

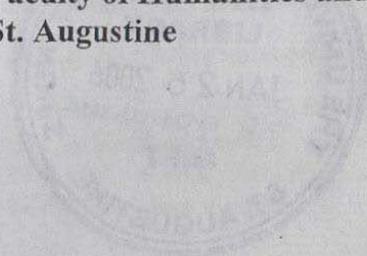
**PARENTING THE AT-RISK ADOLESCENT.
FIVE CASE STUDIES OF SINGLE MOTHERS FROM TRINIDAD.**

**A Thesis
Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of
Masters in Philosophy of Education**

**Of
The University of the West Indies**

**By
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Abstract

Parenting the at-risk adolescent. Five case studies of single mothers from Trinidad.

Nathalie K. Atkinson

This dissertation examines parental involvement of the at-risk adolescent from five female-headed single parent homes in Trinidad. The phenomenon of the single female parent home has existed in the Caribbean for many years and has its roots in the introduction of the slave trade.

Statistics show that single-parent families headed by women considerably outnumber those headed by men. Financially, socially and socioeconomically, the circumstances of single parents vary. Many are struggling to make ends meet, caught in low-paying jobs or none at all. Some female heads have the benefit of extended families while many remain alone with their children, experiencing feelings of isolation. Some allow their children to maintain contact with non-residential fathers, yet others do not. In addition to all of these circumstances, family background, personality and coping styles also influence how the single parent family functions and how their children develop.

Women head five homes in Trinidad were interviewed along with their children or wards and their respective teachers. These were homes with students who were performing well academically despite living in disadvantaged situations. This study documents the processes involved in each woman's interactions with her child. Furthermore, a cross comparative analysis was done. The data analysis revealed several dimensions of parental involvement: Family background, Headship / matrifocality and Coping skills / support. The additional dimensions of involvement of these mothers with

their children ranged from the psychological to the concrete and were captured by the following themes: Discipline / parenting styles, Parental perceptions of education/ Educational expectations, Parental provision of resources to build literacy, Parental moral expectations, Parent-teen interactions, Allowances for relationships.

The findings highlighted the resourcefulness and dedication of the mothers/guardians in encouraging their children in the schooling process. They also highlighted the importance of supportive educators to these families and pointed to the need for further research into the intrafamilial processes which operate in such family structures and alternative ones – such as two-parent households in the Trinidad and Tobagonian context.

I am indebted to the students, their mothers, guardians and teachers without whom this work would not have been possible. I am also indebted to the other members of the faculty for their support and constructive criticism. To Mrs. Zita Wright, your spiritual support was crucial and appreciated.

I wish to thank my husband and two sons for their patience, encouragement and all the trips they gave up until I could finish this work. She who finds a supportive family has a good thing.

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I am indebted to the students, their mothers/guardians and teachers without whom this work would not have been possible. I am also indebted to the other members of the 'quadrivium' (you know who you are) for the emotional support and constructive criticism. To Mrs. Zita Wright, your spiritual support was crucial and appreciated.

I wish to thank my husband and two sons for their patience, encouragement and all the trips they gave up until I could finish this work. She who finds a supportive family finds a good thing.

To my mother

who encourages me to excel at all things

and who remains

the most intelligent and most beautiful person

that I will ever know.

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The Problem

For over 3 decades, the primary school system of education in Trinidad & Tobago culminated with what was called the Common Entrance Examination. This examination originated in the British system and through colonialism this legacy of the 11+ examination had been left in the Commonwealth (Payne & Barker 1986). On an annual basis, over this period of time, those students who had not been assigned to secondary schools based on the Common Entrance Examination remained in post primary classes.

However, in its quest to provide quality education, the Ministry of Education constructed separate facilities called Post Primary centres. The students who attended these were to be exposed to a curriculum that included academic work, vocational training, personal development, remedial work and one that would also furnish them with 'essential life skills'.

These facilities were first introduced as a pilot of 9 Post primary centres throughout several districts in Trinidad and Tobago. By 1998-1999, when I collected data for this thesis, there were 40 Post Primary Centres in Trinidad & Tobago. The aims and objectives of this revised post primary system of education were primarily remedial in nature:

- To provide a flexible type of education which could be either terminal or preparatory for further education;
- To deliver a programme of study suited to the varying abilities and interests of the students who move on to post primary classes;

- To institute a programme of study which include(d) remedial work in literacy and numeracy (so as to prepare them for responsible adult life);
- To enhance the self-esteem of students since most children who (did) not gain a place at the secondary level suffer(ed) from low self-esteem and
- To provide guidance and counselling and basic life skills, including an orientation towards the world of work, to all students of post-primary centres.

Draft Education Policy (1997-2003 p4-5)

Though theoretically the concept of post primary education was sound, there appeared to have been a general failure in its implementation. According to the National Task Force on Education Report (1995), among the factors which worked against the programme's success were:

- The poor physical facilities
- Lack of autonomy resulting in them being mere extensions of the primary schools to which they [were] attached
- A 'continued cycle of student failure at the Primary School Leaving Certificate examination' (which was based on an assessment of the numeracy and literacy skills acquired at the Centres)
- Demoralized teachers and students

All students exposed to the programme were required to write the Post Primary School Leaving Certificate examination in four areas: English, Mathematics, Composition / Comprehension and General Paper. The most important factor determining success at the programme appeared to be the student's performance in the examination.

Statistics from the Ministry of Education showed that, on average, 25% of those who wrote the Post Primary School Leaving Certificate examination secured passes in the required 4 subjects - English Language, Mathematics, Composition and Comprehension and General Paper. Such students would then be eligible to attend Junior Secondary Schools. However, attendance was not automatic but dependent on the availability of spaces. A small percentage of the others (who did not attain full passes) went on to vocational schools. The remainder survived by securing employment, becoming self-employed where possible (I know several students who now sell haberdashery), or as with some of my former female students, remaining at home.

In an effort to ensure that primary school students achieved functional levels of literacy and numeracy needed to embark on some form of education beyond the primary level (for example youth camp, the world of work), or secondary education, the Secondary Entrance Assessment was developed to replace the Common Entrance examination.

Criticism against the Common Entrance Examination is summarized by Payne & Barker (1986). These authors began by delineating the criticism of the exam in England where it originated:

- Its restricting influence on the upper junior school curriculum
- The practice of streaming that resulted as a penalty for late developers and lower class children
- The reliability and validity of the exam itself (that a child's future depended on the his performance on a single day's test)
- The distorting influence of excessive coaching on results

- Mounting evidence that the exam ‘incorrectly placed’ significant numbers of children
- The question of whether assigning children to different school types at age 11 was optimally beneficial
- The negative antecedent and subsequent psychological effects of the examination on children, teachers and parents. [The exam had a high failure rate and placed children under prolonged stress. The teachers, who feared handicapping the children, focused all teaching upon the exam. The authors quote excerpts from the Shorey Report (para48) which stated that, “the effect (of the examination) on pupils who do not succeed in acquiring a place in the government secondary schools is, without doubt, a considerable factor in the future development of children, and it would not be too strong to say that in many instances, they automatically become second-class citizens” (p314)].

Payne & Barker (1986) next examined the effects of the examination in the Barbadian education system and I highlighted what I consider the similarities in findings between that and our system in Trinidad & Tobago:

- To maximize success, many primary schools remove all non-examined subjects from the upper junior primary time-table
- Though partial zoning was instituted, parents prefer to secure places at the older schools (which are more highly regarded and considered prestige); yet these schools have limited places.

(p313-315)

The Common Entrance Examination had been in existence in Trinidad & Tobago since the 1960s (over thirty years) and as mentioned previously was used as a placement mechanism for the secondary school. There were limited spaces available and a great demand to gain entry. Though the government provided additional schools over the succeeding years, this did not remove the demand for the traditional schools which were viewed by members of the public as 'institutions of greatest prestige' (Report of the Task Force for the Removal of the Common Entrance Examination, 1998)].

The Common Entrance Examination covered Mathematics, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies through multiple choice test questions. There was the belief that students could guess the answers to the multiple-choice examination and obtain a mark that was not a true reflection of their academic abilities.

When the government replaced the Common Entrance examination with the Secondary Entrance Examination the subjects Science and Social Studies were removed from the list of subjects examined for the former exam and the essay component was raised from 12 marks to 48 marks, thereby allowing for greater differentiation between the performances of students and minimizing the distorting effects of conversion to a standardized score (Report of the Task Force for the Removal of the Common Entrance Examination, 1998).

With an emphasis on identifying and providing for those students who need remedial work, the additional focus of providing secondary education for all was introduced. Universal Secondary Education (USE) was launched in 2000. This system places every primary school student in a secondary school and removed the need for a post primary system of education. In order to provide a secondary school place for each

primary school student additional secondary schools were built from 1998 – 2003, with the priority being on those districts that were least provided with secondary school places. As of 2004, school construction continues.

Form 1 Special (1S) classes in the secondary schools were designed to receive those students who would have been assigned to Post Primary centres and classes. However, critical problems continue to plague this system of education. It was recognized that in 2001, there were over 6,000 students 'sitting in secondary schools who had not yet mastered basic primary school skills' and that intervention was required to ensure that the original goal of improved student learning – the advance of their literacy and numeracy development is made achievable (Ministry of Education 2001).

For the Form 1 special child, the available options are: secondary school classes Forms 1 to 5, Servol Junior Life Centres, SERVOL Adolescent Development Programmes, Youth Training Entrepreneurship Partnership Program, education extension classes, graduate to responsible citizenship, graduate directly to world of work, enter a youth camp, or other (Ministry of Education 2001).

The reality is that these 1S classes, as they are referred to, still comprise students who could be considered at risk. Thus the findings of this thesis are relevant to this student population. The term 'at-risk' is used to suggest that these students are 'educationally disadvantaged and in danger of not completing their education with adequate levels of skills'. A number of social, personal and academic factors (including the school and community environments) may contribute to a student being placed at-risk. Low achievement, behaviour problems, low socio-economic status, family

circumstances, socio-demographic factors including the increase of single parent families headed by women in low paying jobs may contribute to students being placed at-risk.

Some researchers, in looking at school transition during adolescence have found that such transitions occur at a time of rapid biological and interpersonal change that is both challenging and disruptive to the self-system and to social relationships.

Thus, those youths who do not successfully negotiate this period are at increased risk for long-term negative developmental outcomes. Furthermore, such outcomes may hold true more so for poor urban youth who are undergoing greater numbers of environmental stressors. (Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell & Feinman, 1994).

As a former post primary school teacher interacting with other post primary teachers throughout the country, through informal questioning, I found that most of the students who attended these centres were generally members of families who earned low incomes.

In 1998, I went one step further and conducted a survey on the family structures of these students to determine whether these students came from homes where 2 parents were present or a single parent or guardian was in charge of the household. The results are contained in Table I.

20. Valapole Government	4	10
21. Egypt Village	3	41
22. Clark Richards Government	3	4
23. Jericho High Government	4	1
24. Chano Government	4	16
25. Maching Government	1	6
26. Fernal RC	1	2
TOTAL	73	90

Table 1

Single parent heads of households of students from post primary centres in Trinidad & Tobago 1998

CENTRES	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	MALE SINGLE PARENTS	FEMALE SINGLE PARENTS
1. Bon Accord Government	136	12	36
2. Manzanilla Government	41	2	12
3. St. Barb's Government	72	9	39
4. Pointe-a-Pierre Government	48	8	10
5. St. Phillip's Government	32	1	17
6. St. Therese R.C.	25	2	7
7. Tabaquite Government	33	0	4
8. Morvant North	78	3	33
9. Preysal Government	42	2	12
10. Charlieville A.S.J.A.	14	1	5
11. Mt. Pleasant Government	48	0	10
12. Arima West Government	53	2	9
13. Diego Martin Government	56	3	15
14. Aranguez Government	50	3	4
15. New Grant Government	54	1	10
16. Pepper Village Government	20	1	9
17. St. Mary's Government	80	1	13
18. D'Abadie Government	100	2	19
19. Five Rivers Islamia	43	4	18
20. Valencia Government	63	4	10
21. Egypt Village	44	3	41
22. Clarke Rochard Government	33	3	4
23. Jerningham Government	22	1	1
24. Chinapoo Government	50	4	16
25. Mafeking Government	54	0	6
26. Coryal R.C.	19	1	3
TOTAL	1310	73	363

The findings from a random sample of 26 centres, showed that 33% of students (436 adolescents) came from homes which are headed by single-parents. Of the total number of students (1310), 27% or 363 of them came from homes with single female parents. Coincidentally, these findings corresponded with data taken from the Central Statistical Office 1990-1995 in which it was revealed that in a census of 274,846 households, women headed 77,101 or 28%.

From Table I, it was evident that mothers formed the greater percentage of single parents. Eighty-three percent (83%) of those students who come from single-parent homes (363 adolescents) belonged to families headed by females. Many times in talking to other post primary teachers, the reasons given for poor pupil academic performance were: "Is the home. Single parents. They don't have no time for their children."

According to Pearce (cited in Pong, 1996), in the American society, single motherhood is perceived as a major indicator of the 'feminization of poverty'. Students belonging to this type of family structure are expected to have negative educational attainment and to be a part of a vicious cycle of schooling that makes them prone to become high school dropouts. This view is widespread. In Trinidad and Tobago, single motherhood is also perceived as having deleterious effects on a child's educational growth.

Merle Hodge (1997) suggests that people in our society fasten on to such statements that malign the single-parent family because they hear such sentiments all the time. According to her, the term 'single-parent family' is used 'like obscene language' to include an unmarried parent with 'a low level of education, low self-esteem, an irregular

income, substandard housing, poor nutrition, limited access to healthy recreational facilities and delinquent children on the threshold of criminal activity' (p9).

There is much evidence to suggest that students in single-parent families are at greater risk of educational failure than are students in two-parent families— either by failing to learn while in school or by dropping out of school. Contributory factors to placing them at risk are primarily, a lack of economic resources - a high proportion of single mothers are economically disadvantaged, unable to spend time with their children. This may lead to the inability to create a supportive learning environment that would include supervision, monitoring, the setting of expectations, communicating of aspirations, and that would allow them to be involved in school activities. Furthermore, if parents were once married, the movement after their marriages, many times from richer to poorer circumstances, creates a disconnect from the community in which the children were raised (Pong 1998).

There are numerous instances where the impact on the academic lives of children can be attributed more to the economic disadvantage associated with single motherhood than the family structure and intrafamilial processes existing in it. Among the challenges created by such economic deprivation are educational and cultural lack, increased health risks, the stress of often trying to make ends meet and the lack of resources to engage in social activities (Graham, 1985). Therefore, whether in a single parent or two parent home, low socio-economic standing can have negative effects.

Heath & Orthner (1999) further suggest that the reconciliation of work and family demands places unusual stress on many female single parent families. In most circumstances, she is the primary earner within her family. In the absence of a partner,

she is faced with the task of meeting and reconciling the competing demands for her time, energy and resources. She is more likely to report lower rates of happiness and greater personal agitation.

It is important to note that the phenomenon of female single parenthood has been a feature of West Indian family life from the earliest days of our history. The slave regime made unavailable the basic elements of sharing and maintaining a common household by a legally married couple. Christian marriage was incompatible with the slave code because each partner was at risk of being removed or sold at any time. The child of a slave mother derived his status from her legal status thus giving centrality to the mother's role, a notion firmly entrenched in the kin systems of the West African tribes transported to the New World (Massiah, 1983).

However, it must be noted that this practice did not perpetuate the notion of male marginality because young slave women tended to live either in a childless co-residential union or in an extended family household group. During their prime reproductive years, the majority lived with a mate and their children and when their children left home, either reverted to living with their mate only or if he died, with the children in an extended household (Massiah 1983).

Fortunately, there are female single parents who cope, who are able to align their family members as an effectively functioning unit by gathering the resources necessary to support adjustments and to establish a satisfactory level of 'fit' between themselves and their environments (Heath & Orthner, 1999).

What society tends to ignore are the variations within generalizations. Not all homes, which have female single parent family structures, harbour potential

criminals or have students who will remain at the bottom of the academic rung. Hodge (1994) affirms that, 'Our family traditions could be a major resource in our present economic and social situation, but unfortunately, part of the reason why we are in this mess is that we don't even know what resources we have here at home.'

(p11) *An American Family (Gardner & Szwed, 1994)*

No generalizations should be made from hearsay or research that has focused primarily on the problems of this particular group to the exclusion of data that highlights its successes.

Studies done by Frieberg (1993), among a few others, indicate that children from highly impoverished backgrounds can achieve academic success. In an attempt to understand what takes place within these families, the focus must shift from the actual structure of the family itself to the processes that take place among those in it. What may contribute to putting a child 'at-risk' then, is not simply the familial structure but the processes which may or may not operate within family relationships.

As societal concern grows with the attainment of higher educational standards and increased educational excellence, it is essential to focus research on student and social context conditions which may be predictive of improved academic performance. This study is founded on the theoretical position that there are macro and micro factors which contribute to the overall academic success of the child. Academic achievement does not rest solely on the contribution of one institution be it external (government policies, the school) or the family. It is the result of the dynamic interplay among the many contributing factors.

For this study I opted to focus on one subset of a contributing factor - the female single parent family. Current research has indicated that the quality of parental involvement has varying impact on the academic achievement of the child (Slaughter 1987). The involvement by the parent has emerged in educational circles as a major objective for educational reform (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

The time has come to focus research on finding out about the lives of the children who appear most at-risk in our society, instead of just speculating. In order to assist in the improvement of social/parental interactions in our society, there is the need to first find out what variables currently exist. I would like to suggest that a starting point could be the exploration of what occurs in the families of those children in Trinidad and Tobago who fall within a group which is considered 'at-risk' but in which there are members who perform well, despite the setbacks.

This thesis is an attempt to explore this suggestion. It explores the social meanings of parental involvement in Trinidad within five female single-parent families with post primary students who are performing well academically.

Interestingly, Prudlin, McCarrie, Rodriguez and Kaplan (2003) found that too little attention was paid to the home situation and socio-economic characteristics of families that participated in such programs. This in turn resulted in the failure to take into account the many strong, effective families that exist.

Rationale

Theoretical and empirical work with children who come from impoverished backgrounds (single-parent family structures included) and are considered 'at-risk' has tended to focus primarily on the problems which arise from living within these socioeconomic conditions.

Such families have been viewed as uniformly 'at-risk' or as uniformly coping with very difficult social environments (Chase-Lansdale, Brooks-Gunn & Zamsky 1994). Such models have been defined as 'deficit' and have had as their emphasis the explanation of poor outcomes. This has led, in turn, to the stereotyping of families and students from the lower socio-economic strata of society.

What is needed is research that focuses on in-depth explorations of the processes related to success among children from these environments. It is a known fact that within a given category of family form there is variability. This points to the need for studies of intra-group variations. Bronfenbrenner (1986) has posited that the home is the major ecological setting for children. There are children who belong to families who must contend with negative environmental elements that should lead to disorders in development. However, the fact that these children may attend the same educational institution and yet some fail while some remain well adjusted is reason to examine the possible contribution of the families of the latter group to their successes.

