take place until social workers first acknowledge that power differentials real or imagined, can create barriers between them and African-American female clients (Solomon, 1976).

RESEARCH METHOD

Purpose of Study

African-American women on public assistance programs are often negatively portrayed as a deserted or unwed mother, promiscuous, unwilling to work, dishonest, lazy and
lacking initiative (Grindereng, 1976). This study will explore African-American women's feelings, behavior, and attitudes about these stereotypes, public welfare, and social workers as helpers.

The findings for this exploratory study will have practical implications for five areas of social work: social work practice, social work programs, social work education, social welfare agencies both public and private, and social work research.

Research Question

This qualitative study has a critical theory orientation. It examines African-American women's perceptions of social workers as helpers.

Hypothesis: When African-American women apply for and/or receive public assistance from social workers are interviewed in a safe environment, their perceptions of social workers as helpers will be negative.

Operational Definition of Variables.

The definition of variables will help to clarify the hypothesis.

1. "Apply For" refers to:
   a. Indicate a need for service(s) that could emerge out of an interview, not privately perceived.
   b. Directly request assistance, information, direction.

2. "Public assistance" refers to the host of government
programs designed to ease the load of being indigent in the United States such as AFDC, Medicaid, food stamps, rent subsidies, etc.

3. "Receive public assistance" (have been determined to be eligible for and receive public assistance resources) African-American women see themselves as being responded to based on:
   a. indicated need
   b. requested need

4. "Safe environments"
   a. an African-American interviewer
   b. away from an agency location

5. "Perceptions" defined as personal judgements of the client.

6. "Negative" refers to:
   a. will not or rarely be given relevant resources or (relevant resources with which they are familiar with).
   b. expect negative results, responses, reactions

7. "Social workers" for the purpose of this study is a broad based term: which includes all direct service delivery personnel, who determine eligibility, assist clients, counsel clients and refer or link clients with resources.

   Many employees in the field of social work are perceived as social workers (i.e. Eligibility
Technicians, Social Work Interns, MFCC's, BSW's or MSW's. The clients inability to differentiate social workers from other human resource personnel is one of the limitations of this study.

The practical implications of a critical theory approach are to empower African-American women who have been unfavorable portrayed by the social welfare system and society by: increasing their awareness of the historical oppression and developing strategies for empowerment; and by assisting them to assertively address perceived racial attitudes and practices that increase and maintain dependency.

PROJECT DESIGN

Sample

For this research project, a purposive, non-random sampling of 26 African-American women receiving AFDC were chosen. The women residents of San Bernardino County, California. The ages of the respondents ranged from 17-44. Subjects were treated in accordance with the American Psychological Association (1981) standards.

Rational: There is a paucity of research information on the African-American women's perceptions of social workers. Because of the political importance and sensitive nature of social worker/client relationships in service delivery, participant's perceptions are crucial knowledge. Although not generalizable, these perceptions can serve as
the ground work for developing more effective practice methods with African-American female clients. For example, their perceptions can help social workers and social work students by integrating a more comprehensive knowledge of the oppression of African-American women into social work practice and in education/training that will help social workers and social work students understand how they may be perceived as part of the oppressive system.

Instrument

Since, there was no instrument that measures client's perceptions of social workers as helpers. An instrument was constructed specifically for this research project. The instrument consisted of an open-ended questionnaire with 22 items (see APPENDIX A), and a closed-ended demographic questionnaire with 6 items (see APPENDIX B). The instrument was pre-tested on 5 African-American women. The question "generation on welfare" was eliminated as the pre-test group thought it would set up defensive postures for the respondents. The researcher anticipated that the questions devised for the interview would act as guidelines and that, in the actual interview session, open-ended responses would elicit other questions and information.

