WHERE SELF AND CULTURE MEET:

WORKING SINGLE MOTHERS' SELF FORMATION

By

LAURA SUE SCHMIDT

(Under the Direction of Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the daily practices of working single mothers using the ancient Greek practice, care of the self, described by Michel Foucault. Current research on the subject focuses almost exclusively on the impact of poverty on working single mothers who receive welfare. However, this interview study with five working single mothers of school-aged children documents their everyday practices that enable them to care for themselves and their families. Practices included those found in mother-daughter relations and kinship relations, practices related to finances, practices of advocating for their children, practices of home management, and practices of self-care.

The author reviews the literature concerning working single mothers from the 18th century to the present, the literature about poor single mothers and welfare assistance, recent research covering the positive practices of working single mothers, and the literature about single mothers by choice. She then offers a discussion of Foucault's description of the ancient Greeks' approach to ethics, care of the self. She uses care of the self to identify and then describe the practices of the self that the participants in her study used to create themselves as ethical subjects of their actions.

These working single mothers found a space for active engagement in ethical living, resisting and accommodating the cultural codes in which they lived, through their heart-felt desires to make the next generation better. Appreciation for the everyday practices that establish these working single mothers as ethical subjects of their actions offers social workers, policy makers, and the larger society a different perspective into the dynamics of this rapidly growing family form.

INDEX WORDS: working single mothers, Foucault, care of the self, everyday practices.

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DEDICATION

For my daughter, Haley, whose life and love bring special meaning to all I do.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

MAKING THE CASE

The number of households headed by working single mothers has grown exponentially over the past forty years. Households headed by single mothers with children under the age of 18 make up 10.8 % of all family groups (U.S. Census, 2017), comprising over one-fourth of all families with children (Women's Bureau, 2016). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017), which recorded single mothers as never married, widowed, divorced, or separated, the number of single mothers in the labor force, with children under the age of 18, was 12.9 million in 1970. By the year 2016, the percentage of single mothers in the labor force with children under the age of 18 reached 76.6 %. Over the past 35 years, the number of single mothers entering the work force has grown to 24.1 million, averaging three-quarters of a million each year entering the work force. Table 1 indicates these changes over time.

Table 1.1

Women in the Labor Force, 1970-2015, in thousands

Year	Single, never married	Single, never married, with children under 18	Widowed, divorced, separated, without children under 18	Widowed, divorced, separated, with children under 18
1970	7.0	n/a	5.9	1.9
1980	11.2	0.6	8.8	3.6
1990	14.0	1.5	11.2	4.2
2000	17.8	3.1	13.2	4.5
2010	20.0	3.6	14.7	4.5
2014	22.2	4.0	14.9	4.3
2015	22.4	4.2	14.6	4.1

The working single mother takes on the dual roles of mother and breadwinner, working at home as well as outside the home to provide her children the basic needs of love, food, clothing, and shelter, giving her children the chance to successfully take on adult roles when they grow up. Accordingly, millions of working single mothers are the breadwinner in the family and yet they are raising a family on less income than a man performing the same job. In 2016, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported women's earnings totalled 81.9% of men's earnings and this ratio has remained about the same since 2004. Single mothers are not only earning less than their male counterparts but they also go home to the unpaid work of caregiving and household responsibilities. Working single mothers are responsible for the wellbeing of their children, maintaining a safe home environment, and paying all the costs involved on less income. Putting this into perspective with family income data, The U.S. Census Population Survey of 2016 reported the mean income for a female householder with children under the age of 18 was $42,222, while the mean income of married couple families with children under the age of 18 was $120,017.

Women's Roles Over the Past Century

Historically, society has championed only the traditional heterosexual family model in which the at-home mother cares for the children (Bean, Softas-Nall, Eberle, & Paul, 2016; Broder, 1994; Evans, 2005; Haleman, 2004; Kahn, 2005; Morton, 1988), offering "the best" environment for the child's future well being, while the breadwinner, the husband, earns the money needed to run the household. Having one adult in charge of the home is an acknowledgement that mothering is a full-time job: meal preparation, house cleaning, laundry, and general home maintenance are required for an efficiently run household, and yet stereotypical, deficit thinking continues to plague societal discourses where single mothers are

concerned. For example, a study of single mothers within the field of healthcare began with the acknowledgement, "In comparison to married mothers, single mothers are more socially isolated, receive less emotional and parental support, and have more unstable social networks" (Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, and Westfall, 2004, p. 382). Concerning social assistance programs, Albelda (2011) noted, "those specifically designed to alleviate poverty have been shaped by women's caregiving roles and men's breadwinner status" (p. 191). If programs continue to be constructed with a deficit view of single mothers, then there are implications for what will be done in such programs.

The expectation for women during most of the 20th century was that of wife and mother. Even with the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 and the formation of the Commission on the Status of Women by mid-century, gendered roles persisted. This is evident in the remarks by President John Kennedy following the presentation of the report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women. In his comments concerning working women, President Kennedy divided working women into two groups, the mass of women who work and the skilled women. Concerning the mass of working women he remarked, "we should concern ourselves with two or three main areas; one, working women, what arrangements we can make for them so that they can maintain themselves, their homes, their husbands, their children, make sure that their children are protected" (Kennedy, October 11, 1963). Addressing skilled women, Kennedy said, "then we have the obligation to the skilled, the trained, the unusual women. I see thousands of women getting out of colleges every year and I wonder what happens to all these skills" (1963). During this same time, Coontz (2011) noted that many states still had "head and master" laws "affirming that the wife was subject to her husband" (p.5). Protective laws, enacted in most states after the Civil War, stated that women by their very nature could not work a full

day and restricted them from jobs that required heavy lifting or were considered unhealthy for women (Coontz, 2011). These laws existed until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Aiken, Salmon, & Hanges, 2013).

In addition, prior to the Civil Rights Act, "sex outside of marriage was condemned, by society and the law, much more harshly and consistently for women than for men" (Law, 1984, p. 960). For example, the illegitimate child of a single mother was condemned by the law as a bastard and "subjected to significant legal disabilities" (Law, 1984, p. 962), yet the law did not require the father to take responsibility for the illegitimate child. These laws encouraged unmarried women to maintain their sexual purity and kept both women and children economically dependent on men. By the 1960's, civil rights and women's rights were hotly debated issues. During a heated debate concerning women's rights in the workforce and sex discrimination, a Virginia lawmaker, Howard Smith, who opposed civil rights, proposed an amendment to the civil rights bill in an effort to derail it by adding gender equality to the list protected from employment discrimination. After almost two months debating the bill in the Senate, the bill was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964, as the Civil Rights Act (Aiken, Salmon, & Hanges, 2013). Before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employers could fire female employees if they married or became pregnant and could refuse to hire married women (Coontz, 2011). These gendered laws penalizing women were changed with the Civil Rights Act, granting workplace freedom by forbidding employers to discriminate based on gender.

Age-old patriarchal structures generated oppressive social practices for women throughout most of the 20th century. The industrial revolution made buying products easier than making them by hand, transferring the production of needed goods such as soap, candles, and

cloth, previously made in the home by women to a male dominated manufacturing industry, leaving women to work in the private sector raising children and maintaining the home. Concerning this division of the public and private spheres, Blithe & McCarver (2017) wrote, "In its close association with the private sphere and distance from the public, care-work became private and was therefore rendered invisible, not to mention little valued and unimportant" (p. 34). With women's work defined as that of wife and mother, single mothers were a threat to society's view of the role of women. If a woman's marriage ended, she found her entire lifestyle changed overnight, continuing with the task of raising the children but with little or no income while the man's position remained intact or improved (Caragata & Alcalde, 2014; Coontz, 2011; Sidel, 2006). The ideology of motherhood persisted throughout much of the 20th century, even in the emerging field of social work, where social workers described unmarried mothers as feeble-minded and worked with them "to change their deviant behavior" (Leskosek, 2011, p.8).

Americans have always valued the family as a place of stability and support, a place to share values and culture (Flynn, 2015), and yet the dominant discourse of patriarchy has not changed to accommodate families headed by working single mothers. Cultural double standards continue today; society continues to blame the unmarried single mother for bringing about her situation as if she is solely responsible for the pregnancy (Caragata & Alcalde, 2014; Law, 1984; Sidel, 2006). Also, society continues to assign to women the role of nurturer in the family, a job that requires devoted attention to the needs of her children for more than 18 years, even though many single mothers now have to work to support themselves and their children and have less time for the kind of nurturing our culture expects.

Of course, the structure of the family unit has changed and continues to change. In 1960, the percent of children growing up in a two-parent household was over 88%, and by 2017 the

percent of children living in a two-parent household decreased to about 68% (U.S. Census, 1960-2017). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), the number of mother-only headed households has risen from 10% in 1968 to almost 25% in 2016. Many women in modern society combine the full-time job of parenting with the full-time job of wage earner. Single mothers actually work two full-time jobs and get paid for only one, the vast majority make less than a man doing the same job, and they frequently work in jobs that pay below a living wage (Caragata & Alcalde, 2014; Haleman, 2004; Hertz & Ferguson, 1998; Kahn, 2005).

A few factors that influenced the rise in single mother headed households include, but are not limited to, the following: changes in federal welfare policy requiring poor women to go back to work, single mothers choosing not to remarry following divorce or death of a spouse, medical advances, such as artificial insemination, which allow women the choice to conceive without a partner, and adoption. For example, in 1990, 18.1% of women ages 15 to 44 chose to remain single and unmarried and have children either through artificial insemination or adoption, compared to 23.7% by the year 2016 (U.S. Census, 1990-2016). As the data suggests, the family unit is changing, with more families headed by working single mothers who earn less than their male peers in the same job, perform all the non-paying duties involved in caring for children, and strive to maintain a home considered the foundation for supporting and nurturing our next generation.

Statement of the Problem

Until recently, research involving single mothers was largely negative, revealed the difficulties in the lives of poor single mothers (Barnes, 2008; Bloom, 2001; Chapman & Bernstein, 2003; Edin & Lein, 1996; Haleman, 2004; McFee & Bronstein, 2003), and perpetuated the stereotypical view of single mothers as “unmotivated dropouts… who need to

develop a work ethic" (Polakow, 1993, p. 78). Policymakers' decisions were influenced by society's negative stereotyping of single mothers. For example, the sweeping welfare reforms during the 1990's required economically disadvantaged mothers to seek and obtain work in order to maintain some government financial assistance.

As family dynamics changed, research focused on resilient factors in the lives of single mothers (Brodsky, 2000; Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, & Stephens, 2001; Schlager & Moore, 2014) gained momentum, revealing how many women maintain a home and a job in spite of domestic violence issues and other struggles (Oliver, 2014; Smith, 2010). Also, there is a growing body of research about the lives of mothers who are single by choice (Corsetti, 2011; Hertz & Ferguson, 1998; Mannis, 1999). Many women do not want to enter into a traditional family relationship but do want to have children. Technology has made it possible for single women to choose when and how they have children. A review of the current literature on single mothers is provided in Chapter 2.

Society continues to hold the family in high regard as a place where morals are first instilled and society recognizes the key role mothers play for the moral development of their children. Because what we value and what we know as a society are deeply intertwined, part of the reason for my study is to offer more information that would contribute to the way we approach and understand working single mothers. Today's family unit does look different from fifty years ago, and many women are effectively traversing the intersecting roles of breadwinner, mother, and father. I am one of those single mothers, I know how I did it and I am curious how other working single mothers navigate the busy life of single parenting and work.

Research Questions

My research questions developed out of my experience as a working single mother, out of my curiosity into the ways other women navigate this space, and after studying Foucault's (1984/1985, 1985/1986, 2005) description of the ancient Greek practice of care of the self. The purpose of this study was to recognize the practices of the self in the lives of five working single mothers within the framework of the ancient Greek understanding of care of the self as described by Foucault. The research questions driving this study were as follows:

1. What are the daily practices of the self used by five working single mothers who live in the South?
2. What kind of subject is produced from these practices?
3. How can these everyday practices be understood in relation to the ancient Greek care of the self that Foucault described?

Personal Background of the Problem

As a mother, I discovered a new world of excitement and happiness as I watched the young life of my daughter unfold. When my marriage ended, I hoped that I could be successful in my new role as a single mother to my then three-year-old daughter. With the help of student loans, family, and friends, I completed an undergraduate degree in education, a career I chose so that I could be available for my daughter. I wanted to be in her life, to be the one to influence her life, and to take care of her. In order to take care of both of us, I developed practices of the self over the years that sustained our relationship. When I began this dissertation research, I was curious about whether the single mothers I planned to interview used practices like mine and whether they had others I might have used had I known them.

When my daughter left our home for college, I decided to pursue my dream of studying for a doctorate. I was accepted and enrolled in the PhD program at a research intensive university located about 100 miles from my hometown. After a year of long drives and late nights to attend classes, I decided to move closer to the university and found a home there for my daughter and me as well as a full-time teaching position as I continued my evening coursework. In my doctoral program, I was introduced to the ancient Greek ethical practice, care of the self, which Michel Foucault described in the second and third volumes of his *History of Sexuality*. The ethical work involved in practicing care of the self focuses on establishing a relation to oneself in order to make oneself a better, more ethical person through using certain practices available in one's culture, and, perhaps, in inventing other practices. Care of the self fit perfectly for my research purposes, allowing me to identify the practices of the self used by five working single mothers, which they found in what I call the "Southern woman's culture." In the next section, I offer a brief explanation of the ancient Greek ethical approach and a more thorough review in Chapter 2.

Care of the Self

In the third volume of his *History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self*, Foucault (1984/1986) explored ancient Greek practices of care of the self in the 4th century BC. Foucault wrote, "This 'cultivation of the self' can be briefly characterized by the fact that in this case the art of existence—the *techne tou biou* in its different forms—is dominated by the principle that says one must 'take care of oneself'" (Foucault, 1986, p.43). St. Pierre (2004) noted that the ancient Greeks' care of the self "studies the self's relation to itself, *rapport a soi,* by exploring the ancient Greek concept that, since the self is not given, it must be created as a work of art" (p.337). For the ancient Greeks, care of the self included the branch of morals concerned with

ethics, the self's relation with itself (Davidson, 1986). The ethical work of taking care of oneself involved everyday practices for the self's relationship to itself and to others such as having a friend, a mentor, who will be truthful with you. This work was not an individualized self-help plan, with steps to follow to achieve a goal, but as St. Pierre (1995) wrote, "Foucault believed, rather, that ethics involved the creation of the self" (p. 60). Foucault (1984/1985) described this as follows:

> a process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself (p.28).

In his third volume of *History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self*, Foucault (1984/1986) explored these practices of care of the self in late antiquity. Foucault wrote:

> This "cultivation of the self" can be briefly characterized by the fact that in this case the art of existence—the *techne tou biou* in its different forms—is dominated by the principle that says one must "take care of oneself" (p.43).

Foucault (1984/2010) believed this relationship to oneself the Greeks invented was an ethical relationship, and he described its four major aspects: (1) the ethical substance – that part of us concerned with moral behavior, (2) the mode of subjection – the way we are invited to recognize our moral obligations, (3) the forms of elaboration – the different kinds of work done on oneself, and (4) the *telos* – the goal of this ethical work (p.355). It is important to note that care of the self is purposeful and intentional, that it requires work and commitment if one is to take care of and improve oneself. Finally, the Greeks believed that before one could take care of others, one had to take care of oneself.

Summary

There is very little research on what working single mothers do each day, which is ironic, considering that female-only headed households are rapidly becoming the norm. Even so, the majority of research on single-mother headed households begins with a deficit perspective. If society concurs that the job of raising children matters, then starting with complexity in the practices of working single mothers would offer more information and contribute new perspectives. Mothering is cultural, personal, and circumstantial. Mothers nurture dependent infants and mothers provide the first point of contact in students' academic growth and development. Working single mothers provide for their children and hold full-time jobs. The purpose of this research is to interpret the practices of the self in the lives of five working single mothers using the ancient Greek ethical analysis of the subject described by Foucault. Looking thoughtfully and systematically at these practices may offer more information that would contribute to the way social programs and policy makers approach and understand working single mothers. Next, I offer an in-depth review of the literature on the lives of working single mothers followed by an in-depth discussion of the ancient Greeks' ethical practice, care of the self, described by Foucault.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As explained in the previous chapter, the purpose of this study was to identify the practices of the self five working single mothers used to produce themselves as ethical subjects of their actions using the ancient Greeks' care of the self as described by Michel Foucault. Again, the research questions driving this study were as follows:

1. What are the daily practices of the self used by five working single mothers who live in the South?
2. What kind of subject is produced from these practices?
3. How can these everyday practices be understood in relation to the ancient Greek care of the self that Foucault described?

This chapter contains two bodies of literature on working single mothers. I begin with an overview of the research on single mothers and how they have been situated historically, going back to the 18th century and continuing through the beginning of the 21st century. Included within this overview is a discussion of the church's authority concerning single mothers, maternity homes that were established for fallen women, the laws regarding a women's place in marriage and society, poor single mothers and welfare issues, and recent research on single mothers.

That review is followed by a detailed discussion of some of the key studies involving working single mothers. These studies include working single mothers after welfare reform at

the end of the 20th century and how recent technological advances allow women to chose when and how they become a mother.

The chapter concludes with an in-depth discussion of the ancient Greeks' ethical practice, care of the self, described by Foucault in his final project, followed by a discussion of other studies like this one that have used care of the self to study practices of the self in other populations.

History of Working Single Mothers in Europe and North America

I begin this historical overview of the conditions of working single mothers in the 18th century, when, as in the previous century, ecclesiastical courts reviewed and decided the moral penance for the single woman who was pregnant and anyone who gave her shelter. The 19th century ushered in a change when historical records regarding the lives of orphans and widows first appeared. After the Civil War in the United States, women enjoyed more freedom and found jobs in larger cities; however, most jobs were for domestic help and all were extremely low paying. This is followed by a discussion of the 20th century changes in the lives of working single mothers including changes in welfare assistance, but the social stigma of out-of-wedlock pregnancy was ever present. By the end of the 20th century technological advances allowed women to choose when and how they would become mothers. I end this historical overview with recent research on working single mothers in the 21st century.

Eighteenth Century

The majority of research into the lives of single mothers of the 18th and 19th centuries comes from England because, as Newcomer (1990) explained, "While in England all births were recorded at the parish church, the multiplicity of religious beliefs in the U.S. precluded any one church's having the monopoly of birth records" (p. 359). America did not establish a national

birth registration until the early 1900's. Also in America, it wasn't until after the Civil War, when women had to migrate to larger cities seeking work, that research is available covering the lives of working single mothers. Even so, there is relatively little information about working single women during the 18th century at all, primarily because the label, working single woman, did not belong to the women of the 18th century. Society was suspicious of any woman on her own: a woman's capacity was in the home and her highest profession was her maternal role. As a mother she was the moral compass of the family and her sensibility glued the family together, even though she was secondary in all family decisions including those of her children in the conservative patriarchal climate. In 18th-century England, churchwardens recorded the fate of unmarried, pregnant poor women in ecclesiastical court documents, documents similar to those found in 19th-century America. These women, single and pregnant, were ostracized in their own local society, "they were—at the point of detection of their pregnancy—always out of place" (Postles, 2006, p. 163).

By the end of the 18th century, industry was established in larger cities and many poor women migrated to the cities from rural areas seeking better-paying jobs. Charitable relief established foundling hospitals to take care of illegitimate children and help these unfortunate women return to work. These foundling hospitals were directed by middle class male governors and relied on charitable donations of wealthy benefactors as well as government funding. It was through social policies that the discourses of the elite, rather than the words of the plebian women themselves, created the trope of seduction and portrayed women as victims of male aggressiveness, "with no sexual desire or expression of their own" (Evans, 2005, p. 128). In London's Foundling Hospital women had to petition the governors for help. If the petition were deemed truthful, these mothers would be fortunate enough to come back and participate in a

lottery draw, where a white ball ballot indicated acceptance and a black ball ballot indicated denial (Evans, 2005). Evans (2005) noted, "the governors of these charities forged a new cultural discourse of correct behavior by drawing on the concept of seduction familiar from contemporary literature" (p. 128). This discourse was used in sermons and speeches "to encourage their audience to part with their cash for the charity" (Evans, 2005, p. 131). Evans (2005) reviewed the archival petitions of poor, mostly illiterate women for London's Foundling Hospital. From her analysis, she concluded that the working poor mothers understood they must convey their legitimate need and good character, and, although many of them were illiterate, they received help from friends and family members. According to Evans (2005), "the language of the petitions challenges the representation of unmarried mothers as passive, seduced victims and tells us instead of the myriad fortunes and misfortunes of their lives" (p. 130). Evans' work revealed the language of mistakes rather than the language of sin in the petitions of working-poor unwed mothers for London's Foundling Hospital during the later part of the 18th century.

Where poor pregnant women "lived their lives making shift, surviving, falling in love, facing betrayal and rejection, but always hoping that fortune would help them on their way" (Evans, 2005, p. 147), women from middle class or upper class families were born fortunate: they were well-educated, and, as married adults, financially able to afford a life of leisure and travel because of their husbands' positions. Authors of conduct manuals created a uniform narrative of 18th-century motherhood as selfless and nurturing because English morals and values were "dependent upon the stability of the domestic realm and motherhood" (Zold, 2016, p. 324). In her work on how feminine ideals were relayed through conduct manuals in early England, Tague (2001) wrote, "Women were told that they must love the man they married in order to obey him; they would be sure that they did indeed love him, conversely, by their willingness to

obey him" (p. 85). Also, the political view of motherhood in England was related to the growth of the British Empire: "the construction of motherhood in the eighteenth century was a form of colonisation [*sic*] at home, with children a natural resource, complementing the imperialism abroad" (Zold, 2016, p. 326). Not surprisingly then, a mother's actions, though domestic in nature, were seen and judged publicly.

Zold (2016) studied the writings of two 18th century British mothers, one a middle-class woman who was happy in her role as wife and mother, and the other an aristocrat, unhappy in her marriage. Each chose to leave her children at home and travel abroad. The middle class mother, Parker, was invited by her captain-husband to accompany him on a distant voyage. Parker wrote of her sheer excitement at the thought of travel with her husband and at the same moment her sadness at the thought of being so far away from her two children and her own mother. Interestingly, by establishing her husband as the one requesting her to leave home and travel with him on a fifteen-month voyage, Parker avoided the public's judgment as a bad mother who abandoned her children. When she returned from the voyage with her husband she was pregnant with their third child. Zold (2016) noted,

> Her son is the product of the journey she took with her husband: as demonstrated through her maternal body, travel can become a space for the creation of the maternal and thus domestic body, thereby expanding the possible reach of the domestic sphere. (p. 330)

Several years later, Parker became pregnant with their fourth child and found herself a single mother in need of income after the sudden death of her husband because of yellow fever. With her newborn in one hand and her pen in the other Parker wrote and published her detailed account to distant British colonies as a way to support her family. Through her published writing

"Parker aids the colonists and by extension the empire of Britain, thus supporting her status as a 'good' mother" (Zold, 2016, p. 329).

Like Parker, the aristocrat, Lady Craven, traveled without her children, but unlike Parker, Craven was born into wealth and privilege, unhappy in her marriage, and traveled without her husband. Although it was common to hear about the extramarital affairs of aristocratic men, such gossip was not to be heard concerning the lives of aristocratic women, yet Zold (2016) wrote that Craven was the target of gutter gossip and press over her multiple affairs, regardless of the common knowledge that her husband had a mistress. Even though her actions forced her out of England, it is clear that her aristocratic status protected her as she traveled solo. The chosen lifestyles of Parker and Craven depict small but important changes during the 18th century for middle and upper class single mothers. Craven continued to travel unaccompanied and write about her travels, a lifestyle unheard of for any woman a century earlier, and accomplished by very few women of means in the 18th century. Parker and Craven showed that, for middle and upper class women, being a good mother could also include being away from their children; however, in order to be taken seriously they situated their work within their husband's influence. Male patriarchal dominance defined and dictated the lives of women during the 18th century.

Nineteenth Century

During the 19th century in America, much like 18th-century England, working class and poor women in rural areas moved to larger cities in hope of better wages but discovered that most of the work available to them was the same: low-wage domestic help. In 19th-century Boston, working-class mothers earned income typically as domestic servants or nurses, and many of these women, who found themselves widowed, "sickened and died from overwork as

they struggled to keep their households intact by taking in needlework or laundry" (Porter, 1993, p. 113). Financial insecurity, along with high mortality and disease rates, made widowhood and then, with the death of the widow, orphanages for children common in Boston. Originally established to help the rising number of orphan girls in Boston, The Boston Female Asylum (BFA) included young girls of widowed mothers who willingly gave up the child to the care of the BFA. For example, widowed mothers who worked as domestic servants could afford to support only one child, therefore older children were either indentured or "left to provide for themselves by picking up chips (dried horse manure used for fuel) or selling matches on the street" (Porter, 1993, p. 113). Porter's (1993) work on orphans in the Boston Female Asylum (BFA) from 1800-1850 revealed most of the young female inmates were from working class, poor families and given to the care of the Boston Female Asylum after the death of one parent. According to Porter, there is a scarcity of statistical information on working women in America because women changed their names when they married, were not listed in any tax directory unless widowed or proprietors, and were not listed by name within a household prior to the 1850 U.S. Census.

Also during the 19th century, married women were nothing more than property and "men saw it as their right to beat their wives" (Barr, 2012, p. 51). Married women who were able to get a divorce on grounds of physical violence faced the likelihood of being not only penniless, since women could not own property, but also single and subject to great social scrutiny. As Barr (2012) noted "Divorce cases put a woman's issue out in the open and society thought of women as the moral order of a family. When these immoral issues came out, a woman could be blamed easily" (p. 57). Laws granting divorce on the grounds of wife beating and verbal abuse did not change until late in the 19th century.

De Langhe (2012) discussed the influences on various coping strategies for single women in rural Flanders during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, including two legal advantages for single and widowed women over the age of 25: women were granted full legal powers to act on their own behalf and they received the same inheritance rights as men. In this area, working single mothers were able to do such things as handle their own finances, run a business, and manage their own property, but women's earnings were considerably less than men's earnings and many relied on poor relief in order to survive.

Unmarried 19th-century women who migrated to larger cities typically worked as house servants and domestic help; the only real account of these women and their pregnancies comes from court documents charging these women with infanticide (Williams, 2011), such as cases heard at the Old Bailey in London. The identification of unmarried pregnant women was important during this time "because of its implications for illicit sexual activity, unmarried motherhood, illegitimacy, and the cost to the poor rates" (Williams, 2011, p. 72). Even so, very young single women, many in their teens, not only concealed their pregnancies but also delivered alone, and in the rare instances recorded where the baby was born alive, the mother could not expose the child or herself, and thus often killed her baby. Young, unwed single women who chose to inform family and friends of their pregnancies had birth attendants as well as options for places to deliver, including lying-in hospitals and parochial workhouses, allowing medical care and time for recovery. Unlike other research focused on the act of infanticide, Williams' research focused on the maternal body during pregnancy, birthing, and recovery after birth, with many of these cases involving pregnant teenaged servants who did not have an understanding for all that was happening to their bodies as well as their minds. Accounts of the secrecy involved with birthing inside a privy revealed how shocked the young girls were that they were actually

giving birth; they thought they had one of many female conditions known at that time, such as a condition called dropsy, causing their periods to stop.

The strict Victorian view of poor single women who became pregnant marked them as promiscuous, bad, and unredeemable in the eyes of society, much the same as the contemporary literature in the 18th century. It is not surprising that so many poor single women who found themselves penniless and pregnant ended up mentally ill and admitted to an asylum for puerperal insanity. "Unmarried mothers came to be seen as particularly susceptible to temporary madness or puerperal insanity, as the association between poverty, shame, and illegitimacy strengthened in the first half of the 19th century" (Williams, 2011, p. 82), and by the end of the century, medical doctors associated poverty with insanity to such an extent that 63% of the women admitted to one asylum for puerperal insanity were poor and unmarried.