Mattingly, Prislín, McKenzie, Rodriguez and Kaylar (2002) found that too little attention was paid to the 'demographic and socio-economic characteristics of families' that participated in such programs. This, in turn, resulted in the failure to take into account the many strong, effective families that exist.

The impetus for this research was born out of the need to glean a more in-depth understanding of the home backgrounds of academically successful post primary students who come from single-parent homes. As a mother belonging to a nuclear family and facing challenges that at times seem almost insurmountable even with the support of a spouse, I was curious to know how these single parents managed and beyond that did well.

Moreover, the negative perceptions held by so many members of our society towards such family structures prompted the exploration of the successes of members of these groups to sensitize others to the positive factors that exist within them. As such, it is hoped that this research will contribute to dispelling the belief that all children who grow up in a single-parent home headed by a female will be 'good for nothings'.

'The importance of the home background' which is repeated almost as a mantra to all beginning-teachers, will mean more to those who read the following pages on the lives of these mothers and their children. This research explores and records experiences of single mothers and students within their home environments, as they relate to each other. Thus it contributes to the understanding of life in the homes of these adolescents who daily attended post-primary classes.

Theoretically, the study of parental involvement is a well-researched area internationally. This research may be considered an expansion of theory in four ways. Firstly, it examined parental involvement in female-headed households. (This term will be defined in the review of literature). Next, it explored such interactions in the Trinidadian context. Further, it delved deeper and attempted to probe our sub-cultures by using participants from 5 different areas of Trinidad, inclusive of varying ethnicities and

religions. Moreover, instead of examining pre-schoolers or young children, it examined students at the adolescent stage of life. Thus, the results of this research could expand on previous theory by giving further clarification to existing theoretical propositions as they pertain to our culture.

Many local educators stress the need for 'parental involvement'. This is an umbrella term. What is needed is the further identification of significant factors pertaining to parental involvement (Wang & Wildman, 1995) in our Trinidadian and Tobagonian context.

The stories are real ones, captured from data related by the voices of females in charge of households, by their children and by the teachers of their children. Such thick descriptions should give readers an in-depth account of the experiences that these families face. Thus, another aim of this research is to sensitize the readers to the plight of these families and possibly, to provide information from which policy planners could devise intervention programmes. Moreover, it could possibly provide concrete recommendations to schools and families, about specific activities that could be incorporated into programmes, to enhance the academic performances of other students.

This research examined the family interactions among 5 families from five educational districts of Trinidad. These were 5 female-headed households with post primary students whom teachers felt were performing well academically. The guiding research questions were:

1. To what types of home environments / family backgrounds do these students belong (e.g. family structure, SES, etc.)?
2. What are these mothers/guardians perceptions of parenting?

3. How are the mothers of these academically successful students involved with their children?

The first chapter of this thesis situates the predicament of the post primary child or the child placed in what is now termed the 1S class. It goes a step further to highlight the home environments of many of these children and to suggest that they form a segment of our educational system that could be considered most 'at-risk'. The rationale for the study and the expected outcomes are also stated. Finally the questions that guided the research process are expressed.

Chapter 2 details the researcher's site, and attempts to state clearly my perspective on areas which may have some influence on this study.

Chapter 3 provides a critical review of issues which impinge on this study, including a historical perspective on post primary education, current findings on educational reform and parental involvement and the definitions for specific terms which are used throughout.

Chapter 4 establishes and summarizes the philosophical underpinnings that have guided this research inclusive of symbolic interactionism and adolescent psychology. The qualitative paradigm, the fit of the study to this paradigm and the use of grounded theory are discussed. So too are methods of enhancing research in this paradigm. It also covers the methodology employed and the measures to which I adhered in order to ensure trustworthiness.

Chapter 5 provides a rich description of the contexts and settings of the various participants while Chapter 6 explores the processes discovered at each site and further attempts to examine what, if any patterns of processes exist across sites.

This study culminates with Chapter 7 where the outcomes of the inquiry are discussed along with recommendations and limitations.

I am Afro-Trinidadian, born into a home where my two parents were present on a daily basis. My mother, a housewife, was always there, seeing me off to school on mornings and being greeted by me, when I returned home. My father worked on a shift basis, so that there were days when I would see him leave for work in the morning and get home late at night, or leave around one evening and be home when I arrived from school the next afternoon.

The presence of my mother was constant. She was my greatest daily support. It was always my mother who asks about my work, my children, my husband, my attendance at church, and about my life. She is the one who would shed a tear, if I was going through stressful times, encourage me to be strong whenever I felt that the pressures of my circumstances were too overwhelming. It was my mother who gave me what I felt I needed most throughout the majority of my life: emotional support. She was the business I believe I needed most then and even

Researcher's site

My home background.

My earliest memories of childhood were of being carried in my father's arms, accompanied by my mother, to a show in Naparima Bowl, San Fernando. (My mother says that I must have been about three years, then, and marvels that I could remember so far back in my childhood. She laughs when I tell her that I can even remember Sparrow singing on the stage that night).

I am Afro-Trinidadian, born into a home where my two parents were present on a daily basis. My mother, a housewife, was always there, seeing me off to school on mornings and being greeted by me, when I returned home. My father worked on a shift basis, so that there were days when I would see him leave for work in the morning and get home late at night, or leave around six one evening and be home when I arrived from school the next afternoon.

The presence of my mother was constant. She was my greatest daily support. It was and still is, my mother who asks about my work, my children, my husband, my attendance at church, in fact, about my life. She is the one who would shed a tear, if I was going through stressful times, encourage me to be strong whenever I felt that the pressures of my circumstances were too overwhelming. It was my mother who gave me what I felt I needed most throughout the majority of those times, emotional support. She was the buttress I believe I needed most then and even now.

Ours was not a nuclear but an extended family since my grand mother, my aunt and her two children also lived with us. My aunt had a non-residential partner who supported her family. My father made sure that his family was provided with everything we needed. I stress needed because there is a marked difference between a 'need' and a 'want'. Six young children, the grocery bills and other daily household maintenance debts, in addition to our school bills ensured that it was primarily our needs that were addressed.

Despite the fact that my mother had to look after six children, in my opinion, she coped well. My aunt assisted her from time to time, by baby-sitting when she had to go to the market (the only place she went to besides Church), yet it was my mother who did the majority of work in raising her six children while my father earned the money.

Our parents raised us in what I now understand to be a primarily authoritative manner, with some small degrees of permissiveness (on my father's part) and authoritarianism on my mother's part (the term is explored in Chapter 5).

My father was generally authoritative. He would always negotiate with me when I asked to go to places, weighing with me the pros and cons of making such visits. At other times during my late adolescent stages, with the same cool temperament; he would surprise me with immediate permission to engage in activities which I thought he would have prohibited. My mother, on the other hand, would not hesitate to strongly state her disapproval with certain activities in which I would have liked to engage, with clothes I would have preferred to wear, with hairstyles I adored.

We could not be considered poor since we possessed all the basic household amenities. Moreover, my father always made sure that we had all of our school supplies. Education was

prized. Every August vacation was the time to obtain all of our new schoolbooks and carefully cover each one. I was thrilled to perform that task and took pleasure in thoroughly reading all my books before the vacation had ended.

Both my parents have always valued education and this was transmitted to the children by my father's acts and my mother's words. My father was the person whose face had broken into the brightest smile that I have ever seen from him, on hearing that I had secured a place at what society considered a prestige secondary school.

He supported my academic efforts; yet, it was my mother who frequently made the verbal, emotional, physical and other supportive gestures to which I could relate. From my initial consciousness of my environment, she has been my driving force.

I always strove to please my mother. Perhaps, I felt that through me, she could make up for the academic life she felt that she had missed. I felt, that by excelling I would be able to contribute some additional happiness to her life. My impetus for excellence, at that time, was therefore, external. Her initial and constant encouragement resulted in what is now my strong intrinsic desire to learn and excel.

Thus, when I interact with the students of my post primary class, I consciously examine which students have mothers who support them. For many teachers the idea of parental support, I believe, focuses on the visits which the parents make to the school, for Parents' day activities, fund raising and so on. I focus on the daily activities in which the mothers of my students engage with them, the hopes that these children say that their mothers have for them, the hopes they have for themselves, the types of parental relationships that they have, primarily with their mothers yet also with their fathers.

I am a strong believer in values, holding firmly to the belief that it is what the parents desire for the child that is transmitted to them and encourages them to succeed, provided that the school supplements that with a sound educational foundation.

In the absence of parents who hold such aspirations for their children, I believe that it is the teacher or another adult who inspires the child. Though I have read of personal resilience in children, I still believe that there must have been some person with whom the child came into contact that influenced that child.

In conclusion of this section, I do believe that ideally, children should be raised in a home where both parents are present. I stress 'ideally', because I am fully cognisant of the many events that can destroy relationships.

I also feel that in two-parent homes, it is usually the mother who acts as nurturer, even if she is a working wife. Men still conceive of themselves as the provider and any attempts they make at nurturing are viewed by them as being a 'good husband', 'helping the wife out' at what are considered primarily her tasks.

Parental involvement for me therefore, spans from emotional support to actual concrete tasks and activities, which develop the child holistically, and not solely in the realm of education.

My first experiences of the reactions of teachers to past primary students came just a few days before starting my Master's course. I remember observing and sending the resident of several teachers to the principal to request the teachers to teach a recently formed group of students. They (the teachers) were visibly uncomfortable and unwilling to teach the children.

The post-primary child.

During my tenure at the post primary level of our educational system, I had met some of teachers who belonged to the Centres where I eventually conducted this research, on a professional basis at seminars held during each academic year. At the professional and in some cases personal levels, we related well.

To those who may wonder, the issue of ethnic differences did not arise to cloud the interviewing process with the participants who completed this research. However, I believe it should be taken into consideration for future researchers since, as I mentioned in the first chapter, there were initially six students. Intuitively, I sensed that for the participant who withdrew, ethnicity was an issue. She was an Indo-Trinidadian parent who from her daughter's comments paid particular attention to the skin colour and hair type of others, even her own children. The child felt that the mother considered her the black sheep because she was darker than the rest of children). At one point early in the research process, I took my best friend, an Indo Trinidadian female along with me to see whether it might have opened the door for interviewing (not for my friend to sit in on the process but for the participant to see that I had relationships with persons from her ethnic group). It did not work,. So, though it was not an issue with the other five mothers/guardians, it could be an issue to be taken into consideration by other researchers.

My first experiences of the reactions of teachers to post primary students came just a few years before starting my Master's course. I remember observing and sensing the reactions of several teachers, to the principal's request, for teachers to teach a recently formed group of such students. They (the teachers) were visibly uncomfortable and unwilling to teach the children. It

appeared as though they were just not prepared to go to, what they, obviously, perceived as the, 'Siberian class.' As a result, it appeared as if I was the only teacher, then, willing to assist the other post primary head teacher.

I remember the negative attitudes, to the children, that were held by these teachers. Many hurtful comments were made about and to these children. There was one particular occasion, when I could do no more than leave the school's assembly period and cry, after hearing what was said to one of my students. Those comments were made to young and impressionable human beings who were not allowed to respond, for fear of being punished for answering back, for being rude.

What was not understood was that these were adolescents, who were at that stage of realizing that they were attractive to the opposite sex, and thus, needed guidance through the process preferably from an adult. Such an individual could give solid advice, more than useless and punitive criticism. I had watched my students stand quietly and receive the criticism, to the laughter of the younger children who had not yet done the Common Entrance exam and, fortunately, had not yet been relegated / nor would not be relegated to the 'post primary category.'

I had taken my class outside, afterwards, and we had engaged in an intense session, concerning the need to ignore unfair criticism and excel, both in behaviour and academic work, to seek out adults who could understand and better relate to them, so as to negate the low expectations other persons may have had of them. Frighteningly, however, I believe that those teachers, who felt it necessary to make such, 'insightful statements,' are but a subset of the large numbers of our population, who share similar beliefs.

Chapter 5

My desire has been, and will always be, to champion the cause of those on whom most of society has given up. I believe that all men exist on one level regardless of their socio-economic class and all deserve to be assisted to improve in whatever, if any, area they are lacking. I believe solutions, many times, are found through the enlightenment more of the oppressed but also of the oppressor. It is hoped that whatever comes out of this research will contribute to assisting the single parents and their children to better manoeuvre the challenges of life, in manner that contributes to the positive development of their children, educationally or otherwise. The findings are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Historical overview of education in Trinidad and Tobago and the origin of the Post

Primary System

Independence in Trinidad and Tobago signified a period of change. This change was in over a half century, from the political reform and the Eric Williams regime, which represented new leadership that was relatively independent of our past colonial role. (The term 'relatively independent' is used because all, if not most of the colonial structures remained intact and many persist even to today. This prompts many scholars to describe our system firstly as 'post-colonial' and more recently as 'neo-colonial').

The change was also outward, representing Government's stage of attempts to improve other areas, such as racial harmony and the educational system. In education, a new perspective began to emerge. No longer was our educational system to be viewed as merely 'a social service', aimed at the preservation of the social relations of plantation society and the

Review of Literature

This chapter begins with a history of the educational system of Trinidad and Tobago, tracing the origin of the post primary system and moving to the present system. It then gives an overview of family in the Caribbean and internationally, and examines the processes involved in parental involvement which have been found to impact on the academic performance of students. It culminates with a brief exploration of poverty as a result of the single parent family structure and the concept of the 'at-risk' child as it relates to this research.

Historical overview of education in Trinidad and Tobago and the origin of the Post Primary System.

Independence in Trinidad and Tobago signified a period of change. This change was an overt manifestation, seen in political reform, and 'the Eric Williams regime', which represented new leadership that was 'relatively independent of our past colonial rule.' (The term 'relatively independent' is used because all, if not most of the colonial structures remained intact and many persist even to today. This prompts many scholars to describe our system firstly as 'post colonial' and more recently as 'neo-colonial').

The change was also covert, representing the embryonic stages of attempts to improve other areas, such as racial harmony and the educational system. In education, a new perspective began to emerge. No longer was our educational system to be treated as merely 'a social service', aimed at the preservation of the old relations of plantation society and the

integration of our many cultures and races (Alleyne, 1996). It would also be considered as an investment towards the economic future of our country.

Before the emancipation of the slaves, there had been no inclination on the part of the slave-owners to provide any kind of formal education for their forced charges. The cutting of cane and the performance of other menial tasks did not necessitate any formal training. Indeed, to provide any educational training which could assist the slaves in becoming literate was perceived by the members of the plantocracy as detrimental to the maintenance of social order.

However, according to Campbell (1992), with the abolition of slavery in 1834, limited attempts at educating the masses were undertaken. The impetus for such a program came from the British government and Protestant missionary societies. For eleven years after 1834, and with ever decreasing amounts, the British government made available, an annual subsidy to educational matters in the Caribbean such as the building of school houses and the payment of school teachers. This subsidy was called the Negro Education Grant and Trinidad received part of this grant. The Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England and the Mico Charity ('a non-denominational but Protestant educational trust'), thus set about providing elementary education, 'to integrate the community on the basis of English culture.' In all, by 1840, there were about 38 schools in Trinidad with an enrolment of about 1,971 students.

The funds for education, however, were meagre. Though the colony prospered from the sugar boom, the funds which were channelled into the educational system, were insufficient. As the sugar boom ended, the grants to education also waned. The

year 1845 saw the end of the government grant and the collapse of the Mico schools (Campbell, 1992).

There existed at that time, however, an argument that the existing denominational schools were socially divisive, encouraging religious rivalries and reinforcing cultural differences - all of which were in opposition to the creation of an integrated community. Because of this belief and because, too, it was found that the quality of education offered at these schools was extremely low and they were totally unsupervised, a strong attempt was made in 1849 by Lord Harris to implement non-denominational schools.

He advocated a system of state schools that would be secular and totally controlled by the government. This resulted in the Education Ordinance of 1851 which set up a system of free and secular Ward schools in each Ward. No church school was to receive government aid. For the first time in Trinidad and Tobago, a system of government run secular schools had been set up. However, difficulties arose – there were too few of them to serve the needs of the population and other problems existed such as challenges with attendance, acute language problems, inadequate buildings and a poor quality of teachers. Furthermore, the Catholics complained about ‘the godless secular schools’ being a danger to their youths (Brereton 1981).

When Governor Gordon came to our island in 1866 he requested that the Irish educational consultant Patrick Keenan, investigate the educational system and make recommendations. In 1869 Keenan’s report criticized the Ward schools and recommended that the Church schools be allowed state aid under certain conditions.

A dual system of education was set up in 1870 where state-aided church schools co-existed with government schools in the Wards. The high standards required in order for church schools to receive aids resulted in fewer of them qualifying. The law was changed to make it easier to obtain assistance and this led to an increase in assisted schools. This increase in the number of schools resulted in an increase in attendance at elementary schools in the country.

However, there were large numbers of Indian children who were not enrolled in schools. The Canadian Presbyterian Mission opened primary schools for the Indian children and after 1870, qualified for state aid. They provided elementary education for growing numbers of Indian children. The only challenge was that they were a proselytising faction and catered to a racially exclusive group.

As regards secondary education, it was the upper class that held the reins on that level of the system. In 1857, the Queen's Collegiate School was established. It was financed and run by the government. The fees required to attend were also very high. It catered for the sons of the rich. The Catholics objected because it was a secular institution.

In 1863, the Catholics set up St. Mary's, their own college. It catered for males from foreign Creole families and the language of instruction was French – objected to by those who were dedicated to Anglicization.

The governor at the time, Governor Gordon, concerned that the upper class youth were being educated separately, according to religion or nationality, which would create divisions in the upper class, set up a mechanism to grant state aid to St. Mary's. There would be a Royal College which the government would finance, to which private secondary schools could be affiliated once they met a stipulated standard. In 1870 St. Mary's was

affiliated and based on the intake of male students, would receive funds. Their students then competed with those of Queen's Royal College for annual Island scholarships. Gordon's intention that there would be integration between students of both colleges never materialized because the students of St. Mary's and The Royal College never combined for secular classes. St. Mary's continued to be run along denominational lines and The Royal College merely functioned as a 'device for granting state aid to private secondary schools (Brereton, 1981). It was primarily the upper class males who gained access to these colleges. From time to time, there would be a small number of boys who would win free places to the colleges from the government and assisted primary schools that also existed.

As a result, the movement of students from primary to secondary school only took place with a minute number of students and solely male ones. The opportunity to progress to the secondary level of education was given to whites from the highest socio-economic background and coloureds who were of 'suitable parentage and approved means'.

One of the first schools to offer education beyond primary school to ex-slaves after emancipation was the government training school in Woodbrook. The Boys 'Model' school and the Girls 'Model' school were associated with the training of teachers. They were later renamed Tranquility Boys' School and Tranquility Girls' School. Theirs was an advanced curriculum to the ordinary primary school.