The strength of this combination of open and closed-ended instrument was that the participants would be free to answer the questions and yet not be asked to stay within the framework of a "Likert type" instrument. One weakness the
researcher anticipated was that some participants would be apprehensive that their participation would jeopardize their eligibility for services. Therefore, apart of the interviewing process was spend with rapport and trust building. A non-threatening, comfortable atmosphere for obtaining information served to increase trust. Another weakness was the interviewing process would be time consuming.

Data Collection

Individual interviews were conducted by a single student researcher with each of the 26 respondents. Each interview lasted approximately 2 hours. Twenty of the interviews were conducted in respondents private homes and six interviews were conducted in a local college women's resource center.

Protection of Human Subjects

Subjects were treated in accordance with the American Psychological Association (1981) standards. In order to increase the level of trust, the anonymity of each person was respected. This was accomplished by eliminating any identifiable information of each respondent. Each respondent was assigned a number. This procedure was completed in front of the client to build trust and establish positive rapport.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

The statistical software package SPSS/PC was used to
analyze the quantitative data of the demographic closed-end questionnaire items. Consistent with the exploratory and qualitative nature of this research project, data analysis for the interview followed the open coding method proposed by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990).

Conceptionalizing the data from the interviews was the first step in this analysis. Each interview was broken down in sentences, or paragraphs and given a name or label that represented a phenomenon of the research inquiry, "African-American women's perception of social workers as helpers." A list of concepts was developed. Once a particular phenomenon in the data was identified it was grouped into concepts to reduce the number of units with which to work. The data from each interview that pertained to one another were then categorized.

The next step in the process was to name the categories. Stauss and Corbin (1990) cautions against the use of borrowed concepts/names because they could bring commonly held meanings and associations that may not be the same meaning and can lead to a misinterpretation of your data.

RESULTS

The Hypothesis: When African-American women apply for an/or receive public assistance from social worker are interviewed in a safe environment, their perceptions of social workers as helpers will be negative was partially
supported by the qualitative analyses findings. The majority of respondents reported negative perceptions of social workers as a group. When the social worker was an African-American or a male, African-American women's perceptions of social workers as helpers were more positive.

The analysis of quantitative demographic characteristics data will be presented followed by the analysis of qualitative data.

Analysis of Quantitative Demographic Characteristics

The quantitative demographics were divided into six primary headings. They included demographics that analyzed: length of time on welfare, marital status, number of children, education, age, and employment status.
Demographics for Length of Time on Welfare

The majority, 53.8 percent, of the respondents had been receiving public welfare for 1-5 years; 23.1 percent of the respondents had been receiving public welfare for 1 year or less and 23.1 percent of the recipients have been receiving public welfare for 5 years or more.

Figure 1
Demographics for Marital Status

Of the 26 respondents, 15.4 percent reported they were presently married and living with their spouse. Less than half (42.3) of the respondents reported that they were single. This question did not explore if the respondents had ever been married. Another 19.2 percent of the respondents reported they were separated, 15.4 percent of the respondents reported they were divorced and 7.7 percent of the respondents reported they were widowed.
Demographics for Number of Children

Over half (53.8%) of the respondents (14), had 2 children; 15.4 percent of the respondents (8), had only one child and 30.8 percent of the respondents had 3 or more children. The average number of children for each respondent was 2.5. The range of children for this sample was from 1 to 11 children.

Figure 3
Demographics for Education

The education levels for the respondents was 34.6 percent for the category of 0-11 years of education; 38.5 percent of the respondents had graduated from high school, and 26.9 percent of the respondents had some college education. The range for education level was 10 to 14 years, with an average education level of 12 years.
Demographics for Age

Of the 26 respondents interviewed, 46.2 percent of the women were between 16 to 24 years of age. The data revealed that only 1 respondent was 17 the other respondents were 18-24 years of age. In the next category, the respondents were between 25-34 years of age with a corresponding 46.2 percent. The final category, ages 35 and up, was represented by 7.7 percent of the respondents.

Figure 5
Demographics for Employment Status

Almost 77 percent (76.9) of the respondents were not employed at the time of the interview. In this sample, 23.1 percent of the respondents reported they were employed, half of this group were employed part-time.