Similarly, in post-bellum Richmond, Virginia, accounts of infanticide and child abandonment were recorded at an alarming rate as people migrated to the city with hopes of better jobs in the factories. Poor and working class women as well as war widows found work as domestic servants and struggled to support themselves and their families. Green (1999) noted that both infanticide and foundlings were not new to Virginia, "But in post-bellum Richmond the old problem looked new, for the numbers were so large as to seem to be a new and different type of issue" (p. 188). Victorian middle-class values condemned premarital sexuality leaving a poor unwed mother working as a domestic few options if she found herself pregnant. The post-war South was further complicated by race: in Richmond, the city's charity hospital, the almshouse, was the only hospital available for blacks, and the only hospital where poor unmarried black women could go. Green (1999) wrote,

> It appears that whites more than often went to distant cities to bear their illegitimate children in secrecy. Black mothers were from the local community and would return to the area, taking their newborns with them when they left the almshouse. (p. 193)

The Civil War impacted all Southern social classes. Just as poor women migrated to cities for work in order to support their families during and after the war, the plantation-elite Southern women's role changed from submissive, dependent, and selfless to independently in charge of the family properties out of necessity in order to support themselves and their families. Broussard's (2010) work profiled the lives of elite single women living in Natchez, Mississippi, an area that had more millionaires than any other place in America prior to the Civil War, and described how these women persevered in the bleak economic conditions of the post-bellum south. Broussard (2010) noted, "The Civil War and its aftermath leveled somewhat the gendered playing field of life, especially for those once-elite but still propertied white women left without protective and capable fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers" (p. 61). The women who did have male kin or close friends who could assist them with business matters were given authority as a property-holding female by these male confidants, a sharp contrast to their constrained role in the past.

To summarize, Victorian values during the nineteenth century dominated and ruled over the woman's body: women were the moral compass of the family yet were deemed inferior to men (Barr, 2012). Single women who found themselves pregnant were forced to leave their homes and conceal their pregnant bodies in strange towns (Williams, 2011), many birthing their babies alone. Unfortunately, these problems persisted into the beginning of the 20th century.

Twentieth Century

Migration from the rural areas to cities in search of work brought unprecedented freedom for single women because they were no longer at home under their parents' supervision. As Green (1999) wrote concerning the rapid growth of female labor in Richmond, "In 1900, 37 percent of adult women in the city worked for wages; by 1910, the figure had risen to 42 percent" (p. 190). Young women's work and leisure time was freer of family supervision and allowed for greater sexual expression. However, a woman's ability to live on her own was difficult because low-wage jobs continued to be the only ones available for women, and middle class values continued to support women in their maternal role of wife and mother only. Such conditions left poor single women without many options and extremely vulnerable.

Early social work professionals continued the late eighteenth-century view of the single mother as morally deviant and mentally deficient and, according to Morton (1988), that view continued through most of the 20th century within social work. The religious roots of most maternity homes "subscribed to the belief that the sanctity of motherhood could repair a woman's moral lapse or fall from grace through its redemptive powers, and thus they required mothers to keep their children in order to save their own souls" (Morton, 1988, p. 64). Not only was the mother tainted with sin but her illegitimate child was not desirable and therefore not considered worthy of adoption (Edwards & Williams, 2000; Morton, 1988). Morton (1988) learned that federated charities and maternity homes in the Cleveland area were "committed to the spiritual regeneration of fallen womanhood" (p.62), such that "the case worker's approach and treatment must be as scientific as possible, but she must remember that the eternal values are spiritual ones" (p.68).

Toronto, Canada experienced the same explosive migration of single, rural women to the city in search of work. Evangelical maternity homes tried to save the unfortunate women, and adoption agencies placed babies in homes. But unlike America during this time, Ontario pushed for legislation that allowed other family forms to be accepted. For example, the Adoption Act of 1921 legalized adoptions following a two-year probationary period, gave adopted children certain rights including inheritance rights, and allowed adoptions by unmarried women. Murray (2004) noted, "this provision highlighted the maternalist sensibilities typical at the time and underscored the fact that it was primarily 'improper' sexual conduct that rendered unwed mothers troublesome, rather than the 'single mother' family structures they formed" (p. 267). This went against the predominant view of the two-parent, heterosexual, patriarchal family as the only institution to promote social order, but it was consistent with the goal of charities and social workers to alter the conduct of unwed mothers, but only those suitable for reform. According to Murray (2004), "this white, middle-class, patriarchal project" (p. 276) excluded certain classes of unwed mothers, like those of non-British descent and the feeble-minded, much the same as social work in early 20th-century America considered certain groups unworthy.

Penney's (1948) diary as a social worker recounted her work with unfortunate girls in the 1940's in America. The women's stories related their heartache and expressed the social stigma of shame put on them. In another study addressing social work procedures with unwed mothers in maternity homes, Bernstein (1963) suggested certain modifications were needed by social workers in the treatment of unmarried mothers. Instead of a devalued image of the unmarried mother, what was needed was "an unfearful acceptance by the worker of the girl's self-image as a mother" (p.65). During an era that related a girl's out-of-wedlock pregnancy to a pre-existing

pathology, Bernstein and Penney gave credence to the unwed mother's thoughts and feelings during a difficult time.

By mid-twentieth century, the industrial revolution and the two World Wars changed some of the stigma associated with single mothers. During wartime it was the women who worked in the factories and also cared for the next generation. Since the introduction of the power loom during the 19th-century, the demand for human labor had been greatly reduced, such "that man's value as a producer had been permanently reduced and that therefore moral character could not be responsible for his economic condition" (Woodward, 1962, p. 309). In other words, the traditional view concerning poverty shifted from the conduct and character of individuals to economic forces beyond the control of individuals. After World War II, America experienced an economic boom and announced a war on poverty. In order to establish what was considered impoverished, Orshansky (1965) researched census poverty data, drafted a poverty profile, and developed the variable poverty line that established a need for welfare assistance. She wrote, "The legacy of poverty awaiting many of our children is the same that has been handed down to their parents, but in a time when the boon of prosperity is more general the taste of poverty is more bitter" (Orshansky, 1965, p. 3). U.S. Census data from 1964 revealed single-mother families were three times more likely than male-headed families to live in poverty, while single-mother families made up one-fourth of the poor population (Orshansky, 1965, p. 5). Addressing fatherless families and the rise of poverty among single mother headed households, Bould's (1977) research analyzed national longitudinal surveys from 1967 and 1969 and investigated the concept of personal fate control in female-headed households. Bould concluded that not only did poverty have a negative effect on personal fate control for these women, as expected, but also

women who must depend solely on "unreliable, unstable, controlling or stigmatizing sources of income" (1977, p. 348) had a greater sense of inadequacy in the provider role.

By the end of the 20th century, the nation's view of the working single mother as well as social beliefs around the idea of unwed motherhood shifted. Concerning this shift, Edwards and Williams (2000) noted, "The stigma attached to these women and their children waned considerably. Many unmarried women—including both African American and white women—were no longer adamantly committed to concealing their pregnancies" (p. 164). Changes in government assistance programs and an expanding economy (Albelda, 2011) increased the number of single mothers in the workforce. Under the new welfare program, poor single mothers, many with very young children at home, were required to enter the workforce in order to retain some government assistance. Hourly wages, part-time work, childcare, and lack of health insurance were just some of the challenges faced by many working mothers at that time (Albelda, 2011; Kahn, 2006; Robles, 2014). Note that I review the literature about single mothers and the welfare system in depth following this historical overview.

During the 20th century, economic disadvantages put many single mothers in difficult situations with few, if any, legal options available for raising their families alone. Even though the flexibility needed to sustain work and raise little children was not present for all working single mothers, by the 21st century, working single mothers in America had more options available to them that helped them make some decisions concerning work and family.

Twenty-first Century

By the beginning of the 21st century, single mother headed households were common, and the idea that a woman could work and raise a family without a husband was no longer considered improper or immoral. Women were much freer to follow their own paths rather than

the one historically demanded of women in a patriarchal society. For example, in 1970 there were 75,000 babies in adoptive homes in America, but by the twenty-first century, there were only 25,000 babies given up for adoption each year. Unmarried pregnant women no longer endured the social stigma of past generations that demanded their pregnancies be hidden from the community by moving to another town or living in a maternity home with the intent to surrender their new born to another family in order to redeem themselves. By the 21st century, women were free to choose when and how they become a mother; however, women still entered maternity homes with the intent to place their child for adoption. Edwards and Williams (2000) interviewed 11 birth mothers living in one of seven licensed maternity homes offering adoption services in Texas and all participants entered with the intent to place their children for adoption. Edwards and Williams wanted to understand the adoption process as it unfolded from the perspective of the birth mother. Maternity homes are typically funded much the same as in the past, through charitable donations, state funding, and adoption fees and are required to provide necessary health care, nutritional counseling, arrangements for completion of high school for minor mothers, and recreational activities. Edwards and Williams found that the women in their study "chose adoption over single parenting because they believed it was in the best interest of the children" (p. 171). None of the women in their study felt they had to give their child up because of the social stigma of unwed pregnancy. Even though women who found themselves unmarried and pregnant in the first part of the twenty-first century were not forced to give up their children for adoption, some chose to do so, believing they were giving the child a better life than the one they knew they could offer.

Not only had the shame of being pregnant and single diminished by the first part of the 21st-century, women were also not held to the marriage standard of centuries past, and marriage

was no longer the gatekeeper of social acceptance and happiness for all women. Women could choose to remain single and have a child. Technological advances in the medical field changed how women could conceive, and many women embraced this freedom of choice. For example, in America, sperm donation is a free-market driven, multi-billion dollar business without federal or state regulations. Unlike in most of Europe, the United States allows sperm donor anonymity, believing donor anonymity reduces anxiety for sperm donors concerning future contact and therefore increasing the number of donations "allowing men to donate for purely pecuniary reasons" (Shain, 2016, p. 3). In a study to determine whether a legal change requiring donor identification in America would reduce the number of sperm donors, Cohen, Coan, Ottey, and Boyd (2016) found that over one-fourth of the active, anonymous donors in their study reported they would refuse to donate at all or demand a substantial increase in the amount paid to donors if identified. Cohen et al. (2016) concluded, "Our results generally suggest that changes in mandatory identification rules have a considerable impact on an individual's preference regarding donation" (p. 485). In a medical paper addressing infertility and sperm donor anonymity, McGovern and Schlaff (2018) wrote, "The legacy of embarrassment and shame regarding the use of donor sperm, largely derived from regrettable beliefs that link male sexual potency and reproductive potential, is clearly waning" (p. 230). Concerning the illusion of anonymity in our technology driven society, "In the comfort of one's own home, a cheek swab and a little time on social media can easily penetrate the 'anonymity' of the sperm donation process" (McGovern & Schlaff, 2018, p. 231). Genetics and technology increasingly override sperm donor anonymity, with a number of databases available for donor-conceived people to identify and connect with their sperm donor (McGovern & Schlaff).

Denmark maintains sperm donor anonymity, unlike most of the European countries, and this brings foreign women who want to conceive by assisted reproductive technology to Danish clinics (Ignovska, 2014). Single mothers are the fastest growing category of women using the Danish sperm bank facilities.

Reviewing the statistics on single mothers by choice, Sawhill (2015) found single mothers by choice in America to "have thought hard about whether to have (or adopt) a child and have made a careful decision to do so" (p. 1). Although women continued to push for equality in the workplace and in the home, the social restraints of centuries past were far less impactful during the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

As this historical overview explains, the role of a single mother was difficult and vastly non-existent during the 18th and 19th centuries. From the 20th century to the present, society slowly changed how it viewed a woman who was an unmarried mother and the breadwinner for her family. Next, I review the literature on single mothers, beginning with single mothers and welfare assistance, from both a sociological and medical point of view. Following this will be a review of the literature of single mothers after welfare reform, and I conclude with a review of recent literature covering women who choose to remain single and become a mother.

Single Mothers in America: An Overview

Prior to 1980, the majority of research on single mothers in the United States focused on out-of-wedlock pregnancies (Bernstein, 1963; Morton, 1988; Penney, 1948), the maternity homes for unwed mothers where unwed pregnant women lived until childbirth, and the social workers involved in the treatment of those women. The social revolution of the 1960's and 1970's, as well as technological advances in U.S. Census data collection (Ruggles, 2006; Ruggles & Brower, 2003), helped researchers recognize a growing family form, that of working

single mothers with children at home. Early empirical research on single mother headed households included Bould's (1977) quantitative study of female-headed families that used a national longitudinal sample of single mothers with children at home and was published in *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Although most of the literature during this era revealed disorganization in fatherless families when the mother takes on the roles of provider and nurturer, Bould's work suggested single mothers who both worked and cared for their children were better off than single mothers who stayed at home and relied on inconsistent sources of income. A deficit view of single mothers persisted in the research on poor and low-income single mothers (Barnhart & McGuire-Jack, 2016; Caragata & Alcalde, 2014; Elliot, Powell, & Brenton, 2015; Freeman and Dodson, 2015; McFee & Bronstein, 2003; Oliker, 2000; Pearce, 1978; Richards & Schmiege, 1993). The deficit model extended into the medical field and covered issues related to community health (Campbell-Grossman, Hudson, Keating-Lefler, & Fleck, 2005; Levine, 2013; McCreary & Dancy, 2004; Peterson, 2015; Samuels-Dennis, 2007; Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014). Community health research recognized the need for social supports in the lives of low-income single mothers, and findings suggested the quality of social supports available impact decision making for poor mothers.

Following the work accomplished in community health, resiliency research looked at positive aspects in the lives of poor working single mothers (Brodsky, 1996, 1999, 2000; Corsetti, 2011; Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Haleman, 2004; Hertz and Ferguson, 1997; Smith, 2013). The U.S. welfare reform measures enacted at the end of the 20th century greatly impacted the lives of poor single mothers and their children and left these mothers with very few, if any, options for help unless they worked typically dead-end low-paid work, without benefits or help with childcare. Brodsky's (1996, 1999, 2000) work revealed resiliency factors in the lives of

these poor mothers in spite of the harsh conditions surrounding them, such as the ability to reframe the stressors in their lives so they could experience contentment, set new goals, and utilize supportive resources available to them.

Another positive aspect discussed in the literature on single mothers was technological advances in birth control and reproduction which allowed women new freedoms such that they could choose when to have a child and how to have a child (Freeman & Dodson, 2014; Hawkins, 2010; Pollack & Caragata, 2010; Pulkingham, Fuller, & Kershaw, 2010; Ridge & Millar, 2011; Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014). Included in this body of research were single mothers by choice (Bock, 2000; Hertz & Ferguson, 1998; Jones, B., 2003; Jones, S., 2005; Mannis, 1999; Schlehofer, 2012; Wiegers & Chunn, 2017). Findings in the research concerning women who chose to parent alone showed that strong social supports were a result of planning prior to taking on the role of mother. Recent Scandinavian research (Ignovska, 2014; Salomon, Sylvest, Hansson, Andersen & Schmidt, 2015) discussed issues associated with in-vitro fertilization for women who chose to remain single and have children. A detailed discussion of the research concerning welfare reform, resiliency, and choice in the lives of working single mothers follows.

Single Mothers and Welfare

I chose to discuss single mothers and welfare separately because it remains a complex issue that spans decades. Research on single mothers receiving welfare reveals the entanglement of poverty in the lives of those families. Lack of child support from the father (Caragata & Alcalde, 2014; Richards & Schmiege, 1993), difficulty affording child-care (Caragata & Alcalde, 2014; Scott, London & Hurst, 2005), and little or no transportation (Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck & Westfall, 2004) exacerbate an already challenging situation for single mothers. Although poverty is not the focus of this study, the effects of poverty greatly

impact the lives of single mothers. Therefore, how poverty is addressed in the lives of working single mothers is important. In Iceland's (2006) revealing book, *Poverty in America,* he documented the history and current state of poverty and poverty thresholds in America. The original thresholds for poverty calculated in 1963 were based on a 1955 survey indicating that a family of three spent one-third after-tax income on food (p. 22), and financial assistance was determined using gross family income collected through Census data. Iceland wrote, "What it meant to be poor in the early twentieth century is not the same today" (p. 2). Even though the absolute measure is adjusted yearly for inflation, it is outdated without revisions for an increase in expenditures of necessities like shelter and clothing (Iceland). Allowing a poverty measure to be calculated from a gross income amount as well as not taking the relative cost of food, clothing, childcare, and medical expenses in consideration, leaves many poor families without the financial assistance needed to allow a minimal quality of life.

Under the leadership of President George Bush, Congress appropriated funds for a study (1992) of the current poverty measure and alternative strategies for measuring poverty in America, conducted by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). The new measure is a more refined measure, however, Iceland (2006) noted, "as currently implemented, many elements require complex statistical procedures that could still use further refinement" (p. 32). Making all the changes necessary would impact many programs and according to Blank (2008), "Any White House (Republican or Democratic) is likely to see far more costs than gains from such changes" (p. 242). For example, the NAS measures were essentially relative in nature and included geographic difference; however, few federal programs adjusted benefits by geographic differences.

Polakow's (1993) research reported in her book, *Lives on the Edge: Single Mothers and Their Children in the Other America,* used an historical approach to look at the lives of poor single mothers and their children within the ideology of motherhood (Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2015). Polakow (1993) asserted:

> The family, like childhood, has never been a stable structure, an unchanging essence, but rather a social construct which, like childhood, has undergone dramatic historical shifts, even if our "metanarratives" persist to unusually strong degrees, in maintaining stable and enduring images of the natural order of things. (p. 22)

Polakow's research into the lives of poor single mothers and their children revealed not only the impact of poverty but also continual negative views of poor single mothers by the larger society, who deemed them morally suspicious. Research shows poor single mothers endure not only financial difficulties but also difficulties with consistent child-care (Levine, 2013) and work related time binds (Albelda, 2011) when children are sick. According to a 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 40.5% of families living below the poverty line are female-headed households with children (U.S. Census, 2017). Iceland (2006) argued for a new poverty threshold:

> Some [economists] argue that the current [poverty] income definition does not take into account variation in expenses that are necessary to hold a job and to earn income-expenses that reduce disposable income. These expenses include taxes, transportation costs for getting to work, and the cost of childcare for working parents with children. (p. 24)

Many women in the twenty-first century combine the full-time job of mothering with the full-time job of wage earner. Single mothers work two full-time jobs, mother and employee, and get

paid for only one; the vast majority earn less than a man doing the same job; and they frequently work in jobs that pay below a living wage (Barnes, 2008; Bureau of Labor Statistic, 2012; Kahn, 2005; Maddalena, 2013). In Caragata and Alcalade's (2014) book, *Challenging the Single Mother Narrative,* they noted, "These significant issues are exacerbated by a pervasive negative social judgment that these women have created their circumstances through their own neglect, moral turpitude, lack of drive, and, ultimately, failure to appreciate their obligations as citizens" (p.10). The struggles of single mothers are magnified when there is not enough money to cover expenses.

It is no wonder there is abundant medical research concerning the lives of single mothers since a child's well-being and security directly relates to the well-being and security of his or her mother. In a nursing-related study, Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck and Westfall (2004) used social support theory in a focus group setting with five single, low-income mothers to find out what supports were available and valued by them as they adjusted to becoming a parent. Social support theory "suggests social support is related to mental health outcomes, particularly in conditions of stress such as poverty and single motherhood" (Keating-Lefler et al, 2004, p. 382). Social support theory includes positive and negative characteristics: positive social support delivers affirmations and information where negative social support is perceived as non-supportive, even if the actions were well intended (Keating-Lefler et al, 2004). The three themes that emerged from the focus group work included transition, stress, and social support. Positive social support within the theme of social interactions included social cohesion of neighbors, especially within poor neighborhoods (Barnhart & McGuire-Jack, 2016; May-Stewart, 1998) and matriarchal and family networks (Freeman & Dodson, 2015; Keating-Lefler, et al., 2004). Keating-Lefler, et al. (2004) noted one participant recalled, "My grandmother

supports me. She helps me a lot. I mean, she babysits while I am at work, and she does a lot for me" (p.393). Negative social support included the hurt felt from the actions by the child's father, "Her [the infant's] dad is in the Air Force, and he gets dependent pay for her. He keeps it. He doesn't send her anything, but yet I'm supposed to be all nice and say you can see your daughter when you want to? I don't think so" (p. 393). Their findings suggest that mental health nurses need to offer woman-focused classes by establishing a trusting relationship with single low-income mothers so these women will share their thoughts and feelings. Classes like those could allow low-income single mothers an opportunity to learn and grow through telling their own stories and listening to the stories of other women experiencing similar struggles and successes. Women who received positive social supports were more likely to feel a measure of success in their new role as mother in spite of the often hopeless feelings that accompany raising a family in poverty conditions. The researchers recognized the need to assist low-income single mothers in the life task of taking care of themselves. Next, I review the literature on the effects of welfare reform on the lives of single mothers.

Single Mothers After Welfare Reform

In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), an extensive welfare reform that revised the existing law, Aid To Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Included in PRWORA were time limits for federal assistance, work-related actions including education, training or employment for welfare recipients. States were given incentives to decrease the number of recipients on welfare and assist them in finding employment. The new law also included funding for child-care, enforced child-support payments, as well as federally funded medical coverage (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996).

As federal welfare programs have undergone sweeping changes, welfare recipients face increasing frustration with the welfare system. Using data collected from a previous study, Oliker (2000) investigated care-giving and "the social ethos of care" (p.464) by examining how welfare changes for single mothers affect practices of care for both the mother and her children. Welfare reformers advocated for mothers to return to the workforce after the birth of a child, and Oliker (2000) argued that economic impact overruled the reality of the single mothers' situation. Reformers expect mothers to seek and find work, but the realities of childcare and child safety issues were not considered. Oliker's research looked deeply into the impact of this change on childcare practices and found that single mothers face substandard, inadequate childcare and inflexible work schedules. They desperately need family members' help: however, single mothers cannot counter with reciprocity because of the time constraints they face trying to combine work and family responsibilities. Research on single mothers moving from welfare to work reveals the financial struggles of single mothers and exposes the dangers of stereotyping them.

Haleman's (2004) ethnographic study explored the ways stereotypes of single mothers shaped their lives. Haleman followed ten single mothers who received social services, attended a major research university, and were part of the Single Parent Program (SPP), an independent, not for profit organization designed to meet the needs of single parents and their families. Using in-depth interviews, abbreviated life histories, and focus groups, Haleman documented how these single mothers experienced higher education within the negative view of single motherhood held by society. "The phrase single mother often conjures images of poor, welfare-dependent, and frequently minority women who lack adequate education and employment skills and the motivation to acquire them" (p.770). Haleman (2004) also noted that SPP participants received

Section 8 (subsidized) housing, on-site childcare, medical, dental, counseling, and legal services, community referrals as needed, and attended one of several local colleges to pursue a degree that would allow them financial independence. The ten women in this study experienced negative stereotyping from all aspects of the community, which was secondary to their main concern, which was fear that the negative labeling impacted their children. One woman said of the negativity,

> When you get pressured with negative attitudes—and I have experienced it—you start to question, "Okay, who am I? Is this what I am like?" And you realize, "No that's not who I am. I am not like what these people are saying." And you become more confident in a way. (Haleman, 2004, p.774)

Pursuing a post-secondary degree not only allowed greater earning potential for these women but also empowered them with a sense of self.

In addition to the financial struggles and negative stereotyping of low-income single-mothers exists the ongoing need for adequate childcare and time off work to take care of their own children when they are sick. Kahn (2005) interviewed single mother nursing assistants at a nursing home and a hospital in a high poverty county in Michigan. She explored existing time binds within the workplace, noting the difficulty this group of single mothers had in finding time to care for their own because of the time constraints of their jobs. Although these women earned personal days off, they were required to notify management in advance in order to use personal days, leaving them in a bind when their children were suddenly sick. Adding to their stress, disciplinary procedures followed unscheduled absences of four or more hours from scheduled work for nursing assistants regardless of accumulated paid days available. Parenting related scheduling is not an employee right for nurse aides, as Kahn noted:

> They regard these difficulties as cruelly ironic, since they are working to maintain the health of others and alongside health care professionals who recognize and treat illness; they see them as indications that they are valued only insofar as they do their paid work and not as people with their own failing bodies or important, intimate relationships that sometimes require direct care. (2005, p. 105)

To elucidate the ironic workplace rigidity for nurse aides, Kahn interviewed two sisters who were nurse aides working different shifts in order to try and provide their children childcare. Even with their shared childcare plan, their children had to be transported to another home every evening and someone had to be available to be with the children during the one-hour shift change. Even though these sisters did their best to offer safe, quality childcare for their children, the rigid time constraints of their employers made that difficult. Crittenden (2010) has written widely on economic and social justice issues for women and the social policies needed to recognize the work of mothers. In her book, *The Price of Motherhood,* Crittenden confirmed the need for flextime in the American workplace, "According to surveys nearly 80 percent of American workers want more flex options. Yet only about one-third of employers offer flex-time schedules, despite reams of new data showing that flexibility improves morale, productivity, and employee retention" (p.xi). Flexibility within the workplace allows single mothers to have the time necessary to care for their own children and reduces job-related stressors that impact their ability to care for their children and themselves.

Whereas Kahn's research focused on the need for flex-time in the workplace, Ridge and Millar (2011) focused on income security and followed lone mothers and their children in the United Kingdom for three to four years in order to understand if welfare to work policies allowed these lone mothers some financial security. The women in their longitudinal study started

employment after spending time out of work and drawing benefits. The employed lone mothers were able to apply for credit and receive a tax credit, something these women recognized as both harmful and helpful. Ridge and Millar concluded, "most of the women had successfully negotiated some of the most important years in family life as children grow and change and family practices adapt to different needs and values" (p. 95). Many participants acknowledged additional income insecurity concerns from unstable, low-paying jobs and unreliable child support. The money earned didn't move them far from the poverty line and left them financially vulnerable (Albelda, 2011; Ridge & Millar, 2011).

In the United States, the Child Care Development Fund established by the federal government allows states to set income thresholds and exempt families that earn below the family poverty level (Albelda, 2011); however, this program is severely underfunded. According to the Economic Policy Institute (2016), the average cost of infant care in the state of Georgia in 2016 was $637 a month, amounting to $7,644 annually for infant care, a cost that is 15.6% more than a year of in-state college tuition.

The body of literature on low-income working single mothers attempting to leave welfare and transition to full-time work reveals the complex social and workplace demands these women experience as they exercise their desire to provide for their children. Employers can recognize their employees' concerns over the needs of their children's wellness and well-being and adjust the workplace demands accordingly, while government policies can support this transition and establish child support guarantees. Research focused on the positive aspects in the lives of working single women has recognized the successes in poor families headed by single mothers and will be considered next.

Positive Practices and Working Single Mothers

The emerging body of research recognizing the strengths and resiliency of single mothers (Brodsky, 1996, 1999, 2000; Corsetti, 2011; Freeman & Dodson, 2015; Smith, 2010) shifts the discourse on single mothers from a shortage to a surplus model. As Brodsky (1999) noted, "Without the ability to reframe risks into constructs that motivate rather than devastate, or the ability to appreciate even small resources and progress, these women might easily give up trying to 'make it'" (p. 157), as Bandele, (2009) chronicled in her book, *Something Like Beautiful*:

> A teacher and friend told me once the best thing you can do in shark-infested waters (if you can't get right the hell out, of course), is to be still. So that has become my goal: to be still, to be calm, to focus more on what I do have rather than what I don't have. (p.152)

Bandele's (2009) story archived her struggles as a single mother, a position she never dreamed would be part of her life: her husband went to prison leaving her alone with her baby daughter. Uncertain and scared in the unfamiliar surroundings of poverty, she found a way to celebrate life and thrive as she raised her daughter alone. Her story is about one of the many visibly invisible women who find a way to make it against all odds.