Within ten years of the establishment of the Boys' 'Model' school, the system of primary school education that existed allowed some black children to rise above wage labour to achieve jobs such as planters, managers, clerks, minor civil servants, artisans, store assistants and even others who went abroad for university education. Some students were trained to be teachers and this did not require a secondary education in the colleges. [No

such achievements were recorded at the Girls' 'Model' school since females were expected to be good wives and mothers (Besson & Brereton, 1992)].

Thus, overall, the number of those who remained in the primary school exceeded the number of students who were able to progress to secondary school. This surplus of students either left the primary school to work with their parents or remained at this level until they reached the compulsory school age (the root of post primary education).

At periods throughout our educational history, commissions were established to assess the system of education and recommend measures for, 'economy and efficiency' (Campbell, 1992). One such commission, the Marriot/Mayhew Commission (1933), recommended the creation of a new type of school that provided education that was practical and geared towards industrial, agricultural or commercial and social pursuits (Gordon, 1963). Such recommendations appeared to be suited to the needs of the students who remained in these post primary classes. However, the recommendations were not carried out. Thus, despite the fact that there were suggestions for adjustments and expansion, no real changes to the system actually took place.

In 1945, the Board of Education recommended the award of a Primary School Leaving Certificate. This examination was to assist in the selection of new recruits for beginning training in the teaching profession. For those children who did not progress to the secondary school, theirs would be the procurement of this certificate (Ministry of Education, 1962).

When Trinidad and Tobago became independent in 1962, Eric Williams' concept of 'democratizing education', stressed, more than administrative decentralization, the provision of free secondary education for the masses (Deosaran 1981). Two documents guided the

development of the country during its early independent years. The first was the Five Year Development Program (1958-1962). This programme stressed the importance of education to the creation of an educated people and the social and economic development of the country. Education was thus perceived to be more than merely a 'social service'.

The other programme was the Second Five Year Plan (1964-1968) which held a philosophy similar to that of the first plan. In it, it was noted that education played a crucial role in the 'process of economic development' and was 'one of the most important instruments of social change' (Alleyne, 1996 p65).

Both programmes, however, made a further distinction – that education could be viewed as an end in itself because it permits the development of individual personality. As a result, education was given a leading role.

In the 1964-68 Development Plan, about forty percent of the total capital expenditure on education was allocated to secondary education. Priority was given to this level over elementary and university education because the aim was to use education to promote economic growth. Secondary education would thereby supply 'sub-professional manpower' (Alleyne 1996).

For the period 1968 to 1983, a UNESCO Education Planning Mission outlined a 15-year plan for educational development for Trinidad & Tobago. A proposal was made for the creation of the Junior secondary school, to increase the number of Form One places and thereby decrease the number of post primary students in the primary schools. According to the projections, this would serve to accommodate 85% of students in the 12-year age group.

According to this plan the Junior Secondary school would:

their primary schools. The number of these centres was increased. In all, there was 30

- Offer secondary education on a three year course for the age group 12-14 after which a National examination would be used for determining both whether and where the students would continue in the full-time public education system
- Replace both the post primary section of the all-age primary school and the junior forms of some secondary schools

A considerable decrease in the number of students assigned to post-primary classes occurred as a result of the creation of the Junior Secondary schools. In a further effort to provide for the needs of this population, the 1985-90 Education Plan specifically recommended the introduction of continuing education for this student population. Education of this nature would supply them with remedial teaching in the core subjects, and especially in reading and mathematics, so as to 'prepare them for responsible adult life' (Ministry of Education, 1986 p31).

What followed was a recommendation for centres to be built to provide specifically for the continuing education of post primary students. This 'way forward proposal', as it was called by the Implementation Committee, explained that: '...instead of the present system involving post primary classes in individual schools, a different arrangement consisting of centrally located post primary centres (was) being put in place to correct the deficiencies'. (Ministry of Education, 1988 p4)

This recommendation came to fruition. Initially, 9 centres were built and tested over a two-year period as a pilot project. These centres were established in central locations and served as catchment institutions for surrounding schools. Children at the post primary level in these areas were housed at these centres while others remained in post primary classes in their primary schools. The number of these centres was increased. In all, there were 50

centres in all educational districts of Trinidad and Tobago, with a student population of approximately 1000 students in 1998.

Reports, however, from the Education Policy Paper 1993-2003, suggested that these centres had been unsuccessful in realizing the aims and objectives for which they were originally established. These centres had poor physical facilities and no autonomy. In many instances, they serve as 'mere extensions of the primary school to which they are attached'. Their occupants- the teachers and students, were demoralized. Above all, many students failed the Primary School Leaving Examination.

In 1998, the then Honourable Minister of Education indicated the intention of the then government to address the recommendations of a Task Force which had been set up to examine the movements of students from the primary to the secondary level of education via the Common Entrance Examination. Among the recommendations of this Task Force were to:

1. Accelerate the secondary school building programme in order to provide for the transfer of the full Standard Five enrolment of the primary school.
2. Revise the secondary school curriculum to ensure that incoming students of all kinds are provided with a programme of work that is suitable to their level of readiness.
3. Build thirty-two (32) secondary schools throughout Trinidad & Tobago giving priority to the districts which are least provided with secondary school places and then, when Universal Secondary Education is achieved, de-shift the Junior Secondary schools.

In the same year Reece and Seepersad (1998) submitted a report that recommended that fundamental changes in the education system be brought about by entering into the

Secondary Education Modernization Program partly funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. The underlying notion was that, 'All children could and would learn' if provided with quality learning experiences. Among their recommendations were the, 'strengthening of the literacy and numeracy skills through summer and Form 1 intervention programmes; the piloting of the revised curriculum in selected secondary schools after which it would be revised and implemented in all secondary schools'.

By 2000, Universal Secondary Education (U.S.E.) was introduced. Along with its introduction was the C.A.P. – Continuous Assessment Programme which would test children at the end of each year from Standard One to Standard Five of the primary school, to determine their eligibility for promotion.

In 2001, the format and name of the final national primary school examination for entrance into secondary school was also changed. No longer would there be Common Entrance but the Secondary Entrance Assessment. From this examination used as a placement mechanism for the secondary school (which covered Mathematics, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies through multiple choice test questions), the subjects Science and Social Studies were removed and the essay component was raised from 12 marks to 48 marks, thereby allowing for greater differentiation between the performances of students and minimizing the distorting effects of conversion to a standardized score (Report of the Task Force for the Removal of the Common Entrance Examination, 1998).

The introduction of Universal Secondary Education meant that every primary school student writing the Secondary Entrance examination would be placed in a secondary school. The post primary system of education was removed.

Students who obtained a composite mark ranging from 0-30% and who would have been assigned to the post primary centres, were placed in special classes in the secondary schools. At these schools, the class Form 1 Special (1S) was instituted to accommodate them because it was recognized that many, if not all of these students had not yet mastered basic primary school skills (Ministry of Education, 2001). Furthermore, the government stated that it recognized that intervention was required at both the primary and secondary levels to ensure that, 'the original goal of improved student learning was made available' (p7).

The Ministry of Education claims that it will continue to find methods to address the needs of students at this level. They have stated that they, 'cannot continue to graduate 1S students in our secondary schools without concern for the consequence for such action...intervention is required to ensure that the original goal of improved student learning is made achievable' (Ministry of Education, 2001).

As stated in the Education Plan 1985-1990, 'Our greatest hope for the future lies in the full development of the potential of (our) children'. Our greatest resource is our children. Our country's future lies with the minds of our children. Our quest continues to be: to find the most effective means to assist all children to develop academically and holistically, to function effectively as individuals and to make a worthwhile contribution to the successful development of our country.

Family in the Caribbean.

The study of family in the Caribbean began with research into its origins and moved to the examination of its functions, then generally to functioning families. The two major trends according to Barrow (1996) were social pathology and structural functionalism.

Researchers (including social welfare workers and anthropologists) primarily from Britain began the study of family in the Caribbean. The middle and upper class families were considered 'normal' but the patterns that existed among the lower classes gave rise to the need for explanation and the correction of what were perceived as deficiencies (Herskovits, cited in Barrow, 1996).

Labels such as 'irregular' and 'outlawed motherhood' were used in the descriptions of family processes and patterns. Frazier (cited in Barrow 1996 p3) concluded that 'slave behaviour' replaced the African culture and the Africans who came to the New World engaged in 'second rate' patterns of living.

Caribbean researchers who examined the family from a social pathological perspective perceived family structure as a social problem (the results of the Moyne Commission, 1938-1939 influenced this perspective). In that report, labels such as 'disorganisation', 'illegitimacy' and 'promiscuity' were used. Social welfare workers, among them Thomas Simey, were sent to the Caribbean to solve the problems. According to Simey family life was loose and unstable, relationships usually 'promiscuous;' and 'transitory'. Fathers rarely saw their children and usually could not provide support because of poverty. The children were generally illegitimate, fatherless and lacking in discipline. The aim was to get the families to adopt the nuclear patterns that were considered superior.

In the early 1950s, the use of structural functionalism to study families in the Caribbean was introduced through anthropologists. One famous Caribbean study is that done by Edith Clarke, entitled, '*My mother who fathered me*'. She studied family in Jamaica (Clarke 1970; 1957)).

Research done during this period was based on functions rather than origins, on how the family worked from a contemporary perspective. However, there was still the underlying theoretical assumption that the family was nuclear in structure. As a result, their research was controlled by this assumption. Gender roles and relationships were prescribed. Men were thus 'breadwinners' and 'authority figures'. When they did not fulfil these roles they were viewed as 'marginal' and the family 'matrifocal' (Barrow 1996). Women were many times mistakenly assumed to be 'at home' wives and mothers, obedient, under the authority of a male figure. Any 'matrifocal' families were viewed as a disintegration of the norm and a threat to social stability.

During the 1970s, a modification of the structural functionalism theory occurred. It was based on the concept of adaptation. It was more sensible to see the behaviours of the lower class as solutions they use to solve the problems they encounter in their different spheres of life. With this new approach, new labels were used to describe the families: 'adaptable', 'flexible', 'malleable'. Members of families were perceived as making personal choices from a choice of alternative patterns in order to survive and grasp economic opportunities. Their family patterns were no longer viewed as deviant but as positive responses to unfavourable situations.

The term 'matrifocality' which can be equated to terms such as 'mother-centred', 'female-centred', 'female-headed' even 'grandmother family' was viewed by these researchers as a positive survival skill. It emerged in the literature as an adaptive mechanism to coping with poverty and other adverse circumstances.

The most-used label is 'female-headed'. This concept is problematic for several reasons. It attempts to include notions of female authority. Yet, females can belong to nuclear families and still be the authority figures. The presence of a resident male in the home also leaves questions as to whether it could be considered 'female-headed'. Therefore, several criteria should be used to determine the validity of the term in reference to a particular household. Criteria such as 'economic support, decision-making, house ownership' should be applied. (Barrow, 1996).

Matrifocality emphasizes women as the central focus in relationships and thus as authority figures within the family. It serves to modify the traditional perspective of the nuclear family to one in which the familial structure might be tailored to that which works best in the female's current circumstances or might have come about not as a result of free choice but because there was no alternative.

Matrifocality has been a feature of Caribbean life from early in its history (Massiah 1983). The slave trade did not allow for legal marriages since slaves could be removed to other plantations at any time. The legal status of the mother determined the status of the slave child. So, the mother's owner became the child's owner (cementing the centrality of the mother's role).

Migration has also contributed to this phenomenon. From the 1850s to the 1950s, although rural-urban migration took place, a large numbers of males engaged in external migration. There has been an exodus from the region. It was essentially a male phenomenon that had significant implications for the female population. This deficit of males resulted in a significant number of females having to manage their households single-handedly (Massiah, 1983).

Massiah (1983) further cited as contributing to the phenomenon, notions of increased female independence as socio-economic conditions improve. This independence manifested itself in the adoption of the non-residential sexual union as a socially acceptable option rather than a deviant alternative.

Women are heads of households, too, as a result of being widowed, divorced, separated or having chosen initially to remain unmarried though having been previously in some relationship. In addition, in some households, there may be a male who, as a result of health or for economic reasons cannot function as the head. The female, because of his inability, assumes leadership and must handle income and assets where they exist and take responsibility for the children.

Parental involvement and school performance.

Internationally, there has been a growing body of research concerning the relations between home and school. Such research was initiated by studies done by Coleman and associates who found that familial and societal influences impacted on student achievement. (Grolnick and Ryan, 1989). Coleman's report sparked interest in parental involvement, primarily because of the need for new approaches that could assist in improving student academic achievement. (Fehrmann, Keith & Reimers, 1987). Current research is aimed at expanding the understanding of family-school relationships. (Desimone, 1999; Fuller & Olsen, 1998; Pong, 1998; Yan, 2000)

Because of the dynamic nature of the variables associated with parental involvement, research done so far has focused on 'process' studies. (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts & Fraleigh, 1987). The influence of the family on student characteristics and its interaction with school variables dictates that all these variables be studied in their 'interactive' form (Prom-Jackson, Johnson & Wallace, 1987).

Doing research on home and student variables that may affect achievement and understanding the nature and effects of these interactions could assist schools and communities in enhancing students' education. (Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Thus, new notions of parental involvement, specific to the culture in which the research is done, could be had. The ultimate aim would be to provide concrete recommendations to schools and families about specific activities to be targeted in interventions (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Yan, 2000).

Parental involvement is a multi-dimensional construct. Studies done have substantial differences in how parental involvement is measured. (Ho Sui-Chu, 1996). A general definition for 'parental involvement,' according to Grolnick & Ryan (1989) is, 'the extent to which the parent is interested in, knowledgeable about and takes active part in a child's life.'

Several studies have linked family involvement to student academic achievement. (Dornbusch et al. 1987; Dornbusch & Darling, 1992; Fehrman et al. 1987; Grolnick, Ryan & Deci, 1991; Kurdek & Sinclair, 1988; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch & Darling, 1992).

This research focussed specifically on the extent of parental involvement in the educational domain of the child's life. Many studies which have been done have looked at the socioeconomic levels of the families of origin and the child's academic achievement and have found influences of the former on the latter. This research looked at the home environments of students who do well academically, despite the environmental circumstances that are assumed to lead to disorders in development.

A summary of more pertinent information arising out of studies done on parental involvement will be reviewed below, under the areas:

- a. Parenting styles
- b. Parental expectations/values/beliefs
- c. Parental behaviour
- d. Parental provision of resources

A parent's style of parenting has been found to affect achievement by influencing specific school related behaviours. Dornbusch et al. (1987) successfully applied a reformulation of Baumrind's typology (1966), of authoritarian, permissive and authoritative parenting styles, to adolescents and their academic achievement. (Baumrind originally used

preschoolers). Dornbusch's sample was large and ethnically diverse. Although there were minor variations from the general trend, their analysis indicated that authoritative parenting was positively associated with higher grades, regardless of the family structure.

Authoritative parenting, defined as, ' combining both parental responsiveness and parental demandingness', is characterized by 'a high degree of warmth or acceptance, of psychological autonomy or democracy and of behavioural control.' (Steinberg, Elmen & Mounts, 1989, p1425).

Steinberg et al. (1992) used a sample of adolescents that were ethnically and socioeconomically heterogeneous and found that authoritative parenting leads to better school performance. Of importance to note, additionally, was that such a style of parenting and its link to school success was found to be generalizable across groups.

Parental expectations/values/beliefs concern the child's degree of belief about the parent's expectations for his/her growth and development and the parent's values and beliefs about the worth of education. This would also be reflected in the activities to which the parent exposed the child as a result of such values and beliefs, for example, emphasizing and assisting with homework.

Voelkl (1993), examined African-American students who were low in achievement, yet had high expectations. The pertinence of this study is that homes characterized by parents with high expectations who monitored students and provided intellectual activities, encouraged them to have higher expectations despite their past academic performances.

Research done by Parsons, Adler & Kaczala (1982), found that parental expectations were more directly related to children's self-concepts and expectations than their past performances in Mathematics. Thus, it was suggested that parents impact most as,

'conveyors of expectancies,' regarding student abilities. In Ho Sui-Chu's study (1996), high parental expectations were also found to impact positively on student academic performance.

'Parental behaviour,' according to Grolnick & Slowiaczek (1994), concerns the extent to which parents engage in activities which would provide them with information to help the child with his/ her schooling. Such activities would include his attendance at school meetings such as. parent-teacher or open house, for example.

Epstein & Becker (1982), found that, (controlling for parent education), high school students of parents who attended 'open school' events, earned higher grades than those whose parents did not.

'Parental provision of resources' involves 'exposing the child to cognitively stimulating activities and materials such as books and current events.' (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). These researchers found that such activities would help the child practice skills that are useful for school.

Kurdek & Sinclair (1988) conducted a study to assess the relationship of family structure, gender and family environment to academic performance and school behaviour. Major findings indicated that the family environment that emphasized achievement and intellectual activities accounted for variability in grades more than the other variables examined. Parents can then promote their child's intellectual development through such cognitive activities. (Lareau, 1987).

In the examination of culture as pertains to parenting, Chao (1994) examined a paradox in the literature involving the parenting style of Asians. While Chinese parenting has been described as 'controlling' or 'authoritarian' and these styles of parenting have been

found to be predictive of poor student achievement, their children generally perform well in schools.

In the case of this study of immigrant Chinese and European-American mothers of preschool children, it was found that the concepts of 'authoritative' and 'authoritarian' were ethnocentric and failed to capture an important Chinese concept of 'training'. Thus in the examination of parenting among different ethnic groups, it is important to recognize that there may be some concepts which are equated with negative values by some groups while others may be equated with positive ones. An example of this, with reference to Asians, is their equating of obedience and strictness with parental concern, caring or involvement while Americans equate the same concepts with parental hostility, aggression or mistrust (Chao, 1994).

Poverty and female-headed households.

Poverty is a complex, multidimensional construct that affects every member of a family. It is common in many female-headed households. Poverty can affect both the growth and development of children. It can thus have profound effects on the home environment, family structure and processes.

Poverty has both an absolute significance as well as a relative one. It could therefore mean, not having enough money to meet basic needs, as well as, not having any money left over when basic needs are met to have a lifestyle which society views as normal or average (Shimoni & Baxter, 2001). According to these authors, when the rate of poverty is disproportionately high, there is the tendency to blame poverty on the poor.

This occurs despite the fact that there may be many poor women who do work full time but are paid the minimum or below minimum wage and must support large families.

What must be noted, in addition, is that many perceive of persons on welfare as 'bums who would rather be on welfare than work'. There are, however, many women who are willing to work when jobs and training are available (Gringlas & Weintraub in Shimoni & Baxter, 2001).

There is, too, the 'welfare trap' where people on welfare lose continued assistance when they start to work. Many times the job they obtain is low paying and provides fewer resources for the family than when they were on welfare. When a mother is faced with providing for her family minus free childcare and supervision or protecting her children on reduced resources, it is no difficult task to determine which option she would most likely choose.