Figure 6
Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data are divided into 4 primary headings which include: African-American women's feeling regarding public welfare, their perceptions of the agency, their perceptions of social workers as helpers, and advice for social workers. Working toward the aggrandizement of the qualitative data, three major themes emerged and were represented by respondents. These themes will be included in the advice for social workers. Following is a discussion of each category.

African-American Personal Feelings About Public Welfare

African-American women in this study expressed tears and anger at the continuance of society to view them negatively. They felt they were harshly judged by society and welfare agencies for being welfare recipients. The respondents were all aware of the negative stereotypes perpetrated by society and the public welfare system. They often felt a sense of helpless and hopelessness as to how to change these attitudes. Most felt they were undeserving of this kind of treatment.

Many respondents shopped for groceries at a time when the stores were less crowded to avoid the scrutiny of their buying habits. Some said, "It is not what people say so much as it is their body language. You just get a negative feeling that you're being judged."
A few of the respondents felt that a small minority of women meshed with the stereotypic welfare recipient. They explained that these women have given up, lost hope and have internalized some of the negative myths and stereotypes.

The majority of the respondents felt that welfare was a temporary solution to their situation. They expressed a desire to terminate the system as soon as possible but, for now they had no choice. Welfare helped them survive and not be among the homeless.

The events that brought many into the welfare system was first, separation or divorce, and for a small minority widowhood; second, lost of employment and third, a minority found themselves pregnant with little or no resources.

The Perceptions of the Agency

The women expressed a variety of feelings about their first experience with welfare agencies. Some were embarrassed to apply for AFDC, others expressed anger and hostility at having to disclose personal information that they felt had nothing to do with their needs (i.e. do you have a man, does he sleep at your house). Other felt frustrated and overwhelmed at the amount of paper work that was required. Nevertheless, they knew paper work was a necessary part of the social welfare bureaucracy.

An overwhelming majority of the women expressed anger at being treated like a "number"-- faceless without an identity. They felt they needed and desired someone who
understood their personal set of circumstances. Many complained of the long wait and the length of time involved in the process. Some expressed feelings of alienation and not being understood. Overall, there was a understanding of the way bureaucracies operate for poor people. One woman summed it up by saying, "You have to keep your eyes on survival and do whatever is necessary for you and your children."

Perceptions of Social Workers as Helpers

The women expressed feelings of being in constant battle with social workers and others workers in the welfare system in order to provide for themselves and their children. Several of the women expressed concern that social workers just didn't seem to understand their predicament. These women were annoyed at constantly having to go back to the agency for things (i.e. utility bills, social security cards, birth certificates) when they had already given the documents to social workers. The women agreed that most social workers rarely admit that they lose paperwork or make mistakes.

About one half of the women expressed the feelings that most social workers are there to get a pay check. They felt some were sympathetic and that most social workers had too many cases and were unable to give them the help and time they needed. A minority of the women reported that they thought social workers were there to help them, most of the
women felt social workers do not know "how" to help them.

The majority of African-American women who had African-American and male (Anglo-American, Latino) social workers reported they felt helped more often. For example, they reported feeling listened to, being given more referrals for help and generally receiving positive feedback. Many felt, that Anglo-American social workers were out of touch with their reality. A recurrent response was, "They don't really know or understand our struggles or us as a people."

Several other women reported that some of the Anglo-American social workers seem to feel they are better than the clients. "They don't tell you, it's just an air and a vague feeling that you have."

All the 26 women had experienced at least one memorable negative experience as a welfare recipient. Generally, the African-American women who had Anglo-American social workers reported more negative experiences. Many of the experiences were expressed in vague terms. For example, "When you tell them anything, some have a suspicious look, that you maybe lying to them." A few of the social workers will tell you that if you're lying they will find out about it. "How would you feel if someone said that to you?"