Much like Bandele's determination to celebrate life, Brodsky's (1996, 1999, 2000) work concentrated on characteristics in the lives of poor single mothers that gave them strength to make it in spite of their surroundings. Brodsky conducted numerous qualitative studies focused on the resiliency of low-income single mothers. One study of low-income single mothers living in risky neighborhoods found that the women used their own set of strategies in order to raise their children (Brodsky, 1999). For example, one participant's view was to take one day at a time and take care of what needed to be done each day. She did not feel she was stuck or doing

things just to get by. Brodsky's (1999) focus group took on the phrase "making it" (p. 152) to describe successes achieved in spite of unsafe surroundings. All the participants viewed making it "as a day-by-day process—and it is both the process and the outcomes that define their resilience" (p. 157). Brodsky (1999) identified three component skills of their resilience:

> The ability to 1) appreciate resources and successes, and reframe some stressors to allow for contentment in one's current situation; 2) reframe stressors in ways that are motivating; and 3) locate, recognize, and utilize resources from supportive domains—and to set and strive for new goals. (p. 157)

Brodsky's research found that in the midst of dismal living conditions the single mothers in her study lived with hope.

In an earlier study, Brodsky (1996) looked at the psychological sense of community (PSOC) of African American single mothers in risky neighborhoods, "which have some of the worst reputations for disrepair and violence in the city" (p. 349). Brodsky found that a negative psychological sense of community could have positive outcomes for some single mothers. The women in this study recognized the dangers, violence, and hardships in their community and chose to isolate themselves and their families from others in the community, noting their values were different than others and they did not wish to be pulled down by negative influences. Because these women perceived their neighborhood to be a source of stress and negative influence on their children, they actively chose to remain hopeful even though those around them lived without hope. One mother used negative examples of teenage behaviors in the neighborhood as a way to teach her own children her own personal values.

Similarly, Freeman and Dodson (2015) conducted a three-year ethnographic study of low-income single mothers involved in an antipoverty program. Results from this specific group

showed these women helped one another in spite of scarce resources, building networks that began with each other. The authors reported an untapped asset among the poor single mothers, this asset being "their capacity to recognize, incorporate, and then build upon and share opportunities and resources" (p. 599). Freeman and Dodson recognized this particular program focused on the positive assets of poor single mothers rather than their deficits.

In another study, Brodsky (2000) examined the role of religion in the lives of African American single mothers living in a poor, declining part of the District of Columbia. This study is part of a larger study that identified religion as one of eight domains cited by participants as having both stresses and resources. In her study, Brodsky (2000) observed that religion, whether institutional or individual, made a difference in the lives of single mothers and their family members. Brodsky highlighted four mechanisms by which religion impacted the lives of the single mothers in her study: religious settings and people, the internal role of religion, behavior, and protection and blessing. Brodsky noted, "these women represent examples of natural prevention, that is prevention that occurs without intervention" (p.216). Whether the women were church attenders or non-church attenders did not matter; their understanding of God and personal spirituality gave them the inner strength to make decisions for the wellbeing of their children and themselves.

Much like the work by Freeman and Dodson (2015) and Brodsky (1996, 1999, 2000), Smith's (2010) dissertation, *A Qualitative Exploration of Successful Low-Income Single Mothers' Experiences*, explored the experiences of successful low-income single mothers. Smith's work provided mental health professionals insight into the experiences of successful low-income single mothers, helping debunk the deficit model, while adding to the research on single mothers' positive practices.

Corsetti (2011) studied lone working mothers in South Wales "to establish ways in which care is perceived, expressed, and experienced by WLM's [*working lone mothers*] in relation to their children, to themselves, and to their social environment under the often strenuous condition of modern life" (p. 30). Corsetti identified the public, formal world of work and the private, informal world of care to establish that an ethic of care begins in the private world of women and appears to be a newly developing theory. "From this vantage point an ethic of care is articulating women's thoughts, feelings, values, and experiences" (p. 297). Many women in her study chose care over career, putting career temporarily on hold in order to put their children's needs first. The participants knew this sacrifice was temporary and a worthwhile opportunity "that was as precious as it was brief" (Corsetti, p. 300) because children grow up quickly. These WLM's had the same struggles as other working single mothers across the globe; Corsetti embodied their strengths, not their deficits, in her work.

Research recognizing the positive practices in the lives of single mothers (Brodsky, 1996, 1999, 2000; Corsetti, 2011; Freeman & Dodson, 2015; Smith, 2010) may one day tip the research focus on single mothers away from a deficit model. The literature noted that helping caseworkers focus on positive paradigms within the lives of poor single mothers could potentially change the negative stereotyping by society.

Recently, the U.S. Census Bureau (2012) adjusted data collection methods for accurate statistical information regarding single mothers by choice. Following is a review of the literature on women who choose to remain single and become a mother, a rapidly growing family dynamic.

Single Mothers by Choice

Although most research defines single mothers in the context of poverty and focuses on their deficits in raising children, there is a growing body of literature on single mothers by choice that addresses positive effects in the lives of these single mothers. By the twenty-first century, data began to reflect the many changes in family forms. The U.S. Census of 2010 reported that 84% of all single parent families were headed by women, and by 2012, the number of married couples with children dropped below fifty percent for the first time ever (U.S. Census, 2012). In addition, the U.S. Census (2012) reported that single mother headed households in America rose by a total of 4,475,000, from 6,061,000 in 1980 to 10,536,000 in 2009. By 2015, never-married mothers with children at home under the age of eighteen reached 50% of all female-headed households (U.S. Census, 2015). Bock (2000) noted the percentage of college-graduate women "who became mothers without marrying more than doubled during the 1980's; for women with professional or managerial jobs, it nearly tripled" (p. 63). Technology, in addition to improved economic status, has changed the way we look at and interact with the world, allowing women today the choice to have a baby alone.

In a study of women choosing donor semen in Denmark, Salomon, Sylvest, Hansson, Andersen and Schmidt (2015) found "an increasing number of children in Denmark have been born without a registered father, indicating that an increasing number of women are single mothers by choice or are establishing families within lesbian couples" (p. 479). Beginning in 2007, the government of Denmark allowed the use of donor semen in both public and private healthcare systems (Salomon et al., 2015). In the nine public fertility clinics in Denmark, "the public healthcare system provides women with equal and free of charge access to medically assisted reproduction until the age of 41 years" (Salomon et al., 2015, p. 474). Danish research

findings showed the majority of women wanted to raise a family with a partner; however, the single women who decided to become a single mother still hoped for a future partner. The single women were older than cohabitating women couples; however, socio-demographics and viewpoints on motherhood were the same for both groups.

In an earlier study, Mannis (1999) investigated single women in America who were financially stable and chose to mother alone. Mannis's use of the lifecourse perspective enhanced the in-depth study of the dynamics of a family to explore ways "individuals exert agency by selecting, ignoring, and modifying socializing influences" (p. 121). Mannis's feminist perspective acknowledged the legitimacy of single mothers by choice as worthy in their own right and not a deficit family model compared to other normalized family forms. Mannis "abandoned an either/or mode of thinking, considering that while a person's life story and actions may hold contradictions, that does not eliminate an expression of choice and autonomy that enriches life" (p. 122). Mannis's research showed some women, with the support of family, friends, and community, actively chose single motherhood. Through her work, Mannis brought to paper the voices of single mothers by choice, telling the joys of mothering along with the struggles of doing it alone.

Likewise, researchers Hertz and Ferguson (1997) explored ways single mothers by choice developed innovative networking and bartering systems of care for their children. The participants in this study varied by race and social class but all of the women were self-supporting and single at the time of the study. Their route to motherhood shaped the kinship strategies for their children. Hertz and Ferguson investigated how the under-represented group of single mothers by choice may change society's negative view of single mothers. The single mothers in their study made a conscious choice to mother alone and although that was

challenging, they utilized social networks for support, giving them more time with their children. Their research "shed light on how they [single mothers] manage work and family life and to inform future policy initiatives for all women" (p. 189). Acceptance of this recent phenomenon is empowering for women who have the resources available to them to follow through as a single mother by choice. Research focusing on single mothers by choice (Bock, 2000; Hertz & Ferguson, 1997; Mannis, 1999; Salomon, Sylvest, Hansson, Andersen & Schmidt, 2015) illustrated that these mothers can successfully raise a child.

The literature reviewed thus far included the role of the single mother over the past two hundred years, low-income single mothers moving from welfare to work, single mothers' strengths, and single mothers by choice. Most of the current research on single mothers has explored the status of motherhood in light of what these women lacked and has historically defined these women in relation to a man. There is a need for research that moves away from delineating single mothers along the binary *with*/*without* and focuses on what these women do each day. Resiliency research has revealed that some working single mothers have been doing things well. So what are the daily practices of working single mothers, practices that are available or created within their culture? In order to get to this question, I first review the ancient Greek concept, care of the self, as described by Foucault in the last major project of his career.

Ancient Greek Ethical Analysis

Throughout his career, French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault studied the different ways in which people in Western culture have created themselves and have been created as subjects. For example, he explored how people are produced in power relations (Foucault, 1975/1977) and in discourse (Foucault, 1969/1972). In his genealogical project

studying the history of sexuality (Foucault, 1976/1978, 1984/1985, 1984/1986), he went further back into Western thought than he had in his other genealogies, all the way back to the 4th century B.C., and found that the ancient Greeks tried to produce themselves as ethical subjects using what they called practices of the self or arts of existence.

In his genealogical study of disciplinary power, Foucault (1975/1977) had identified Christian disciplinary and normalizing practices of the self and became interested in their origin, which led him to the pagan ethics of the ancient Greeks in the 4th century B.C. Foucault (1984/2010) discovered "that this pagan ethics was not at all liberal, tolerant, and so on, as it was supposed to be" (p. 342) and that themes found in Christian austerity were also found in pagan ethics. Nevertheless, the difference that intrigued Foucault was that the problem, or theme, for the Ancients focused on technologies of the self and not rules for austerity. The problem of the Greeks was "*techne tou bio*" (1984, p. 348), how to live. The ancient Greek approach to ethics, care of the self, is a deliberate work of the self on the self, "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport a soi*" (p.352).

I first review the ancient Greek approach to ethics, care of the self. Following this I review what others have said about Foucault's understanding of the ancient Greeks' ethics as well as how other researchers have employed Foucault's work in their studies. Last, I recognize the need for research that interprets the practices of working single mothers using the ancient Greek approach to ethics, care of the self.

Foucault (1976/1978) initially set out to analyze the discursive-power-knowledge productions that constitute a science of sexuality, going as far back as the 16th century, with the object to "define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world" (p.11). Volume one of *The History of Sexuality* "explores

how the experience of sexuality has been defined, limited, and produced by discourse" (St. Pierre, 1995, p. 51). Originally planning a six-volume series of the history of sexuality, Foucault (1984/1985) changed his direction after volume one, making a theoretical shift in order "to determine how, for centuries, Western man had been brought to recognize himself as a subject of desire" (p. 6). There is an eight-year gap between the publication of volume one and volume two of *The History of Sexuality*. In his second volume, *The Use of Pleasure,* Foucault (1984/1985) abandoned the genealogical analysis he used in the first volume and chose to "reorganize the whole study around the slow formation, in antiquity, of a hermeneutics of the self" (p. 6). Regarding his restructuring, Foucault (1984/2010) explained,

> One of the numerous reasons I had so much trouble with that book was that I first wrote a book about sex, which I put aside. Then I wrote a book about the self; sex disappeared, and for the third time I was obliged to rewrite a book in which I tried to keep the equilibrium between one and the other. (p. 341)

The last two volumes of his genealogical study of the history of sexuality became a philosophical exercise for Foucault: "The object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (1984/1985, p. 9).

I began reading volume two, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure* (1984/1985), believing that it would follow chronologically from volume one, which focused on the Enlightenment. However, in volume two, Foucault goes back to the Greeks of antiquity. Concerning this shift, Foucault (1984/1985) noted:

> It seemed that by starting from the modern era, and proceeding back through Christianity to antiquity, one would not be able to avoid raising a question that was at the same time

> simple and very general: why is sexual conduct, why are the activities and pleasures that attach to it, an object of moral solicitude? (p. 10)

Going back into classical antiquity and inquiring "how, why and in what forms was sexuality constituted as a moral domain" (p. 10), Foucault dwelt on the intersection of problematizations and practices of the self in volume two, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure* (p. 13). In his third volume of his history of sexuality, *The Care of the Self* (1984/1986), Foucault examined Greco-Roman ethics, specifically the self's relationship to itself. Since its publication, volume three of *The History of Sexuality: Care of the Self,* has influenced research across disciplines, a few of which I discuss later in a section that describes research using care of the self. In 2018, the fourth volume of *History of Sexuality, Les Aveux de la Chair,* [*Confession of the Flesh*], was published in French. It has not yet been published in English and is not included in the following discussion.

Care of the Self in Greek Antiquity

Foucault found the ancient Greek approach to ethics, care of the self, within their cultural practices and dated it as far back as 500 B.C. Foucault (1984/1986) followed the ancient Greek theme, *heautou epimeleisthai,* care for oneself, as it "gradually acquired the dimensions and forms of a veritable 'cultivation of the self'" (p. 45). Care of the self was woven into the fabric of moral life during Greek antiquity. Foucault (2001/2005) noted, "throughout the long summer of Hellenistic and Roman thought, the exhortation to care for oneself became so widespread that it became, I think, a truly general cultural phenomenon" (p. 9). For the Greeks in antiquity, *epimeleia heautou,* care of the self, defined a way of being, "it is an attitude towards the self, others, and the world" (p. 10) which involved looking inward toward oneself and included meditation and exercise. *Epimeleia heautou* "designates a number of actions exercised on the

self by the self" (p. 11), practices that purify and transform oneself. Practices produced a way of being, a way of knowing. This means that one cannot know oneself without the practice of care of the self. Foucault (2001/2005) connected these practices that one carries out on oneself in order to understand the truth of spirituality; however, it is important to remember that the ancient Greeks did not believe in the Christian God. Theirs was a different kind of spirituality.

> We will call "spirituality" then the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth.
>
> (Foucault, 2001/2005, p. 15)

In other words, the truth is not obtained through the act of knowing but rather through the act of spirituality, the work involved in the transformation of the subject by the subject.

Foucault (2001/2005) explained the Delphic precept, *gnothi seauton,* know yourself, has philosophical ties to the rule *epimeleia heautou*, take care of oneself:

> The *gnothi seauton* ("know yourself") appears quite clearly and again in a number of significant texts, within the more general framework of the *epimeleia heautou* (care of oneself) as one of the forms, one of the consequences, as a sort of concrete, precise, and particular application of the general rule: You must attend to yourself, you must not forget yourself, you must take care of yourself. The rule "know yourself" appears and is formulated within and at the forefront of this care. (p. 5)

The Greek oracle's charge to "know yourself" and the practices of care of the self become entwined, tangled up and complicated, or as Foucault (2001/2005) initially expressed, "we can say that there is a forced takeover by the *gnothi seauton* in the space opened up by the care of the

self" (p.68). For example, Foucault (2001/2005) found in Plato's work many archaic techniques of care of the self, including meditation and endurance, organized around the principle of *gnothi seauton*, know yourself:

> It is in order to know oneself that one must withdraw into the self; it is in order to know oneself that one must detach oneself from sensations which are the source of illusions; it is in order to know oneself that one must establish one's soul as an immobile fixity which is not open to external events. (p.68)

In other words, in order to know itself the soul must turn away from things around her and look solely "upon the divine" (p.70).

Plato's metaphorical use of the eye to represent the soul helps to understand the conditions under which, as well as how, the soul can see itself.

> The soul will be able to see itself by turning round towards the part that ensures thought and knowledge. What is this element? Well, it is the divine element. So it is by turning round towards the divine that the soul will be able to grasp itself.
>
> (Foucault, 2001/2005, p. 70)

Interestingly, you cannot know yourself if you do not know the divine but you cannot know the divine unless you take care of yourself. That is to say, through this movement of care of the self to know oneself, the soul knows the divine and can achieve wisdom. With wisdom (*sophrosune)* comes the ability to decipher good from evil so the soul can manage itself appropriately. During ancient times in Greece, this work on oneself produced a good leader. All these aspects found in the principle of *gnothi seauton*, know yourself and the rule *epimeleia heautou,* take care of the self, are found in the ancient Greek approach to ethics, which includes moral judgments, moral obligations, ethical practices, and ethical aspirations. "Practicing care of the self was a choice

and was not juridical or prescribed by any institution or disciplining authority. Ethics was not used to normalize society but involved choosing the practices through which one constituted oneself" (St. Pierre, 1995, p. 59).

Next, I review Foucault's interpretation of morals, which includes actual behavior, moral codes, and ethics. This will be followed by an in-depth review of ethics, the self's relation to itself, which is the heart of the ancient Greeks' practice, care of the self, that Foucault described.

Ancient Greek Ethical and Moral Theory

There were three components of morals in the ancient Greeks' care of the self: a person's actual behavior, the moral code found in a culture, and actual ethics in everyday practice. Figure 2.1 illustrates the relation of moral and ethical theory in care of the self.

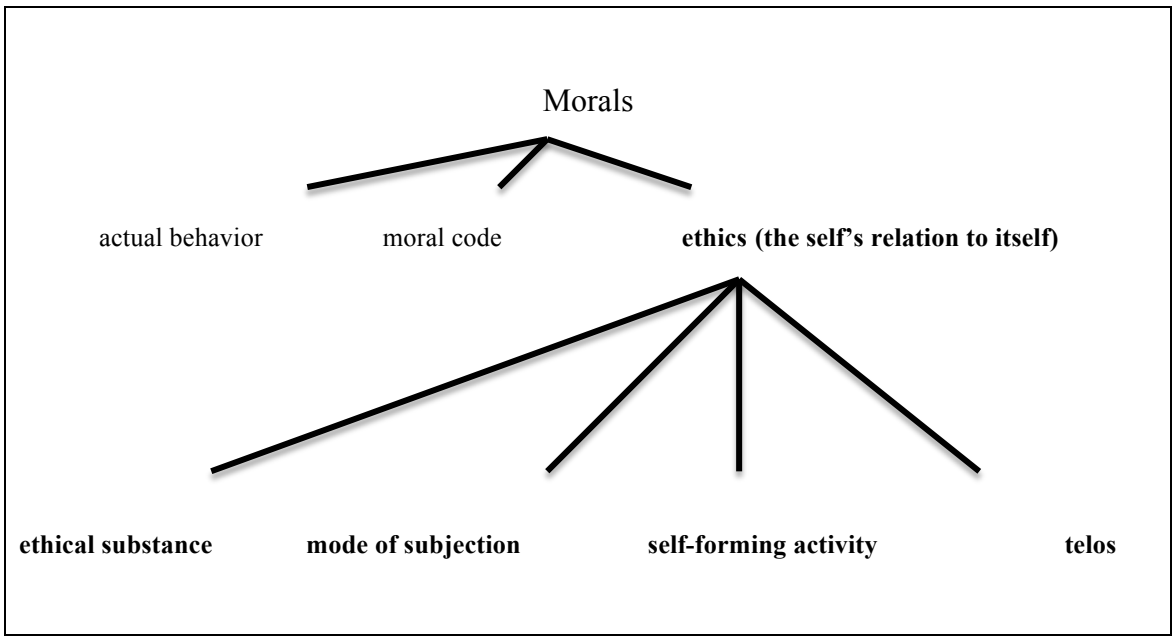

Figure 2.1. Foucault's Representation for Understanding Morals. From Davidson, A.I. (1986). Archeology, genealogy, ethics, In D. C. Hoy (Ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (p. 229). Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

The first component of morals, our actual behavior, is the way we behave in the presence of the moral codes around us. The second component, the moral code, determines those behaviors that are permissible or forbidden as well as the degree to which the behaviors are considered positive or negative (Foucault, 1986, 1985/1990, 1986/1988). Although Foucault found both actual behavior and moral codes important, it was the third component of morals that Foucault stressed (Davidson, 1986). St. Pierre (2004) noted, "He does not write a great deal about moral codes, since he found them to be similar across cultures, nor does he discuss people's actual behavior" (p. 339). Ethics is the third component in Foucault's representation for understanding morals. For the ancient Greeks, ethics, the care of the self, was the self's relationship to itself, or care of the self. Concerning the self's relationship to itself Foucault (1984/2010) explained,

> There is another side to the moral prescriptions, which most of the time is not isolated as such but is, I think, very important: the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport a soi,* which I call ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions. (p. 352)

The ethical work involved in order to improve and transform oneself is care of the self, and the focus of Foucault's work. Next, I explain the four aspects that make up care of the self.

The self's relation to itself. Care of the self has four major aspects: the ethical substance, the mode of subjection, the self-forming activity, and the telos (Foucault, 1985/1990, 1984/2010; Davidson, 1986). The ethical substance in the self's relation to itself, is that part of our behavior which is the applicable area for ethical judgment, the particular area of our life that is worked on by ethics. For example, one might identify envy or laziness as an aspect of oneself that is problematic and requires reflection and work. The second aspect of this ethics, the mode of subjection, concerns "the way in which people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations" (Davidson, 1986, p. 228). In other words, it is the way that we produce ourselves in relation to the moral code and act honorably according to the code. Drummond (2003) noted the familiar examples: "the discourses that constitute a religion, a work ethic, or perhaps patriotism and duty in times of national crisis" (p. 60).

For the ancient Greek leaders of Athens it was chiefly their relation to their discourse of justice that established their relation to the moral codes (Foucault, 2001/2005, p. 72) and so subjected them to be moral. The third aspect, the self-forming activity, is the means by which we can change ourselves and become a more ethical being. Some self-forming activities practiced by the Greeks included an administrative review of one's day, reading, writing, and

working with a wise mentor. Other familiar practices they used are meditation, prayer, fasting, and exercise (Drummond, 2003).

The last aspect of care of the self, the *telos,* is the ideal person we want to become. Foucault (1984/2010) described the *telos,* asking, "which is the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way? For instance, shall we become pure, or immortal, or masters of ourselves, and so on" (p.355). For the Greeks, the ethical work required to become that which we aspire to would bring pleasure in old age:

> The old man then is someone who delights in himself, and the point at which old age arrives, if well prepared by a long practice of the self, is the point at which, Seneca says, the self finally arrives at itself…a perfect and complete relationship to the self of both mastery and satisfaction. (Foucault, 2001/2005, p. 109)

An example of telos is the work involved in the pursuit of a life with integrity.

For the ancient Greeks, taking care of oneself was a lifelong endeavor, ideally, to create one's life as a work of art. Plato's "Symposium" discussed the never-ending pursuit of moral beauty so that one's works and deeds during this life will memorialize him after death (Shusterman, 1997). During antiquity, this art of existence, the *techne tou biou* (Foucault, 1984/1986), was not a mandate but rather a choice that was limited to socially elite men. Foucault explained as follows:

> In the slow development of the art of living under the theme of the care of oneself, the first two centuries of the imperial epoch can be seen as the summit of a curve: a kind of golden age in the cultivation of the self—it being understood, of course, that this phenomenon concerned only the social groups, very limited in number, that were the

> bearers of culture and for whose members a *techne tou biou* could have meaning and a reality (p. 45).

Here, Foucault reminds us of the rigid social order during antiquity: practices of care of the self were limited to the ruling social groups made up of the elite male leaders who were the disseminators of culture. It wasn't until later, with the expansion of the Roman Empire, that these social barriers were eroded and practices of care of the self filtered down to all social classes and later still, were incorporated, to some extent, in Christianity.

The care of the self was such an important part of Greek culture that they developed the term *epimeleia heautou,* which means care of the self through cultivation of the soul by means of "a whole set of occupations" (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 50). In regard to oneself, *epimeleia* implies a labor that takes time and work. Care of the self was not for the faint of heart. The practice of the care of the self included the social dimensions of care of the self, interconnectivity of the body and the soul in regards to care of the self, the art of self-knowledge through regimens and exercise, and the goal of rejoining oneself to oneself.

***Social dimensions*.** The labor involved in the cultivation of the self was lifelong work, a preoccupation that must never let up (Foucault, 1984/1986). Foucault believed that inward reflection involved in the cultivation of the soul was an essential part of life. Man must seek out that which he needs and attend to himself "because the god [Zeus] deemed it right that he be able to make free use of himself" (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 47). The Greeks believed that man must use reason to consider carefully the attention necessary for care of the self. Quoting Greek philosopher and historian Plutarch, Foucault (1984/1986) wrote, "he who wishes to come through life safe and sound must continue throughout his life to take care of himself" (p. 46). Plutarch and others made clear that care of the self required daily attention, from sunrise when

one reviewed one's connection in the plans for that day to the evening's review of one's actions that transpired and consideration for further improvements on oneself. In this context, it was not uncommon to seek the advice of someone close, a mentor, friend, or advisor, who might be able to shed light on certain situations and offer some assistance. This is what Foucault refers to as the social dimension of care of the self.

The social dimension, seeking the advice of someone close, could be considered the foundation for cultivation of the self. Care of the self through self-reflection included conversing with close friends, meditating, reading, and writing (Foucault, 1984/1986). A very important aspect of care of the self was seeking advice from others wiser than oneself: "Around the care of the self, there developed an entire activity of speaking and writing in which the work of oneself on oneself and communication with others were linked together" (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 51). This theme in care of the self expanded ethical labor from solitude to community. A person had the right to seek advice from someone recognized as knowledgeable, and it was the duty of the one sought to offer assistance. Foucault (1984/1986), used as an example of this kind of relationship the writings of physician and philosopher Galen:

> He advises anyone who wishes to take proper care of himself to seek the aid of another; he does not, however, recommend a technician known for his competence and learning, but simply a man of good reputation, whose uncompromising frankness one can have the opportunity of experiencing. (p. 53)

Care of the self encompassed this social dimension of communication with others, involving a relationship, and the person practicing care of the self sought as well as gave advice when asked.

Interconnectivity of body and soul. Equally as important to the Greeks for the cultivation of the self was the interconnectivity of the care of soul and the care of the body. Taking care of oneself involved taking care of the body through education and by keeping the mind healthy, and "the care of the self is in close correlation with medical thought and practice" (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 54). Medical terms were used when describing work needed on the soul; for example, "put the scalpel to the wound" and "open an abscess" (p. 55). In a lecture at the College de France, Foucault (2001/2005) explained that the effects of this medicine/soul connection is that "one has to deal with the intertwining of the mental and the physical, which becomes the center of this care" (p. 108). Foucault (1984/1986) described the direction that Stoic philosopher Epictetus wanted his school to take:

> He does not want his school to be considered as just a place of education where one can acquire knowledge useful for a career or a reputation, before returning home to derive advantage from it. The school should be thought of as a "dispensary for the soul": "The philosopher's school is a physician's consulting room [*iatreion*]. You must leave it in pain, not in pleasure." (p. 55)

Epictetus believed that the work involved with cultivation of the self was painful in the sense that it concerned deep reflection of the body and the soul. Since *epimeleia* entails a whole set of occupations that take time, self-discipline and commitment were necessary in the practice of care of the self. Thus, one had to do the ascetic work necessary to have control over oneself, "everyone must discover that he is in a state of need" (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 57). The labor involved was aesthetic; not in the sense that this labor made one a more beautiful person to behold, but it was an elaboration of oneself, a transformation apparent in one's conduct, an ethical aesthetics in which the goal was to produce oneself as a work of art. This is the kind of

aesthetics of existence Foucault defended (Shusterman, 1997). The work involved was a lifelong, ongoing effort that attended to both the body and the soul.