There is intermittent poverty and persistent poverty. It is the latter that is of more concern. For the reader, consider the difference between being broke and being poor. Being 'broke' is a temporary feature. Being poor is long term, may result in decreased motivation and may lead to other social and emotional problems unless the mother is able to cope and by her behavior, create an environment in which the child recognizes fewer effects.

from the early 1960s, different views have characterized the perception of disadvantaged students. They were first viewed as culturally or socially deprived. The general meaning was that some children were not raised in environments that encourage the

The 'at-risk' label.

There are those who argue that identifying the population experiencing problems in the educational system is a crucial step to solving them. Cuban (1989) argues differently. He belongs to that group which feels that defining a set of students as disadvantaged locates the problem in the students themselves rather than the institutions.

Several researchers have had a problem with the heavy use of the term 'at-risk' with reference to disadvantaged students in a manner that resulted in it becoming a label to define them. Cuban (1989) asserts that for years, the at-risk problem has been framed in the following manner: - 'many parents live in poverty, long term poverty splinters families apart, children thus lack care, so they steal and fight, lead stunted lives and may continue to become destructive adults without the intervention of the school system'.

When compulsory schooling was used as a solution for the disadvantaged, the result was another problem: - poorly performing children in the classroom. The gist of the explanation for the emerging problem was that children were responsible for their own performance in the classroom and their parents, because of their cultural backgrounds, failed to adequately prepare them for school.

There is the possibility that this could pose further problems for students in that once viewed as disadvantaged, there is a tendency for the label to be carried throughout life and become a self-fulfilling prophecy to prevent progress (Natriello, Mc Dill & Pallas, 1990).

From the early 1960s, different views have characterized the perception of disadvantaged students. They were first viewed as 'culturally or socially deprived'. The general meaning was that some children are not exposed to environments that encourage the

proper development of linguistic and mathematical skills. The solution was to develop policies that emphasized the preschool years as critical.

They were next viewed as 'educationally deprived', of not having adequate experiences prior to entry and outside of school hours. The solution was to provide compensatory education to such students. The School Development Program, founded by James Comer in 1968 is one such example (Comer, 1991).

They were also viewed as permanently 'at-risk'. Some youths were perceived as more likely than others to experience problems in school, to not acquire the necessary knowledge, achieve the educational goals, graduate from school and thus to not be as productive as others. The predictive nature of this label was the general theme, linking the students to future problems. The solution would then be long term and on-going educational interventions.

Fourthly, it was believed that the disadvantaged fell within the youth category. Thus, the disadvantaged were categorized as, 'all those blocked from fulfilling their human potential'. The implication was that all young persons had potential which could fail to be realized and could become disadvantaged. Solutions were sought in the institutions that served them (Natriello, Mc Dill & Pallas, 1990).

I prefer not to view the term 'at-risk' with a deficit notion. This deficit definition has been provided by scholars and administrators who failed to consult with the people involved and failed to take their values seriously' (p350). It incorporates an assumption of its subjects as passive rather than active co-participants involved in shaping their life conditions. I choose to adopt the proposition of Margonis (1992) that children *are placed* 'at-risk' by 'a diverse set of institutional forces. They are not 'at-risk' children.

Margonis pondered whether images of unfortunate lower socio-economic citizens suffering moral decay were conjured up as a result of the collective guilt of a privileged class unwilling to take actual steps to end poverty rather than being a true reflection of the lives of students who are at risk. What is needed then, is on-site knowledge of parents and students – a localist strategy rather than gross generalizations.

This research views the variables pertaining to academic performance as a combination of interrelated constructs encompassing the home, school and community. To delimit the study, I focused only on the processes operating within one subset of a macro system affecting the child's learning – the home. I limited the focus to one type of family setting – the female single parent family. Six homes were examined initially but one group of participants chose to be removed. In all, intrafamilial processes from five female-headed single parent homes in Trinidad were recorded.

The mothers and female guardians of the students recounted their experiences in relating to their wards. Areas such as family routine, parent-child interactions and strategies used by the family to deal with challenging circumstances were explored. So, too, were parent background and parent-school interactions. Chapter 4 explains the process of data collection and the paradigm through which the data was collected and analyzed.

*Methodology**Qualitative research.*

In this chapter an overview of qualitative research is given. This is followed by an explanation of how the research was conducted through seeking approval, preliminary surveying, sampling, gaining access, data analysis and methods of achieving trustworthiness.

Research in the educational domain has been built on methods that originated in the physical and biological sciences. Such methods were classified as 'quantitative positivistic research' (Borg & Gall 1990) and were said to be related to the schools of positivism. The core tenet of these methods is the principle of 'verifiability'. Defined, this principle means that something is considered useful or meaningful, if and only if it can be objectively observed by the human senses. Such an underlying assumption that observations could be objectively made, is viewed by critics as a major flaw in the quantitative paradigm and has led to its repudiation.

There was the call about 20 years ago, for new understandings and the formation of a new paradigm. This paradigm, which is slowly gaining acceptance, was given several different labels: 'qualitative research, naturalistic enquiry, non positivistic research, post positivistic inquiry'. That the epistemological position of the original paradigm was no longer tenable, gave rise to this new interest in qualitative research.

From its introduction, debates have arisen over the legitimacy of qualitative research standards. Fetterman, cited in Vuilliamy, Levin and Stephens (1990) suggests that the term 'qualitative' is a commonly accepted handle used to describe both the paradigm and the methods associated with it. An understanding of this new paradigm can be had by first examining its abstract epistemologies as was done in early debates by its defenders, then by moving beyond this to focus on its various research methodologies and methods of establishing trustworthiness.

There are several assumptions in this paradigm. Qualitative researchers expound that observations do not remain objective. They contend that observations are always influenced by the purposes that gave rise to the manner and evaluation of scientific investigation. The fact that some beliefs are stable does not increase the probability of their validity. A good example that highlights the loophole of this argument was the persistent belief that the world was flat. All research, therefore, is considered theory laden, the reflections of human purposes and theoretical constructions and thus, inherently interpretive (Borg & Gall, 1990; Howe & Eisenhart, 1990).

Thus, qualitative research stresses the perception of a reality that is constructed in the mind of the individual. If there is a reality, it can never be fully known and no convergence on it could ever be fully had from inquiry. There is instead an infinite number of constructions that might be made and, as a result, multiple realities. These constructions could have a common label (also known as a 'referent term'), such as 'zoo', 'mother', yet each term connotes different constructions to different individuals. Moreover, no referent term exists in a form other than that which the persons who experienced it have constructed. Neither is it the sum of all individual constructions.

Qualitative researchers attempt to study all the processes in a setting. They acknowledge the complex and interwoven nature of variables and the difficulty in separating them into their component and causal parts. The major aim, as a result is holistic inquiry: the investigation of the historical, cultural and social processes that are found in any natural setting (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Those who operate in the qualitative paradigm, opt not to remove participants from their natural setting into 'laboratories' at which the research is conducted. The questionnaires which might be used initially, do not have focused questions on specific variables but cover a broad scope of processes which might be related to the phenomena being observed. They then move to questions that are relevant to those highlighted by the participants. Therefore, all attempts are made to obtain a contextual understanding of the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behaviour.

Because of its focus on contextualization, the exploration and development of a body of knowledge which is unique to those individuals who are being studied qualitative research is most times, 'small-scale and time-bound', describing unique rather than classes of phenomena.

Furthermore, due to the fact that qualitative studies are closely tied to the context being investigated, the purpose of sampling is altered to incorporate the inclusion of as much information as possible. There is a shift in focus from highlighting the similarities (as is done in generalization), to detailing the specifics. The researcher engages in purposive rather than random sampling. The aim is to ensure that deviant cases are also studied and not missed, as can many times be the case with random sampling. Thus, the researcher in the qualitative paradigm selects a range of participants inclusive of non-

typical subjects, so that a much greater understanding of the phenomenon could be gleaned (Borg & Gall, 1990).

Qualitative sampling, therefore, omits statistical considerations in favour of informational ones. It foregoes generalizations in order to maximize information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, more 'real life' research can be carried out, through the discovery of the many different realities that exist in societies because in life, there are exceptions to the norm.

The qualitative researcher acknowledges the subjective nature of the research process, in general. Indeed, pre-eminently, the researcher himself becomes the research tool. What is produced is a filtering of data through his eyes. What results is an intricate mixture of descriptive accounts of data with explicit statements of the subjective areas of interactions with the respondents.

Consequently, the role of the researcher is one of partiality and personal involvement. He strives for an empathic understanding of his participants' views. There is the acknowledgment that the research is value-bound. He enters the contexts with the understanding that both the relationship between him and the subjects, and the role he assumes within the research setting with its accompanying values, are influenced by the biases which he possesses. Also, that the choices of theory and research strategies are, to some extent decided upon subjectively.

As a result, the researcher approaches the research process with honesty and introspection. There is the systematic recording of personal comments and field notes based on the researcher's interpretations of observed events. This will assist in the

maintenance of credibility by allowing such records to be subjected to testing by outsiders.

Qualitative research methodology is recursive. 'Recursivity', implies that the procedures can be repeated indefinitely or until a specified condition is met. Initial questions are reviewed during each successive activity to make sure that the data sources conform to them. Where they do not, and mismatches are found, there is the possibility of reformulating the problem and questions, altering the strategies and modifying future data collection.

And, it is only as the information unfolds through the collection and analysis of data, that understandings are gleaned and generalizations drawn. Data analysis, then, is inductive.

The theory that underlies the qualitative research process is grounded in the data which has been collected. The researcher foregoes the testing of preconceived hypotheses, in favour of gleaning understandings and commonalities from the actual data collected. The aim is to generate hypotheses and theories from the data that emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This 'grounded theory' forms the foundation of the paradigm and is considered a major characteristic of qualitative research.

In the 1960s, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss formulated an alternative perspective on social science research called 'Grounded theory'. The core tenet of their proposition rested on 'the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p2).

Born out of dissatisfaction with the hypothetico-deductive practices which prevailed at that time, they argued for a new form of field methodology. According to them, 'grounded theory would help to forestall the opportunistic use of theories that (had) dubious fit and working capacity' (p4). Too many times, they claimed, an empirical research would be concluded with a 'tacked-on explanation'. Such an explanation would be the result of research and the verification of facts rather than the research and generation of an explanation of them.

Furthermore, it was highly possible for a researcher to produce examples for concocted or logically deduced theory after the idea occurred. However, because the idea was not grounded in the examples, these examples could in no way change or amend the idea. What resulted was, 'the image of a proof when there (was) none' and a theory which had not earned the richness of detail which had been ascribed to it (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Stern (1980) feels that grounded theory is best used for the investigation of 'relatively uncharted waters' or for gaining a fresh perspective in an already known situation. Through the used of this methodology, the phenomenon is explained by linking a series of hypotheses. Both inductive and deductive reasoning is used. Though the researcher is aware of information from previous studies and this may influence the final outcome, he develops a conceptual framework generated from the data.

The major attempt is to discover dominant processes rather than describe units. The pieces of data are constantly compared with each other (constant comparative analysis) and the advancing theory may lead to the modification of successive data collection.

The actual analysis of data involves its collection, coding and categorizing, concept formation, concept development, selective sampling, concept modification, integration and theoretical coding. It is all these stages of methodology which lead to the production of the final research report (Stern 1980).

Though neatly enumerated in the previous paragraph, the process of grounded theory is far from such a simple straightforward process. Stern contends that challenges often arise which could lead the researcher to confusion and frustration during the research process. However, if the methodology is followed carefully, it can be successfully used for analysis in a variety of social contexts and since it is not discipline specific, a range of different disciplines. Grounded theory has been developed since its introduction to become one of the more popular and comprehensive methodologies used in the qualitative paradigm.

I opted to use the case study, to study the phenomenon of single parenting. Stake (1995) views 'the case' as the 'object of study'. Merriam (1998) considers it 'a methodology'. I take the stance of Creswell (1998) who defines it as, 'An exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information' (p61). The case study approach lends itself to studies of an exploratory and descriptive nature (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994).

For this research, the case was the phenomenon of single parenting and the multiple sources of information included that obtained from the mothers/guardians, their children and teachers. The context is Trinidad and will span both social and economic issues since these impact on all the families involved.

My familiarity with the subject was acquired through the reading of related literature, the observation of student behaviours and the interactions among students and parents at occasional school gatherings or daily when some parents visited to speak/inquire about their children for various reasons.

Data Collection Process: Phase 1- Receiving formal approval.

In order to conduct the research, what was first needed was permission from the C.E.O. of the Ministry of Education. In September 1997 I received an authorized letter from the School of Education, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine which stated the nature of my research and which sought such permission (Appendix C). The permission to conduct the research was received the same month and the first phase began.

A letter from the Head of the Faculty of Education, U.W.I., requesting cooperation from the respective teachers at the schools (Appendix C) and

A letter of introduction by the researcher that explained the nature of the research and solicited the help of the teachers through the completion and return of the survey (Appendix D).

Data Collection Process: Phase 1 - Preliminary survey.

I believed that in order for a study to be done concerning processes linked to single-parenting among the students of the post primary sector of education, it was necessary to provide a foundation in the form of the incidence of single parenting among this population. The findings could serve as a springboard for the research and assist in the sampling of participants.

In 1997, I designed a survey entitled, 'Post primary students living in single-parent homes'. It contained questions on the number of students enrolled at each post primary centre for the 1997/1998 academic year, the number of students living in single-parent homes, their gender and ethnicity. It also requested information on the sex of the head of the household and the teacher's opinions of the percentages of children whom they felt were performing well academically (Appendix A).

This survey was sent by mail to the 38 post primary centres in Trinidad and Tobago at that time, accompanied by a self addressed return envelope and three letters:

- A letter of approval to conduct the research from the Ministry of Education (Appendix B)
- A letter from the Head of the Faculty of Education, U.W.I., requesting cooperation from the respective teachers at the centres (Appendix C) and
- A letter of introduction by the researcher that explained the nature of the research and solicited the help of the teachers through the completion and return of the survey (Appendix D).

I opted to use solely the post-primary centres because they were more easily accessible and as a Centre I assumed they would have had a more structured curriculum because at that time, they used the 'Guidelines for Primary School Leaving Certification Examination' (PSLCE, 1996). I felt that it would have taken a considerable amount of time and money (for phone calls/visits) to locate all the primary schools in the country where there were post primary classes and there was no guarantee that these classes followed the required curriculum.

After four weeks, only 17 completed surveys (45%) were returned by mail. A second letter and a copy of the survey were again sent in January 1998 to the teachers at those centres from which no response had been received. In this letter I reminded them about the survey and informed them that another had been included in the event that the first copy had been misplaced or lost in the mail (Appendix E).

After 2 more weeks, 5 more completed surveys were received, bringing the total response to 60% and I decided to continue with the study.

Data Collection Process: Phase 2- Sampling.

The data collected in Phase 1 indicated that approximately 25% of the students from all the centres at that time belonged to female-headed households. The next phase involved going out to a sample of post primary centres and sourcing participants for the research.

Initially, six students were invited to participate in the research and permission was sought and received from the parent of each. However, later on in the process after consent had been given by the parent, and the student and teacher had been interviewed,

the mother of one of the participants from the St. George East district, declined to be interviewed, claiming that she was too busy to facilitate the researcher. The corresponding data was removed from the research.

As a result, only 5 students, their teachers and mothers or guardians participated. In all there were 16 persons because in one home there were both a mother and grandmother. In order to get a spread in the sampling, centres from the following districts (in Table 2) were used:

Centre 1

Centre 2

The purpose of choosing District of South and West was based on the proximity of the district to the researcher's then daily location (U.W.I., St. Augustine). It was also because the fact that the population generally holds a negative perception of persons living in these 'danger' depressed areas in our country. I wanted to know more about people who live there and enlighten others at the same time.

The districts of Central, Victoria and South Eastern were chosen because the teachers at these centres were well known to me and for research purposes, could be classified as key informants.

Table 2

Geographical locations of Post Primary centres used in sampling

Centre	No. of centres used from district
Caroni	1
Port of Spain and environs	2
South Eastern	1
Victoria	1

The rationale for choosing Port of Spain and environs was based on the proximity of the district of to the researcher's then daily location (U.W.I., St. Augustine). It was also based on the fact that the population generally holds a negative perception of persons living in these 2 major 'depressed areas' in our country. I wanted to know more about families who live there and enlighten others at the same time.

The districts of Caroni, Victoria and South Eastern were chosen because the teachers at these centres were well known to me and for research purposes, could be classified as key informants.

Data Collection Process: Phase 3 - Gaining access.

Because I had been in the post primary field for over 5 years and knew many of the teachers from whose schools I chose participants, building trust was not a major issue for me. My colleagues trusted me, and they in turn could vouch for me with the students and their mothers or guardians. I thus began the research process as a more accepted member of the group.

Each post primary centre in each of the districts chosen in the sample was visited. The teachers (as well as the mothers and students) were given:

- (i) a full explanation of the aim of the research,
- (ii) a description of any potential risks and benefits (the primary benefit being to assist them indirectly through gaining information on what are effective parental processes operating in single parent households which could be adopted and transferred to others),
- (iii) the offer to answer any inquiries during or after the completion of the research
- (iv) the assurance of confidentiality, and
- (v) instructions that they were free to withdraw if they ever felt the need to and also that they were free to not answer any question about which they might feel uncomfortable

The following factors were used to determine the student participants selected: each teacher was asked to provide me with a student who came from a single-parent home (female-headed household), whom they believed was performing well academically and whose parent they felt, would allow herself and her child to be interviewed. Student gender was also taken into consideration. I had received informal

feedback from teachers at both the primary and secondary levels that suggested that girls were outperforming boys academically. From further feedback with the post primary teachers in this research they felt that this phenomenon was also occurring in their classes and with students from both single parent and two parent families. When asked to estimate the ratio among the single parent population, they suggested that of the students who performed well academically, about 75% were females. Table 3 shows the sampling results of student gender per district.

District	Student Gender
Victoria	One female
South Eastern	One male

Data Collection Process: Phase 2's Interview

After the teachers spoke with the mothers, they (the mothers of the students) called me and I made arrangements for each to be interviewed either at the student's school or at home based on the parent or guardian's preference.

When it was done at the school, a quiet spot was found in the school's yard (under trees) where both researcher and mother/guardian could be comfortable. Again, the mothers were given a visit or explanation of the which was given to the teachers. In addition, throughout several stages of the interview I constantly reminded the respondents that what they revealed in confidence would not be betrayed and in addition, that confidentiality would be honoured.

Each of these women was met on three occasions. In the initial meeting, they were invited to talk about their relationships with the teachers of their children, their views on education, life as a single parent heading a household and any other related

Table 3

Gender sampling by districts

District	Student (Gender)
Caroni	One female
Port of Spain and Environs	Two females
Victoria	One female
South Eastern	One male

Data Collection Process: Phase 3: - Interviews.

After the teachers spoke with the mothers, they (the mothers of the students) called me and I made arrangements for each to be interviewed either at the student's school or at home based on the parent's / guardian's preferences.

When it was done at the school, a quiet spot was found in the school's yard (under trees) where both researcher and mother/guardian could be comfortable. Again, the mothers were given a similar explanation to that which was given to the teachers. In addition, throughout several stages of the interviews I constantly reminded the respondents that what they revealed in confidence would not be betrayed and in addition, that confidentiality would be honoured.