The majority of the women, said, "I don't trust social workers." This persuasive lack of trust seemed to stem from negative experiences with social workers. Many of the women said, "They have to prove that they can be trusted." Others
said, "Why should we trust them anyway, they are part of
the system?"

**Advice For Social Workers**

Advice from African-American welfare recipients to
social workers, centered around four themes and have several
implications. First, be sensitive and treat people like you
want to be treated. A common response was, "We are people
just like you who happened to be experiencing problems. Most
people don't want to be on welfare. Remember not to talk
down to us, weren't not stupid, just in need." Second, an
overwhelming majority of the women said, "Stop acting like
it is your personal money, coming out of your own pockets."
Third, a majority of the women voiced this concern, "Most of
us need help at some time in life. Give us as many services
as you can to strengthen us so that we can get off welfare.
Giving us services will not make us more dependent." The
women felt, that receiving maximum services might give them
a slight reprieve from their everyday struggles. Fourth,
know personally, the programs and referrals to which you
send them. "Sometimes we get a referral and it is no longer
valid or in service. Check it out before you give it to us."
All the respondents expressed a need for more services.
"Give us more information and services on child care, job
referrals and educational opportunities so we can work." A
majority of the women also expressed an antipathy for
generic services like parenting. "Some of us can learn by
taking parenting classes but most of us need services such as respite care and child care because we are often overwhelmed and need help and relief from our everyday struggles.

The implications of these statements are that the social welfare programs continue to maintain African-American women's poverty status and dependency. There are not enough programs and rehabilitative strategies in place or utilized to facilitate African-American women's movement from total reliance on public assistance. Sensitivity training for social workers is also needed. This training should provide social workers with a better understanding of the present predicaments and realities of African-American women welfare recipients and knowledge on how to better assist them to become self-maintained.

Three major themes continued to surface which should be of immense interest to social workers. The need for support services that would help African-American women become self-maintained, respect, and recognition of the clients personal boundaries. The need for support services and respect have already been given adequate attention. Respect for the client's personal boundaries was a recurrent issue and will be examined here. An overwhelming majority of the respondents felt that social workers frequently cross their professional boundaries by prying into their personal lives, and asking questions that are irrelevant for receiving
and/or continuing services. For example, they ask who recipients sleep with, if they have a current boyfriend, who they go out with, and look into their bedrooms to see whether a man's possessions are there. Respondents reported, "They are nosey and want to know how often we go on dates, where and who with." African-American women often felt some social workers continue to pry and cross professional boundaries.

DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Sample

As Figure 1 shows, 23.1% of the respondents have been on AFDC for 1 year or less and over half (53.8) have been of AFDC for 1-5 years with 23.1 percent have been of welfare for 5 years or more. Research by Bane and Ellwood (1983) indicates that 50 percent of families on AFDC use the system for a relative short term form of assistance in times of crises, usually brought on by divorce or unemployment. An additional group of welfare recipients remain on AFDC for 2 to 7 years; the remaining 25 percent stay on welfare for over ten years. Washington, (1991) has noted that it is the latter subgroup that accounts for 60% of the costs of the system. Washington (1991) also asserts that this group has been identified as the having an over-representation of young, unmarried, women with children under three years old.

At least half of the women in our studies reported coming into the welfare system because of divorce,
separation, or unemployment these findings are congruent with research conducted by Bane and Ellworth (1983).

As Figure 2 shows, single women represent 42.3 of the respondents in this study. The researcher did not explore if the women had ever been married. A majority of the respondent were married, divorced, separated or widowed.

Figure 3 indicates, 68.2 percent of the respondents have 1 child and (53.8%) of the respondents have two children. The younger women (16-24 age category) have less children (1.7) than the age group (25-34). This group has an average of 3.1 children. Washington, (1991) reports that one of the myths of welfare for African-American female headed households is that they have large families. Polhman, (1990) study of welfare recipients found that most families in the welfare system have 1 or 2 children, which is consistent with the findings of this study.