Self-knowledge through regimens and exercises. The ancient Greeks believed that a weak soul could likewise threaten the body, therefore they established regimens and exercises as a way to know oneself that protected the body and the soul and avoided a weakened state. Foucault (1984/1986) noted that abstinence training was common among the ancient Greeks, "not to practice renunciation for its own sake; it is to enable one to do without unnecessary things by establishing a supremacy over oneself that does not depend on their presence or absence" (p. 58). Along with abstinence training, the Greeks practiced morning and evening reflective examinations, daily meditative practices that shaped the start of each day and focused on reflection at its end. Foucault (1984/1986) explained, "when he had retired for the night, Sextius would question his soul: 'What bad habit have you cured today? What fault have you resisted? In what respect are you better?'" (p. 61). In regards to the work of the soul, Foucault (1984/1986) devoted an entire chapter in volume three of *The History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self*, to the soul because:

> It is the soul that constantly risks carrying the body beyond its own mechanics and its elementary needs; it is the soul that prompts one to choose the times that are not suitable, to act in questionable circumstances, to contravene natural dispositions. (p. 133)

Thus, one had to work on oneself to prevent the soul taking the body down the wrong path.

The goal of rejoining oneself. Practices of the self helped keep the individual focused on the need for the constant "relation of oneself to oneself" (Foucault, 1986, p. 65). The goal of rejoining oneself involved a constant awareness of the internal as well as the external conversation with the self. This kind of personal self-reflective work has no shortcuts. As

Epictetus noted, “But, as it is, some men, finding themselves unable to swallow a mouthful, buy themselves a treatise, and set about eating it whole, and in consequence they vomit or have indigestion” (Foucault, p. 57). In other words, diseases of the soul, unlike diseases of the body, can go undetected for a very long time before the sickness in the soul is detected.

For the ancient Greeks, care of the self was vigilant work, seeking to know oneself, and involved developing a relationship with oneself as well as seeking the help of others. This relation of oneself to oneself “implies a shift of one’s attention: the latter must not be dissipated in an idle curiosity, either that of everyday agitations and of absorption in the lives of others” (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 65). Avoiding the wastefulness in life required learning how to access oneself. Rejoining oneself was to truly know oneself so that the individual finds pleasure in being with oneself through the technique of care of the self, *epimeleia heautou*. Care of the self was not considered a way to conquer oneself but rather a conversion where a real relationship with oneself was established, finding acceptance in one’s limits and pleasure in oneself.

Although Foucault found worthy the Greeks’ practice of care of the self, he did not particularly find the ancient Greeks themselves commendable. He did not advocate that modern society copy the ancient Greeks’ care of the self, “he did, however, think that care of the self has something to offer us today, especially given that contemporary politics does not appear much concerned with an ethical subject” (St. Pierre, 2004, p. 341). In the following section I review recent studies that have used care of the self.

Research Using Care of the Self

Foucault’s three volume series, *The History of Sexuality*, began as a study of sexuality “in order to analyze the theoretical and practical content with which it has been associated” (1984/1985, p. 3) and evolved into a study “around the slow formation, in antiquity, of a

hermeneutics of the self" (p. 4). Since its publication, *The History of Sexuality* has impacted work across disciplines: in feminism (Deveaux, 1994; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Shusterman, 1997; White, 2014), medicine (Park, Pelletier, & Klingenberg, 2014; Papadimos, Manos, & Murray, 2013), sports sociology (Markula, 2004), and education (Drummond, 2003; DeMarzio, 2007; Infinito, 2003; Peters, 2003; St. Pierre, 2001, 2004) to name just a few.

In this section, I describe three studies in education that used care of the self to study the practices of the self used by different groups of women to improve themselves and become more ethical subjects of their actions.

In her interview study, Underwood (2009) used care of the self to study low-income single mothers as they pursued post-secondary education and post-secondary degrees as a means to improve themselves after exiting an abusive relationship. Underwood found that these women used the ancient Greek practice of the self of finding a trusted advisor in all aspects of their lives, including social agency workers, teachers, and friends. These advisors helped them understand they were moving from "bad mother" to "good mother and role model" (p. 131). Through the words and deeds of their masters—their advisors—and through the daily practice of seeking out advice and support, the women in her study were able to stay the course and produce themselves as the good role-model mothers they wanted to be for their children.

Underwood found the practice of friendship important for all the women in her study as they became independent women, good students, and good mothers. Several participants recalled the isolation of their abusive relationships and how abusive men wanted "the victim to believe there's no one else that cares" (2009, p.152). They often used email to keep in touch with friends. Foucault (2001/2005) wrote, "And you see that friendship belongs entirely to the domain of care of the self and that it really is for the care of the self that we should have friends"

(p.195). Their friends encouraged them to leave the abusive relationship and supported them as they started back to school.

St. Pierre (1995) also found friendship relations were important in her study of care of the self in a group of older White Southern women. Within friendship relations, her participants elaborated arts of existence they found in their culture and invented, especially after their husbands died. Friendship relations supported social, religious and educational practices, "which have become enmeshed in the fabric of their days" (p. 263). Attending book clubs, church functions, the local Woman's Club, book and study clubs like the Cosmopolitan Club, and volunteering were just a few of the practices supported through their friendship relations.

Dobkins (2008) used care of the self as she studied how young Southern women constructed themselves while reading literature by Southern women. Dobkins found that the young Southern white women in her study practiced reading, writing, and listening "within sisterly relations as vital practices of the self" (p. 263) to guide, trouble, resist, and re-remember as they constructed their own subjectivities. Her participants connected with the southern female protagonist in several books they read together. Sharing thoughts and writing connections about characters and events helped them constitute their subjectivity.

In these three studies (Dobkins, 2008; St. Pierre, 1995; Underwood, 2009), using care of the self to study different groups of women as they constructed themselves as ethical subjects of their actions, practices formed within friendship relations were important in developing the personal strength necessary for change (Underwood, 2009). Women encouraged others through their own practices (Dobkins, 2008; St. Pierre, 1995; Underwood, 2009) as they created themselves as ethical subjects and in some cases, as works of art. Research studying the everyday practices of working single mothers guided by the ancient Greeks' care of the self is

necessary and exciting work, adding to the literature on single mothers from an ethical perspective, care of the self, that has a very long history.

In Chapter 1, I presented the more personal background for my research. In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on single mothers from the 19th century to the present. Next, I explained the ancient Greek ethos, care of the self, and its historical roots in antiquity. I then provided Foucault's description of care of the self. Lastly, I briefly described three recent studies which used care of the self in education. In the next chapter, I present the methodology used in this qualitative interview study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Although many recognize the inevitable challenges and struggles involved in combining a full-time job with raising children, there is little research available (Corsetti, 2011; Hertz and Ferguson, 1997; Mannis, 1999), as noted in Chapter 2, concerning the daily practices in the lives of working single mothers that enable them to do all the things they must do for their jobs and their children. This chapter describes the methodology and methods used in my interview study that examined the practices of the self used by five working single mothers in the southeastern United States to take care of themselves and, then, of their children and friends. Included are a description of the research design, research sites, participant selection, participants, data collection methods, the study's timeline, data, data analysis, and my role as researcher.

Study Overview

The goal of this interpretive qualitative interview study was to explore the daily practices of working single mothers to understand how they produce themselves as ethical subjects as they struggle to "make it" in this world. As explained in Chapter 2, the literature on single mothers mainly presents working single mothers using a deficit model, not as ethical subjects; that is, these women are presumed to lack something, be it a husband, a living wage, job security, health insurance, or stable childcare, and therefore are seen as not being able to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children. Using that logic perpetuates negative stereotypes of working single mothers in social work, social policy, and public discourses (Danzinger, 2010). And yet, according to the US Census Bureau (2016), single mother headed households are the

second most common family arrangement after two-parent families. Less well known and perhaps more interesting is that almost 49% of those families headed by single mothers are led by women who choose to remain unmarried and have a child (U.S. Census, 2015), a phenomenon that as recently as thirty years ago was considered unacceptable. In effect, women are changing the way they choose to have children and raise a family.

This interview study attempted to provide a closer look at what I found were single mothers' ethical practices of care of the self, an approach quite different from the deficit model of most research in this area. To do that, I interviewed five single, working mothers with school-aged children living in the Southeastern United States to respond to the following research questions:

1. What are the daily practices of the self used by five working single mothers who live in the South?
2. What kind of subject is produced from these practices?
3. How can these everyday practices be understood in relation to the ancient Greek care of the self that Foucault described?

After obtaining permission from my dissertation committee and the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board to begin my study, I conducted one-to-one conversational interviews with participants to identify and understand their everyday practices. Interviews allow the researcher to listen to and focus on what the participant is experiencing at that time concerning a specific issue. Using a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) with open-ended questions allowed each participant to tell her story in depth. I conducted follow up interviews with each participant based on the initial interview. Following each interview, I recorded participant behavior and connections to my own life in my researcher's field notes.

In addition to collecting data using interviews, I asked each participant to carry an audio-recorder with her for one day and to dictate her practices, all the things she did during the day—not what she was thinking, but what she was doing. I reasoned that most of us do many things during the course of a day that we no longer pay attention to, but suspected that all of them might count in this study about practices of the self.

Research Design

I intentionally chose a qualitative research design for my study because I wanted to hear working single mothers' stories of their everyday practices in order to understand their practices of care of the self and understand whether and how those practices helped to create them as ethical subjects. As Glesne (2006) maintained, "qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions" (p. 4). The conceptual framework of my research follows from an interpretive tradition that seeks to understand human action and interactions and recognizes that human meaning is intrinsic in human action. As Maxwell (2005) noted "you are interested not only in the physical events and behavior that are taking place, but also in how the participants in your study make sense of these, and how their understanding influences their behavior" (p. 22).

Interpretive researchers believe participants make sense of, interpret, their lives using dominant meanings found, for example, in their cultures, their institutions, and their families, but that they might also make an uncommon meaning in their lives. That means that there is no one meaning to be made, and people often, in fact, produce different meanings of events in their lives at different times in their lives. Further, it is not uncommon for someone else, say, a researcher, to disagree with a participant's interpretation of her own life. Social constructionism, for

example, is an interpretive theory that helps explain how we, together with others, make different meanings and, in the process, different realities.

Given that people develop meaning socially through experiences, the meanings of human action "are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). An interpretive approach embraces the complex meaning-making in human interaction, looks for subjective meanings that are socially constructed, and recognizes that these meanings are negotiated both socially and historically. "In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interactions with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals lives" (p. 21). Understanding the daily practices of working single mothers and how those practices helped to create them as ethical subjects is best honored through an interpretive approach that acknowledges the meanings these women make and remake of their everyday lived experiences.

As described in Chapter 2, the majority of research on single mothers focuses on issues of poverty and welfare (Caragata & Alcalde, 2014; Haleman, 2004; Hawkins, 2010; Kahn, 2005; Keating-Lefler, et al, 2004; Oliker, 2000) rather than the tenacity of these women as they creatively find ways to meet the needs of themselves and their children (Brodsky, 1996, 1999, 2000; Hertz and Ferguson, 1997; Mannis, 1999; Smith, 2010). This interpretive study was designed to identify the everyday practices of five working single mothers and how these practices may be related to the ancient Greeks' care of the self as described by Foucault. I was interested in the creative practices used by these women that helped produce them as ethical subjects of their actions.

Selection of Research Participants

I used purposeful sampling in selecting participants for this study. The sample selection criteria were that participants must be working, single mothers with school-aged children living at home. Merriam (2009) noted, "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p.77). I also wanted to recruit working single mothers living within traveling distance of where I lived who were diverse in terms of race and socio-economic backgrounds. I therefore solicited friends and colleagues to be my gatekeepers (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2013) to help me locate participants. I explained to each that there is an abundance of research concerning poor, non-working single mothers but that research with working single mothers is practically non-existent. I reminded gatekeepers that the single mothers for this study had to be working and could not have someone living with them sharing expenses. A colleague and the director of the grant-funded after school science program in the school where I then taught quickly identified a working single mother of a high-school child and she gave me her contact information. And so I met Lynn (participants' names are pseudonyms). Another colleague and dear friend gave me the name of another single mother, and that connection led me to Sharon. A lifelong friend who worked in the health care field recommended a mother she knew, Nisa. Another friend knew many working single mothers and introduced me to both Fran and Brooklyn. The following paragraph provides a brief sketch of each woman and is followed by a table with more details. All names are pseudonyms.

Brooklyn is a 42-year-old flight attendant of European descent from Georgia with one child. Fran, a 54-year-old single mother by choice, adopted a baby girl from China. She works in the mortgage industry and is of European descent. Fran's childhood involved moving every

year or two, and she now loves calling one place, Georgia, her home. Lynn is an African American mother of one who works in a school as the parent liaison, supporting families in promoting academic success through workshops and events and offering resources for families. Lynn grew up in New York and moved to Georgia when her daughter was about five. Nisa is a 45-year-old African American single mother of two children raised in Georgia who works as a lead nurse in an instructional setting at a hospital. Sharon, a European-American, 36-year-old single mother of two, works as a customer service coordinator for a large business. She was not born in Georgia but calls it her home now. All women were between the ages of 36 and 53 at the time of data collection, with the average age being 45. Table 3.1 gives an overview of the women in my study.

Table 3.1

Participant Profiles

Single Mother	**Age**	**Race**	**Child/Age**	**Profession**	**Education Level**	**Socio-Economic Status**	**Single Mother by**
Nisa	45	African American	Simone, 12 DeShae, 15	Nurse	BSN	Middle class	Divorce
Fran	54	European American	Claire, 13	Mortgage Business	High School	Lower-middle class	Choice
Sharon	36	European American	Ashley, 9 Maggie, 6	Customer Service Coordinator	Some College	Middle class	Divorce
Lynn	48	African American	Jill, 17	School Paraprofessional	Some College	Working class	Divorce
Brooklyn	42	European American	Jackson, 16	Flight Attendant	Some Technical School	Middle Class	Divorce

Recruitment of Participants

After the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my study, gatekeepers gave me contact information, and I contacted the five women by telephone to find out if they might be interested in participating in my study (see Appendix C). During this initial contact, I obtained both home and email addresses and then mailed consent forms (Appendix B) to each home address. I also emailed each participant to let her know the consent forms were in the mail. Next, I offer a richer description of each participant.

Participants

Fran is a 53-year-old European American single mother by choice. Fran described her childhood as a chaotic time in her life. Her father was a preacher and an alcoholic who drank himself to sleep in his recliner every night and moved the family every one or two years because he couldn't keep it together. Her parents divorced when she was 20 and she sought counseling to help her understand and manage the overwhelming feelings that consumed her. She married, and when that marriage didn't work, she decided she would adopt a child if she were still single at 40. "So for me that was an easy decision, because [being a mother is] it's something from age 13 on that I envisioned doing. I turned 38 and went okay I guess I'm going to have to do this. And it took a couple of years. I turned 41 the year she was born and then brought her home shortly after that." At the age of 41, she traveled to China to bring home her baby girl, Claire, who is now 12 and attends public school in a suburban county in Georgia.

Lynn is a 48-year-old, African American single mother. Originally from New York, her parents divorced when she was 12, and her mother raised four children by herself while working as a registered nurse. As a child, Lynn realized her gift for writing. Her love of writing got her into Syracuse University at the young age of 16. Lynn recognizes now that she was too young

and too far from home to successfully navigate the demands of college life, and she was unable to complete her degree at Syracuse. Later, she married the man she described as "the love of her life," but the marriage did not last. While working in New York she lived with the father of her child but they did not marry. During this time, she and her daughter planned a trip south to celebrate her mother's 60th birthday. Her mother and grandmother lived together in Florida and when Lynn and her daughter arrived she discovered that her mother was deathly sick. She moved south over 14 years ago to help care for her mother and stayed in Georgia near her sisters after her mother died. Lynn works as a parent liaison in a public middle school in a suburban county in Georgia, which allows her to be on the same schedule as her daughter, Jill. On an abysmal salary, Lynn has supported her daughter's endeavors and helped her to become a capable, competent young person today. Jill is a very accomplished high school senior with a full tuition-paid scholarship to a university in a large city in the northeast. As Lynn will tell anyone, "it's all about Jill."

Nisa is a 45-year-old, African American single mother with two daughters, and she is a registered nurse at a nearby hospital. From the age of three, Nisa was raised by her mother. Nisa's father was in the military, serving twice in Vietnam, but his alcoholism caused her mother to leave him when Nisa was young. Her mother did not graduate from high school but worked very hard to give Nisa the support she needed to have a better life. Nisa lived with her mother in a suburban town in southwest Georgia and attended a nearby university and then moved to a metropolitan city in the northern part of the state to finish college where she received her BA in nursing. She is now a nurse educator at a hospital. She also fills in as floor nurse to maintain her skills. Nisa married and had two girls, but after the birth of their second child, her marriage ended.

Brooklyn is a 42-year-old, European American single mother who works as a flight attendant for a large airline. Brooklyn's parents divorced when she was 12, and she and her two sisters lived with their mother. She began dating Adam at the end of her senior year in high school and although he pushed for marriage after a year of dating, she wanted to wait, to do it "right." Seven years later Brooklyn married and became an administrative assistant for a catering firm in Tennessee. Her new husband was the night bouncer at a local bar. Brooklyn ignored the problems of her marriage, though her husband's control issues became increasingly serious when she was pregnant. She left Adam for good when her son Jackson was one and a half years old and moved in with her mother.

Sharon is a 36-year-old European American working single mother with two elementary school aged daughters. She is the youngest participant and the newest in her role as working single mother, with just three years as a solo parent. Sharon grew up in Florida with both parents and an older sister. Both her mother and father were actively involved in raising their children and today she recognizes their sacrifices. Her parents still live in Pensacola, Florida, and she, her girls, and their dog visit them whenever she can squeeze in a long weekend. The girls spend at least two weeks with her parents during the summertime. Her oldest daughter, Ashley, is 9 years old and in the fourth grade, her younger, Maggie, is six years old and in kindergarten. Sharon married an army man and when their younger daughter, Maggie, was 18 months old he was stationed in Colorado. Sharon gave up a good job and they all moved to Colorado. After about six months in Colorado, she packed up her children and moved back to Georgia because her husband was being unfaithful with numerous women. The girls visit him in Colorado during the summer and occasionally during the school year. When she first moved back to Georgia three years ago, she cleaned houses, usually two per day. The company she'd previously worked for

in Georgia recently contacted her, and she is back on their payroll working as a customer service coordinator for a large restaurant corporation.

Duration of Study

All data collection occurred between the months of January and August 2014. I conducted two interviews with each participant at a location that was comfortable and convenient for the participant. Two women chose to meet at their homes, while the other three preferred to meet in a central public location. Initial interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, with our follow up meeting lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. I also wanted participants to record what they actually did each day, and so I gave them each an audio-recorder to use for that purpose. Each participant recorded her practices during one day in her life as a working single mother. The entire research process involved three years, and included seven months for data collection, which involved conducting interviews, collecting audio-recordings, and transcribing; eight months to review and analyze data; and 20 months for reading and writing. A timeline for this study may be found in Appendix D.

Data Collection Methods

To repeat, I interviewed a total of five working single mothers from two counties in the northern part of Georgia in the United States. As noted in Table 3.1, one woman has a college degree, three have some post-secondary education, and one has a high school education; three are single mothers through divorce, one working mother remained single and chose not to marry, and one is a single mother by choice who adopted her daughter from China. Two participants are African American and three are European American.

Data collected for this study included transcripts from two, one-on-one conversational interviews, data transcribed from participants' audio-taping of a single day's practices, and data recorded in my researcher field notes and memos.

Interviewing was the chief method of data collection and provided rich data. The starting point for interviews is "interviewers' interest in other people's lives, responsiveness to their stories about these and a responsible attitude toward the data and the participants," (Oakley, 2016, p. 198). Knowledge construction during the process of interviewing honors an interpretive research approach, which "assumes that reality is socially constructed, that there is no single, observable reality" (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). Interviewing allows subjective meanings to take shape during the questioning, answering and listening between interviewer and interviewee.

The second method of data collection, audio-taping by participants, was chosen to allow the women in the study to record their practices during one day in their lives. In this way, the women determined and recorded what counted as a practice without the guidance of a researcher.

The third method of data collection, writing field notes to document the day-to-day doing of the study and ongoing interpretations was invaluable when writing up the study. One example of one field note that supported a participant's practices occurred during my interview with Nisa. She spoke with confidence about her decision to encourage her girls to get involved in different activities because she wanted them to find something they enjoyed doing and also to do well as adults on their own. Then she told me how her brother believed she was "messing them up" because it was going to be hard for them to find a husband. I noted in my researcher's log her confident spirit in spite of her brother's negative comments. My interpretation, of course, was not in the transcript from our interview.

Through the use of one-to-one interviews, participant audio recording of a typical day, and field notes, I collected data to identify and describe the everyday practices of the self used by five working single mothers to produce themselves as ethical subjects.

Interview Process

I contacted each participant by telephone to schedule our first interview after I received her signed consent form, and all five agreed to two interviews. The purpose of our initial interview was to establish rapport and to gather basic information. I also asked them if they would be willing to audio-tape their practices for one day. Before we began the first interview, I reviewed the consent form and answered any questions about my project.

All follow-up interviews were scheduled after I listened to and transcribed the first interviews. As I listened to the initial interview several times I took notes on some of the participant's practices that I hoped she might elaborate on further. For example, Brooklyn discussed how she would put someone in her heart and pray for him or her. In our second interview, I asked her to tell me more about this practice because I was curious as to whether she wrote down those thoughts. She was able to elaborate this practice in her job as flight attendant. Follow-up interviews were scheduled about eight weeks after the first interviews, allowing time not only to transcribe all interviews, but also to listen to the audio-recordings several times for practices that were not fully discussed.

Interviews were conducted in a place comfortable for the participant and without children present. I offered to pay for childcare but all mothers made arrangements themselves. For both interviews, two participants asked to be interviewed in their homes, and the other three preferred a public place close to their home.

Through the use of one-to-one interviews, participant's audio recording a typical day, and reflective field notes, data was collected to understand and interpret working single mothers' practices through the analytic lens of the ancient Greeks' practice, care of the self, as described by Foucault.

Initial interviews. Interviews were conducted in a location comfortable for the participant. Sharon and Fran preferred to meet at their homes while Nisa, Brooklyn, and Lynn chose a public place. At the beginning of each initial interview, I explained the purpose of my research project and began by asking the participant to walk me through a typical day in her life. Initial interviews were based on a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide (Appendix A). During our initial interview, Brooklyn immediately opened up with a very detailed account of her life with her ex-husband from when they met to the present. I remember thinking that maybe my open-ended questions weren't structured enough for our time together, but as I listened to her story I forgot any previous worries because it seemed clear that she needed to tell her whole story. It helped her to talk about the abusive relationship, and that helped me understand some of her fears.

All the women were forthcoming and did not appear to hold back information, but it took Sharon a little longer to be comfortable talking with me. I wondered if that was because she was the youngest working single mother in my study. I also considered that she might be withholding information because my gatekeeper taught at her children's school. However, by our second interview, Sharon was very forthcoming and transparent. I considered all the recent changes in her life and realized that she was now settled and comfortable. She was in a home she could afford, she has returned to a job she loved, her girls were in a new school, and both

girls were much happier than in their previous school. I reminded myself of my state of mind after I sold my home of 20 years and moved to a new town where I knew only one person.

I went into each interview prepared to actively listen to the words of my participants. Seidman (2013) suggested not only recording the interview but also taking notes during the interview as well. However, I found that note taking distracted me from the interview. After each interview I recorded field notes and any reflective notes. I also transcribed the data verbatim. I listened to each interview several times and during this process I recorded notes for further questions in our follow-up interview.

Follow-up interviews. As I listened to the voice of each participant during the transcription process of the initial interview, I returned to the day of our interview. I thought about each participant's words as well as my questions and considered our conversation once again. After reviewing the transcribed interview, I considered each participant's story and highlighted areas that I wanted to know more about. Our follow up interviews were conducted about eight weeks after the initial interviews in the same type of setting as our initial interviews. My main line of questioning was, "you talked about such and such, I'd like to hear more about that. Can you tell me more about that?" I wanted to dig deeper into their practices and experiences as single working mothers while maintaining that "delicate balance between respecting what the participant is saying and taking advantage of opportunities to ask difficult questions" (Seidman, 2013, p. 99). Each follow up interview took a different path based on the information gathered from our first interview and our states of mind.

Participant audio-taping. Audio-recording a day in the life of each participant was another data collection method that allowed the participant freedom to record her thoughts without the presence of the researcher. Each participant was given an audio-recording device and dictated

her activities for one day. One participant, Lynn, requested that she write rather than audio-tape, and I honored her request. I transcribed each recording and typed up the hand-written document from Lynn, adding pseudonyms for actual names when necessary. Participants' audio-recordings of their daily activities added another dimension into the lives of working single mothers, helping to capture the reality of their day as it unfolded.

Data Analysis

Choosing an interpretive, qualitative research design embraced my own understanding of how people make sense of their lives and allowed the data to drive the results. In my first qualitative research course, the professor often reminded the class that, despite the assumption of some, qualitative data does guide a study's outcome. Appreciating the evolving and flexible nature of qualitative work, Merriam (2009) noted, "The process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic" (p. 169). In the spirit of constructivism, where knowledge is socially constructed and learned by doing, the work of data analysis involves making meaning by constructing categories, or practices, to organize and theorize collected data. The framework I established as I reviewed my data used the ancient Greeks' practice of care of the self to look for practices of the self or arts of existence the women used to construct themselves as ethical subjects.

A Hybrid Process

I began the process of analysis by reading paper copies of transcripts carefully, one participant at a time, marking passages that seemed important and noting words or phrases in the margins to help me make meaning, a process called by many in the field of qualitative work classifying or open-coding (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2013). For example, if a participant explained in detail her morning routine, I highlighted the passage and wrote *morning*

practice out to the side, to help me recognize and organize practices, keeping in mind early organization of practices is tentative because, as Seidman (2013) noted, "Some categories that seemed promising early in the process will die out. New ones may appear. Categories that seemed separate and distinct will fold into each other" (p. 128). I used a very simple notation system beginning with the participant's initial, followed by the abbreviation of the data source—interview one (I1), interview two (I2), audio-recording (AR), and field notes (FN). This notation system allowed me to keep up with all the data. The complexities that exist in human subjectivity flowed throughout the transcribed data and my memory as I listened to the audio-taped interviews; therefore, rather than extracting words or phrases in isolation to be counted and coded, I used theory as my analytical tool to determine what counted as data. St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) noted, "using theory to determine, first, what counts as data and, second, what counts as 'good' or appropriate data" (p. 715). I studied all the data collected for each participant (interviews, audio-taped or written practices for one day, my field notes), thinking all the while about the ancient Greek practices of the self. I was looking for the practices of each woman as well as any practices common to the group. As I read and reread the words of each participant I found practices in the lives of these women that helped them not only "make it" through the day but also helped them create their lives as ethical subjects of their actions, as works of art. For example, the idea of creating oneself as a work of art for the elite male leaders during Greek antiquity included practices that were intended to give their lives certain values, such as a distinguished reputation. As Foucault (1984/2010) explained,

> It was a question of making one's life into an object for a sort of knowledge, for a *techne*—for an art. We have hardly any remnant of the idea in our society, that the

> principal work of art which one has to take care of, the main area to which one must apply aesthetic values, is oneself, one's life, one's existence. (p. 362)

Immediately apparent to me was a passion with which my participants honored their mothers and approached their own lives as working single mothers. Their practices formed out of their relation with their own mothers and they were all deeply committed in their roles as mother and provider.

Seidman (2013) suggested,

> The participants have spoken, and now the interviewer is responding to their words, concentrating his or her intuition and intellect on the process. What emerges is a synthesis of what the participant has said and how the researcher has responded. (p. 129)

The participants' words, gestures, and presence as well as my words, gestures, and presence intermingled, creating meaning together. What I brought to the study was my own experiences as a single working mother, my understanding of the ancient Greek practice of care of the self, and a heartfelt desire to hear the stories of other working single mothers. I heard stories about practices that echoed my own as a single mother as well as stories about different practices.