Each of these women was met on three occasions. In the initial meeting, they were invited to talk about their relationships with the teachers of their children, their views on education, life as a single parent heading a household and any other related

issues on which they cared to focus. Permission was sought from them before they began speaking so that I could take field notes.

The information yielded by these discussions was used to construct a checklist of questions for the interviews to which all parents, teachers and students would be subjected (Appendix F). Generally, each parent was interviewed for at least five hours. Teachers were interviewed once, for about one hour. Students were interviewed once for the same amount of time but there were follow up telephone calls.

They were informed that at the next two meetings, the interviews would be taped and transcribed. If they wished, a copy of the transcription could be returned to them so they could read it. Also, a synopsis of what was understood from the interview was also passed to them for their confirmation of the information about their families and themselves (member checking).

The time frame for the three meetings ranged from a spread over 1 month to 3 months. This was done to facilitate the schedules of these women. Additionally, telephone discussions were held in some instances to clear up any information shared from the face-to-face interviews.

Students were next interviewed. Similar to the teachers and the mothers/guardians, they were informed of the aims of the research, other related issues and their permission sought.

They were first involved in a talk about education, their futures, their relationships with their mothers/guardians, teachers. This was recorded through field notes (again, which they were told about beforehand). They were informed that at the subsequent interviews, the conversations would be taped and transcribed.

These taped interviews were done and a synopsis of the information given to the students for them to read and verify.

The students were also asked to complete two 30-item multiple-choice tests in English Language and Mathematics (Appendix G). These tests were an attempt to substantiate the teachers' claims that the students were performing well, academically.

I designed the tests based on the curriculum for post-primary students as outlined in the 'Guidelines for Primary School Leaving Certification Examination' (PSLCE, 1996). I first prepared a checklist of topics which the students should have already covered on the curriculum and asked the teachers to verify whether their students had in fact completed these areas.

Next, I designed a blueprint of specifications and constructed two multiple-choice tests. The first was in the Language arts area and consisted of 30 items. The second also consisted of the same number of items but was in the area of Mathematics.

I then ran a pilot of both tests to 10 students from another post primary centre. One item on each test discriminated negatively. Each of these items was changed and the new tests were run with each of the classes from which the five students belonged. All five students scored over sixty percent (60%) in each test.

Data Analysis.

The topics / issues raised in each preliminary discussion were noted to determine follow up questions for future interviews. Based on the responses to the checklist of open-ended questions, the data from each case was analyzed holistically to give a detailed description of each.

Then, the data were cross analyzed to yield major categories. The emerging categories were first relayed through a chronology of the major events in the life of each parent or guardian that led to her becoming a single parent or opting to remain single and moved to a detailed perspective of the themes or concepts (such as coping, expectations, defining headship) which operated within each household and across households. This thesis thus reflects my interpretations of the 'lessons learned' from each case and across cases.

Data analysis is a cumbersome task when you have to transcribe the interviews yourself. Though I would have liked to pass them on to someone else to be transcribed, many nuances in the words or tones of the participants, even entire words themselves, could be missed by someone whose sole purpose was simply to 'type the words heard'.

I prefer the qualitative paradigm, however, because the analysis is more 'real'. The qualitative researcher could be likened to an underwater biologist investigating a species of fish in its natural habitat – its colour, actual environment, prey and predators and interactions with other organisms. The quantitative researcher on the other hand, removes the particular species from its environment, and risks describing a dead fish, or one which is alone in a tank, thus missing out on the many processes which would exist in its natural environment.

Establishing trustworthiness.

The trustworthiness of the research process, which entails the adherence to conventional standards of reliability, validity and objectivity in the positivistic paradigm, is translated in the qualitative paradigm into an adherence to four new criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility.

When a single reality is replaced by an ontological assumption of multiple ones then the qualitative researcher's task becomes one of convincing the audience that she has represented these realities adequately. Such an adequate representation of these realities demands that I reconstruct the information given by the participants in a manner that is credible to them. I must, in addition, conduct my enquiry in such a manner that the findings are thought to be credible by other researchers.

I attempted to achieve credibility through prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing and member checks. For about two and a half years I was in the field, collecting data. This was not done on a daily basis but visits were made over periods ranging from one to several months (with intervals). Such breaks I felt were necessary to prevent me from 'going native', becoming so engrossed in the process that I lost my research perspective.

I used the technique of triangulation. Students, their mothers /guardians and teachers were all used to gather information on the phenomenon of parental involvement.

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), the term 'triangulation' possibly had its origins in 'radio triangulation' where an origin was determined by using two antennas

from a known baseline. Triangulation is viewed as a strategy to improve the validity of research through supporting a finding by showing that independent measures of it either agree or do not contradict it (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

I concur with Mathison (1988) when she states that it should not be assumed that using this technique would result in the convergence on a single perspective of some social phenomenon. She maintains that such a perspective is 'a phantom image' for the researcher (p17). Though in navigational circles it might be the desired goal, for the qualitative researcher, triangulation is used to obtain a rich and complex picture of the phenomenon.

At points during each phase of the interview process I told my supervisor at the time what I proposed to do and solicited his feedback. I also engaged in peer debriefing. Where my peers did not question, I deliberately sought to justify my reasons for wanting to go in specific directions to see whether this would have prompted them to ask questions or disagree with my rationale. This was all done in an effort to keep my research 'honest'.

Further, I shared any emerging themes with my peers, with supporting evidence, in order for me to see whether they were considered reasonable or whether I was too biased in my analysis. My overriding concern was not to cloud my judgment so as to introduce too much bias in the interpretation of the data.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) were right – naturalistic enquiry can be a lonely task, requiring the researcher to develop coping strategies to deal with emotions/feelings that arise during the research process. For example, when all the questionnaires, which I initially sent out, were not returned, I was devastated for a couple of days. (It was

interesting that I had this emotional response, despite having read about the general results in surveying in chapters on sampling in major texts). It was only after talking to one of my lecturers that I felt better, the point hitting home that it was a common occurrence and not something that was unique to me. I was careful to have more than one debriefer (four in all), so that a balance in constructive criticism could be obtained.

The final criterion used to establish credibility was member checks. I gave synopses of the data collected to the participants to verify whether they considered them adequate representations of their realities. I did both formal and informal member checking. Sometimes I called the participants on the phone to ascertain whether what I interpreted from the data was what they intended. Other times I showed them parts of the transcribed interviews for their verification. Yet in other instances, I paraphrased the information obtained and allowed them to read it for their comments. For reasons of confidentiality, the entire group was never brought together for verification of information, but each participant sought individually.

Transferability.

A second criterion, which must be adhered to, in order to ensure trustworthiness is that of transferability. Defined, 'transferability' refers to the provision by the researcher of thick description of the phenomenon, so as to allow the reader to determine whether it is possible to transfer that information to another situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To cater for this criterion, I used the case study approach to investigate the phenomenon of single parenting among 5 female-headed families in Trinidad. In addition, there were

multiple interviews and the interviews were lengthy in order to grasp a good understanding of the phenomenon from the participants.

Dependability.

Similar to a fiscal audit, the criterion of 'dependability' seeks to ensure the accounts of the research process could be authenticated. There must be, therefore, an audit trail to examine how the records were kept so that readers could be reassured that nothing was concocted. Secondly, the records must be examined for accuracy.

'Dependability', then, rests on the examination of the entire process of enquiry and the product of the research process (where the criterion of 'confirmability' arises). I included the following items for the audit trail (excerpts of which have been placed in Appendices G - I):

Raw data -	Survey results
	Field notes for the first round of interviews
Data Reduction -	Summaries and reflective observations of parental involvement
Evidence of enquiry decisions -	Reports of meetings with supervisors

Confirmability.

To ensure 'confirmability' the 'confirmability audit' must be done. This technique involves the examination of the data, findings, interpretations and recommendations to see whether they are 'grounded' in the data. The connection between the final product

and the raw data, is the procedure that was used to process the data. The trail of records that describe this procedure is the 'confirmability audit trail'. For my study this included:

- a. Transcriptions of interviews
- b. Write up of field notes (incorporated into my reflexive journal)
- c. Descriptive coding of transcripts
- d. Findings and conclusions

Other considerations

Ethics.

What cannot be omitted from the qualitative process besides the establishment of trustworthiness is the issue of ethics. In cases where the investigator has great power and control, there is always the danger of abuse and a great need for guidelines and regulations (Merriam 1988).

The challenge is to obtain meaning from the data and above all, to obtain the data through questioning that does not deliberately prompt the participants to give a response. I was constantly aware of this fact while interviewing.

In addition, the researcher is sometimes given information in confidence, which for ethical reasons, cannot be shared (even if sharing might have given an even clearer insight into the phenomenon).

I often battled with this occurrence, sharing the revelations with my lecturer or voicing them openly to myself and engaging in intense self-questioning to decide what I should do with the information. In the end, it is the researcher's ethical responsibility to the client, which should prevail each time, and so it was in my case.

At home with 5 female-headed families in Trinidad

Contexts.

For this research, female heads from five (5) families, their children and respective teachers were interviewed. I examined the family interactions among 5 female-headed families, from five educational districts of Trinidad, with post primary students whom teachers believed were performing well academically. The guiding research questions were:

1. To what types of home environments / family backgrounds do these students belong (e.g. family structure, SES, etc.)?
2. What are these mothers/guardians perceptions of parenting?
3. How are the mothers of these academically successful students involved with their children?

Chapter 5 answers question #1 through providing a description of the home environments and socioeconomic backgrounds of the female heads of these families.

Chapter 6 answers questions #2 and #3.

In order to maintain confidentiality, each parent/guardian was given a pseudonym. There were six (6) female guardians or mothers in all because, in one instance, the student's mother lived in her mother's home. The pseudonyms for each respective participant are given in Table 4.

Table 4
Pseudonyms for mothers and students by districts

District	Mother/Guardian	Child
Victoria	Victoria	Hazel
	Ms. Eastlyn	
POS and Environs	June	Charlene
POS and Environs	Kay	Sharon
Caroni	Nirmala	Hema
South Eastern	Carol	Marlon

The data analysis revealed several components of parental involvement. It must be stressed that the variables are interrelated and the diagram does not suggest one-way or causal relationships. Instead, the variables are bi-directional with each impacting on and being impacted by the other. The data yielded the following dimensions of parental involvement:

- Family background (includes ethnicity, family structure, educational background of the mothers or guardians, the sources of income and the physical living environment of the participants)
- Headship and matrifocality
- Discipline and parenting styles
- Coping skills and support
- Parental perceptions of education/ Educational expectations
- Parental provision of resources to build literacy
- Parental moral expectations
- Parent-teen interactions
- Allowances for relationships

What also emerged from the data were student characteristics of self-discipline, a willingness to work and a general positive disposition. Teacher support to the families was also existent. This support took the form of:

- Teacher expectations
- Provision of resources
- Empathy with the family
- Positive teacher-student relationship

Both groups will be discussed in Chapter 6 under 'Emerging issues'.

Parental involvement has multiple meanings, yet is recognized as a major contributor to the academic success of students (Yan, 2000). Bronfenbrenner (1986) classified research paradigms on the family into the 'microsystem' and the 'mesosystem'.

Mesosystem models posit that though the family is the principal context in which human

development takes place, it is one of several settings in which developmental processes occur. Additionally, the processes that operate in different settings are not independent of each other. An example of this is the potential for home events to affect the child's progress in school.

The within family (also termed 'intrafamilial') settings in which parent child relationships develop constitute the microsystem. Research on the family microsystem that has been conducted by structuralists, focus on the family background, often measuring it by the socioeconomic structure - parents' income, education. Functionalists emphasize the social processes in the home – the family's influence on the child's attitudes, behavior, expectations to education, communication with the parent, parenting styles and so on.

I share the view of Pong (1998), that a study of the intrafamilial environment should include all of the information and processes that are examined by the structuralists and the functionalists.

In this chapter, I examine the ethnicity, family structure including educational background of the mothers or guardians and the sources of income. Descriptions are given for each respective household, using vignettes.

Victoria

Victoria is 48 years old. She is an Afro-Trinidadian housewife who lives with her three (3) children and mother, Ms. Eastlyn, in her mother's two-storied house in the Victoria educational district.

The house is a concrete structure, with bedrooms upstairs and downstairs. It is fully furnished both upstairs and downstairs but the furniture is of a better quality upstairs where the grandmother lives. There are a living room set, dining set, TV, music cassette player, a set of encyclopedias and other books for the children, stove, refrigerator, telephone. Victoria lives downstairs. This is her mother's house, left to Ms. Eastlyn when her husband died. There is no outstanding mortgage to be paid.

Ms. Victoria and her children have lived with her mother for eight (8) years. The children range from fourteen (14) years (Hazel, the post primary student in question) to her 12-year old brother and 9-year old sister.

Ms. Victoria does not work. Her highest level of educational attainment is School Leaving. She attributes some of the blame to her parents for this. She believes that their outlook was outdated, even backward and also blames herself for not having pursued additional training:

Her estranged husband supports the children in 'a small way' financially. She considers his financial support unreliable and his contributions as 'small' because his visits to bring money or to buy foodstuff are sporadic. Furthermore, with respect to the amount of cash, it varies. He would give money for the children to travel to school and to buy snacks.

She refuses to speak to him about money and 'is grateful' and just 'makes do' with what he brings. In fact, she communicates with him primarily through the children. Whatever the family requires, she will have one of the children tell their father.

In reality, it is the grandmother who takes the brunt of the financial burden. Grandma Eastlyn is the primary financial caretaker of the home. She receives a monthly pension and in addition, she and Ms. Victoria receive financial assistance from Auntie Pat – Ms. Victoria's younger sister, who lived with Grandma Eastlyn for some years before migrating to the United States. Auntie Pat sends monthly stipends and an occasional barrel filled with clothes and foodstuff.

June

June is a 40-year-old Trinidadian woman of mixed ethnicity (Afro and Indo Trinidadian). She lives with 8 children in her father's three-bedroom concrete flat in the Port of Spain. & environs area. The house is well furnished, carpeted, with a living and dining room set, TV, refrigerator, beds, stereo and telephone.

June was the sole breadwinner at the time the data was collected. She had been, since 1990, the provider to her three children who then ranged from 12 years to 2 years and to her five brothers and sisters who then ranged from 13 years to 4 years. (Charlene, the student in this study was 4 at that time).

June went through primary and secondary school. She then went on to do evening classes and 'other courses'. These prepared her for the jobs that she does to support her large family.

Just prior to the actual data collection period, June had been a nursing assistant with a government medical institution. She now works at a Nursing Home on the night shift for 2 nights per week. Two of the children are old enough to work and bring money into the home. One has left the home to live elsewhere.

June gave accounts of spending the weekend 'in the bush with a bunch of men'. These men are soldiers. Her other job is as a voluntary soldier (medic) particularly during the August vacation for 1 or 2 days per week. Having to do the latter while she first worked at the government institution meant that for certain days, she would have to work from the morning at one job and without returning home, go to the evening shift of the next. She considers herself fortunate because she received National Insurance for her siblings. There has also been some assistance from Social Welfare.

Prior to 1990 June lived with her father and stepmother, brothers and sisters. They all grew up together. She had her 3 children with her but no male partner, under her parents' roof. Early in 1990, her stepmother, who had heart problems and was asthmatic, died. June's task then became that of being the breadwinner to the rest of the family because her father was unable to work. Therefore, he remained with the children in the house while June became 'mother' and breadwinner.

Both she and her father approached their relatives for assistance but were turned down by all of them. Many people suggested she put the children in an orphanage. Indeed at one point plans had been so strongly in place that the authorities had already assigned each of her 5 brothers and sisters to orphanages. But June strongly opposed, she fought to keep the children, her reason being, that if it had been hers, she would not have wanted this fate for them.

By late 1990 her father suffered a heart attack and died. June smiles as she says that after that, "it wasn't easy", to take care of the household. She says that she "had to find a way to maintain her sanity and ensure the orderly progress of activity in the home."

Nirmala

Nirmala is 40 years old and Indo-Trinidadian. Her husband's death left her to be the breadwinner to her 2 daughters – 12-year-old Hema (the student involved in this study) and her 15-year-old sister. They live in a modest, wooden structure in the Caroni educational district. Though modest, her home is fully furnished. There are a telephone, television, refrigerator, stove, stereo, living and dining room sets.

At the time she was interviewed she was a widow. As was customary, her husband had left the house one evening around 6 pm, to 'run taxi'. By 9 o'clock that night, he had not returned and Nirmala had grown more and more concerned. She remembers becoming increasingly anxious as the minutes and hours stretched painfully by.

When the policemen came, she went with them. They took her to her husband. He was lying on the side of the road. She remembers cradling his head, holding his face and then shaking him, "to get up". She could even recall hearing as if from far away, a policeman mention, 'Monsegue's' (i.e. Monsegue's Funeral Home), but nothing helped her realize that he had been murdered, stabbed repeatedly to death – 22 stab wounds, 2 to the neck. For some reason she never saw the blood.

They never caught the murderer. She had gone into shock for several days afterwards, neither eating nor drinking. The events of that night appear to remain quite

vivid in her memory – enough to bring quick tears at their recall. The death of her husband continues to overshadow some of the activities in which her family must daily engage. She sends her daughters off to school and becomes anxious even if they are a few minutes later than expected.

After her husband died she relied on her brother and family for financial support. Just a couple of months after that, she managed to secure a job at a candy factory and the support from her relatives stopped immediately. She continues to work at the candy factory for 3 months per year but that job alone is not enough to support her and her two daughters.

To make additional money, she cuts cane during the cane season. During the 9 cane-cutting months in Trinidad, she awakens at 2 a.m., quickly prepares and leaves the house before 3 a.m. to meet a hired car at the top of her street.

Nirmala describes this job as ‘very hard’. Her friends tell her that it takes a ‘woman with guts’ to cut cane. She considers it a nobler occupation than other options available to single mothers. When I last spoke with her, she was recovering from a snakebite to her forearm that she had suffered early one morning, cutting cane before sunrise.

Nirmala never had the opportunity to finish school. She came from a family with 9 children, including herself. Not too long after Nirmala stopped school, she began to do some of the housework and progressed to doing all of it.

When she compares her life to her children, she is happy for the educational opportunities afforded her daughters. She understands what it is like to lack and ‘feels

real good' when she sees her children 'progress where she couldn't reach'. She recalls living with both parents and her father bringing in \$5 per fortnight. What was life like?

That \$5 is just like to buy a pan of milk and that's it, nothing to eat. How long that could stretch? They [her parents] used to go by my grandfather and cut rice and they used to mill rice and all of that and bring like cassava and bhagi. My mother and father go through a lot of hard times, you know.

Because she knows what 'hard times' are, she tries to make things easier for her family. Just how she attempts to do this will be explored in Chapter 5.