The education level (Figure 4), for respondents in this study, is an average of 12 years. Over one third (38.5%) of the respondents reported having graduated from high school. According to Population Bulletin, (1991) high school graduates have some advantage in the job market compared to those who dropped out of high school. High school dropouts are not only disadvantaged in the job market but are also at a higher risk for an array of social problems. Thus the 34.7 percent of the respondents in this study who reported receiving 11 years or less of education may be particularly
at risk for long term welfare dependency. Clearly this group of African-American women will be in most need of encouragement and intensive support services. (Williams, 1984). A surprising 26.5 percent of the respondents had achieved some college education. This statistic does not mesh with the stereotypic information about African-American welfare recipients. This group of respondents is in need of resources that will give them maximum resources, opportunities, and access to additional education and job training that would move them from the bottom rung of poverty and into the mainstream of society. This group has already experienced a modicum of success through education achievement and would be prime candidates for a progressive service approach (Segal, 1991) that builds on and stresses recipients strengths.

As Figure 5 shows, almost half of the respondents were between 16-24 years of age although, only one was under 17 years of age. An equal percentage of the respondents were in the 25-34 years of age category and a small percent of the recipients were 35 years and older. The preceding analysis suggest that young African-American women are not experiencing other positive alternatives such as education and job training and may have began to internalize their oppressive status and lack of opportunities (Gainor, 1992) in society. According to Myers, (1989) African-American women need to experience conditions that can counteract the
negative effects of traditional roles socialization prevalent in impoverished communities.

Figure 6 (employment status), indicates that 76.9 percent of the respondents do not work and 23.1 do work. A large portion of the respondents had a work history prior to becoming welfare recipients. The majority of this group of women are high school graduates and have achieved some college education. If they are allowed access to maximum resources, the possibility of them becoming self-maintain, self-sufficient and free from welfare dependency is greatly amplified.

Generalizing from the present sample to the population of AFDC recipients is problematic because of the sample size, and sampling method. This study, however, illuminates and amplifies African-American women's attitudes, feelings and behaviors about being welfare recipients. Further, this sample represents a portion of what society defines as the "urban underclass," a group that is of special concern to policy-makers especially, the disproportionate number of young African-American women who are welfare recipients.

As agents of change, social workers must be willing to advocate for African-American women. First they must hear the plight of African-American women from the women themselves. The pyramid of poverty and oppression of African-American women will never be razed by chipping away at its apex, its destruction must began by first educating,
empowering and strengthening its foundation.

SUMMARY

There is a plethora of data that demonstrate the oppressive conditions that persists in African-American communities (National Urban League, 1990; Young, 1989). Young asserts, "As an active and integral member of the community, the African-American female has a historical legacy of experiencing these circumstances in the most exaggerated manner." The African-American female has the least amount of resources, lowest social status, and remains at the bottom of the socio-economic scale (Davis, 1989; Jewell, 1988, Washington, 1987).

One insidious aspect of her existence is that she has been cast in many stereotypes and sometimes has accepted the stereotypic depiction as reality with subsequent internationalizations (Gainor, 1992; Helms, 1979).

Given the history of racism in society and the general degrading of African-American women, complex dynamics are in place which can limit the potential for positive relationships between African-American women clients and social workers. Race and class differences as well as the role of the social worker can pose barriers to positive interactions between them. The classic image of "white middle class social worker," removed from their clients' lives and issues appears to be all too accurate (Pinderhughes, 1989; Withorn, 1986). When built-in role
conflicts interact with class and race differences, the results can be devastating.

The African-American welfare recipient is especially vulnerable since she is most often trapped in a vicious cycle of systems which does not provide nor help her acquire enough assistance to become self-maintained. The degree of negative emphasis placed on the individual as opposed to the system in affecting a person's behavior is noted by Sue & Sue (1990). In discussing the casual attributes of social problems, (Sue & Sue, 1990) state that Western society tends to hold the individual responsible for her/his problems. Such an approach has the effect of labeling that segment of the population which differ in thought and behavior from the larger society as deviant.