Seidman (2013) found,

> When I reflect on the types of material that arouse my interest, it is clear that some patterns are present, that I have certain predispositions that I bring to the reading of the transcripts…sometimes excerpts connect to the literature on the subject. (p. 129)

All this works together in the meaning making process of data analysis.

Using Care of the Self to Interpret Data

I used the ancient Greeks' care of the self to analyze data, looking for practices used by the five women in my study that helped them not only to make it through each day but also to

create themselves as ethical subjects and, sometimes, as works of art. With each re-reading I considered Foucault's (1984/1986) description of the ancient Greeks' care of the self and a visual depiction for understanding Foucault's interpretation of morals, which can be found in Chapter 2, Figure 2.1. The process was slow and recursive. As I've noted repeatedly, I was particularly interested in the practices the women used everyday to construct themselves as ethical subjects. Interestingly, practices were not always in the transcribed words, but occasionally in the silent spaces heard in the audio-tapes. For example, in our first interview, Lynn mentioned little miracles that had happened in her life followed by a thoughtful silence. As I transcribed this interview I made a note to ask Lynn about the little miracles. During our second interview Lynn shared stories about what she believed were little miracles and I recognized a tenacity within her that kept her positive in spite of the seemingly impossible, difficult times.

After identifying practices, I made a list of all the practices I had identified in all data I had collected, including notations that identified the data source and page number of the data in that source. I established different headings for each participant based on her particular story. Some of the category headings unique to some women included the way in which they came to be single. Along with these differences, participants' data shared common categories including self, mom, family, faith, challenges, pleasures, children, strengths, and work.

After reviewing, refining, and rereading participant transcripts, I looked for possible connections across participants' interview excerpts. Because I am a visual learner and an elementary teacher, I decided to use large chart paper for a visual representation as I worked through the data. I wrote the practices I identified as headings on chart paper hung on the wall above my desk with excerpts from each participant's interview and audio-taped transcripts below. I also included my notes from the field on this chart. Using Foucault's interpretation of

the ancient Greeks' care of the self as the framework for final analysis and interpretation, I reviewed my research questions:

1. What are the daily practices of the self used by five working single mothers who live in the South?
2. What kind of subject is produced from these practices?
3. How can these everyday practices be understood in relation to the ancient Greek care of the self that Foucault described?

Listening to the recorded interviews helped me when I found that I was stuck while sifting through paper transcripts. The practices I identified mapped easily onto the ancient Greeks' ethical care of the self, practices I will discuss in the next chapter.

Researcher's Field Notes

I decided to collect two types of field notes, one a record of participant behavior during their interviews that I labeled field notes. Another form of field notes collected was a record of my thoughts and any personal connections to my own life during the interview that I labeled reflective field notes. Merriam (2009) noted, "field notes can come in many different forms, but at the least they include descriptions, direct quotations, and observer comments" (p. 137). Next, I explain the process I used to collect field notes along with examples of each.

Field notes. Field notes included a written account of the behaviors of the participants during the interviews. I recorded my interpretation of the interpersonal dynamics of our interview immediately after each interview. Patton (2002) called this creative fieldwork, "using every part of oneself to experience and understand what is happening. Creative insights come from being directly involved in the setting being studied" (p. 302). I recorded my field notes in a computer file labeled FN after each interview. These notes allowed me to capture some

participants' non-verbal responses during their interviews. Field notes were attached to direct quotes from participants as an analytic tool to strengthen data. Table 3.2 gives an example of the field notes collected during the interview process.

Table 3.2

Example of Field Notes

Participant's Words	**Researcher's Notes**
It's just hard. I told him that. We were actually having a conversation the other night on Sunday when Ashley got in trouble, And he actually backed me up-he was like you're not going to yell at your mother that is very disrespectful. He said do I yell at you? And she said sometimes and he said well don't answer that question! Ha ha! But that's your mother, she is not going to tolerate it and neither will I so apologize to her and you do not yell at your mother.	As Sharon told the story of her ex-husband actually backing her up her body actually relaxed. Shoulders relaxed, she was visibly relieved.
The first thing I wanted to do when my mom passed was to call her and tell her that my mom passed. It was that kind of feeling, you know?	As she spoke these words her eyes filled with tears. Mine too.
And he (brother) tells me I spoil my children. He tells me I'm messing them up, It's going to be hard for them to find a husband unless this man is able to do all this stuff. I said no, they're going to be in a position that hopefully they can meet the one that has the same mindset that they have they will be able to go and do together.	Nisa spoke with conviction and purpose in her voice. She knows the experiences her daughters have now influence their future.

Reflective field notes. The second set of field notes gathered were my reflective notes, which included my feelings and reactions during the data collection and analysis process, as well as my interpretation of the interpersonal dynamics during our interviews. Reflective notes were recorded in a document labeled RN after each interview and included my "feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, speculations, and working hypotheses" (Merriam, 2009, p. 131). As Patton (2002) asserted "it's in the nature of our intellects that ideas about the meaning,

causes, and significance of what we experience find their way into our minds" (p. 304). Reflective notes reverberated in my thoughts and feelings—my connections, struggles, questions, knowledge learned, and personal memories from interacting with the data. Reflective notes go beyond the factual descriptions of what happened found in field notes allowing space for the researcher to express human subjectivity that is inevitable in all work involving human understanding and contributes to some measure of transparency where the researcher is concerned. Table 3.3 provides an example of reflective field notes during data collection.

Table 3.3

Example of Reflective Notes

Participant and Interview	**Reflective Note**
Nisa Interview 1	As Nisa told her story of her seizures and the unknown I wondered what that must have been like for her. It was over six months to recuperate before she was able to mentally and physically work again. Everything was stacked for hopelessness, Yet through it all she had a positive outlook. She never gave up. She had a lot of support from family, friends and colleagues. I wonder if her perseverance and strength has a genetic marker, or was it developed from experiences?
Fran Interview 2	Fran's struggles growing up with an alcoholic preacher father and her mom being the child of an alcoholic didn't come out in our first interview. She talked about her need for therapy when she was younger and how she learned a lot about who she is and why she does things. Her chaotic upbringing is why she has to create order in her life and why she has to control things. I found myself smiling because her house is very neat, orderly, and tidy.
Brooklyn Interview 1	As the story of manipulation, deceit, and abuse unfolded I was in awe at her strength of character. So many of her current practices seem to have been informed and created by this incredible hurt.
Lynn Interview 2	When Lynn's sisters convinced her to try for some government funded financial help with rent money through Section 8 she reluctantly moved in that direction. At the end of it all the person on the other end of the phone told her that she needed to move into an extended day hotel and save money. Lynn said she'd choose struggling and living over roaches and existing. I had to smile. I

	get it. I so admire her positive attitude, setting the bar high and working toward hopefulness. She is my Gandhi.
Sharon Interview 1	Sharon struggles with the one voice. She misses the extra voice to help with the kids: wash and fold clothes, help with homework, break up the bickering, handle discipline. The one voice wears her out. I had my parents right down the road for help and support and I think I took my daughter and loaded the dogs up in the pickup and drove over to visit and eat dinner two or three times a week. When I think about the conversations shared as we enjoyed mom's delicious cooking I realize that time with Mom and Dad was my "extra voice." Sharon's parents are in Pensacola. She talks about her parents and uses them as examples when she parents her girls. I wonder if having her parents closer might lessen her struggle with just the one voice?

I kept a record of my thoughts as I went through the interview process. As a working single mother myself, I brought my own knowledge and experiences to the table. It is my hope that through my reflective notes I allowed some measure of transparency, allowing the reader to know my stance, my assumptions, and values. Any personal thoughts or connections I may have to the stories told by my participants were recorded in my reflective notes. Next is an explanation of the approach taken for establishing trustworthiness in my study.

Qualitative Trustworthiness

Most of our standards about validity and reliability involve systematic, quantitative number crunching, seeking statistical reliability. But quantitative research is often an ineffective methodology for analyzing the human spirit. In-depth studies of the human condition involve the mingling of subjectivity from researchers, participants, and the readers of the published work. Internal validity asks if what the researcher finds in her study matches what is in the real world. If defining validity centers on our understanding of reality, then qualitative and quantitative research designs are based on different philosophical assumptions: quantitative research assumes

that an average is the best approach to reality while qualitative research considers the complexity that is life.

Considering the differences, Merriam (2009) argued, "Qualitative research also has strategies for establishing the authenticity and trustworthiness of a study, strategies based on worldviews and questions congruent with the philosophical assumptions underlying this perspective" (p. 211). Within qualitative research, trustworthiness is apparent if the findings are credible given the data presented. As I noted earlier, the basis of interpretive work recognizes that meaning is socially constructed, and as a researcher I am interested in the actions and behaviors of my participants as well as their own understandings of their actions. This study was created from an interpretation of data based on interviews, participant audio recording of a day in the life of each participant, researcher field notes and reflective notes. I sought to understand the many variations and complexities in the practices of the five single mothers in this study. This is a messier process than quantitative research but one that can produce more nuanced understanding.

There are various strategies throughout the qualitative research process to ensure good work. Seidman (2013) noted that doing good work "is a process in which the methodology and the ethics of the work overlap" (p. 140). One technique to ensure good work involves the use of multiple forms of data (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2013). In this study the use of multiple forms of data were used to contribute to the study's validity.

In addition to using multiple methods of data collection that produced different kinds of data, I also asked each participant to review the transcribed interviews. After transcribing each participant's interview, I sent a copy of the transcription to the participant requesting that she look over the information for accuracy as well to be sure she wanted everything in the document

to be included. All five participants said that I could use their transcribed interviews for my study. Although this is a very important way to rule out any misinterpretations as well as to spot my own biases, "participants' feedback is no more inherently valid than their interview responses; both should be taken simply as *evidence* regarding the validity of your account" (Seidman, 2013, p. 111). Asking each participant to review her interview transcripts helped us both in understanding. I highlighted any area in the transcripts I returned asking participants to verify that my transcription was correct. In one case, I had made an error, and the participant corrected her transcript. I was thankful that each participant willingly aided me in the respondent validation process.

Summary

In summary, I used multiple methods of data collection to collect rich data about the everyday practices participants used to create themselves as ethical subjects. I found that my work as researcher, going deep into the lives of people and then interpreting them, was a very delicate, ethical endeavor. For me, qualitative research opens a window and offers a glimpse into the immeasurable human spirit, honoring the complexity of the people interviewed. I found qualitative research to be difficult, thought-provoking, and challenging work that I look forward to doing again. In the next chapter, I describe those practices and their work in participants' lives as single mothers.

CHAPTER 4

AN INTERPRETATION

This chapter offers a discussion and an interpretation of the practices of the self, both invented and available in their culture, the five working single mothers in this study used to create themselves as ethical subjects. In Chapter 2, I explained, following Davidson's (1986) model of care of the self, that for the ancient Greeks' morality included the culture's moral code, people's real behaviors, and ethics, which includes four features delineating care of the self. The moral code is the set of beliefs and rules taught by institutions like the family, work, schools, media, and church. One's actual behavior, which may or may not comply with the rules and beliefs taught by these institutions, is the second aspect of morality. The third aspect is ethics, which is the part of morality that concerns how one should conduct oneself, "the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject, acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 26). This model of morality used by the ancient Greeks worked well with the data collected in this study, as I describe below.

Morality

Morality can be a dense, confusing concept. In the second volume of *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure,* Foucault (1984/1985) noted the ambiguity of the word *morality*. He wrote:

> It is sometimes the case that these rules and values are plainly set forth in a coherent doctrine and an explicit teaching. But it also happens that they are transmitted in a diffuse manner, so that, far from constituting a systematic ensemble, they form a complex

> interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another, and cancel each other out on certain points, thus providing for compromises and loopholes. (p. 25)

Foucault (1985) asserted three elements of morality within this interplay: the moral codes, one's actual behavior, and ethics. It is helpful to first introduce how these elements of morality connect to themselves and to the women in this study, followed by my interpretation of the practices of Nisa, Lynn, Brooklyn, Fran, and Sharon using Foucault's description of the ancient Greeks' care of the self, practices that constitute the self's relation to itself and others. Again, all names are pseudonyms.

At the time of the study, the five working single mothers lived and raised their children in a suburb of a large city in the southeastern United States. Many of the cultural practices available to them are found within the code of the southern woman. In St. Pierre's (1995) dissertation, *Arts of Existence: The Construction of Subjectivity in Older White Southern Women*, she described the code of white southern womanhood which is entangled with the code of patriarchy: "This code focuses particularly on the manner in which women should comport themselves, both in public and in private" (p. 241). Women are to act a certain way, be accommodating, and nice. St. Pierre (1995) recalled the heroine in a book series called *The Little Colonel*, "in one of the books she decides to improve her character—to be good, in fact—to hurt no one's feelings, but to be obedient, kind, and thoughtful, all those characteristics cherished by southern womanhood" (p. 238). Much of the southern woman code exists in response to the long-standing code of patriarchy that has dominated southern culture for centuries.

Patriarchy, in the south especially, once dictated the role for honorable women; a lady was taught that her role as a wife was to enhance her husband's position because women, by

nature, were weaker, and thus, dependent on men. One hundred years ago, the grandmothers of these five women grew up understanding they, as women, were not capable of successfully navigating the world outside the home; the cultural division of male and female structured their way of life. Although patriarchy in America is more fragmented today than it once was, Ortner (2014) explained, "it continues to play an invisible, but highly damaging, role in contemporary social life (p. 531). The mothers of the women in this study taught their daughters to be independent; however, the code of patriarchy influenced the social context of the lessons. For example, many women continue to be excluded from the self-sufficiency of our free market including moral character derived from the work ethic, because, for women, "it was not self-sufficiency and rugged individualism that was promoted, but rather dependency; dependency on men as breadwinners, while men and children in turn were dependent on women as wives and mothers to create the domestic nest" (Polakow, 1993, p. 51). As the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 confirmed, the patriarchal subordination of women to this ideal of domesticity is an historical event that is still manifested in societal actions and discourses. My participants shared examples of the social context of beliefs influenced by the code of patriarchy. For example, Brooklyn spoke of God as the husband and provider for women who don't have a husband, a belief grounded in male superiority. Also, four of the five participants' jobs were in female-dominated fields.

Along with the codes of southern womanhood and patriarchy, the code of Christianity is present and influential in the lives of these women. Foucault (1984/2010) noted that for the ancient Greeks, the work involved in order to be master of oneself included austere practices that gave a certain value to their life, such as "being able to reproduce certain examples" or "leave behind them an exalted reputation" (p. 362). For the ancients, knowledge was important for the

care of the self. Foucault (1984/2010) also explained that the Greco-Roman "austere lifestyle marked by a series of renunciations, interdictions, or prohibitions" (p. 361) was later borrowed by Christianity and changed over time. There was an ethical shift over time from one of aesthetics to one of purification. According to Foucault (1984/2010),

> This new Christian self had to be constantly examined because in this self were lodged concupiscence and desire of the flesh. From that moment on, the self was no longer something to be made but something to be renounced and deciphered. (p. 366)

Foucault (2001/2005) further explained that the development of Christianity brought about a continued shift in western thought from *epimeleia heautou,* care of the self, to *gnothi seautou,* know yourself, so that "the subject's being is not put in question by the necessity of having access to the truth" (p.18), and "access to truth, whose sole condition is henceforth knowledge, will find reward in nothing else but the indefinite development of knowledge" (p.18). The hermeneutic work necessary to understand the root of one's desire is no longer present within Christian ethics because of the shift in austere practices, from antiquity, where it was an individual's choice to care for oneself—make one's life a work of art, to the present, where religious obligation dictates individual practices in order to have an eternal life. Foucault (1984/2010) explained,

> What happened in between is precisely an overturning of the classical culture of the self. This took place when Christianity substituted the idea of a self which one had to renounce, because clinging to the self was opposed to God's will, for the idea of a self which had to be created as a work of art. (p. 362)

The shift from the importance of an aesthetics of existence in ancient Greek ethics to the importance of purity and purification in Christian ethics brought with it a feminine model of

purity. "The paradigm of sexual self-restraint becomes a feminine paradigm through the theme of purity and virginity, based on the model of physical integrity" (Foucault, 1984/2010, p. 366). The work once required by the self to learn the art of living became the work necessary to renounce the sinful self.

The degree that these codes have influenced the actual behavior of the women in my study can be found in their practices of accommodation, ambivalence, and resistance to the codes. The diversity of the urban area where these women live and work presents a variety of religions, ideas, and lifestyles, allowing for rupture in the old patriarchal Christian code and may contribute to why these working single mothers show ambivalence and resistance when cultural codes conflict with what they believe best for themselves and their children. Brooklyn walked on eggshells any time she needed to ask her ex-husband for help, even after she left him, but she had a small child to support and found herself standing up to her ex-husband, no longer allowing him to talk to her in a negative way. When she finally asked her ex-husband for child support, "He just started yelling at me and cursing, and saying you know you can't get blood out of a turnip. He said you know what you can just keep Jackson and just get out of my life. And I said I'm not saying that, I'm not giving you and ultimatum, I'm just asking you to do your duty and help me." After hanging up on her, he refused to pay child support and he did not communicate with his son for over six months. During our interview, Brooklyn voiced confidence as she told this story to me. She was proud of her ability to address her needs to her ex-husband regardless of how he might respond.

When her son, Jackson, was young, Brooklyn did not discuss why she left his father but as Jackson grew older, he asked why she no longer acknowledged his father and rather than smile and brush over the truth, as she had done when he was younger, she told her son some of

the reasons why. It is the attention, tenacity, and resolve involved in becoming and being a mother that I believe is the site where these working single mothers find great pleasure and work on and create themselves.

Foucault (1984/1985) believed both the codes and one's actual behavior are important: however, he understood that, for the Greeks, it was within ethics that one establishes a relation to oneself. He noted there are different ways to accomplish "the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject, acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code" (p. 26). For the women in this study, both the ethical substance, the way in which one forms different aspects of oneself in relation to the moral code, and the mode of subjection, how one establishes oneself and acts in regards to ethics, are deeply intertwined with their desire to recognize a power far greater than themselves by striving toward their best self each day, especially in their role as mothers. Therefore the self-forming activities are all the practices these women use "to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behavior" (Foucault, p. 27). Although Foucault focused on the domain of sexual relations as the place of self-formation for the free, elite males of ancient Greece, I believe the domain of motherhood is the place for self-formation for the working single mothers in this study.

For these women, the telos, their goal in life that is established through their practices, is to honor God, to be the best person they can possibly be and to do their best to help their children become productive adult citizens. Through self-discipline they find pleasure in their actions first and foremost as a mother to their children but also as a valued employee in their working professions. In the next section I explain how their practices are entwined in Foucault's ethical analysis of the ancient Greeks' care of the self and how these five women actively participate in their self-formation, "forming and recognizing oneself as the subject of one's own actions, not

through a system of signs denoting power over others, but through a relation that depends as little as possible on status and its external forms" (Foucault, 1984/1986, p. 85). It is within relations that these women create themselves as works of art.

Moral Codes

As I previously noted, the code of the southern woman is entwined with the code of patriarchy and often entwined within the code of Christianity as well. There are certain unspoken rules concerning how a southern woman should conduct herself that I have identified as the code of the southern woman. Next, I review how these codes play out in the lives of my participants.

The code of the southern woman. The code of the southern woman is hard to isolate because the controlling influence of our patriarchal history had made it normal and taken-for-granted. Having been raised in the south, I remember too well the double standard, that unspoken rule allowing my brothers more freedom than my sister and I. A case in point is that my father took my brothers, but not me, on a deep-sea fishing trip when we were children. Most girls I knew then didn't like the idea of fishing all day, but I was crushed. My father eventually realized how upset I was and let me go the next year. I still remember the thrill of witnessing my baby brother reel in a huge, beautiful Amberjack. Although I do not recall catching my own big fish as a young girl, as an adult I have enjoyed the thrill of reeling in exquisite salt-water fish.

An example of the southern woman code I resisted is the dress code with its focus on appearance. This code stresses that one does not leave home in old, everyday clothes but dresses up to make a public appearance. As a child in the 1960's, Mom always dressed my sister and me in cute dresses, usually dresses she sewed for us. I complained loudly and often about the extreme discomfort of the full petticoat slip, tight hose, itchy hat, and white gloves, while Mom

reminded me that some things may be uncomfortable but that a lady handles discomfort with a smile.

Thankfully, the southern woman dress code has relaxed considerably since my childhood days; however, appearances still matter, and women are scrutinized for what they wear or don't wear, especially in the business world. Fran used to have a sales job that required her to wear a suit each day. She knew her first impression counted, and she made sure she presented her best self always. Her current job does not involve sales, and "this job, I work from home. I do not wear suits every day and I do not go to meetings where I know everybody. I probably don't look as successful as I did before. So it depends on what you consider success. I'm in sweat pants and sneakers. Well, actually, I'm not wearing sneakers, I'm just wearing socks today." Fran is comfortable working from home in sweats and doesn't need to dress professionally in order to feel professional. "I manage details all day and I am using muscles (in my brain) that I haven't used in a very long time. I am learning the details of the mortgage business and the way that this is changed thanks to regulatory guidelines." For Fran, her work ethic defines her as a professional.

Unlike Fran, Lynn's income puts her among those living in poverty, and she does without so that her daughter will be successful. Lynn recalled an important meeting she attended for her daughter, who was dressed for the occasion. "My daughter was speaking at this big event this week and she was at the head table because she was the guest speaker, and everyone there was very rich and very successful. Well everyone was dressed up and I looked down and there was a hole in my shoe. (She laughs) And that was interesting because I saw someone looking down and I thought to myself, I think I have on the hole shoes." Lynn felt the eyes of the other adult women judging her for wearing shoes with holes to an important event.

Brooklyn's job in the airline industry requires women flight attendants to wear a suit and heels. I asked her how she manages to exercise with such a demanding job and she laughingly told me that as long as she isn't on her feet she is fine. "The last thing I want to do after wearing high heels all day is pounding on the pavement walking or pounding down on a treadmill. So I've been downloading videos, doing abdominal exercises and leg exercises, anything that is not on my feet!"

A woman's appearance matters, and often it is other women who critique a woman who is not dressed appropriately for the occasion. Brooklyn, Fran, and Lynn did not allow the southern woman dress code to define them. In her previous job, Fran understood her appearance was under scrutiny compared to her male coworkers, and she knew how to dress professionally in order to be perceived as such by others. In her present job, Fran's resistance to the code may be more visible to others, but she feels every bit the professional she did when she was dressed for success. Brooklyn and Lynn resisted the southern woman dress code through the guise of accommodation to the code. Lynn spoke ambivalently about her appearance because she did not have the resources for herself after she made sure her daughter was dressed for success.

Another expectation of the southern woman's code is to be nice; this expectation also requires women find balance in all they do. Women who speak their thoughts with conviction are more likely to be critiqued as emotional or insubordinate compared to men in the same situation; therefore, even the image of being nice has to be balanced out. Several participants expressed this sentiment. For example, Nisa's ex-husband is a truck driver and unable to help out during the week. If she has to work weekends when she has her girls, she takes them with her, "I try not to but sometimes I do work on weekends. (Nisa is a registered nurse and nurse educator,) I worked yesterday and the girls were with me. And I am also president of our

professional organization for the state. So trying to balance them and keep my professional life and keep everybody happy and still be a loving mama, it's hard, but you know I need about 30 hours versus the 24 that I have." Nisa loves her family and her job and really strives for a balance as she acts nicely and tries to keep everyone happy. For example, several years ago Nisa stopped asking her ex-husband for his half of unpaid medical expenses or extra-curricular activities, "He is supposed to pay half of it and sometimes he falls a little short of that. But I am a nurse and he's a truck driver and his business is economic dependent. If the economy is down sometimes his job is down, so I give him a break. I'm not a hard or mean ex-wife, I take what he can give me and I appreciate what he can give me." Being nice and not pushing for her ex-husband's financial responsibility further adds to her unbalanced world as a single working mother.

As a single mom by choice, Fran entered the world of working single motherhood intentionally, but she expressed the struggle for balance, "I work full-time, I have an aging mother, I have a house to take care of, there is a tree down in the back yard, a faucet is leaking, so trying to balance all those things—those are the things that overwhelm me." An expectation of balance in the lives of mothers is nothing new; however, working single mothers continue to attempt to satisfy society's unrealistic demands for a balanced life. When her daughters fight and argue, Sharon repeats what she learned from her mom, "If you can't say something nice and have a nice tone don't say anything at all," in order to end the arguing. This saying promotes niceness at the cost of listening to both sides of the argument.

The southern woman code promotes mother as peace-keeper, which sometimes can be an extension of being nice. For example, Sharon and her parents do not share the same approach to disciplining her children. As much as she would like to have another voice—another opinion—

especially in helping to discipline her children, Sharon has learned that she and her parents will never agree and so she no longer asks them for parenting advice. Sharon chooses to be nice and keep the conversations peaceful, which becomes an aspect of her life requiring balance. The southern woman code covertly continues expectations regarding not only women's appearance but also their temperament amid a chaos that makes balance impossible. The five working single mothers in this study demonstrate both accommodation and resistance to the southern woman code, which I will discuss further in ethics under self-forming activities.

The code of patriarchy. The code of patriarchy is not as structured in our society as it was 50 years ago and can be difficult to recognize; however, the social power structure with its system of cultural categories "is grounded in a conceptual division of the world into two (and only two) kinds of gendered persons" (Ortner, 2014, p. 534). Ortner (2014) explained that the nature of the gendered categories, women and men, being both unequal and different, are culturally constructed and normatively imposed categories. Ortner (2014) wrote that patriarchy "is more fragmented than it once was, less monolithic and homogeneous, as a result of a century or so, on and off, of feminist activism" (p. 531). Even so, many gendered inequalities, although invisible, remain unchallenged (Blithe & McCarver, 2017). I read through all my data over and over again searching for actions or reactions to patriarchy and located some practices that, for these working single mothers, appeared to take shape from a resistance to the codes, especially the code of patriarchy. For my participants, the code of the southern woman was, indeed, entwined in the code of patriarchy. Brooklyn's engagement to her ex-husband demonstrates the messy mingling of moral codes. "He wanted me always from my family, he wanted to whisk me away either by ourselves or up with his family. We were never around any of his friends or my friends, and I thought of it as just so romantic that he always wants to be with just me, you know,

just totally blind. He wanted me to drop everything when he came into town. He was very controlling." She noted after the abusive marriage ended, "I think I created the monster," taking the blame for his controlling behavior.

For Fran, many of her decisions as an adult were thoughtfully planned in response to the life she knew as a child. Although both of her parents worked, it was her father's job as a preacher that the family depended on despite his alcoholism. "He's a preacher. He would sit in his recliner and drink himself to sleep every night. He had a narcissistic personality disorder and he was very self-absorbed. Church came first, other people came first, and we came after everything else. We moved every one or two years because he couldn't keep it together." Fran's childhood was fractured and friendless, "You never had really good friends and you couldn't trust anybody. It's like they were always picking on you because you were always the new kid. I didn't want that for my child." Today she offers her daughter the stability of their own home with friends and neighbors all around. Fran's decisions and actions as a working single mother are in resistance to the code of patriarchy she experienced as a child.

Like Fran, Lynn developed her own set of beliefs and practices that resisted the code of patriarchy. Lynn said that she was not supposed to be able to have children. During her marriage, she and her husband both wanted a family and tried for a long time to have children, but they never conceived and that marriage ended. Then Lynn met Taru, who she knew did not want children, who made other women get an abortion if they became pregnant. Lynn and Taru lived together, but they did not marry. When Lynn conceived, she told him she was going to keep the baby, "He did not want me to keep the baby. No, once she [Jill] came it got a little better but I think it wasn't as much as keeping her, it was the fact that I went against what he said. Because you know the African men are very strong and they're very um, what they say

goes. And he couldn't believe that I would not get rid of the baby. And I knew that this was my only chance." Lynn boldly resisted the code of patriarchy refusing to accept the traditional authority given the male in a family.