In terms of her family, Nirmala confessed that one of her greatest and constant fears has been and is - leaving her teenage daughters alone in the house, in the dark, early hours of the morning to go to the cane fields. Despite her unwillingness to leave them, she must, in order to procure money to support her family.

Kay

Kay is a 47-year old Afro Trinidadian woman living in the Port of Spain and environs area. At the time this research was conducted, she was living with 2 of her daughters: one, 10 years old, the other Sharon, the 13 year old student who participated in this study and her youngest son who was 18 years old then. Both daughters go to school. Her son had been working but was laid off that Christmas before this study. Kay has an older son who is married and living a few houses away.

Despite Kay and June were the two parents/guardians who came from the Port of Spain and environs area. The public perception of where they live and the activities of some

persons belonging to their environments, make those who live on the outside fearful or even unwilling to venture there.

Though I visited June, I never went to Kay's house. I know what street it is on and even the colour but never ventured into the area to conduct the interviews primarily because I was never invited. In addition, interestingly enough though, all the other mothers invited me to visit them at home but Kay never did. She preferred to meet me at her daughter's school because it seemed to be easier for her to or from her way to work. I never pressed any interviewee for the location of a visit, preferring to remain to talk where each was most comfortable.

Kay felt that people describe the area in which she lives as a 'low area', in reference to the number of crimes that take place there. She believes, though, that outsiders need to, 'come in and mix with the people and meet the people...all areas have crime. But is nice people, friendly and thing.'

Her home is one-half of a concrete structure made up of 2-three bedroom apartments separated down the middle. In it there are a television, radio, video, stereo and other basic furniture. The television is in her two daughters' room. She sleeps in another bedroom and her son in the third.

Kay reached as far as Std. 5, then left school after failing the Common Entrance exam and went to a 'pay school' for a year. Her teachers considered Kay an intelligent child. She commented that she, 'was the onliest [sic]one in the family with the brain'. Despite failing her Common Entrance examination and having poor parents, she was fortunate to have a neighbour buy the books and uniforms she needed. The neighbour's husband was the Head teacher at the high school and his wife in addition, gave Kay

money every month for her parents: 'When she get money she used to put it in a envelope and let me carry it home for my parents and thing'.

Somehow the high degree of support, coupled with the responsibility of the position she was placed in, resulted in a pressure to perform and led to overload for Kay the adolescent: 'When I sit down and I study that, you know, I just quit'. She spent one year at the school. Kay has six children in all. On the heels of quitting school came her first pregnancy and this was swiftly followed by a baptism into the world of work.

The father supported his children from the time of their birth and continues to do so. Support from their father is provided in the form of clothes, food, schoolbooks and school supplies. The children are also allowed weekend visits to their father's home. Kay has never lived with her children's father, receives little or no support from him and expects none.

She works from Monday to Saturday, 10am-8pm selling sweets and other such snacks outside a club in Port of Spain. She does not consider what she does a true job, though, because what she currently does to make money severely limits the scope of resources she can provide for her children.

Carol

Carol is a 42 year-old Afro-Trinidadian mother of 6 children. Four of her children already left home and she remains with one girl, 17 years and her son, Marlon, 15 years (the post primary student in this research).

She lives with her son and daughter in a three bedroom wooden house in the southeastern educational district. There is a small television that works with a car battery,

living and dining room sets and beds. At the time I started the research there was no electricity. She had lived there with her children for 22 years without it. She hoped to get it soon. After 22 years, she had decided that she would finance the entire project on her own.

The contractor charge \$1200 for the lines and them, for them to run the lines and the ground wire. And then after, when I was hustling down in Moruga, well I buy the poles and them. The 3 poles I pay \$800 - \$200 for 1 and \$200 to bring up the truck. That was \$800 in all with the truck and the 3 poles. Then after I come and I put out \$300 to get holes bore and thing, get the post weld and paint it. Nobody help me.

(Interestingly enough, by the time I had completed this research she did receive a supply of electricity).

Her home is the last house at the bottom of a long grassy slope (no paved road). She needed the support of her immediate neighbours who lived higher up along the slope to obtain the electricity (They would have benefited, too). However, they did not want to contribute any kind of money to the venture and generally behave in an anti social manner towards her.

Ridiculous set of people, oui. Them not easy at all. They throw words. I don't know what is the cause of it. It have times when they'll be getting on, it have times when they'll be normal, alright? So, they realize, well, I'll ignore them and they wouldn't continue it.

She is the sole breadwinner for her family. She receives a monthly public assistance for each of her children and herself.

Her decision to remain as the sole care taker was based primarily on her husband's choice of a promiscuous lifestyle. His behaviour did not manifest itself after the birth of all 6 children but prior to and throughout the conception and upbringing of each child. 'Just as I get a child, well he believe he [could] go, as I done make, he come back. And is just so I get 6'.

Yet, their father did not provide support. When she approached him for financial assistance to raise the children, he refused. Because he wasn't taking care of the children, she had to apply for public assistance.

Her children would visit their father during the holidays. However, she and her husband eventually divorced about 4 years prior to the study and he remarried. Then the children's visits were stopped.

When the children were smaller she would get help from friends in the forms of a listening ear, money or foodstuff. Her relatives provided no support whatsoever.

For some years, Carol supplemented the public assistance with a small income, earned from working in the market. She also did some baby-sitting for a male friend whose wife had died leaving him with about 4 children. However, this came to an end when she became ill.

She got involved with a male companion but ended the relationship a year before the study because he expected her to leave her children and live with him full time. At that time her third daughter was home and became the caretaker when Carol went to work and live part time with the male companion. (He had a food catering business).

The arrangement worked until the daughter moved out of the home. Carol believed she could not leave a 14-year-old daughter and her youngest son to fend for

themselves when she was not around. She opted to end the relationship and return to her family. Now that four of the children have left home, there are fewer persons to feed but also less money.

As a result, barring June and Nirmala, the income-earning activities in which the women would be classified as jobs in the bottom of the occupational hierarchy or

Income. Poverty cuts across ethnic lines. Women who head households are most vulnerable to poverty. In the Caribbean women have been socialized essentially for parental, conjugal and domestic roles but historically have been associated with occupational role performance (Massiah, 1983).

According to this author, female success at manipulating their occupational roles has been related to their ability to combine income-earning activities with household responsibility. For many years, women controlled the local fruit and vegetable section of the distributive sector. Modernization in the Caribbean, however, has resulted in a focus on imported technology, specialized enterprises and individualistic philosophy. These, together with the decline in the extended family have created challenges for women to combine income-earning and home-maintenance activities. Women are more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts, more likely to be in low paying occupations and more likely to be untrained for any occupation at all (p57).

Low education also cuts across ethnic lines. With the exception of June, who obtained a secondary level of education and did 'additional courses', all the other women in this study attained, solely, primary school education. Nirmala was forced to leave school to take care of the family household. Victoria regretted that her parents never valued education and, as a result, she attained the level of School Leaving. Kay started at

a secondary school for which fees were charged for attendance but dropped out in Form 1. Carol failed Common Entrance, and though she had other chances, was not allowed to go back to school.

As a result, barring June and Nirmala, the income-earning activities in which the others engaged could be classified as jobs at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy or social welfare programmes.

With the exception of June, the primary concern of the women in this study was to earn, to provide for their children or wards instead of to satisfy childhood or adolescent aspirations and obtain additional qualifications. The impetus was on these female heads to place earning above their personal aspirations so as to ensure that their children were properly cared for. Table 5 below summarizes the financial support in each home.

Kavya	- Mental job selling sweets outside school - Contributions from one working adult son in household (recently laid off) - Contributions from non-residential father
Nirmala	- Earnings from two jobs done consecutively during the year (one cutting hair and the other sewing)
Carol	- Public Assistance for self and children - Mental job selling on beach

Table 5

Forms of financial support in 5 female-headed homes in Trinidad

Mother/Guardian	Forms of financial support
Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Small contributions from non-residential father -Pension from mother -Monetary donations (including occasional barrel of foodstuff and clothes) from sister abroad
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Contributions from one working adult son in household -Public Assistance for children -Earnings from 2 part-time jobs
Kay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Menial job selling sweets outside club -Contributions from one working adult son in household (recently laid off) -Contributions from non-residential father
Nirmala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Earnings from two jobs done consecutively during the year (cane-cutting & work at a confectioner)
Carol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Public Assistance for self and children -Menial job selling on beach

With respect to three of the five women in this research, Nirmala, June and Carol, there was no substantial or consistent form of external financial assistance by individuals. As soon as Nirmala started to work after her husband's death, the financial support from her brother stopped.

To supplement the income from 2 part-time jobs, June had to rely on welfare assistance provided by the State for her family. So too, did Carol. A major contributing factor to the economic problems of children is the failure of non-custodial fathers to financially support them. Carol's husband did not contribute financially to the upbringing of his children. He eventually became ill and to get Public assistance Carol had to show that he was unable to work through a medical. However, he even tried to evade doing this. Carol had to go through the legal system.

He [never used to help me take care of them] because that is what make me go to the officer and she advise me to apply for public assistance. That when I even go to he to get help that he as the father supposed to give to them, he did refuse doing it. He give me lil problems and thing, when he start to go, oh, he used to take he medical, stay in Mayaro with it, he didn't even wanted to give me anything for them. So, I come and talk to the officer and she send me to the JP[Justice of the Peace]. And she – the JP advise me to bring him up that he will be able to give the medical every 6 months, that I will be able to get something for the [the children]. So that was how I was able to get money for them.

Carol received support from friends with her first 3 children but not with the last 3. This, she attributes to changing times.

I used to get help from friends. When I tell them my problems, anything like that, they still used to help me out and thing, so I didn't have any problems to say I had problems. It had friends will give me money, it have who will give me grocery things. It had friends I coulda sit down and talk to that time but now it don't have that again. I have family but it come like I don't have, in Trinidad, in the States, nowhere.

For Victoria, with 3 children and no job, finances are an issue. Victoria receives financial support from Ms. Eastlyn's pension, primarily traveling and snack money from her children's father and monetary contributions, including the occasional barrel of foodstuff and clothes from her sister who had migrated.

In an attempt to survive in what could, to some extent, be viewed as circumstances of poverty and deprivation, Victoria's mother and sister engage in an adaptive strategy. They have created what Barrow (1996) terms, 'a female dominated kinship network that incorporates migrant ties'. This is based on findings done by Gussler cited in Barrow (1996), in a village in St. Kitts, where there were limited economic and employment opportunities. Villagers became highly mobile and migrated to areas of 'economic abundance and opportunity'. Victoria's sister migrated to the United States.

At least once a month, we [Victoria's mother and family] receive something from her. But March gone, I hadn't received anything and she send it. She send the money in a postcard thing, put it up and then she

wrap it in a letter. And like somebody pick up with that. I think I was up in Arima while it come. Now we know letters coming, every month she will send a little something. I always tell her thanks and what happened [by letter]. But she say [by phone] she ain't get no letter. So I say, 'You should have told me because I didn't see anything and I thought you didn't send none.' So she want to dead."

According to Barrow (1996) kinship networks focus on the relationship between mother and child, particularly mother and daughter. It is posited that from an early age, permanent obligations are instilled into the child to help support her mother, presumably through achieving success abroad.

It is only Kay who has a reliable source of external financial support from her children's father but only for her children, not for herself.

If say, like Sharon want a dress, pair of shoe, anything, I (Kay) go to him {their father) and he give me money to buy. He'll come and he'll drop money for food. He does buy all the books and everything. Everything. As the book list come he takes it and buy uniforms, sneakers, everything.

The concept of comfort with independence with these female heads is another area to address. June, Carol and Kay appeared comfortable being on their own with their children. They neither indicated having ever had a male partner in the home, nor expressed any intention to seek for one.

Nirmala and Victoria on the other hand, once had partners. These two women showed some reaction to the absence of their male partners. They spoke of something missing from their lives, of being lonely (according to Nirmala "Is me alone") and in

Victoria's case of having to keep constantly occupied so as not to miss or think about her estranged husband.

Even with such trying circumstances, resiliency is present and is manifested in the continued perseverance of the women in this study to successfully raise their children despite varied odds. Just how they do so is explored in Chapter 6.

8. How are the mothers of these academically successful students involved with their children?

Lincoln (1987) referred to these interactive processes as "social capital." Social capital pertains to, "the social networks and social interactions that facilitate educational attainment particularly those established between parents, students and schools" (p.74).

Researchers, who studied an Indonesian village camp, found that even where some families have low levels of resources parents could still have high educational aspirations for their children and support their educational pursuits (Yan, 2003).

Evidence from research suggests that social capital leads to improved student achievement, better school grades and lower rates of dropping out of school. Research also indicates that a family may possess a number of characteristics that are associated with high academic achievement (Carroll, 1998).

The data collected revealed a number of characteristics of the parenting for females. The data revealed several categories of parenting for females. The data revealed the following categories: their perceptions of headship and motherhood. What they think are the types of disciplinary skills which they use, parenting style, and family size. In addition, their coping skills and various forms of support provided to them were revealed by the data. Also revealed were these parents' or grandmothers' perceptions of education, educational and moral

Intrafamilial processes in five single parent female-headed households in Trinidad

In this chapter, I examine the intrafamilial environment of the 5 female-headed families. The information yielded by the data provided answers for questions #2 and #3:

2. What are these mothers/guardians perceptions of parenting?
3. How are the mothers of these academically successful students involved with their children?

Lareau (1987) referred to these interactive processes as 'social capital'. Social capital pertains to, 'the social networks and social interactions that facilitate educational attainment particularly those established between parents, students and schools' (p74).

Researchers, who studied an Indochinese refugee camp, found that even where some families have low levels of income, parents could still have high educational aspirations for their children and support their educational pursuits (Yan, 2000).

Evidence from research suggests that social capital leads to improved student achievement, better school grades and occurs regardless of other social and economic characteristics that a family may possess (Carbonaro, 1998).

The data collected revealed several dimensions of social capital. In this chapter, several categories are examined: the phenomenon of single parenting for females, their perceptions of headship and matrifocality. What then follows are the types of disciplinary skills which they use, parenting styles and family rules. In addition, their coping skills and various forms of support provided to them were revealed by the data. Also revealed were these parents' or guardians' perceptions of education, educational and moral

expectations, positive parent-teen interactions and parent-school interactions. The categories are in Table 6.

Table 6

Intrafamilial processes in 5 female-headed families in Trinidad

-
- Headship and matrifocality
 - Discipline and parenting styles
 - Coping skills and support
 - Parental perceptions of education/Educational expectations
 - Parental provision of resources
 - Parental moral expectations
 - Parent-teen interaction
 - Allowances for relationships
-

- An older, unmarried biological mother with a planned or unplanned child
- A single person, male or female, gay or straight, who adopts a child
- A lesbian mother who chooses surrogacy through donor insemination
- Separation
- Widowhood

Locally, the women in this study were single parents in one of 3 ways (as shown by Table

The following section on Headship and Matrifocality will answer the second guiding research question:

2. What are these mothers/guardians perceptions of parenting?

'Headship' and 'matrifocality'

Although there might be the tendency to think of single parents as a group, they are in fact a diverse population, having found this form of parenting through many different routes.

One definition of 'female-headed families' is: 'households in which there is typically, one female parent or guardian, who might or might not have been married, with one or more children'. These types of households could have come about in several ways. Foreign research pinpoints some major groupings (Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2000 p37)

- A divorced person with child custody
- An unmarried teenage biological mother with a planned or unplanned child
- An older unmarried biological mother with a planned or unplanned child
- A single person, male or female, gay or straight, who adopts a child
- A lesbian mother who chooses impregnation through donor insemination
- Separation
- Widowhood

Locally, the women in this study were single parents in one of 3 ways (as shown by Table 7).

Table 7

Reasons for Headship

Female Head	Reason For Headship
Nirmala	- Widowhood
Victoria	- Separated
Patricia, June, Kay	- An older unmarried biological mother with a planned or unplanned child

June and Kay have relationships where they never officially married their children's fathers nor lived with them but bore their children and received support from them.

I have used the term 'female headed' in my research. Both this term and matrifocality have been used interchangeably with other concepts such as 'mother-centred', 'matriarchal' and 'grandmother family', for example. As a result there has been some degree of confusion and discrepancy. Four areas of variance in the meaning of the term are pointed out in Barrow (1996):

- a. The implication that women are more important than the observer had expected
- b. Women have a great deal to say about how money is spent
- c. Women are the primary source of income in the household
- d. The absence of a resident male from the household

Barrow goes on to posit certain criteria in defining 'matrifocality' or 'female-headedness'. Firstly, the mother or female guardian takes the central focus in

relationships and secondly, she holds a position of authority and dominance within the family.

In addition, the woman's decision-making is free from male authority. Fourthly, from the perspective of children within the household, the female figure is perceived as the most stable, most dominant. She is both the nurturer and the disciplinary figure (p74).

When this research was conducted, there were no resident male adults present in the households of the participants. In the Caribbean, there has been a tradition of female-headed households going back a century before modernization and even into the days of slavery.

Male migration was one reason for this. There was a dramatic imbalance in sex ratios, for example, in Barbados, around 1921 when men migrated to Panama to help in the building of the canal. Massiah in Barrow (1996) pointed out that the continued deficit of males meant that quite a considerable number of females were left to manage their households 'single-handedly'.

However, this reason cannot fully explain it. Another contributory factor may be 'female longevity combined with age at marriage'. It has been found that the Caribbean woman's life expectancy surpassed that of the men by approximately 5 years. In addition, there is the tendency to marry men who are approximately 5 years older than themselves and thus females, many times, outlive their spouses. Also, there is a low remarriage rate among widowed women (Barrow 1996, p77).

Yet another factor is the emergence of a category of women who choose independence and freedom from male dominance. These women often head households and may enter into extra-residential visiting unions. June and Kay belong to this category.

They personally opted for their respective residential patterns. That these two women chose to head households, suggests a level of economic autonomy or autonomy, at most, since neither of them could have been considered as holding a well-paying job.

Kay became pregnant at the beginning of her teenage years and started working the following year. She neither expected to live with her children's father nor demanded that he support her financially. She perceived of herself as providing both maternal and paternal support to her children in all matters, relying on the father to assist primarily when she was unemployed.

"Being mother and father of six children I was working all the time and you know, the father will help me in between. So, it wasn't hard for me, raising all these children. The onliest time the father will see me is when I don't have money but as long as I have money, is everything with me and my children."

Kay is comfortable being on her own with her children. Her major source of discomfort is not having a better job to provide for them. What she does she does not consider a job.

If I get a job my children and them will be better off. Sometimes you want certain things for your children and, you know, you telling yourself, 'If I did working I'd a have them', you know. I want to have them more happy, man. Have them more happy as a single parent. I want to have my children real happy. I does try my best, yet still I telling myself 'That is not enough'.

June, however, provides all round support to her family, without any male assistance.

I am the adult figure, the parent, in order to administer guidance, make sure everything is going okay with them. I'm their financial backbone. I'm responsible for them on a whole, 100 percent. I manage everything. I am solely responsible for their care."

June, too, appeared to be quite comfortable without a male assisting in raising her children and wards. She described her role as being mother to all the children in the household when her stepmother died and shortly after, when her father died, becoming sole caretaker for them.