African-American clients, who seek help from social agencies generally have negative expectations. Generally, experience has convinced them that white institutions are all-powerful and relationships with them always end in frustration (Pinderhughes, 1989). They believe the agency is capable of helping if it chooses. Since they do not expect any valid services, however, they may internalize feelings of hopelessness and anger even before the initial contact with the social workers. The reactions of the worker may reinforce these feelings.

When African-American women are not offered the opportunity to utilize the full gamut of needed resources,
the social welfare system increases and maintains their dependency. Therefore, African-American women must be allowed increased opportunities to utilize to the maximum, resources that will move them from dependency to self-support.

To know the condition of African-American woman is to know all the ways in which race and gender, culture, age, poverty, sexuality, religion and politics are played out in our society (Cole, 1991).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations will address five areas of social work: social work practice, social work programs, social work education, social welfare agencies both public and private, and social work research.

Social Work Practice

1. Social workers should participate in regular in-service training to provide and sensitize them to issues relating to race and ethnicity especially as it relates to African-American females. The astute social workers must acquire awareness and skills through training which will address the following questions:
   a. What are my own attitudes that may affect my work with African-American women?
   b. What are the tools (i.e knowledge of history of oppression, prejudice), as an agent of the system, do I need to be aware of when engaging African-
American women?

c. What repertoire of techniques are needed to demonstrate and communicate my intentions to support, at the maximum levels, efforts toward self-support by African-American women and other women of color?

d. What measure or indicators do I need to access whether or not I have been successful in the interracial worker-client relationship?

2. Supervision of social workers should include a reviewing of their cases, at intervals, by supervisors to determine if social workers are maximizing resources for African-American women and African-American families on welfare.

3. Social workers should engage in open exchanges between African-American women in public forum. This dialogue can encourage social workers and African-Americans to share information and incorporate an understanding between these two groups.

Social Work Programs

Special programs should be developed and targeted for African-American women who apply for and receive public assistance. Especially for those women who have been on public assistance for 1-5 years and has some college education as this group has the greatest chance of re-entering the work market and or becoming self-supporting
when resources are maximized.

**Social Work Education**

Using the information from this study, graduate programs, at least in Southern California, should review and revise their social work content in class and field placement to increase the potential of social work students to assist African-American women especially the age group between 16 and 24 years of age which seems to be the most promising. Applying the knowledge of African-American women's socio-history of racism, sexism and oppression, along with social work education can be a valuable tool in helping African-American become self-sufficient.

**Welfare Agencies Public/Private**

There should be intense and innovative programs aimed at African-American females that result in ways to facilitate their movement from total reliance on public assistance to varying degrees of self-maintenance. These programs should address prevention strategies, rehabilitative strategies, and post-vention strategies (i.e. self-help, and related support processes in groups).

**Research**

Finally, as this study relates to research. More definitive examination of the issues raised here relative to African-American women on welfare should be identified and followed up at three levels: exploratory, quantitative-descriptive, and experimental field type studies.
Exploratory Studies

The goals of exploratory studies should include exploring, defining, and testing concepts such as marginality, empowerment, and self-actualization for African-American females at risk of becoming welfare recipients, receiving public welfare, and exiting from welfare assistance programs.

Quantitative-Descriptive

A large sample size, range of welfare services should be studied for American-American welfare recipients where comparisons could be made to variables such as age, length of time on welfare, pre-welfare circumstances, etc.

Experimental Field Type Studies

One goal of an Experimental Field Type Study is observations of African-American welfare recipient's response to social workers with specific levels of training and experience over a specific period of time.
APPENDIX A

Interview Questionnaire

1. There are myths and negative stereotypes about African-American women on welfare. How do you feel about being on welfare.