Brooklyn, too, experienced her husband's anger when she became pregnant, "We weren't even married a year and I got pregnant and he was freaking out, angry and just upset, and giving me guilt trips the whole time I was pregnant." Another time she spoke of his dominance was when she came home from the hospital. After having a cesarean section delivery, her husband left her his car that was a manual stick shift for her to drive, knowing she could not drive it and keeping her where he wanted her. She accommodated her husband's domination and anger until she left him when her son was 18 months old.

Nisa and her girls love to travel and see different parts of the country. Nisa has always loved traveling, but her brother tells her she spoils her children, "He tells me that I am messing them up, that it's going to be hard for them to find a husband unless this man is able to do all this stuff. I said no, they're going to be in a position that hopefully they can meet the one that has the same mindset that they have and they will be able to go and do together." Nisa resists the code of patriarchy because she believes her daughters are learning and growing from all their traveling.

In a conversation around women's dreams and accomplishments in life, Lynn said she believes love will divide your passions. When I asked if she was speaking mainly from a women's perspective or if that is true across the board for everyone she remarked, "I don't want to be sexist or anything, but men are going to get what they need and what they want. Like men get people to take care of them. That is the reality of being a man in most situations, not every. Women are caretakers, they are givers, they are nurturers. The world would be amazing if

women didn't give so much of themselves to other people." The culturally constructed and intertwined codes of the southern woman and patriarchy are deeply enmeshed in what these five women do and do not do, and their practices as working single mothers to the next generation reveal significant efforts to resist these codes, which will be discussed at length in the section on ethics.

The code of Christianity. The code of Christianity permeates southern culture and the lives of my participants. These women exercise a faith in a power far greater than themselves, noting God has provided for them during the most difficult of times. Fran's father is a preacher so she grew up in the teachings of the church and has never doubted her faith, "I was raised in the church and never doubted it. I never have and that is the way I raised her (daughter). It's tough to write your testimony when you've always believed, you know? But I have never needed, really truly needed, when God didn't provide." When considering how she manages her job and finances Brooklyn said, "It's good. My car is paid off. I really believe the Lord is my provider. In the Bible it talks about how he is husband for the widows and for the women that don't have husbands. He is my comforter, and He is so faithful and provided even when my ex-husband hasn't done what he's supposed to do." Brooklyn's words reveal how deeply entangled the code of patriarchy is in the code of Christianity.

Sharon said her biggest source of strength is God, "I am not perfect but sometimes when all else fails you just need to sit quietly in the corner and talk to the one person that will listen and work it out for you." Nisa grew up in the church, spending summers at her grandparents, listening to her great-grandfather sing spiritual hymns on the porch, going to church with her great-grandfather and her grandmother and some of her grandmother's 15 siblings, and sitting with them in the choir, "and that's what's instilled in us and it's always been a part of my life.

But God is there you know, and I just don't know how to live without God." Nisa believes that she survived a rare sickness and is here today because of her mother's incredible faith in God. "When I was sick my co-workers didn't understand when she was praying so heavily while I was laying there sick and some of them admit that she scared them when I would start to have seizures and mom would start with telling the devil no you can't have my child, it's not going to happen, and a lot of them didn't understand what was going on at that time." Her mom's anointing and praying over her comatose body was uncomfortable for her friends and colleagues who witnessed it. Nisa knows she is blessed and that her mom's prayerfulness made a difference. Her colleagues recognize her mom as a very strong praying woman, "and a lot of them say now, if I ever get sick will you bring your mother?"

Lynn grew up in the church too. "I come from a very religious family. We grew up in the church, more than one day a week church. I remember distinctly we had to choose, because my mom had four kids, either gymnastics or Sunshine band. Sunshine band was Saturday church for kids. We chose Sunshine band, we were that into the church and we wanted to do that." Lynn was raised in the Pentecostal Church; however, as an adult, Lynn expressed an understanding and an interest in different faiths, "I am very open to Buddhism and eastern way of thinking, I believe in things like that. And I've always said this about my life that this time I'm supposed to be learning something. It is something for me about achievement this journey this time." As an adult Lynn knows she is blessed, even through all her struggles with money.

Lynn's faith is spoken through stories of blessings. "I know God is there and God is with me. It is weird but He always shows Himself. You know, He only shows Himself, like you're going to make it, you're going to make it, it is going to be okay. And it's from the weirdest places." The sale of her father's house in the Bronx after his death was supposed to be a

financial blessing, but the blessing came about unexpectedly. Lynn and her three sisters thought their father's house would sell quickly; however, the city stopped the process because the house was in disrepair. Lynn called a family friend in the construction industry in New York, explained the city's involvement, and he offered to check the condition of the house. Lynn intended to use the proceeds from the sale to keep her and her daughter in their apartment, and the friend's call confirming the house's run-down condition was upsetting, "I'm crying and he's like oh my gosh don't be upset. Look I know you're a little upset but I want to tell you this story just to make you feel better. Let me tell you what happened to me today." He told her that he hadn't updated all of his online paperwork for his pension and yet he just received his first check. "He finishes his story and he says do not worry about the house, I am just showing you that things happen out of the blue. And I told him I'm not crying about the house, I am crying because I cannot pay my rent!" This friend realized her need and wanted to share his blessing with her. "He said to me how can I sit here with this blessing that I didn't expect? And he shared with me. Can you believe that? So how can I not believe in God? So things like that happen." Her friend in New York loaned her the money she needed to avoid being evicted. Mounting bills, no money, and eviction notices are part of Lynn's life. She knows the fear of losing everything, including the safety of the apartment complex they live in and becoming homeless, and each time she is sure that day has come, God blesses her. She knows her help comes from God. "Who could hear this and think that there is no God?"

Fran's father was a preacher and her mother was a social worker who took in foster children. Fran's childhood experiences growing up in the church and having foster kids in their home impacted her decision to adopt. "We had foster kids in the house when I was growing up and I always felt so sad for them. And then I began to learn about the plight of Chinese girls

because that became a big deal, as you remember the one child policy that came along in our lifetime. We learned about it in school and the news. So I said that I would like to get a child out of China and also let her get to know Jesus. I had always said that if I hadn't remarried by the time I turned 40 that I would adopt." Fran turned 41 the year her daughter was born in China and Fran brought her home shortly after that. Her daughter, Claire, is actively involved in the youth group at their church.

Fran recognizes her sinful self and continues to do the work necessary to denounce Satan and avoid sin. She recognizes her impulse to control all situations as a part of her sinful self, "I'm very controlling, and that is my biggest sin." Fran's dad was an alcoholic preacher and her mother was the daughter of an alcoholic. Because of all that, Fran's chaotic childhood triggered a need for controlling all situations that as an adult she realizes she cannot. "You'd think I'd get better at letting go but for me it's control." Fran has a therapist who helps her with her control issues. She knows her prayers for help are answered too. Through therapy and prayer Fran continues the work to become less controlling and live in the moment. Fran, along with other working single mothers in this study, accommodate the code of Christianity and yet, subtly resist the gendered roles in this code. These women also resist the assumption that God will provide for them without any work on their part. They express faith in a God that is always there for them, especially during very challenging times; however, they recognize the hard work they have to do in order to grow spiritually.

These women say they believe in God and His support in their lives, even though, historically, the code of Christianity hasn't been good to women. For example, in the code of Christianity the definition of being good and being female included submissive rather than leadership behaviors. "Good girls" were expected to be married, silent, nice, and submissive,

and these lessons were taught in both the church and the home. The only desire acknowledged for women was the desire to please others, a desire the codes of Christianity and patriarchy constructed and deeply engrained in southern society, so much so, that, they continue to be passed on in southern woman's culture. The codes of southern womanhood, patriarchy, and Christianity have less influence in the lives of these women than in the lives of their mothers and grandmothers, and yet they still define the role of women. These women are aware of the subtle changes in the way women act in relation to the moral codes. Their actual behavior in relation to the codes exhibits forms of resistance, accommodation, and ambivalence, which will be considered next.

Actual Behavior

In this study, the second part of morality, people's actual behavior in response to the moral code, is located to great extent in the mother-child relationship in which these women have chiefly formed their subjectivity. The decisions they make as adults are shaped by what they learned from their own mothers and revolve around a desire for their children to have a better life. As Nisa described, "I am very active in my children's life. My mother was a single mother and there were things that I wanted to do that I couldn't do, so I make sure my children can do them. I do, I sacrifice a lot to make sure that they can do that." Within mother-child relations, the working single mothers in this study are ambivalent about the standard of conduct thought to exemplify the southern woman in a patriarchal society and create their own ethical standard of conduct. Foucault (1984/1985) explained, "there are different ways to 'conduct oneself' morally, different ways for the acting individual to operate, not just as an agent, but as an ethical subject of this action" (p. 26). It is through these mother-child relationships—their relationships with their own mothers as well as their relationships with their own children—that they act as

ethical subjects of their actions without feeling the need to accommodate and comply to the moral codes.

Ethics

As discussed previously, the Greeks described four areas within the third part of morality, ethics: the ethical substance, the mode of subjection, the self-forming activities, and the telos. Again, care of the self is found in actual practices, which I describe below.

The ethical substance. The ethical substance is that part of our behavior which is in need of work and which becomes the focus of ethical judgment. Within the code of Christianity, it is our sinful self that is in need of elaboration. For the five women in this study, their actions, their sins, that prevent them from doing their best, is the focus of their ethical judgment. All five women I interviewed grew up in a Christian home. As adults, several enjoy the fellowship of their church community, which continues to be influential in their lives.

Fran admits that she continues to work on what she recognizes as her biggest sin, her need to control things, "I'm very controlling. It is very hard to let go. Life is better when I do. I don't know why you have to keep learning it over and over and over! It's like what Paul said, Lord why do I do the things I do and don't do the things I should?" Fran's desire to control every situation made looking at the tree that fell in her back yard difficult. But she knew that the tree would remain down in her back yard until she could afford the expense of removal, even if the grass under the tree died or the tree rotted first. I asked Fran if those everyday "what-ifs," what-if the tree rotted or all the grass under the tree dies, ever got in her way. Fran replied that she does not dwell on the "what-ifs" but just goes forward. "I try really, really hard to live in the present, that's kind of the daily goal for me, or minute by minute, is to live in this moment because it won't come again and that's hard for me." Fran's need for control is the part of her

ethical substance she continually works on, "I think I can be strong without having to control. That's where I need to be. Hopefully I'll get there. But I may be six feet under by the time I get there (laughs)."

Brooklyn said that what she has to continually work on to be ethical is not second-guessing the decisions she makes as a parent and staying hopeful by remembering everything God can do. Her job as a flight attendant requires her to be away from home for days at a time. The schedule she had when Jackson was a baby no longer worked for them as a family when Jackson started school. "It is always a balance with motherhood. I never know what is the best thing to do. You would think I would have this managed since I've had this job since he was 2½, but I go back and forth in my head. Then when he started school I was like, gosh, what am I going to do?" Brooklyn worries that her decisions as a parent may mess up her son's life. "How do I teach him to take the initiative and ownership over his life, for school, for his devotional time, for his relationship with God, and all these different things in life? How do I help him to be a caring, Christ like, generous, loving, forgiving human being? That is the hardest thing." Brooklyn said remaining hopeful helps her when negative thoughts enter her mind. "I am fearful. I really do believe Satan can throw all kinds of fear at you—you know all the what-ifs, all the garbage—instead of being hopeful and thinking what all God can do." For example, rather than accept what others say about single mothers "with their baggage and their children," Brooklyn remains hopeful, remembering God loves her and cares for her.

Another area of vigilance for all participants is their role of mother. They work hard to be good mothers and role models for their children. Lynn stated, "Jill believes she can do anything because she has seen me do anything. And I would rather deal with that than get her to think that life is so low that she would just settle." They especially want their children to have a

better life, as Nisa revealed, "I sacrifice a lot to make sure that they can do extra-curricular activities and I am always there. I'm a person who believes that every generation should be better than the one before." All five participants want to help their children grow into successful, happy citizens. Fran explained, "I try to remember that my job is to teach her how to be without me. And it's real easy for me to try and protect her too much and not let her live with her consequences." These women work hard to be good mothers. For them, it is not a problem to put their desires to the side because they know they have a limited amount of time with their children at home before they are grown and gone. The ethical substance they work on daily is what enables them to raise their children to be responsible adult citizens.

Within the code of Christianity, several participants acknowledged their sinful self as the ethical substance requiring vigilant work. All five participants acknowledged the role of mother as "that vigilance and that struggle" (Foucault, 1984/1985, p. 26) and the main area for moral practice. The second part of ethics—the mode of subjection—the way in which these women attach themselves to the codes of patriarchy, southern woman, and Christianity and how they put this into practice will be discussed next.

The mode of subjection. It seems that there is not one dominant code calling these single and working mothers to become ethical subjects of their actions, unless it is the code of motherhood, which has yet to be given the recognition and compensation deserved because it is severely overshadowed by the code of patriarchy. Historically, the code of patriarchy has maintained power and control over women, and the code of Christianity has promoted meekness and submission in order to be "good" in the eyes of God. These women continue to submit and settle for less while they raise their children and expect to follow their own dreams and desires once they no longer have the responsibility of children at home.

When these women were children, the code of Christianity instilled in them a sense of community among believers, the difference between right and wrong, and an understanding of hope. All five women include hopefulness in their lives, choosing to remain positive and at the same time trying to avoid becoming negative and bitter. As young girls, they learned this approach from their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts along with their church community. It is the generational lessons passed down among the women that have given these single mothers a depth of character and immense integrity in their role of mother to their own children.

Nisa's mother was a single mother earning minimum wage when Nisa was growing up and she moved to a better neighborhood so that Nisa could attend the best schools, a strategic act on her mother's part that Nisa remembers and appreciates to this day. Like their mothers, these women do not allow society to dictate their actions as mothers; rather, they develop their own strategic plans for surviving as a working single mother, and this includes decisions that help their children. Their strategic planning can be difficult for women, yet necessary, since women are not supported in the workforce or valued in society as men are. Lynn, for example, admits that in her current job her salary is the same as it was when she was 18 years old, but she does not allow others to influence her decisions when it comes to how she will raise her child. Rather than live in a government subsidized apartment complex that might pose risks for her child, she chooses to raise her child in a safe environment even if living there does not fit her budget. And she encourages her daughter to get involved and have big dreams. She remembers that her mother also provided experiences for her that seemed out-of-reach financially but that were driven by hope. As Lynn said, "The crazy thing is I get this from my mother! I know what my mother did for me, she would do the same thing, and she had four kids! You know she would say, oh my gosh, how did we possibly go on that trip and do that, or that…or go to Florida? So I

am only reliving what I was taught in all honesty: the dreams are okay and life shouldn't be all negative." Lynn developed a strategic plan, partly learned from her mother, choosing to embrace hopefulness so her daughter may live her life without the struggle of poverty, "If I didn't have that hope, I'd be hopeless."

Sharon is the youngest woman I interviewed and the most recent to become a working single mother. She also made decisions she believed were in the best interests of her family but were in opposition to what others may have thought best for her. Leaving the familiarity of their neighborhood, their home, and her children's school, Sharon moved her family to a new community and school system. The move was difficult because her family left neighbors and friends, yet Sharon handled the struggle with poise, knowing she could be financially independent in their new home. It takes strength of character to negotiate moving to a new area as a single mother of two young children. Similar to the older women in St. Pierre's (1995) study, the generational lessons of other women is the way in which these working single mothers are encouraged to recognize their moral obligations, and, like the older women in St. Pierre's (1995) study, these working single mothers "learn to negotiate the force of the power relations within which they live with the grace and dignity which many attain" (p. 250).

The strict codes governing their grandparents and great-grandparents no longer dictate the female code in the everyday doing of life for these women as mothers. There is ambivalence to the codes within mother-child relations, but accommodation to and compliance with the codes persist due to patriarchal power relations that continue to affect working single mothers' career choices. For example, Blithe and McCarver (2017) reported, "Women are frequently cast as 'work mothers,' 'ice queens,' and 'overemotional.' These biases play a role in promotion, salary, role placement and hiring decisions and contribute to gender inequality at work" (p. 39).

It is possible, however, that the children of these working single mothers will experience greater freedom from such biases.

The telos. For these five participants their goal, their telos, is to make the next generation better. All five women deeply care about their children's well being, similar to the care expressed by the master, Socrates, to his student, Alcibiades, where Socrates cared "about the way in which Alcibiades will be concerned about himself" (Foucault, 2001/2005, p. 58). Foucault (2001/2005) explained further, "The master's position is defined by that which he cares about, which is the care the person he guides may have for himself" (p. 58). My participants teach their children by example, through their practices. Here are the words of all five participants, expressing their devotion to their family as they strive to be the best example they can be for their children:

"The hardest thing is not screwing up my sons life, honestly." "I miss a relationship with a man, because I like that, but it is not something I'm unwilling to sacrifice. I just think it is healthier for her and it is a short period of time in my life and hers. I have her for 18 years." "Jill, it's all about Jill! This is the life I live and this is what I say until the day I die. I begged God for that child, and I'm not going to throw it back in His face like I am ungrateful. I will do what it takes." "My kids are my strength; I have to do things because nobody else is going to do it. And they rely on me and I am not going to let them down." "And I exposed them to different things. If you put them in the position I feel if you expose them they will follow what you want them to do and take advantage of that. I work hard to try to get them where they want to be and I am proud of them."

Teaching and supporting the next generation is the ultimate goal for these five working single mothers. Sometimes they sacrifice their own needs in order to benefit their children.

These women love what they do and do not view their sacrifice negatively because through sacrifice they help the next generation to be better.

Next I describe some of their practices of care of the self, practices that both resist and accommodate the moral codes of their community and include practices specific to the everyday concerns of my participants: mother-daughter relations, kinship, finances, advocating for their children, home maintenance, and self-care.

The self-forming activity. The third aspect of ethics, the self-forming activity, involves all the things we do, the practices we use, to change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects. My participants shared generational wisdom from their mothers and grandmothers passed down to each new generation, which brings to mind Foucault's (2001/2005) discussion of *parrhesia* for the Ancient Greeks. Parrhesia is free speech, speech that is not bound by eloquent words, speech that a guide or mentor must have. Parrhesia, "for the one who utters it, it is speech that is equivalent to commitment, to a bond, and which establishes a certain pact between the subject of enunciation and the subject of conduct" (p. 406). Foucault explained that with parrhesia "not only do I feel and consider the things I say to be true, but I even love them, am attached to them and my whole life is governed by them" (p. 405). Foucault wrote that parrhesia is simple, pure, and tender in expression. This committed speech is also pedagogical, "the transmission of a truth whose function is to endow any subject whatever with aptitudes, capabilities, knowledges, and so on, that he did not possess before and that he should possess at the end of the pedagogical relationship" (p. 407). The devoted connection between a mentor and a student for the ancient Greeks is akin to the expressions of commitment from the mothers of the participants in this study to their own daughters and then from the participants to their children.

For the women in this study, a culture of tenderness and simplicity in actions and words, learned from their own mothers, is passed down from mother to child—their own enactment of parrhesia. These women wove stories about their own mothers within the fabric of their lives and in their interviews with me. Their mother-daughter relations are deep, enduring relations possessing strength, wisdom, conflict, and compromise.

Participants' Everyday Practices

The everyday practices in the lives of these five women include practices in mother-child relations, kinship, finances, advocating for their children, home management, and self-care, practices that richly detail their lives. These working single mothers experience deep-seated support—or a desire for it—in their relationships with their mothers. I begin with a mother-daughter story for each participant followed by my interpretation of practices in those stories that help them create themselves as ethical subjects of their actions.

Mother-Daughter Relations

Lynn dedicates everything she accomplishes to the memory of her mother. Lynn's physical relationship with her mother ended twelve years ago when her mother died suddenly, but their relationship is alive in Lynn, motivating her and shaping her decisions and actions. Lynn spoke tearfully of a close relationship with her mother in spite of the miles between them and said that she still constantly imagines her mother's advice on things. "Even though she lived in another state I'd talk to her like 5-10 times a day. She was an RN so any little thing, 'my daughter is coughing, sneezing, this and that,' I could ask her about anything." She took her daughter to Florida to celebrate her mother's 60th birthday and when they arrived, she discovered that her mother was extremely sick, something Lynn's mother hadn't told anyone because she was taking care of her own mother, Lynn's grandmother. Because her mother was Lynn's

confidant, Lynn was devastated and lost when her mother died. "The first thing I wanted to do when my mom passed was to call her and tell her that my mom passed. It was that kind of feeling, you know?" Recalling that pivotal time, Lynn said, "And I always say, this is my mantra, if my momma can do it for four kids then I can do it for one. So I do everything to the tenth degree trying to show my mom that it was worth it. She died so young and I am not going to make it in vain all the sacrifices she made for us." Lynn's practices are shaped and defined through thoughtful consideration of the life her mother lived and the relationship they shared.

Fran's mother was her inspiration for adopting a girl from China. Fran grew up with foster children in her home and learned about the plight of Chinese girls at a young age. Her mother's support was instrumental in Fran's decision to adopt. She went to her mother and said "I want to do this but I can't do this by myself. And my mom said, 'oh that's okay, I'll retire.' And she did!" Through her relationship with her mother, Fran was able to plan and carry out her desire to adopt a baby girl from China. Because her mother helped her take care of her adopted daughter, Fran was relieved of some of the worry and guilt that goes with leaving a baby and going back to work. Now it is Fran's turn to help care for her mother. Since the death of Fran's stepfather, Fran's mother has been lonely and difficult, and Fran finds this new space stressful. Intellectually, Fran understands her mother's situation; however, her mother's constant requests for Fran to visit her are emotionally draining. During our second interview, Fran said that her mother went to a therapist and her attitude is much better. Fran is doing much better now that her mother has a positive outlook on life.

Nisa and her mother have always been very close. Her mother left her father and moved back to Georgia when Nisa was just three. "I have a strong relationship with my mom. You know if anything happens to my mom I'm going to be lost for a long time." They share a

trusting, close relationship. When things seem really bad, Nisa finds comfort talking with her mother, "she is a very spiritual person; she gives me spiritual guidance." Her mother's life also gives her great inspiration. "When I was in high school she always made sure where I grew up that we always lived in the better neighborhood and that I had better schools. And she worked hard." Her mother did not graduate high school, and she wanted Nisa to have a better life.

As recently as a few years ago, Nisa's mother put her own life on hold in order help Nisa recover from a near death illness. After Nisa's hospitalization with status epilepticus, she was unable to be a mother for her girls for over six months. "And they just kept me asleep around the clock and I didn't know what was going on with my kids. I didn't know. My mother was basically taking care of my kids. She was getting them to school, getting them to where they needed to go, because I was there but I was no good for them." Nisa's mother put her own life on hold in order to encourage and keep Nisa's family together during this difficult time.

Similar to the story of Nisa's mother, who willingly changed her lifestyle in order to help her daughter, Brooklyn's mother opened her home to her daughter during a very difficult time in Brooklyn's life. When Brooklyn finally left her abusive marriage, it was her mother who came to get her and her son and nursed her through the traumatic experience. After healing, her mother suggested she apply for a job opening as a flight attendant, the same job she had suggested 10 years earlier that Brooklyn had laughed off. It is now the job that Brooklyn loves and wonders why she refused earlier. Her mother's support allowed her time to heal and space to figure out her future. Her mother is her stable ground. "It is still my mother and me, so anytime I had to go to work I had my mother. She is always the constant. I've never had to worry about childcare or anything like that; she's always been there. And for a couple of years it was my mother and my sister, so it was great. But it's always been my mom."

Sharon, unlike the other women in the study, is not close to her mother. Sharon recognizes a distance in her relationship with her mother since she divorced three years ago. Seeking advice from her mother is difficult because her parents never liked her ex-husband. Sharon learned her husband was having multiple affairs when they were living in Colorado, and she packed up the girls and moved back to Georgia. "It is hard to talk to my parents because it always goes back to my children's dad. My parents do not like him at all." Sharon's mother doesn't express understanding or support for the custodial agreement. "I was talking to my mom about the kids going for two months to Colorado in the summer, and my mom was 'Why? I don't think that you should let them go for that long.' And I was like Mom, he is their father, I can't keep them from him, I just can't. And she just keeps on going and going." Sharon's oldest daughter is displaying defiance and disrespect toward Sharon, "I told her if I ever talked to my parents the way she talks to me I would spend all my time in my room. I told her I still respect my parents, and it's yes ma'am, no ma'am, yes sir, and no sir. I respect them and appreciate all they have done for me." Sharon wants to be able to share these parenting issues with her mother; however, she accepts their current relationship and is hopeful that soon they will be able to discuss the difficult issues. All five women in this study respect and admire their mothers and, because of their mother-daughter relations, create their own unique practices as mothers to their own children that I will discuss next.

Practices in mother-child relations. For these five women, many everyday practices are created within their mother-daughter relations to promote the well-being of their children—the next generation—which may or may not promote the well-being of the mother. A common practice in the lives of all five working single mothers is the practice of delayed gratification. Several participants discussed not earning enough in their present employment to cover all living

expenses; however, they choose to stay in those jobs because they can be available for their children as their mothers were for them.

Lynn said this about her job, "When my daughter started school I started working for the school system and the money and accomplishments just aren't here for me. It's a great job because I'm able to do things I need to do with her schedule-wise. We have the same schedule, when I'm off she's off and I'm able to do everything. But as far as monetary, my life is not monetarily balanced with the life I live." Fran's income is considerably less than it once was, "Now I work for probably a quarter of what I used to make. I like the flexibility. You know I worked here [home] every day last week and that is huge. My daughter needed braces last week and I could take her. So that flexibility is worth it to me."

In the practice of delayed gratification, these women are willing to do whatever it takes to be available for their children, including making difficult decisions in their own lives, because they view the situation as temporary. As Fran noted, job flexibility is more important than earning more money for now because she can pursue a better paying job after her daughter, Claire, leaves home. Lynn's current job offers her the flexibility needed to support her daughter's activities, "Right now with the big scholarship that she [daughter] has, once a week she has to go to a meeting downtown. She has to be there at 4 o'clock so she has permission to leave school early. I leave my job early now once a week to take her downtown. Who else is going to take her? So, you know, just not having to deal with the stress—having this job and having the freedom to do those things is a blessing." Not making enough to make ends meet is stressful but these women view it as a temporary choice to help their children. In her work with poor single mothers in low-paying jobs, Brodsky (1999) revealed, "Beyond meeting the basics, each of the women described the need to be involved in their children's lives and to teach them

the behavior and values they need to survive (p. 153). Similarly, the women in my study chose to look at their temporary financial stressors in a positive way in their mother-child practice of putting their child's needs first, and by "making it," they allow their child to "make it" in this world. They express joy in their willingness to put their children's needs before their own; in the space of this felt joy, these women create themselves as ethical subjects of their actions.

Nisa finds joy in her practice of sacrifice, which includes encouraging and supporting her daughters, even if she has to work long shifts and weekends to cover expenses. "A lot of times I work extra—when I would really like to be relaxing—I'm doing something extra. I was working yesterday and I really don't like to work 12 hour shifts, but she [daughter] is going to London and the deposit is due soon, it's a $300 deposit, and so I work extra." Nisa's practice of encouragement is one she experienced as a child and she has made it her own. Nisa encourages her daughters to get involved in activities they find interesting, and she makes sure they are where they need to be each afternoon. "I learned while I was in school and I think I do the same thing for my daughters—I exposed them to different things and so now they are like okay mama I want to do this." Her practice of sacrifice is not always pleasant, but it is always thought out with her daughters' best interests in mind. These women sacrifice for their children with the ultimate goal of helping their children live responsibly and ethically, and through this practice they find satisfaction and a feeling of accomplishment.