Despite the challenges of this position, ('Sometimes it's tough. Sometimes I feel as though, you know, the whole world is on my shoulders') June never suggested needing male assistance but takes solace in the fact that the wards are her relatives and that the challenges they posed would have been taken on by someone else, had she not accepted them.

Carol raised her children without a male presence in the household: 'Since they [her children were] small they never had father to say well, they never had father love. They grow up with only a mother alone'. She would have preferred to have her husband live with her and assist in the children's upbringing. However, his choice of a promiscuous lifestyle thwarted her desires.

There were no indications of reconciliation because he never showed any willingness to change his behaviour. Carol did not appear to have any meaningful relationship beyond his 'visits'. In addition, he would never willingly provide for her or

for his children, though they (the children) would occasionally spend time by him during holiday periods. When the last child, Marlon was about ten (10), he remarried and whatever was left of Carol's and his relationship deteriorated even further. He died about two (2) years prior to this research.

If Carol were able to go back and relive her experiences of parenting, she vows she would not do it again, not because of the absence of her spouse but the calibre of what she terms, 'nowadays' children.

I ain't believe I'd be able to reach in that position [single parent] again nah, to really take up in that again. Cause in this times here now, I doubt I will be able to control any more children again in these times.

Nirmala was a housewife before her husband died. Like Carol, she also, would have preferred to have a male around to assist her in raising their two daughters. However, fate prevented this. She was forced to assume full responsibility for her family after her husband was murdered. It is a task that she took on albeit somewhat unwillingly, 'sometimes when I get downcourage, I does tell myself like I have to work for the rest of my life, you know'.

However, she would not forego being a single parent to her daughters, even if it means having to work daily, to provide for them, 'I does feel like down and out sometime. Not raising them, eh, I could tell anybody I ain't regret that I make them at all, although I have to work to mind them. There's no regret'. Nevertheless she finds being a single parent, many times overwhelming.

Sometimes I does feel like frustrated. Like to get up in the morning, go to work, leave my children. Go work, come back, everything for myself. Everything. All

housework. Everything. Being a mother and father together. Taking full responsibility, Sometime I don't know how I does keep going.

Victoria lived with her husband until the relationship deteriorated to the point where she took her last 2 children and joined her older child in her mother's home. She, too, would have preferred to have a man to assist in raising her children, to be reconciled with her husband, but it did not seem like this would happen with her. As a result, the relationship further deteriorated to the point of absolutely no communication with her estranged spouse.

Despite the state of their relationship, she would still have preferred to spend time with him and her family. He appeared to be the one who avoided contact with her, 'You know as a family man, he wouldn't come and say, well, you know, 'Let me take my family for a sea bath or a little cultural show'. Nothing. He don't have time'.

With his meager financial support, and the support from her mother, she has taken up the role of raising her children. She, like the other women in this study, gave no indication of abandoning their positions or allowing a male presence in to assist them. Like Carol, Kay, Nirmala and June, Victoria considers raising her children her responsibility.

My advice to parents, specially single parents because you already bring them up and keeping in mind that is your responsibility, you don't turn your back because he [the father] turn he back. No. You as mother you go all out to make your children be happy with you and this is what I always try to do.

What was interesting was that Victoria perceived of herself as a single parent and considered the assistance of her mother as a subset or buttress to her parenting rather than a separate influence. Earlier studies done of Caribbean women, depicted female heads of households as embedded and supported within extensive kinship networks (Barrow, 1996).

Social influence in families can take place through both direct and indirect paths. Direct influence is the process whereby, for example, a grandparent can directly influence a family situation through face-to-face interaction. Indirect influence occurs, for example, when a grandparent may take care of a child, thereby serving as a mediator by providing an overstressed mother with relief from childcare and thereby possibly altering the ensuing pattern of interaction of the mother and child (Lewis, 1984). Ms. Eastlyn, Victoria's mother, was a caregiver to Victoria's children.

Having the support of mom really make it a lot easier for me. Hadn't it been for her it would have been very difficult on my part. Being here with her I'm able to get assistance. And as I again repeat myself, if it wasn't for mom, it would've been a lot difficult.

Yet, consistent with Victoria's belief, though Ms. Eastlyn provides a range of support for her daughter, and could have had much direct influence, she allowed Victoria to take the primary role in the psychological upbringing of her children.

If I tell her (Hazel), 'You would do this', and the mother say, 'Well, I want you to do that', I will let her (Hazel) go to the mother, you understand.

But I would say, if I was alone, was handling her right through, it would be different. She would be, instead of having 2 (guardians), you know. So

now like, for instance, she may want to go with the girls then and they say they want to go South to shop and thing. I'm not accustomed to that, so I will tell her I will go with her to the shop and the mother will tell her, let her go on her own, with that now, I have no say in that, the mother make the decision.

Neither the children nor their mothers indicated any existence of visiting male partners or any intention on their mothers'/guardians' part to find male partners in the near future. What they indicated was a reliance on each other and the students' acceptance of the status quo on headship in their families.

Discipline and parenting styles: June

All female heads have established family rules with their wards. These rules focused on the amount of time that students were allowed to watch television, interact with friends and as well, required the teens to perform some household chores. What emerged too, were the preliminary indications of the parenting styles and disciplinary techniques of these female heads.

This was, perhaps, most evident in June's running of her household. Having been placed in a situation where she had, through untimely events moved from becoming the parent of three children to the parent of eight she felt that to maintain her sanity, she had to establish clear-cut rules or procedures. She devised rosters with the children's names on them so that each had a chore to do even if it was to pick up bits of paper 'Everybody had a particular chore to do on the day in question so at the end of the week everybody fill in on a daily basis and it wasn't hectic. Everything was organized'.

Even meal planning and its delivery was an organized process. Meals were determined beforehand. Plates of food were labeled with the children's names when June had to move from one job in the morning to another that evening. A large amount of juice would be made and bottled on weekends. Planning also took place in preparing the children for school.

The night before you would get everybody to lay out their clothes, socks, their shoes, the school bag, everything would be just laid on a chair accordingly for the next morning. So when they get up everything was close at hand so it's just nobody would have to be rushing about looking for anything. You organize everything the night before. Even thing like sandwiches, you know what kind of sandwich you making.

June initiated family sessions to resolve conflicts and maintain a 'team' effort.

Like maybe once a month we'd call a meeting on a Saturday I'm home. Sometimes during the month of 2 weeks prior to the meeting or whatever if anybody said or did anything to offend anybody, it would come out in the meeting. We would ask each other if anybody pleased with how the running of the home, how it's going on, you now, and if anybody have any grievances as such. They would lay their cards on the table. Sometimes they corrected me, and all, you know, and if certain things that I did and they didn't approve of and they said it in the meeting, well, I would be big enough and apologize and likewise across the board, we'd be apologizing to each other and stuff like that. And it worked okay and the meeting was a good solution in that that was one point in time where everybody came

together and we spoke about the situation at hand, if it's improving. We check to make sure everybody is getting their fair share of support, in that nobody's being, how should I say, no one person's doing everything.

She even introduced rules to assist in the training of proper etiquette for all of the female children in areas such as bed making, putting away clothes and neatening rooms. There was, as well, an established location for performing school related activities, 'Well, they all sit either by this table or sit at the table in the kitchen and they do their homework'.

Diana Baumrind, conducted a comprehensive longitudinal study which examined the effects of parenting style on the development of children 3 –15. She identified three parenting types: *authoritarian*, *permissive* and *authoritative* (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts & Fraleigh, 1987). Her latest report (Grolnick & Deci, 1991) identified 7 types of parenting styles:

1. Authoritative - parents are firm and discipline consistently. They are also warm and supportive
2. Democratic - parents unconventional and modestly firm
3. Nondirective - parents considered permissive. They are supportive, unconventional and lax
4. Directive - parents controlling, firm, rejecting and traditional

5. Authoritarian-directive - parents highly intrusive
6. Unengaged - parents rejecting and neglectful
7. Good enough - parents had moderate scores on all parenting dimensions

Because of the exploratory nature of this research and to limit the study, I focused on the original 3 patterns of parenting. The *authoritarian style* of parenting is characterized by many strict limits and no freedom. Parents attempt to shape, control and evaluate their children's attitudes and behaviours by an absolute set of standards. Their goals for their children are obedience, respect for authority, work, tradition and the preservation of order. A 'healthy fear' of authority is encouraged and parents make the decisions. The parent may be described as controlling, inflexible, critical, harsh, and loud. He / she uses rewards, punishments, threats, bribes, yelling and demanding as tools.

The *permissive* pattern is tolerant and accepting towards the child's impulses. Little punishment is used and the parent makes few demands for mature behaviour or self-regulation by the child. It is characterized by no limits and total freedom. Typically, the parent may be timid, weak, absent or inconsistent. He / she may use pleading, pleasing, hoping, giving in and giving up as disciplinary tools. The child's needs are considered more important than the parent's.

An expectation of mature behaviour from the child and the clear setting of standards by the parent characterize *authoritative* parenting. Rules and standards are firmly enforced while commands and sanctions are used as necessary. The parent's belief is that she / he must lead her child and his goals for the child are cooperativeness, respect and responsibility for self and others and courage. The child is encouraged to be

independent and individual. Open communication is welcomed and verbal give-and-take allowed. The parent uses natural or logical consequences, family meetings, incentives, negotiation and asking as disciplinary tools. Rules and routines are also established. The rights of the parent and child are also taken into consideration. The parent thus tries to exercise leadership and direction without suppressing the child's self respect, individuality or willingness. There is mutual respect and conflict resolution.

Though a parent may conform predominantly to one pattern, there are often characteristics from the other patterns in his / her parenting style. Actual families are often a mixture of styles. Variations can include instances where two parents use different styles or when a parent demonstrates inconsistent or unstable patterns (possibly psychological or substance induced behaviour).

Charlene describes her big sister June as 'nice. I ain't get punish. When she tell me to do something is usually a joy to do it because I need to learn. So when she tell me, "Go for this", I, well, I going for it'.

Though at times June would use corporal punishment (which suggests control and hints at authoritarian parenting), she preferred to talk and to use reasoning with her wards (authoritative approach).

Well, there are moments when they get the lash, of course, you know, but most of the time, I'll just talk. A lot of talk because sometime it could get really, really tough. You one, as an adult with so many children to manage because is a whole lot of thing you have in your head because you have to study for everybody because everybody have individual needs. Then you have to study on a general basis, well, home needs this, it needs that, I

have to pay this bill, I have to because everybody has to survive and you're just one person and you have to be able to manage all these things, juggle your work. Then you have to be able to have a little time for yourself, if it is even self 5 minutes, you know. It's kinda tough but when they needed the discipline, they got it. If it was a few thumps or if it was sitting down and just talking my head off and they getting tired hearing me. It worked.

Consistent with authoritative patterns, sometimes June's disciplinary method was having the child examine his behaviour from her point of view or follow the natural consequence of the action. There was one occasion on which one of her brothers 'broke biche' (played truant) for two days.

His punishment was to cook, make sure that I got food when I got home from work and he had to clean because I said to him, it takes a lot out of me to get his working tools together in order for him to go to school and his responsibility is to make sure that he uses the tools he has been given. So he had to cook. Of course he didn't cook anything very tasty but he had to cook. And of course he had to clean. So, it was his day of cooking and cleaning. I think I probably made him do that for a weekend or so. He had to do it, regardless of how it was done. He had to do it and if at any point in time it was done halfway, I think I corrected him, making sure it was properly done.

There were, too, rules concerning the length of time the children could spend watching television.

Once I say get in your bed, if I find they staying long, I start to bawl and everybody does get up and move. Sometimes I come home and I'm very, very tired, I happen to lie down. After I lie down and it's done 8 o' clock, I could get stick and after I jump up and they still sitting down there and the TV very low but they don't want to wake me up because they know the next day is school but by the time I walk outside I doesn't have to look, every man jack just start to move. It isn't too bad. They listen.

Discipline and parenting styles: Victoria

It was Victoria's religion that appeared to heavily influence the day-to-day activities in which her family engaged.

We examine the Scriptures daily. She [Ms. Eastlyn] take her [[Hazel] up in reading, not forgetting, as I mentioned before, we are Jehovah Witnesses, so we always have a lot of reading to do. So, most of the time she take Hazel with her up on mornings and Hazel will read the daily text with her, you see.

Her daughter, Hazel, had chores. One of them was cooking occasionally, so that it would, 'Make life easier for herself. So then she knows she will be responsible for herself, for the little ones so if mammy not there she won't say, "Mammy not here and we don't have food". No. She has to do things for herself'.

Victoria had established procedures such as the completion of homework assignments with her children or allowing them to work on their own when they felt capable. 'Well, there are times when I do [supervise] but most times, she [Hazel] feel that she get along on her own so you find she would come and she would take up the book'.

She had spent considerable time in Hazel's earlier years, training her to assume responsibility. She explained that she was quite aware of teens whose childhood experiences were so confining that when they were in situations where their parents were absent, they engaged in extreme forms of behaviour. Thus Victoria wanted her daughter to be able to make responsible decisions with her mother's guidance.

I was a child and I've seen when parents try to protect their children, soon as that parent turn away from that child, that child gone like it was in a cage, right, and they tie up. They say they get that cage open and they fly out. All sort of immorality. I have seen it. So that's why I began to give Hazel responsibility, alright, and I monitor her – what time she leaving for school, what time she coming home. If she not doing right, then I say, 'Well, I gave you the privilege and you didn't do the right thing. Come what may, morning and evening I'll be there with you. I didn't have to do that so far. She has been able to monitor herself.

As a parent, such guidance suggests generally, an authoritative pattern. However, there are times when Victoria demonstrates authoritarianism through removing privileges or using corporal punishment.

The Bible say, 'Foolishness is tied up in the heart of a boy but the rod. So, there are times when they do foolish things and they need correction,

right? Sometimes I use the rod, sometimes I give it to them in punishment.

Perhaps they might have to go somewhere and they really did not carry

about themselves and I forbid them. Sometimes the television show that

they so love I say, 'Well, no TV watching', as the case may be or you

know, things like that. Not all the times I use the rod.

When asked to explain her mother's disciplinary style her daughter Hazel explained, 'she is very cool and calm to get along with when we do the things pleasing to her, but the time you ever do something to get on her nerves, you wouldn't have any good relations'. She adds that corporal punishment is used when her mother asks her, 'to do something and she tell you more than once and you ain't do it, she put a licking on you, or if you do something bad, she put a licking on you'.

Discipline and parenting styles: Kay

Kay, too, had established chores for her children to perform. These they had to complete in her absence (while she was away at work, for example), to facilitate the effective running of the household.

Because I have to be out, I can't be, you know, home at the same time so, you know, they used to clean out. Well, my big daughter, she's 27 now, she start to cook at the age of 13 years. She used to cook, you know, when I gone to work and thing because when she was small I used to do some cooking in a club in town. So, when I gone out, she used to cook for the smaller ones. Now, when I come home and I meet the wares dirty I say,

'Who's to wash wares?' Sharon say, Mammy is Debra'. I say, 'Debra, come and wash the wares'. She done get up from watching TV and go and wash the wares. I don't have no problem with them.

Her parenting style incorporates authoritarian patterns resorting to what she terms 'a healthy fear'.

I don't tolerate stupidity. If I come home, I see the place dirty, you know, I will talk to them, I will say, well, don't let me come back and meet it so, you know. They will clean it up and thing. [When they were younger I would beat them] now and then. Cause right now, my children, I don't beat my children. I always threaten them, 'I 'o beat all you so bad!' you know but you know, no licks. Well, you see, I's a strict mother, you understand? My children and them never used to slip with me because you know, I's mother and father.

From time to time, she would have the final say in decision-making for her daughter.

Well, if she has to go somewhere and she come and say, 'Well, look mammy I want to go somewhere', if my mind tell me look, feel heavy as to where she going, I doesn't send her and she don't dig nothing to say well, it have some children, they will. She doesn't dig nothing you know.

She also demonstrates some authoritative characteristics.

I used to sit down and talk with them, you know, and show them, well, look, I have to go out and get everything, you know. I try to teach them the

right thing. Yeah, don't mind they will have they own life and take they own road after a time but you know, I try my best.

Though Kay describes herself as strict, Sharon her daughter, describes her as, 'A cool kind of person...She don't get on like some mothers get on, grouchy, grouchy, grouchy and buff you up [speak harshly to child]'.

Discipline and parenting styles: Carol

In Carol's family, there were chores for her children to do. Marlon's responsibility was cleaning up around the yard.

Sometime I don't even have to tell him, 'Well, Marlon the yard want cutlassing or the track want cutlassing'. Marlon will get up early on morning, before he bathe or anything and Marlon will cut the track. If round the yard want cutting, he will cut round the yard and thing. I never had no problem of doing that or paying anybody to do it.

Carol appeared to be primarily authoritarian in parenting and in particular, with the older three of her 6 children.

Well, I used to beat all of them but the amount of licks the 3 bigger ones get the last 3 never get that. No, because afterwards when I come and I start to suffer with the heart and pressure that used to give me shortage of breath.

She became emotional, moved to tears, when she attributed, what she felt was poor behaviour on the part of her last three children, to her failure to use heavy corporal punishment with them.

I believe must be all that that make them grow up so, too. Otherwise, if they used to get licks like the bigger set, they mighta [sic] be like the bigger set. But as how they come here now and most of the time you talk to them, you will call them, you will rough them up, you know and you wouldn't beat them. So they come here now and they tell theyself [sic], well, they free. They could do what they want. Lil [sic] bawling, they get accustom to it but if I did beating them like the bigger set, they would have behave better.

Carol feels that the relationship with her son, which was once very close, is becoming distant. Whereas before he would come home and relate to her his school experiences, he no longer wants to do this.

Right now he asking for the brands and them they have come out here and some fur hat or some kind of hat they bring out and I tell him flat, I say, I don't have the money and if evenself [sic], right, it have other important things that I have to give you, right, I cannot take my last money and buy that because you want that and when you done it have important things you need of and I wouldn't have the money for it. So, he find well, you know as well, I ain't showing him that I would buy that for him cause he want it, he does get bad, he does have me in mind for that and all of them thing. Right, is all that he does have me black in he mind for.

Despite her claims, Marlon did not share his feelings of conflict with me, when asked to describe his relationship with his mother he said, 'It good. When I come home from school on afternoon we chat about things I did in school and things they did home.' From information gathered from field notes with his mother, I learnt that Marlon vents his frustrations about his mother with his sister. It is through the sister that the mother learns how he feels about situations of conflict between mother and son. The sister thus becomes an outlet for Marlon to vent his anger and a source of communication between Carol and her son.

Carol has had to resort to an external source of support to assist in disciplining her son. This support is found in his older brother, John.

He brother does talk to him because sometime when he misbehaving here I does call he brother and tell him I want him to talk to Marlon. John will talk to him and he will answer him, he will talk good to him because John will say if he ain't come to the phone to talk when he come here it will be a different story, he will know who is man in the house, right? So, John does talk to him, you know, like a father, like a big brother, like a friend, you know. So it ain't that he does bully him or anything like that.