2. Do you feel society judges you for being a welfare recipient? Why?

3. What event(s) brought you into the welfare system?

4. How did you feel the first time you applied for welfare?

5. How were you treated by the agency?

6. What was your first encounter with a social worker like?

7. Was your social worker a man or female?

8. What was the race/ethnicity of your social worker?

9. How did the social worker treat you?

10. How do you think your social worker feels about you as an African-American woman?

11. What kind of services were offered or presented to you by the social worker?

12. What information or opportunities did your social worker provide or discuss with you to assist you in becoming self-maintained (to eventually get off of welfare)?

13. How many social workers have you had?

14. How do you feel about the social worker(s) you have had?

15. What positive experiences have you had with social workers?

16. What negative experiences have you had with social workers?
17. When you have problems with your social worker, who do you go to?

18. Do you feel social workers are there to help you?

19. If you had advice for social workers what would it be.

20. Would you like to stop receiving welfare? Why or why not?

21. What could social worker do to help you develop a plan for getting off welfare?

22. Do you have anything that you would like to include in this research interview?
APPENDIX B

Demographic Questionnaire

Length on Time on Welfare
- 1 Year or Less
- 1-5 Years
- 5 Years or More

Education
- 0-11 Grade
- H.S. Graduate
- Some College

Age
- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35 and Up

Number of Children
- 1
- 2
- 3 or more

Employment Status
- Employed
- Not employed

Marital Status
- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Single
Dear Study Participants:

You are being asked to participate in a research project that explores African-American women's perception of social workers as helpers.

The format chosen for this research project requests that you respond to open-ended and closed-end questions. This particular format was chosen to afford you the greatest opportunity to clarify and modify responses as you deem necessary. The interview, which involve approximately 45-60 minutes of your time will allow you an opportunity to express your feelings and opinions freely. All responses will remain anonymous. To assure anonymity, the interview and closed-in questionnaires will have no identifying marks and the consent to participate, in the study is separate from the questionnaire.

There has been little research done on African-American women's perception of social workers as helpers. It is hoped that data from this research will lead to the development of theoretical knowledge from which social workers may better understand and further develop practice techniques for working more effectively with African-American women.

If you have questions or need clarification concerning this research project, or if you are interested in the results when
this project is complete, please contact:

Adriene L. Anderson  
Department of Social Work  
California State University-San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, CA  92407-2397  
(909) 880-5501

OR:

Dr. James Bush, Associate Professor  
Department of Social Work  
California State University-San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, CA  92407-2397  
(909) 880-5501

Sincerely,

__________________________________________  
Adriene L. Anderson  
Date
APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

I consent to serve as a participant in the research investigation entitled, "African American Women's Perceptions of Social Workers as Helpers." The nature and general purpose of the study has been explained to me by Adriene Anderson from the Department of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino, California. I understand that the purpose of this research is an exploratory effort to understand African American women's perceptions of social workers as helpers. The research procedures involves an oral interview and a questionnaire.

The potential benefits to participants are:

1. An opportunity to express your feelings about social workers and the social welfare system.

2. An opportunity to provide knowledge that will help social workers work more effectively with African American women.

3. To provide an opportunity for participants to address barriers and practices that increase and maintain welfare dependency.

4. The opportunity to participate with other African American women in a research project that will provide information from the African American women's perspective.

No risk to study participants are anticipated.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that all
Page 2

information is confidential and that my identity will not be revealed. I am free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time. Any questions that I have about this project will be answered by the research named below or by an authorized representative.

California State University, San Bernardino, and the investigator named below have responsibility for insuring that participants in research projects conducted under university auspices are safeguarded from injury or harm resulting from such participation. If appropriate, the person named below may be contacted for remedy or assistance for any possible consequences from such activities.

On the basis of the above statements, I agree to participate in this project.

Participant's Signature ________________________
Adriene L. Anderson
CSUSB
San Bernardino, California
Campus Phone (909) 880-5501

Researcher's Signature ________________________
REFERENCES