In her mother-daughter relations, Lynn created her own practice of collecting documentation. Lynn collects memorabilia that documents her daughter, Jill's, accomplishments with the purpose of encouraging Jill towards achievement and also planning for her own old age. In our first interview Lynn said, "The other day we were at this big fundraiser, And I'm the only one sitting there with my camera, and I always tell her I'm taking all these videos and pictures

because when it's time for me, when I'm in the bed dying, I want to have all these things just running in my life and to remind me of all the things I did and accomplished through you. And that goes back to my mom too, because when she was dying and lying in the bed we were watching *The View*. And I was like, if she could've been looking at us, looking at those things—so I am very obsessive about pictures, about documentation." In Greek antiquity, preparing for old age was part of the care of the self. Lynn's practice of documentation is her visual reminder of her daughter's accomplishments that she can review anytime, especially in her old age.

Their devotion as mothers is played out in the actions they take for their own children and includes planning with hopefulness. Their internal optimism is a driving force behind the decisions they must make for their family and is externally expressed in their actions and words. When I first met Sharon she was self-employed, without insurance for herself, and raising two young girls. She remained hopeful in her decision to change jobs knowing it would be hard for the girls to move to a different area and make new friends in a new school setting. During our second interview, Sharon said her daughters love their new home and meeting new friends in their new neighborhood who also go to their new school. In spite of all the hurdles involved in moving, changing schools, and beginning a new job, Sharon's family is happy in their new surroundings.

Sharon's practice of planning with hopefulness also includes strategies for developing independence for her daughters. For her oldest, Ashley, Sharon created a schedule board in the kitchen for Ashley to record her homework, chores, and scheduled appointments. Sharon is hopeful the visual schedule board helps Ashley's planning and organization skills. Sharon's practice of planning in this way, with hope, allows Ashley some control in her own life. Sharon's youngest child, Maggie, is hard to get out of bed, and even harder to get dressed and

ready for school, and although Sharon wants both children to go to school in matching outfits, she is learning to let Maggie dress herself in the mornings regardless of the outfit outcome. "I said okay just pick out what you want to wear, and she had a purple shirt on with fish and then she had these cute little shorts on that had cupcakes all over them and thin black sandals. She said I'm going to wear my ugly shoes today. And I was like okay let's go! Usually I get the bow in the hair and have her matching." Her practice of planning with hope gives Maggie an incentive to get out of the bed on time and dress herself.

Nisa practices planning with hopefulness by exposing her girls to opportunities that her mother could not afford to give her and hoping that her girls find pleasure in some of the activities. Her youngest, DeShae, loves basketball and plays with the junior varsity team even though she is still in middle school. Nisa said, "She's 5 feet 5 inches tall and 141 pounds and she's good. Hopefully she'll help me and go to college that way." Nisa offered her children experiences in swimming, orchestra, basketball, track, and supports them in traveling abroad with school related groups. Her ex-husband's family does not understand why she has her daughters involved in extracurricular activities. Nisa said her ex-husband grew up "with both of his parents, but all they wanted to see him do was to work. They didn't have careers and they didn't have any vision outside of working." She teaches her daughters through her example—she works hard to give them opportunities to succeed—remaining hopeful that her example and her parenting will help her girls in the future as they make their own life decisions, just as her mother's example made a difference in her own life.

Fran and Brooklyn's practice of living with hopefulness has roots in their relationship with God. For Fran, teaching her daughter about God prepares her for a hopeful life knowing she is never alone in this world, "I was raised in the church and I never doubted it. I never have

and that's the way I raise Claire. I don't know how you live without that hope, or to be completely alone. I cannot imagine being completely alone." Their practice of planning with hopefulness includes consideration for their child's future well-being. Brooklyn's favorite Bible verse, "His mercies are new every morning," keeps her hopeful that her decisions will positively impact her son's life. For the five women in this study, there exists thoughtful consideration for their children's present and future happiness in their practice of planning with hope. This practice reassures these women and sustains them during difficult times.

Some of the other practices these women use to produce themselves as ethical subjects of their actions include their practices in kinship relations, finances, advocating for their children, home management, and self-care. I describe these next.

Participant practices in kinship relations. Kinship relations can be a support for a family with young children, but for families headed by single mothers, kinship relations are even more significant. The literature reviewed for this study acknowledged that there are kinship relations and practices in the lives of single mothers that are both helpful and hurtful. In the case of the working, single mothers in this study, like those in other studies, kinship relations both hinder and support them as they raise their children.

Lynn knows she would not have made it through those difficult days after her mother's unexpected death without the support of her sisters, "I was crazy, not an outward crazy because I am not that kind of person, it was inside—I remember taking my daughter to school in my pajamas—I was going through the motions. My sisters took care of me." Her sisters were so important to her that she chose to remain near them in Georgia rather than going back to New York where she had worked and lived with Taru prior to her mother's death. Her younger sister, Louise, who has three children of her own, told Lynn "I told mama I would finish raising you!"

Louise offers meals, money, and hair styling for Lynn. Lynn's youngest sister, Linda, is her confidant and the one she interacts with on a regular basis, sharing stories about their days and discussing their favorite television shows. Her practice of sisterly support in kinship relations is an additional resource for Lynn emotionally, financially, and spiritually. As Linda said to her one day, "Who needs friends? You have sisters!" The shared sustenance between sisters is invaluable for Lynn, supporting her and adding meaning in her life. Lynn's emotional and physical needs are answered through her practice of sisterly support in kinship relations.

Much like the literature reviewed on single mothers by choice, strong kinship relations and practices were in place before Fran set out for China to adopt a baby girl. Fran and her sister were both actively involved in helping care for their father, who was in poor health, but as she considered adoption she told her sister she could not maintain the same level of involvement in his care, "If I do this I can't help you emotionally with Dad, I can't help you physically, and I can't help you monetarily, so you need to be a part of this decision." Her sister and brother-in-law were eager to be a part of her decision to adopt and agreed to take over as full guardians for her father. Thoughtful planning on Fran's part before she adopted her daughter established kinship practices that included family members helping her out in her new role as a working single mother by relieving her of family obligations.

Sharon also has a sister, and they help each other with childcare. Once a month her sister keeps the girls so Sharon can work later, and, in return, Sharon takes care of her nephew when her sister needs help. This practice of reciprocal childcare in kinship relations brings comfort to Sharon because she does not have to worry about her girls' well-being when her sister takes care of them. Sometimes she and her sister swap babysitting duties so that each can have some time without children. Sharon keeps her nephew during the week when her sister has to travel but

finds it tiring to have the responsibility of another small child. Sharon also feels guilty if she leaves her girls with her sister for a weekend because her daughters visit their paternal grandfather every other weekend. The weight of reciprocity for working single mothers is confirmed in the literature, as Oliker (1995) noted, "The women who had considerable support from kin invested a great deal of time in caregiving and helping these others and still often felt an oppressive weight of debt" (p. 257), debt to the others who help them. Sharon said the "one voice" at home is hard and having her sister as an authority helps.

When Brooklyn moved in with her mother after leaving her husband, many loving, caring women supported her and helped her through a difficult time. "My sister would come over and take me out to the park and make sure I got some sunshine. I had two godmothers that said they wanted to pay for me to go to counseling as long as I wanted to go. I just had a strength you know around me and honestly it was women." The women who surrounded her with love and gave her the gift of time allowed Brooklyn to heal both physically and mentally before seeking work to support herself and her son. Millar and Ridge (2009) explained the changing social relationships in the lives of working single mothers, "These social relationships—at home, in work, in care settings, at school—may be a key element in employment sustainability, and one that has not yet been systematically explored" (p. 104). Through kinship relations, Brooklyn never had to worry about childcare or her son's safety, and she had the gift of time to heal from her abusive marriage. The practices in her kinship relations helped her find her career path in a job she values even more today than when she first began. Supportive kinship practices helped Brooklyn in sustaining work and sustaining care as a working single mother.

Brooklyn's other sister, who lives in Montana, moved back to Georgia and lived with Brooklyn and their mother during Brooklyn's recuperation, "it was like a God-send. It helped my sister and I mend our relationship and become friends, which was great!" Having her sisters and friends supporting her made it easier for Brooklyn to change career paths when she was ready to go back to work, knowing Jackson would be cared for while she went through flight attendant training. "I've never had to worry about childcare or anything like that." What a contrast in her world—from an environment of scorn and abuse in her marriage to an environment of admiration in her family—that allowed her time to sit in the sun, seek professional help, spend time with her son, and find strength to pursue a new career path.

Unlike stories of inconsistent help and unreliable family members in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the practices of kinship were a reliable source of support for the working single mothers in this study and their children. These five working single mothers would not have achieved the success they know at work and at home if they had not had supportive practices in kinship relations. Supportive kinship practices filled a real need in the lives of these women and their children, whether it was a meal, safe childcare, encouragement, or emotional support.

Practices related to finances. Having the money to provide a child with basic needs is challenging, and for families whose financial resources do not enable them to plan ahead for their children's future, finances become mind-boggling. I found different adaptive practices regarding finances for each participant because their financial situations are different. Of the five working single mothers interviewed in this study, only one receives alimony, two receive consistent child support from their ex-husbands, two receive sporadic child support payments,

only one receives the required help with medical expenses, and none receive help with expenses incurred in extra-curricular activities for their children such as band, track, or basketball.

Sharon's military ex-husband pays alimony and child support and covers his two daughters' medical insurance on his health insurance policy. The money Sharon receives goes towards the majority of her monthly bills, and she uses her own income for everything else. One thing she finds difficult is helping her girls understand that they cannot have everything they want. "They want a pair shoes or they want this. And yes the money I make is extra but you still have to be responsible. Okay? I'm to put this in savings and I want to put a little more on this bill. You know it's not all this money - it's a little bit. That's rough." She follows a budget, but her income makes it challenging for her to have the extra money to do fun things with her girls, and her ex-husband always does the fun things when he is responsible for them. "And I try to do the extra stuff but it's not, it's almost like you are always the disciplinarian, so I'm always the bad guy. So that's rough too. It is hard to handle when their dad comes into town and he takes them everywhere they want to go and he's not as strict as I am so he is like the fun parent." She does plan fun and affordable family activities, but her ex-husband has an unfair financial advantage and spends and spoils the girls when they visit him.

Sharon continues to pay her own medical bills incurred when she was without health insurance. When I first met Sharon she lived in a very large house, and her bills were consuming all her income, but by the time of our second interview, she and her girls were settled in their new, more affordable home, the girls were in a new school district, and she had a good job with a company she had worked for when she was married. "Switching jobs and houses helped tremendously. Last house, the electric bill was always over $300.00 each month, so I am in a better place." Sharon's practice of accepting her limited financial resources helps her work

toward healthy financial practices. One of her first steps in this transition was to downsize and move to an area that is within her budget, letting go of the big house and moving to a small home though she said she misses having privacy in her small house.

Another financial practice of the self is teaching her girls to budget by being smart about shopping. "Friday I went to Goodwill. I don't care what anybody says, I go to Goodwill and I love it. I came home and my neighbor was over, and Ashley said, I do not want to wear those clothes—somebody else wore them. And I said okay. And I started pulling them out of the bag and she said, oh! that's really cute. And I said no that is for me. Remember you don't want to wear it! And she asked if she could wear one of the dresses I bought." Sharon buys name brand clothes that she knows her girls will wear while saving money and teaching her daughters smart shopping techniques. Sharon is adapting to her financial situation as a working single mother. She is hopeful that her knowledge and understanding of budgeting helps her girls appreciate the value of money, especially when their father spoils them with money. Sharon has been a working single mother for three years, which may explain her resentment toward her ex-husband and her lowered financial status as a working single mother. She is learning to accept her financial budget and finding balance in her life through this practice.

Brooklyn lives with her semi-retired mother and finds she has to be proactive about finances in their relationship, "She ended up taking over a lot of the bill paying because everything could be cheaper under her because she is a senior citizen, which included no banking fees and a lower interest-rate and all that. So I started letting go of that control, which I was used to doing everything." Brooklyn gave her mother control of her finances when her son was little and she was learning her new career because her mother was able to secure senior citizen banking privileges; however, she and her mother are in different places financially today

compared to 12 years ago. "I don't understand why—I can tell my mother when she's going to the grocery store I need mascara—and she will freak out. Again! You need mascara again? What does it matter if I need mascara again? But she can go to the store and buy me something as a gift and it's okay. Why is it okay? It comes down to control. And I told this to my mother so we have had our good talks. And we have always been very truthful with one another. We might yell and scream, but then eventually we will come back together and work through it." Brooklyn pushes against her mother's continued need to control her finances and her money. She expects to have money for the things she needs and wants without her mother's anger and their heated arguments.

When I met Lynn she was making less than $20,000 a year, bringing home less than $1,000.00 each month. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), the poverty threshold for a family of two was $16,895. Lynn described her never-ending fear around finances in her written account of one day in her life as a working single mother. Her financial state is a constant juggling act on her part, and even though she comes to work after sleepless nights of worry and fear, Lynn carries the appearance of being put together and has a very accomplished daughter in high school. Lynn will be the first to tell you that her obsessive drive to help her daughter is because her own mother raised four children as a working single mother. If her mother could offer four children opportunities as a working single mother, Lynn believes she can do the same for her daughter Jill. But to do that, Lynn is always hopefully adapting to her financial situation.

Lynn does not let her job or her income define her; she does not settle for less but chooses to remain optimistic. Yet the word depressing comes to her mind when she thinks of her financial struggles, "you know I am driving around in this borrowed car because I can't even afford to fix my car and it is been in the shop since December 20. I get on the highway at least

three to four times a week to drive my daughter places, and here I am without even a way to get there so it is just very ironic the life I lead and live, trying to push her to be so accomplished, but I, it is hard to just survive." Lynn is still paying a high interest car loan on a car that doesn't run and is in the shop. She also has a huge student loan from her college days that she pays when she is able. Lynn's worry is understandable and yet through all her worry she adapts her thinking and plans with hope. Her faith in God supports her through her darkest financial days, "He (God) shows himself. You know like He only shows Himself like you're going to make it, you're going to make it. It's going to be okay. And it is like from the most weirdest places." I explained earlier that a man in New York not only helped her sell her father's home after his death but also gave her money to avoid eviction. Her daughter also had sponsors to help pay for a trip to Europe during high school.

Lynn accepted a job as a paraprofessional in a public school so that she and Jill have the same schedule. Her job allows Lynn the flexibility to drive her daughter to after school events, but her salary is so low that she constantly juggles bills. "After the staff meeting I took out my papers–A collection of sheets of information where I write all of my money stuff down, every day going over it and moving figures around, trying to make sense of the senselessness that is my money life." When her daughter, Jill, applied for a scholarship online she needed a deposit of $150. "I knew she needed to be one of the first to reply so she would have a good chance of securing the scholarship. What did I do? Overdraw my bank account that I had just gotten out of being overdrawn to pay her deposit so my account was minus $59 on Monday morning." Lynn's practice of adapting to her financial situation involves a lot of juggling while remaining hopeful. She acknowledged that this is stressful but she does it, preferring hope over hopeless. She knows her finances will improve when her daughter graduates, and she plans with hope to

continue her lifelong dream to be a writer for television situation comedy after her daughter is on her own.

The paid work in the lives of the five working single mothers in this study mirrors the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 concerning working single mothers: they earn less than a man in the same position and go home to the non-paid work of raising children. Society expects a mother to nurture and support their children; however, these women were devoted to their children notwithstanding society's expectations. Rather than allow monetary difficulties to define them, they created their own unique financial practices around their own unique financial situation, practices that supported them as ethical subjects of their actions regardless of what those close to them and the larger society expected of them.

Practices of advocating for their children. Parents are in a position to advocate on behalf of their children, speaking up for them at an early age. The single mothers who I interviewed are strong advocates for their children. Along with Merriam-Webster's (2018) definition of advocate, "one who pleads the cause of another" (p. 13), I include in my understanding of advocate, parental planning and decision-making for their children, because children, as minors, lack decision-making skills or the authority to advocate on their own behalf. The women in this study acknowledged their responsibility; however, I heard a committed focus to support and defend their children when they needed to. These working single mothers began advocating for their children shortly after they were born. For example, Brooklyn refused to raise her son in an abusive home, several participants chose jobs that allowed them the flexibility they needed to be available for their children, and all five women practice putting their children's welfare before their own.

Fran's practice of advocacy has roots in her own childhood experiences, recalling the difficulty she faced when her family moved every two years, "You never had really good friends—you couldn't trust anybody. It's like they were always picking on you because you were always the new kid. I didn't want that for my child." She wants to provide one home in a single place for her daughter Claire to grow up in, with friends she will know all through her schooling. "There are six kids in her grade she has grown up with and two in her class. We have a bus just for this neighborhood! The same kids that she was in playgroup with when she was two. I think that kind of stability breeds confidence. And I want her to be confident and not have to worry about where she is going to live." Fran's practice of advocating for her daughter began with her decision to adopt a baby girl from China as a single mother, "Yes, it was not an oops and I didn't end up with the husband walking away when it is not the way I envisioned my life. This is kind of how I envisioned it, so it's okay. Eyes open." Fran's practice also involves teaching her daughter, Claire, how to live without her and how to be in the present moment. They talk a lot, "and I try to be respectful of her and not talk down to her." She recognizes the importance of allowing her daughter to experience the consequences of her actions rather than overprotect her. Teaching Claire to be a strong, confident, and independent person is a message to Claire that she matters.

Brooklyn's practice of advocating for her son involved meeting with the school principal concerning a lunchroom incident at his high school. Her son, Jackson, and another boy threw unused salad dressing containers from a distance toward the trashcan; however, the dressing containers missed the trashcan and burst open, covering an innocent by-stander's boots. Jackson and his friend apologized and cleaned up the student's boots; however, the student's parents demanded that the school take action and punish the boys. Brooklyn was upset knowing such a

trivial incident could be on Jackson's record, "I wrote a scathing letter, and I'm not like that. So I wrote this letter saying you punish my son and his friends this harshly over a very innocent incident. You are almost turning it into a bully situation and it wasn't." She tried reaching her ex-husband for help but he did not respond. "So I go into the principal's office and fight the battle myself." Brooklyn went directly to the school principal to advocate on her son's behalf, refusing to allow anything negative to go in his records concerning such a trivial issue. Her determination on her son's behalf worked and the incident was not written in his permanent record.

The practice of advocating for their children also involved planning and decision-making when their children were little. When her daughter, Jill, was young, Lynn researched organizations for girls that cultivate leadership skills and assist with higher education expenses. When Jill was old enough to experience the organizations, she chose the Girl Scout organization, and through her service and leadership in Girl Scouts, Jill achieved the highest award, the Gold Award, along with college scholarships and an opportunity to travel to France, Spain, and Morocco her senior year of high school. Without her mother's planning and decision-making on her behalf when she was little, Jill may not have achieved to the degree she did. For example, Lynn recalled her telephone conversation informing a Girl Scout sponsor that Jill could not attend the trip to Europe due to financial constraints, "She's like, are you kidding me? Your daughter? Are you talking about that girl that gave that speech – because my daughter speaks at a lot of different meetings – are you talking about that one? Oh no, we are not going to let that happen!" Lynn's practice of planning and decision-making for her daughter gave her daughter, when she was old enough to decide on her own, the opportunity to choose the organization that supported her educational endeavors and allowed her to excel.

Nisa's practice of advocating for her daughters through planning and decision-making is unwavering because, as a child, she benefitted from her mother's practice of advocacy for her, "She [mother] worked hard to make sure that I went to those better high schools and I was exposed to those opportunities. And did I know how to do everything? No, but I learned while I was in school and I think my daughters, I do the same thing for them." Nisa exposes her girls to different experiences and the high school offers a variety of courses for her daughters to explore. Her oldest has refined her career path from being a lawyer in the ninth grade to being a corporate lawyer or specializing in international business as a junior, "When I was in the 11th grade I didn't know that! And even when I said I wanted to be a nurse I didn't realize there were all kinds of nurses." Along with her focused career path, Nisa's oldest daughter is on the track team, she is an involved leader in a school club, and a mentor in a community club. Her youngest daughter is a talented basketball player in middle school and also plays on the varsity high school team and a traveling team. "I appreciate what they do because that will help me out with college in the long run." Because of Nisa's practice of advocacy through planning and decision-making for her children when they were young, her daughters are now leaders among their peers. Nisa exposes her girls to eating healthy foods and is happy that they are not fast food junkies, "I feel that if you expose them, they follow what you want them to do and they take advantage of that." She believes that advocating healthy food choices for children is fundamental in teaching them to be healthy throughout their lives.

Through their practice of advocating for their children in the traditional sense of advocating as well as advocating through planning and decision-making when their children were young, the working single mothers in this study create themselves as ethical subject of their

actions. Their practice of advocating for their children teaches their children that they matter, that they are valued.

The practice of home management. Families who have two adults have an extra set of eyes and hands to help out with home ownership. Working single mothers spend eight plus hours away from home in the workplace and come home to more work. Practices of home management include meal preparation, upkeep and maintenance of the home, house cleaning, and other chores. The five working single mothers in this study created their own practices of home management based on their family and their budget.

Whether a meal is picked up or prepared at home, some planning is required. Sharon's practice is to plan meals by the day, asking the girls in the morning what they want for dinner and picking it up after work. "I think the quick stuff is not the healthiest thing but it is manageable because when I walk in the door and start cooking it is already 6 o'clock and sometimes later. We're not eating until like 7 or 7:30 and that's not good. That's not healthy." Sometimes she puts food in the crockpot in the morning so that dinner is ready that night. She and her daughters eat dinner out at least once a week. Sharon enjoys cooking when she has time but says she just doesn't have that sort of time on a regular basis anymore. When Sharon cooks a holiday meal she has enough leftovers to last into the next week, but long range planning and grocery shopping are not part of her meal preparation practice.

Fran plans, grocery shops, and prepares meals for the week, but she does not enjoy cooking, "I don't like to cook, but I like creating a home. To me that's enjoyable." She and her daughter Claire order take-out food every Friday night, "on a Friday night I do not cook and I don't clean—any dirty dishes go in the sink. Friday nights I don't do anything. By Saturday

morning, I am ready to go!" Fran's practice of meal preparation includes taking a day off from cooking because it rejuvenates her.

Nisa shops at a local wholesale club where she can buy family packs of food that will feed her family for two nights. Buying in bulk saves money and trips to the grocery store by storing the unused items in her freezer. "I cook massive amounts and we eat leftovers. I normally cook on Sunday and I took out fish so we are going to have fish today and tomorrow. On Tuesday I will cook something else from a big pack, maybe chicken, and we will have chicken on Tuesday and on Wednesday. And I will cook again on Thursday and we will have that for two days." Her youngest daughter, Simone, has a big appetite, "she has always been able to eat. She's been so greedy that she would not even breast feed because it didn't come out fast enough!" Nisa finds pleasure in preparing healthy meals for her daughters, Simone and DeShae, who are both involved in sports and have excellent appetites.

Lynn's evening and weekend meals are in the car as she drives her daughter to meetings and events. Healthy eating is not possible on her income; however, Lynn's sister, Louise, has three kids of her own and always cooks extra and invites Lynn over for a good meal. Lynn is very appreciative of the help with dinner meals.

Home management practices include home maintenance that is unique to each participant. Fran laughs at the irony of her situation, selling home mortgages for a living and finding the upkeep of owning her own home stressful. "I've got a young, single woman now who is buying a house and I can't say it but I want to say, don't do it, it will eat you up!" Home maintenance is never ending, "the lawn keeps growing and the bushes grow and the weeds come in and the trees fall down, and the paint peels and the porch needs to be swept and painted, and the house has got to be pressure washed, and rotting wood has to be replaced and foggy windows

have to be replaced. You know, it just never ends." The faucet has leaked for a couple of months but Fran is so busy with the everyday routine of home-maker, mom, employee, errand driver, and neighbor that finding time to call someone who can fix the leak and being at home when they get there is a huge challenge.

For Fran, learning how to let some things go is an aspect of her home maintenance practice. She tries to create order in her life because of her chaotic upbringing, admitting that any change in her orderly world causes her stress. During my second interview with Fran, I asked if she would go into more detail about how she handles the challenges of home ownership. Using the fallen tree as an example, Fran admitted she could either obsess over it lying in the yard and killing the grass or just wait until she has the time and the money for someone to remove it. "It wasn't like it didn't bother me, but it bothered me less than it might have in years past. I've had to learn better that I can't control everything and some things I can't control and it's okay. Have to let them go." For a person who created a need for order in her world, learning to let go requires daily work. She mentally reminds herself everyday that it is okay and one day the tree will be gone.

Keeping the home clean and tidy is a constant challenge for any family with children. Several of the working mothers in this study felt overwhelmed coming home to a cluttered home. As a child, Nisa spent her summers at her grandmother's home in North Carolina, following the same routine year after year, waking up every day at 7:30 a.m. to eat breakfast followed by a list of chores for the day. Her grandmother saved the special china in the cabinet just for Nisa to wash when she visited, even though it went right back in the cabinet until she returned the following year. Today Nisa is a working single mother of two very active girls. Nisa admits it is not easy for her to accept that she can't do it all right now without "killing myself or driving

myself insane." Now that her girls are in middle and high school, she spends her after-work hours driving them to various practices and does not have time to worry about the condition of the home, "it just got to be too much, so my house is livable and lived in. You won't die if you eat there. It is not the cleanest but it is not the dirtiest." Her daughters know that "as long as the kitchen and bathrooms are clean then we are good," but they tell Nisa that all she does is fuss about cleaning. Once the clutter overwhelms her, they stop and spend a day cleaning, which usually happens once a month. Nisa recognizes her inner struggle in this practice—finding balance between her grandmother's cleaning rituals that she learned as a young girl and her life as a working single mother of two active teens—and she constantly reminds herself of what is most important and what can wait.

During our first interview, Sharon was packing and preparing their move to a smaller home. "Don't look at my house because you wouldn't believe me but I'm very OCD. I like things in their place." Sharon's girls walk in the door after school and immediately drop everything on the floor, and everyday Sharon has to reminder her daughters to put things away. Her youngest gives her the hardest time, "She will tell me, that's not mine I'm not picking it up, and my answer all the time is, I pick your stuff up all the time and it is not mine so it does not matter. You are going to get up and do it." Trying to help each child with homework and get her own household chores done is another challenge. The oldest, Ashley, helps Maggie with her homework afterschool and that is very helpful for Sharon. Sharon's evenings are typically very busy with homework, dinner, baths and bedtime for the girls, followed by washing clothes and cleaning up before she can go to bed. Sharon's youngest, Maggie, is too young yet to have expected chores, but her oldest daughter, Ashley, has several chores including washing her own clothes, emptying the dishwasher, and walking the dog. Ashley's help relieves Sharon of some

of the stress of cleaning; however, Sharon does not have time in a day to get everything done. Her need for order clashes with her hectic daily routine raising two children alone and working full-time. "A lot of people don't understand, they have no idea how hard it is. It is just me—just me. And it's hard being the one in charge all the time making all the decisions and the one that is responsible for everything, you know, it's rough." Woven into her practice is an awareness of how difficult home management is with just one set of eyes and hands at home, which possibly adds another level of frustration in her practice of home maintenance.

Practices of self-care. The practices of self-care for each participant in my study include mothers' time and space just for themselves. For Sharon, finding space and time for herself in the small home she shares with her two elementary-aged daughters is challenging because she cannot escape the bickering and arguing between her daughters. Sharon created two practices that allow her time to think and calm down when the girls demand more than she can give. One practice is to request ten minutes of Mommy-time when she knows she needs time alone. Sharon suffers from anxiety, and, even when the girls are playing well together, the loudness and close proximity in their small surroundings can make her feel anxious, "It all goes back to the one voice and how hard that is. In my mind I try to think, please just leave me alone, but you don't say that to a child, so I let them know I need a break for ten minutes and we set the timer." Her request for Mommy-time gives Sharon time to recognize what triggered her anxiety and calm down.

Another practice of self-care for Sharon involves saying a silly, made-up word, "skittle-bot," signaling to her daughters to stop whatever is going on immediately. "And it goes back to what my mom would say, and I tell them the same thing, if you can't say something nice don't say anything at all. If you can't say something nice and have a nice tone then just zip. And I

have to take that to the nth degree. My deal is I say skittle-bot and that's it—don't cross that line. Even the dog knows." When Sharon intervenes with "skillet-bot," her children understand, stop the negative behavior, and give their mother immediate quiet time. This practice stops the arguing between sisters; however, it does not help the girls find ways to settle differences.

A trip to the salon for a manicure, hairstyle, or massage helps all five women unwind, de-stress, relax, and feel good about themselves. Nisa belongs to a massage salon and tries to go in every month. "I love massages. I get those, I belong to a massage salon so if I can get that two hours in a month I feel good." Sharon loves time to herself window shopping during her lunch break or escaping for a manicure and pedicure. Fran unwinds every Friday night by ordering out for supper and watching a television show or movie that doesn't require her to think, "it is stupid, but for me just doing something brain-less, whether it be reading a fiction book or watching Grey's Anatomy on Netflix on my iPad. For me, I will do that, just let my brain stop and check out." By Saturday morning, Fran is rested and ready to go.

Talking to their own mothers and reading the Bible are practices these women use for support to guide them through tough times. Nisa said, "I talk to my mother and pray. She is a very spiritual person; she gives me a lot of spiritual guidance. I have a strong church and they have a lot of prayer. But you know that's what I do, I spend a lot of time reading my Bible and praying about things I am struggling with."

The practices of self-care for the working single mothers in this study also include quiet, alone time in the morning before their children get up. This personal quiet time is a must in the lives of several women, a time to think or pray or just be in the moment before the day begins and the needs of their children and their jobs take precedence over their own. Fran wakes up early each morning so that she can have her time for reading, prayer, and coffee in a quiet house

before her daughter gets up. "I'm all by myself. Nobody is asking me for anything. Nobody is calling me for anything, nobody is emailing or texting me for anything. It is the only time of the day when somebody is not taking from me. I just get to be." Fran can't imagine living without her early morning time, and many days she is up before her alarm goes off, "because it is so quiet, it is me and the dogs. I like that. I like my coffee."

Brooklyn finds quiet time on the days that she is off work to pray and read her Bible and daily devotionals. She prays for wisdom and guidance to be a good parent for her son. She doesn't keep a journal; however, when she is working and a prayer for someone comes to her mind she writes it down on scrap paper, "so when I am on the plane to keep myself focused, I write my prayers out. And I think through the pen hitting that paper, thinking and focusing, I'll have people come to mind that I'm not even thinking about." After she has written out her prayer, she tosses the paper. Brooklyn loves that peaceful quiet in the morning when she can consider the day ahead, read her devotional, send encouragement to friends, and talk to God. "When I have that quiet time it is just sweet. You know I feel like God can just settle me down and speak to me about what I need to be thinking about. And I will give to Him certain issues that I'm worried about. Sometimes God will put other people in my heart and I can start praying for them. A lot of times I send a prayer to somebody through text, you know, as an encouragement to say, hey somebody is thinking of you. I just like it."

Exercise is a practice these women know is good for them. As I transcribed my first interview with Fran, I laughed as she talked about exercising, "If I was going to do something for me it would not be exercise! I run to the bathroom and from fires and that is it!" Fran exercises because it is the smart thing to do, "I want to be stronger and healthier—and I need to be. I don't want to be a burden to Claire some day. And I don't want to be as weak as my mother is

physically." When Claire was young, Fran chose not to go to the gym, "the last thing that she needs or I need, is to pick her up after not seeing her all day and go dump her in a day care somewhere at a gym. And that is an hour and a half less that I get with her in the evening, and that is an hour and a half less she gets with me." When Claire was young, they did fun things together outdoors to stay fit like riding bikes, swimming, and playing in the yard. "We lived outside, it was fun. It was a blast really, and it is gone before you know it." Now that Claire is older it is easier for the two of them to go to the gym together.

It is harder for Nisa to find time for the gym now that her girls are older and need transportation to their different practices. She would like to workout while her daughters practice, but her gym is in the opposite direction. "I'm going to have to cancel the work-related gym facility membership and find one that's closer to the house so that when she [DeShae] is in basketball practice I can run up there and get something in." Nisa is motivated to find a gym and take care of her body and end her guilt for not using her current gym membership and working out.

Brooklyn is not as motivated as she once was to workout, "And then as the years have gone on it seems like the free time after flying has gotten shorter or I don't want to do anything, as I'm tired." When she is working, she uses a workout app consisting of weight training and abdominal exercises that don't involve pounding the pavement or a treadmill after working 12-16 hours in heels. When she is home, she and Jackson go to the gym together and encourage each other. Brooklyn seeks balance in her life, getting back into the pattern of working out consistently and not letting her work schedule throw her off course. In our follow-up interview, she was frustrated because she had to work nine days with only one day off and had to re-establish her exercise routine at home. For these working single mothers, finding time to

exercise consistently is a challenge; however, they feel better about themselves when they do, knowing the work they accomplish exercising improves their inner and outer selves.

Another practice of self-care for some of the women in this study included watching television or reading a book. Lynn loves watching situation comedy and critiquing the shows, and is passionate about pursuing her dream of writing for television one day in the near future. Her practice of critiquing different television shows keeps her dream alive. Several participants love to escape into the world of television, and Fran admitted she probably watches too much television, "I like television, I watch a ridiculous amount. I like television way more than I should!" After thinking all day at work, Fran loves to turn her brain off at home and escape with a good mystery book or a favorite television show, "Just let my brain stop and check out." The women in this study find pleasure in their practices of self-care that allow them time to de-stress from the day, escape into a world of make-believe, and rejuvenate. This practice of self-care is a vital part of every day, shaping their lives into works of art.

Summary

In the same fashion the ancient Greeks' practices of care of the self were carried out in relations, the practices of care of the self for the five working single mothers in this study are found within generational mother-daughter relations. The codes of Christianity and southern womanhood, which I discussed earlier in this chapter, set the tone for the ways their mothers helped them learn how to be mothers and understand the impact the role of mother has in shaping the morals and values of their own children. It is within their mother-daughter relations that these working single mothers recreate or create their own set of practices. An ethics of obligation, wishing a better life for the next generation, arises from mother-daughter relations in the lives of the women I interviewed. Their relationships with their own mothers includes

talking, sharing, watching, and learning—a process that is always evolving day by day. Much the same as the apprentice learns the art of a trade by watching and helping someone seasoned in the trade, these women learned their own arts of existence from watching their own mothers' practices as they created their own set of practices through accommodation and resistance to the codes found within their own culture.

Their telos, their desire to give the next generation a better life, was born within mother-daughter relations and fuels their practices. Practices of care of the self often involve sacrifice and always involve others. These women take care of their children and the relationships around them much like the ancient Greeks took care of their city, "A Greek citizen of the fifth or fourth century would have felt that his *techne* for life was to take care of the city, his companions" (Foucault, 1984/2010, p. 348). The disciplined ethics of the ancient Greeks was vital for the continuity of strong leadership in the same way these women strive to offer their children a better life.

Through their daily practices, these five women created themselves, not only as ethical subjects of their actions, but as works of art, similar to the ancient Greeks that Foucault (1984/2010) discussed, "It was a question of making one's life into an object for a sort of knowledge, for a *techne*—for an art" (p. 362). Their desire to help their children, the next generation, brings joy to the women in my study. I saw their joy on their faces and felt their joy expressed in words during our interviews. Even the participants who did not have enough money for basic necessities found great joy in helping their children succeed. Lynn willingly did without because her efforts allowed her daughter incredible opportunities that left Lynn feeling a sense of accomplishment in her work as a mother. Foucault (1984/2010) noted, "I think we have

to get rid of this idea of an analytical or necessary link between ethics and other social or economic or political structures" (p. 350). I couldn't agree more. I still sense their joy.

Like care of the self for the ancient Greeks, my participants' practices are established in relationships; for the Ancient Greeks it was in sexual relations for the elite, male leaders; for these working single mothers, care of the self is established in mother-daughter relations. Unlike the elite, male leaders of antiquity, my participants are women. They are mothers and daughters and granddaughters. They could be leaders in their cities, but as mothers, they cultivate future leaders. They are their child's first knowledge, an intimate bond that offers the child time to know the rhythms of her day—her voice, her laugh, her cry, and her beating heart. I believe that like the ancient Greeks, the problem is the same for these women: "are you a slave to your own desires or their master?" (Foucault, 1984/2010, p. 349). Their commitment doesn't waiver: it is evident in their homes, in their workplace, and the larger community in which they live.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The ancient Greeks' care of the self was a lovely fit for this qualitative researcher who was curious about how other working single mothers live and manage their lives. My research into the daily practices of working single mothers as they construct themselves as ethical subjects emerged from my own journey as a working single mother and an inquisitiveness about how other working single mothers manage their lives. I was introduced to Foucault's (1984/1988) ethical work describing the ancient Greeks' practice, care of the self, and thought it might be helpful in my investigative quest. Although care of the self was a practice reserved for elite male leaders during Greek antiquity, it reminded me of the work women do and have done from time eternal. Women invest years in teaching and guiding their children toward responsible citizenship as adults, *bearers of culture*. If the Greeks' care of the self included practices that allowed them to create themselves as ethical subjects of their actions, and if mothers teach their children through their everyday practices, then one can argue, as I do, that the ancient Greeks' care of the self can, more or less, be used for this group as well.

My research questions evolved after reading Foucault's (1984/1985, 1985/1986, 2001/2005) description of the ancient Greek practice of care of the self, and my curiosity found meaning. St. Pierre (1995) used writing as a method of inquiry, noting "It has also enabled a more direct relationship with the reader, since the self-evidence of the author/authority position is disrupted when the reader's contribution to the meaning of the text must constantly be addressed" (p. 301). Writing throughout my research project taught me the importance of

writing clearly in order to avoid misinterpretations. I must say that this is a lifelong endeavor I find worthy of pursuing.

St. Pierre (1995) wrote:

> If words do not represent the Real or True but construct a text loaded with contested signifiers which are open to multiple interpretations, then paying attention to what is going on as words appear on the page and to the effects of the product becomes not only an intellectual activity but also an ethical one. (p. 305)

In this chapter I will summarize what I have learned about my research. I will attempt to connect the dots between my initial curiosity about how other working single mothers manage their lives, my research questions, and questions that developed as I wrote through this research project.

Creating Themselves as Works of Art

As described earlier, the five working single mothers in my study invented practices or borrowed existing practices from the cultural codes available to them in order to create themselves as ethical subjects of their actions. The codes of the southern woman, patriarchy, and Christianity are mingled together, silently governing the lives of the women I interviewed; however, the strict codes governing their grandmothers and great-grandmothers no longer dictate the southern woman code in the everyday doing of life for these women. My participants created their own practices through resistance to the codes they found in their culture and some they borrowed from their culture, in order to create themselves as ethical subjects of their actions.

The practices in the lives of the working single mothers in this study include practices in mother-child relations, kinship relations, finances, advocating for their children, home management, and self-care. Their practices give meaning to their own lives and are firmly fixed

in obligation and responsibility in order to offer their children a better life. The determined and heartfelt desire of these working single mothers to make the next generation better is recognized by many, including their children. "They have created their own ethos in a private sphere which, in turn, has had a rhizomatic, unexpected, and uncontrollable influence on their culture" (St. Pierre, 1995, p. 303). Even though the dominant discourse of patriarchy has not changed enough to accommodate working single women with children, the practices found in the mother-child relations of my participants ignored and challenged patriarchy's power. The daily practices of these five working single mothers, whether learned or invented, help them accomplish their aspirational goals to be a good role model for their children as they work to offer them a better life, and find pleasure in their own lives. Through it all, these women experience great joy.

Writing Through Research Thoughtfully

My research questions guided me through my work and included:

1. What are the daily practices of the self used by five working single mothers who live in the South?
2. What kind of subject is produced from these practices?
3. How can these everyday practices be understood in relation to the ancient Greek care of the self that Foucault described?

I kept these questions in front of me as I worked to stay focused. Next to these I kept my understanding of Foucault's description of morality for the ancient Greek leaders. Writing thoughtfully through research involved the ethical task of honoring the words of my participants. Listening to the recorded interviews took me right back to the day of the interview and I could remember our interactions. However, it was in the silent spaces of the interview where I heard once again a heart-felt love for their own mothers and deep commitment to their children. The

ancient Greek practice, care of the self, developed in sexual relations, and their telos was to be an honorable and good leader for their city-state. The practices of the women in this study formed in their family relations with their mothers and children and their telos was to make the next generation better. They strived to improve themselves in all aspects of their lives—as a mother, daughter, employee, colleague, and friend—because they were committed to their children's future well-being. Their practices created them as ethical subjects of their actions.

Woven into practices of these working single mothers were reliable support networks. Similar to the research covering single mothers, these women needed help with childcare. Unlike most of the research on single mothers which reported they did not have reliable family members they could consistently count on, the women in this study knew they could count on their mothers or another family member to help them out with childcare, whether it was transportation to school and other activities or being at home to care for the children full-time when the mothers had to be away. These working single mothers verbally expressed comfort knowing their children were well cared for during their absences. And I heard their comfort resting in the silent spaces of our taped conversations.

The codes of the southern woman, patriarchy, and Christianity, found in their culture, did not support these working single mothers who were raising their children alone, working full-time, and managing a home; therefore, these women found the support they needed in mother-daughter and kinship relations and developed their own set of practices in resistance to the negative aspects of their cultural codes. Even though several women in this study did not make enough money to cover all their expenses, they developed practices of resistance to the codes to help them as they raised their children. They preferred a job with low pay and flexible hours over a higher-paying job that would not let them be responsive to their children's needs. These

women did not mind the sacrifice because they understood their time with their children was temporary; therefore, they established practices that supported them, allowed them to give their best each day on behalf of their children, brought joy to them, and created themselves as ethical subjects of their actions, as works of art.

It was the joy they found in their willingness to temporarily set their needs on hold and establish disciplined practices safeguarding their children's future successes that I admired most in the women I interviewed. In the midst of a busy hectic life, these working single mothers kept their focus on helping their children toward a better life, and their efforts brought them joy. They expressed pride in their children, pride in their work to help their children, and pleasure and joy in what they were doing even though it was not easy. I admired too, the source of their joy; that is, their commitment to teach their children how to be ethical by trying to live their lives ethically.

The five women I interviewed were very different, and yet they shared common practices connecting them as working single mothers. Some of their practices, particularly practices related to finances, helped me understand my own financial decision-making as a working single mother. When I was raising my daughter, my income was limited. I thought I needed a better home, the latest fashions, and a new vehicle, to be accepted as successful. Looking back on that time, I now realize the impact capitalism had in my life and in some of my decisions. I have learned it is not necessary to move up in this world by society's standards. I am now working on practices that allow me to create myself as the ethical subject of my actions.

The Eternal Connection of Mother and Child

The working single mothers in my study were close to their own mothers. The relationship they shared with their mothers nurtured and helped to develop their own practices as

mothers to the next generation. Their practices consisted of self-less activities that were established in mother-child relations in order to give their children a better life, and created them as ethical subjects of their actions. In their current roles as working single mothers, they understood the long-term gain in putting their children first as well as the short-term sacrifice of setting their own needs to the side for a time. They believe that when their children are grown, their own interests will be center-stage once again.

Similar to previous research, the complexities of raising a family on one income, the need for support from family and friends, and the unpaid work required at home while raising children was evidenced throughout my participant's practices. In St. Pierre's (1995) study using care of the self, the older women she interviewed practiced care of the self within friendship relations as they stylized themselves "for the sake of love and pleasure" (p. 302). For the working single mothers in my study, friendships existed; however, their practices were formed in mother-child relations for the sake of the next generation. I am curious now as to whether the women in my study will practice care of the self in different relations when they are older and their children have left home.

Through her relationship with her mother, each participant internalized some of her mother's practices that worked for her. Four participants attribute their ability to live with faith and hope directly to their mothers; they are spiritual and practice their spirituality as they learned it through their relationship with their mother. Living with hope, walking in faith, and feeling blessed on so many levels are practices learned through their relationship with their mothers. Similar to the single mothers in Brodsky's (2000) study, these are practices that these working single mothers actively repeat for their own children so that they may have a better life. My

participants' mothers were the bearers of culture for them, and now they are the bearers of culture for their own children.

This study led me to examine women's relations with their own mothers. I still wrestle with the memory of the relationship I once shared with my own mother. She was a beautiful southern belle who was socially involved in the community and always dressed like a lady should for the occasion. I prefer tractors, diesel, and grease under my nails. As I grew into my teens our relationship shattered. My mother never stopped giving her children advice when she felt we needed it; that was my mother. Our relationship mended when I became a mother and then, very slowly, dementia took her away from us. If mother's cognitive abilities were not impaired, I am sure we would still disagree; however, her disease brought us closer together. Where we once lacked simple pleasures in our relationship, we now share laughter and quiet times outdoors with nature. I am devoted to her. Our relationship is immensely complicated and eternally connected.

I have often wondered how my maternal ancestors handled themselves during their lifetimes. Were they silenced by the strict cultural codes of their generation? Did they silently resist the codes found in their culture and carve out a space for themselves as women in a man's world? I would like to think that my grandmothers' mothers and my great-grandmothers' mothers were trailblazers who pushed against limiting cultural codes so that life would be better for the next generation. Understanding their practices using the ancient Greeks' practice of care of the self would be fascinating and revealing.

The ancient Greek practice, care of the self, described by Foucault, gave meaning to the daily routines in the lives of my participants. Investigating their practices using care of the self

revealed a deep relational bond with their own mothers and their children, as if an eternal promise to help the next generation is shared and passed on from mother to child.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study afforded me a greater understanding of Foucault's description of morals for the ancient Greeks including care of the self, and how care of the self can be helpful for understanding how the working single mothers in my study manage their lives. The women in my study were committed to helping their children develop healthy practices they can use now and as adults. I would love to interview these same women in the future—when their children are grown adults—to understand what they do every day, the things that are important in their lives, and what brings them pleasure. Of course, I would use the ancient Greeks' care of the self to help me understand their practices. Will the relations in which they form their practices be the same? Or will they be something different? I would also want to learn at different stages of their lives whether and how their own mothers' influence changed.

I also have questions about fathers, single or married, of young children. I have been privileged to watch some of the men in my extended family share in nurturing and in the unpaid work involved in raising children. I am curious if the roles and views of being a father are changing. Are the fathers of very young children an integral part of their development? How are fathers managing parenting demands and work in the 21st century? Patriarchy created the illusion that only women have what is necessary to successfully nurture their children, leaving men out of the private sphere of getting to know their children while guiding them to adulthood. Even though it is challenging to work and raise children, my participants found joy in their sacrifice, knowing that their hard work was worth it and their situation was temporary. In her book, *The Price of Motherhood,* Ann Crittenden (2010) concurred, "A large and growing body

of research in child development has shown that care and guidance of the young child lays the essential groundwork for the formation of human knowledge, skills, creativity, and entrepreneurship" (p. 71). The working single mothers in this study find pleasure in their commitment to their children's successes.

The dedicated investment of mothers is deemed honorable and at the same time expected in American society; however, working mothers have yet to receive extended paid maternity leave to nurture their newborns, giving the infants time to develop before facing a day care setting and many mothers are required to return to work when their baby is six-weeks old. This is a tragic American reality and another existing double standard for women, where nurturing the next generation of leaders is valued but is not economically supported. The role of mother is acknowledged as valuable, hard work; therefore, it should also be given monetary value, so that mothers, especially working single mothers, do not have to choose between work and the well-being of their children. Future research into the practices of working single mothers with newborns could be helpful.

Concerning the subject, Foucault (1988) wrote, "the subject is not the operating ground for the process of deciphering but is the point where rules of conduct come together in memory" (p. 34). I argue that the practices of the working single mothers in this study established them as ethical subjects of their actions. As mothers, their practices allowed their children to take to memory the rules of conduct they witnessed through their mothers' practices. These mothers call themselves role models for their children and they want their children to have a life better than the one they know. By modeling their practices to their children, they teach their children ethical lessons, codes of conduct, practices they can take with them throughout life, and the opportunity to create themselves as ethical subjects of their actions.

Implications

> A mother's work is not just invisible; it can become a handicap. Raising children may be the most important job in the world, but you can't put it on a resume.
>
> (Crittenden, 2010, p. 3)

Similar to previous research, my research revealed the complexities of raising a family on one income and the need for support from family and friends, but it also differed from other research because I used the ancient Greeks' care of the self, an ethical analysis described by Foucault (1984/1988) to understand the practices within which five working single mothers take care of themselves and others. Care of the self involves practices these women use in order to create themselves as ethical subjects of their actions. Programs that assist working single mothers and their children could benefit from this research. Programs, along with policy makers, can greatly enhance the quality of life for both working single mothers and their children. All that is required, really, is a new and fresh approach, one that considers a plan of action after reviewing what and how working single mothers do for themselves and their children. Even where the literature supported the deficit model in the lives of working single mothers, the working single mothers were doing the best they could so that their children could have a better life. If programs and policy makers begin by acknowledging all that working single mothers do in a day, these programs will be able to successfully implement strategic plans supporting the needs of single mother families. For example, federal monies were allocated to states in order to establish quality and affordable childcare programs for low-income working single mothers. There is still a great need for quality and affordable childcare, which when available, will enhance the lives of many working single mothers and their children. For the single mothers in this study, establishing themselves as ethical subjects of their actions may not be included in

their resume for work; however, it can affect the resumes of their children, the recipients of so much of their hard work.

What does it mean that this ethics, care of the self, still exists in Western culture? In *Technologies of the Self,* Foucault (1988) explained the Stoic administrative review of one's life, one of the technologies of the self used by the ancient Greeks. That review is concerned with remembering truth in the subject, a recovered truth that was forgotten, "the recollection of errors committed in the day" (p. 34), and allows for adjustments between what was done and what was supposed to be done. Similar to this ancient Greek practice, several women in this study found quiet time each morning to review all that needed to be accomplished that day. Knowing that care of the self is established in relations and that the women in my study established their practices within mother-daughter relations, it could be said that this ethics, care of the self, still exists, tucked quietly into submission in Western culture.

This study revealed in the lives of my participants a set of practices situated in mother-child relations, whose example gave meaning and strength for our next generation of leaders and created these women as ethical subjects of their actions. While this chapter ends this research project, it is my beginning in understanding the delicate rhythms shared in mother relations and the endless possibilities of expression found within.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about your life right now.
2. Walk me through a typical day.
3. Tell me about your job.
4. How are you managing home?
5. How are you managing kids and all their needs and scheduling?
6. Transportation?
7. What do you do for yourself?
8. What brings pleasure to your life?
9. When things seem really bad what do you do?
10. What is the hardest thing to deal with?
11. Do you have a support system? Can you tell me more about this?
12. If you could change a few things what would you change?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Dear _____,

You are being invited to participate in this research study entitled, "Where Self and Culture Meet: Working Single Mother's Practices of Self Care". Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can ask to have all the information about you returned to you, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The main objective of this study is to understand working single mothers practices of care of the self and to interpret how these practices are possible.

You may benefit from participation by learning more about the research process as well as have the opportunity to reflect on your experience as a single working mother.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Participate in two 90-120 minute interviews, in a place that is comfortable for you, beginning late January 2014.
- Make and audio recording of a day in your life, recording even the mundane activities in a day.
- Total participation in the study will be one day audio recording and 2 hours for interviews between the months of January and May, 2014.

The researcher wishes to make audio-tapes of the interviews and your typical day. Please check the appropriate box below if you are willing to allow the researcher to audiotape your voice during your interview and home visit as well as taking an audio-recorder to record a day in your life.

No risks are anticipated from participation in this study.

The researcher will keep your identity confidential. The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. You will be assigned a pseudonym and it will be used on all labels, transcripts, and writings about the research. Audiotapes of the interview and home visit and any individually identifying information collected from you will be kept in a locked file which only the researcher can access. All audio tape recordings will be stored in a flash drive with a security password that only the researcher will know. This flash drive will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. All recordings will be destroyed on December 31, 2014.

Any individually-identifiable information collected about me will be kept confidential unless otherwise required by law. The researcher will answer any questions about the research now, or

during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (770-846-8060) or email lsmith56@uga.edu. I may also contact the professor supervising the research, Dr. Cheryl Fields-Smith, at (770) 634-1676 or cfields@uga.edu.

Laura Schmidt Smith _____ _____
Name of Researcher Signature Date

Address: Department of Educational Theory and Practice

629 Aderhold Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

I agree _____ I do not agree _____ to participate in the interviews for the research study and to have her interview audio-taped.

I agree _____ I do not agree _____ to share the audio recording of my interviews for the research study.

I agree _____ I do not agree _____ to take an audio-recorder for a day and record the events of the day.

I agree _____ I do not agree _____ to give permission to the researcher to write, publish, and present the findings from my participation in the research, using a pseudonym to protect my identity.

I understand the project described above. My questions have been answered and I agree to participate in this project. I have received a copy of this form.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 609 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail irb@uga.edu.

APPENDIX C

INITIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Participants for this study will be nominated from friends, neighbors and other social contacts. Further participants may be nominated from potential participants. All participants will be advised from the gatekeeper contact that they have been nominated for the study and that the researcher will contact them, if they are interested. Once permission to contact has been made the researcher will conduct an initial call as follows:

Researcher: Hello, my name is Laura Schmidt Smith. I am doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. I received your name and phone number from _____, who suggested you might be interested in participating in a research study on single mothers. Is this a good time for me to share more about the study with you? [If not, reschedule a better time to call.]

Researcher: As _____ may have told you the topic that I am studying is single mother's with my supervisor Dr. Cheryl Fields-Smith. Specifically, single mother's practices of care of the self, because as I continue to read and learn more about single mothers, I find that there is not a lot of information available on the resiliency and strengths of single mothers. Let me share with you the process for the interview and your rights. Please feel free to stop me if you have any questions at any time.

If you decide to be involved in this study, you will be asked to agree to one interview and one follow up interview. Both interviews will be scheduled at your convenience and held wherever you feel comfortable. I will ask that you allow me to record the interviews in order to have a transcript made of the each. I will pay for childcare during our meetings. Additionally, you will be asked to carry a digital recorder for a day, recording a typical day for you, even the things that you think are not important.

During the initial interview, I will ask you questions about where you are from, your experiences growing up, and your everyday practices of care of yourself as a single mother. I want to know what it is you do and how you do it. The questions in the follow up interview will come directly from our first interview. Shortly after each interview you will receive a copy of the interview transcript, which I will ask you to review to make sure that what it says is correct.

Should you decided to participate in the study I will need to have you sign a consent form at the time of the first interview. This consent form explains your rights as a participant. Let me review these rights to you now. It is important that you understand that throughout the interview process you have the right to not answer any particular question or to stop the interview process without providing an explanation. Your real name will be kept confidential. A fictitious name will be given to you, or you may select your own. This name will be used on all documents related to the study. I will keep the copy of the tape and transcripts in a secure place, again only your fictitious name will appear on these items.

There are no risks associated with your participation in this study. Unfortunately, there are also no direct benefits available to you in return for our participation in the study as well. Instead, your participation in the study will contribute toward the understanding of single

mothers from the lens of strength, which will assist communities and schools in understanding the resiliency of single mothers, helping to change the current deficit model of single mothers.

In order to be eligible to participate in this study, you must be a working single mother of school-age children who exhibits resiliency and does not have a live in partner.

Do you meet these criteria?

Do you have any questions?

Would you be willing to participate?

APPENDIX D

TIMELINE

December 2013	IRB Approval
January-August 2014	Data Collection
August 2014-April 2015	Review and Analyze Data
December 2016-October 2018	Reading and Writing
November 5, 2018	Defense
December 14, 2018	Graduation