Her older son's parenting style could be viewed as more authoritative, with the potential threat in his words suggesting some nuances of authoritarian patterns.

Discipline and parenting styles: Nirmala

Nirmala believes that as mother and father to her children, it is her responsibility to perform the household chores. She admits to having had a regimented life in her childhood and her marriage. She described her married life as one where her husband was continually, 'taking control of her life. Can't go here, can't go there'. She described her upbringing in the following way:

My mother[sic] house is just like you have to get up and work and do this and do that I can't find no happiness at my mother house. Because my mother had 8 children, right? She couldn't afford to send all of we to school. When she had the baby one day I used to stay home, one day, my brother used to stay home to baby-sit, right. Well eventually, like I stop just like that because of the children, you know. That is why the boys had more education than the girls.

She prefers to do most of the household chores herself including cooking for her daughters, so as to allow them leisure and time to do their homework.

Like if they go to school or go to the temple, they come home early in the evening. I does [sic] make sure and cook, I ain't[sic] doing no cleaning you know, I look at the time when they have to come home to prepare something. When they [her daughters] come from school I don't really pressure them like in my mother house[sic], how it used to be in my mother house with me. I do the work so that when they come they would take a little five and they would start in a book, clean up and eat and thing and do they work. I tell them I don't want to confuse them with work. I

mean they have to get happiness here too, you know. Sometime I does [sic] make kicks out of that. I does say, 'Like all you is my husband. I have to cook for all you. If I go anywhere, if I go to work, I come home I have to cook my own food. My children doesn't[sic] eat anywhere, you know.

However, there are a few chores that she will allow them to do on Sundays. These include ironing, washing wares and preparing a meal for the following morning.

On Saturday when they go to temple, I do all the work. Sunday's I's get the whole day to relax. Sunday evening, well, they does get up, bathe, and iron out they school clothes and thing. The older one does iron. Hema will help with lil washing up wares. If I preparing for the morning to go to work and for them to go to school, she'll help me do other little things. Like if I have to cook and thing sometime she does help me but I don't make it a habit.

Nirmala demonstrates a pattern of permissive parenting with authoritative characteristics, in her approach to her teens. She can be characterized as permissive at times because she is sometimes accepting and timid in her dealings with her children. She goes out her way to please her children and serve them to a degree that could be considered self-effacing.

I does tell myself like I don't really have anything to live for except my children. I want them to have everything. If I need something I would put that aside and make sure my children have. Money, I have to think about,

you know. All you [her daughters] will be tomorrow future and I does tell myself I getting old already, I don't have to see anything again.

There was once an occasion where she wanted a T-shirt at a cost of \$25. She postponed buying it for 3 months in order to ensure that her daughters received anything else that they might have needed personally or for school.

When Nirmala relates occasions where her daughters, particularly Hema felt it necessary to purchase specific household items, it is evident that there is permissiveness in her mother's parenting style.

We just had 2 bed, we had a television and like we didn't have anything else. So after my daughter was 12 years she tell me, she say she think we should buy a couch set. So that's it. Then my stove went, so I bought a stove one fortnight we got pay from Caroni. One fortnight I used to pay for the stove, one fortnight for the set. Right, they take out a dinette set.

Well, she say, 'Like everybody have radio and all of that'. We didn't have that. So she say, 'Mom, I think we should buy a stereo'. I tell she is I alone working but she insisted she wanted a stereo. I went and pick out a stereo.

I pay for it in 3 months time. I went and take out a stereo just to make my children happy. I know in my heart I not happy but seeing my children happy make[sic] me happy too. She say, 'Well, mom, is time to buy a piece of vinyl and put it in your house. Like she make the demands, not like my daughter. Like, you know, a real constructive person.

Hema finds her mother to some degree, authoritarian. When asked to describe her mother's disciplinary style she explained, 'She likes things to be done well. Everything. If she tell[sic] you, like, don't go, don't go. "Don't go" means don't go' (laughs).

Coping

Frydenberg (1997) suggests that the term 'coping', 'can imply a range of behaviours which are akin to adaptation, mastery, defence or realistic problem solving'. Furthermore, coping involves the responses such as thoughts, feelings and actions that are used by the individual to deal with everyday problematic situations and particular circumstances.

There has been a tremendously increased interest in stress and its consequences. Environmental destruction, terrorism, unemployment, racial tensions, divorce, violence, crime are some of the issues that have contributed to such an interest. The result has been a 'deficit or disability model of behaviour' that focuses on what people cannot do rather than on what they can do (Frydenberg (1997).

There has since been a shift from the deficit view to an 'ability model' and the emergence of interest in both the theory and measurement of coping. This shift is positive, focusing on optimism and happiness. It seeks to examine human behaviour by observation of healthy and normal aspects of human endeavour rather than abnormal ones. The human being's adaptive rather than maladaptive responses are highlighted because the focus is on what the individual has and her capacities to cope with her problems.

Heath & Orthner (1999) stress that parenthood itself is a time of stress. Parents experience more demands on their personal time because of increased child and household related demands. In addition, economic demands are higher, with increased costs for household expenditures.

This normal pressure is accentuated in single parent households. Many times, the single parent is the primary owner and parent of his / her family. When the many roles they are made to play converge, they are faced with competing demands. Coping mechanisms must then be applied. I examined coping under the following areas: financial support, dealing with death, social support, dealing with separation and spiritual beliefs.

Coping: Dealing with death

The death of a loved one is rated as the most stressful life event. Generally, as human beings, we tend to associate death with the passing away of an elderly person and usually experience discomfort when discussing the topic. The witnessing of a death can bring and leave images that cause event greater turmoil.

Shimoni & Baxter (2001) suggest that the continuous flashing by the media of images of death may have desensitized us or made us fail to understand the true meaning of what might be considered the most traumatic event in the course of a family's lifespan. That Nirmala's recall of the events leading to her husband's death and her discovery of his body, brought quick tears, indicates the profound and pervasive effect that this event had on her life and those of her daughters. Responses to death are partly influenced by the nature of the relationship with the deceased. There are certain events which can evoke strong emotions and grief years after the death has taken place (Kubler-Ross 1974).

There are, too, social aspects of death. When a spouse, who was a breadwinner in the family, dies, that death has an impact that goes beyond the emotional responses. The death usually leads to a period of crisis in the lives of the surviving family members. The income of the family will obviously significantly decrease. In the case of Nirmala, she then had to find a means of financial support whereas before, she had been a housewife, looking after the affairs of the home while her husband handled the financial responsibilities.

Nirmala described seeing her husband's dead body and shaking him to get up (representative of shock and denial). She also talked about feeling a strong sense of despair or depression, lacking purpose and direction and having blacked out and remained out for 3 days (trauma, depression and despair).

To some extent she is still in the process of coming to terms with the untimely transition from housewife to single working mother. In reference to the period just after her husband died she recounted, 'It seem like we was now starting in life...without a father, is me alone'.

Nirmala spends some months cutting cane at Caroni and 3 months at a candy factory. Her friends consider the former job difficult: 'Everybody tell me it takes a woman with guts to cut cane'. Her primary impetus for living, working and assuming headship of the household is for the all-round benefit of her children.

Social support.

Heath & Orthner (1999) posit that the ability to adapt to pressures and cope with the demands placed on them is a potential determinant of personal and family well being among single parents. They cite several factors that tend to be associated with greater coping ability. Among them is having an available and supportive parent or partner. This support or what could be described as 'social support' for the women in this study came mainly from their children or wards and in Victoria's case, her mother, Ms. Eastlyn.

Social support is 'the single strategy that is consistently reported as being used more by females than by males' (Frydenberg 1997). Defined, it is 'a range of significant interpersonal relationships that have an impact on the individual's functioning'. The 'use of social support is associated with experiences, past and present of the individual and how family and friends are perceived' (p132).

For Nirmala, her daughters provided the main source of social support for her after her husband's death and continue to do so. They gave direction and purpose for the maintenance of the household. This social support she receives from both her daughters is reciprocal, fuelling her strength to support them.

In all my worries, like sometimes she see me crying she would say, 'Mom, is okay.' She would hug me and say, 'Mummy, don't worry'. You know, she wouldn't let you down. She say, 'Things will be okay. When I grow up, have some education you wouldn't have to work. I go get a job and support you'. I's tell them, 'No, mummy have to work, you know. I will support everything, don't worry. You know, when I worrying, I does cry eh. They does know that I down by the road and I was crying. I does

always tell them if anything happen to them, I don't know? I mightn't be strong enough like when they father died I take it. I does feel like I go dead because both of them is like the apple of my eye. If I have a problem, I could sit down and talk to them.

In the case of Victoria, as Heath & Orthner (1999) posited, the parent – Ms. Eastlyn, has been a primary source of support for her. Victoria has left her husband and returned to her mother's home with her other children. Her mother, she affirms, has strongly supported her in a variety of ways.

She helps take care of the children. Whenever I have to go out, somewhere about, she takes care of them. She would prepare meals for them, as the case may be. She's an all rounder in helping me out. She sews for them. Whatever challenge, whatever where you could fit her in, she's there, taking care of the garden, preparing for them from the garden sugar cane to suck, however. More than I would normally do with them. Give them money. She spends time to recreate with them more than I, you know, in the yard. I would take them out for a drive and help with the schoolwork.

June became the breadwinner to 8 children ranging in ages from 16 years to 5 years, after the deaths of her stepmother and father. Like Nirmala, she placed the welfare of her 5 brothers and sisters before her concerns.

I had to go through an interview and a lot of questions, carry my job letter, pay slip, you know, and of course I had to try and beg a bit because they weren't totally convinced because they themselves found that it would be

hard on me, seeing that I was so young at the time and had children of my own to take the 5 added children but things worked out

She relied solely on the older siblings to supervise the younger ones during her absence from the home, when she went out to earn a living: 'The bigger ones will try to assist me by checking the smaller ones, home-work etc. make sure that it's done, check the books. It worked out'.

Researchers have also cited 'having a more flexible work schedule' as one factor that is associated with greater coping ability (Heath, Orthner & Dennis, 1999). When June's job location and schedule changed, the situation with regards to the monitoring of her household improved, 'It was bit tough in the beginning and eventually at that time I worked at Caura, eventually they sent me to Mt. Hope Chest clinic where I did not have to work any shift so things became easier'.

'The presence of a supportive community services system' is also listed as another contributing factor to greater coping ability. Both June and Carol received public assistance for their households. In June's case, for a couple of years subsequent to her parents' deaths, she received National insurance for five of brothers and sisters. This contribution ceased in May of 1997 and was never restarted. She also receives Social Welfare for the five children.

National Insurance is a bit of a disturbing feature because since May 1997 they stopped paying the National insurance towards them. Each time I go they keep promising. Now it has been over a year and still none but it doesn't matter anymore because I have learnt to do without that financial amount to make the total amount for a living basis per month

Unlike June, Carol is not employed. Because of illness she must rely on Social Welfare solely. She and her two children receive public assistance. With the money she has to take care of her needs and those of her two teenagers.

When she was younger, healthier and could work, she would take the older girls with her to the market to sell produce and leave the oldest son to look after the younger children.

Now that she is forced to stay at home because of failing health, when the circumstances become overly challenging she removes herself from the children and seeks social support from a neighbour or in solitude.

Sometime if they make me talk here, I just leave two of them here and I walk out the road. I will sit down out the road by a friend and I will talk to she. Sometimes I will sit down there, I feeling sleepy and sometime I tell she, you see me, I going and walk. Sometime I reach out on the junction and I sit down out there little bit. I sit down there by the junction alone.

After that, well, I come back home.

She finds social support, too, from her daughter, 'Sometimes, I just gone straight to my room and I lie down. She [her daughter] will come inside and lie down there in bed and we will talk away'.

With the exception of June, however, Carol and Kay have relied on male support through visits by the children, to the homes of their fathers. Zimmerman, Salem & Maton (1995) posited that youth living with their single mothers might continue to receive support from their fathers. From research they conducted with youth in single parent homes, they found that many youth who do not live with their fathers report that they

spend time with and receive support from them. Thus, father absence from home does not necessarily mean that the fathers are either psychologically or physically absent from their children's lives (p1609).

In Kay's case her older sons also provide the support she needs through the monitoring of her children.

Well, I have my bigger son there, which is 18. So, even though I not at home, when I not there, they [the 18 year-old and Sharon] does go by my next son. I have a bigger son which is 33 years living in the same street before I come in. So, they does go there and wait until I come.

Coping: Dealing with separation

The second most stressful life event is divorce. Victoria had not yet reached this stage but was at the point of separation from her husband.. She was forced to deal with the deteriorating relationship between her husband and herself and had actually reached the point of a physical separation.

She appeared to be in a period of mourning the loss of her intact family Whereas before in the relationship, her husband would have taken her and their children on recreational activities, he no longer welcomed her presence for such activities. She had resigned herself to this new relationship and had even gone further by ceasing from any form of contact with him, 'Whenever they [her children and husband] were going I used to go but now we on a torrid break, he will take them'.

Victoria was faced with the prospect of divorce and appeared to be heavily involved in the process of restructuring marital and parent-child relationships and finances and adapting to living apart.

Victoria emphasized that one of her primary strategies for dealing with the separation from her husband has been keeping physically active. She frequently cleans the home and this prevents her from having the time to think about her circumstances. Thus, it is through deliberately engaging in constant physical activity that she has no time to worry or grieve over her marital situation.

Coping: Spiritual beliefs

All women affirmed a reliance on spiritual support. For Nirmala, who is Hindu, she thanks God that she is able to support her daughters in a morally upright way, 'the onliest[sic]thing, I put God in front, you know'.

Victoria is a Jehovah Witness. Her entire purpose for living is to do what she considers to be 'Jehovah's job' and this is what she transmits to her children. Her entire conversation was interspersed with her religious beliefs.

When I study God's Word the Bible and you look at the conditions, you know the Bible is being passed. We are under God's will. We know that by Bible standards this system has gone, we cannot bring it back. We have to survive ourselves and those who listen to what the Bible say will do so. So this is my goal and I'd really like my children to think about it serious.

June attributes her existence and coping to a reliance on God.

Many a day we didn't have things to eat in here but we survived, you know. All of them have stayed away from school because I didn't have the money to send them. I, even, in instances, stayed away from work and preferred to give them their passage to go to school, that kind of thing. But we weathered the storm and it worked out okay. Everybody get big so it wasn't so bad. By the grace of God I'm here.

Kay admits to life's difficulties but swears by the power of prayer.

Yeah, it does be difficult really as a single parent, you know. You have your children, sometimes you get up on morning, you don't even have a dollar. It does be real hard but as long as you believe in the 'man up there' everything will be good. When you does pray hard, all you have to do is pray hard and God does let everything happen for all you, man.

Carol believes that it is God who has made it possible for her to accomplish taking care of her last 3 children.

I believe children today ain't hearing no parents. Well most of the time I don't make it a problem to me, you know. Because if I go to really take on that, most times is either I have to live on tablets, then. And the doctors too, does tell me that – don't take on nothing. Is only by the grace of God. If it wasn't for God I don't know how I would make it sometimes.

Parental perceptions of education and educational expectations

All of the women had a strong degree of educational expectations for their children. These statements were explicitly made to their children and were heavily influenced by the educational experiences of the mothers / guardians.

June spent many occasions reminding the children of their circumstances. She related her son's recent attainment of a position in the army and remarked that 'he has remembered the road that he has walked'.

She attributes Charlene's attempts to succeed at schoolwork to June's constant reminders about their past. She reflected that reminding Charlene about,

a little hardship in her life, growing up, probably motivated her, you know, to have that ambition to want to be somebody and, you know, trying to be successful so her mind was set on learning her work and probably trying to be the best she can be.

Victoria, also talks to her children in an attempt to have them strive to do educationally what she never did.

I somehow blame myself [for where I did not reach educationally] but I try to see how far I can reach with my children and that is my goal towards them. I repeat myself, I am not pushing my children on education to be a Dr. This and Dr. that or lawyer This or Lawyer That but if my children could pursue a career in whatever field they want to stand up, especially to do Jehovah job, it will be my earnest heart desire.

She constantly encourages Hazel to improve, 'I always show her, there's always room at the top. I give her all my encouragement'. She discusses the benefits of school with her

daughter, reminding her that her past failure at Common Entrance was her penultimate chance. Her attempts at the School Leaving examination might, most likely, be the last opportunity because of their economic situation.

For one I help her to appreciate that going to school is where you get basic knowledge and if you throw it away – I don't know if I am right or wrong by this term, since she was not successful in the Common Entrance I always refer to her as, 'this is your last chance' alright or 'this is the last train'. You wouldn't have another opportunity because I am not in a position to pay a Pay School and I don't believe the father is willing to do that, right? So, what I try to show her, you find an opportunity that you can make now by putting forward your best interest. In my days it was hard. Now, any child coming out without a piece of paper to show in hand, nothing doing. It real hard. So, if you getting the opportunity now, if you helping yourself, I'll be proud you reach somewhere.

Kay makes sacrifices for her children so that they would not have the difficult childhood she experienced. This, she reminds them of, from time to time. (Because her daughters are doing well at school, there is no need for constant reminders).

She encourages her daughter to pursue her dreams: 'It ain't[sic] easy out there. You want to be a nurse, you have to work hard'.

Carol becomes emotional when she talks of her past experiences linked to education and her expectations for her children; expectations which she, too verbalizes to them repeatedly, 'I want my children to get it [an education]. So, I always try to push my children...Marlon know that because I always push him for it and I does tell them that'.

Ironically, Carol considers it more important for her son to be educated than her daughters. Seemingly ignoring her circumstances, she believes that the role of the man is to be breadwinner to the family. On the other hand, she felt that husbands could provide for females or they could get by with unskilled labor.

I always wanted my boys and them to get education. I always tell myself that them have to work to mind whoever they have. I always tell myself that the boys have to take wife and when they take wife they have to have a job. Well, the girls are always there. If evenself them could've get anything with education, without education, them would've get something to do. And then if evenself they have a husband and, you know, he have education and have a job, it come the same thing.

Nirmala spoke of her difficult upbringing, as previously mentioned and stressed that she did not want her children to grow up like that. As a result, she reminds her children about her past and the importance of educational attainment to avoid negative circumstances.

I does sit down and talk to my children. I does talk to my children, tell them all about my past life...I tell them I working to make sure that all you have an education. Without an education there's not a life.

Marlon explained that he needed an education because he wanted to go to another school, a Junior Secondary. Though his mother appears to have some doubts, his teacher is convinced he truly feels this way, 'He is very serious. Quite serious when it comes to his work and I know he desperately wants to go to the Junior Sec. I know for a fact'.

Hema has big dreams that she hopes to have realized through acquiring an education.

Well, I'll like to be working and helping my mother with the situation. Then I'd like to try to achieve my goals. I have a lot of dreams. I like to sing a lot and I like to dance. I would like to become an air hostess and fly in planes – go all over the place, that's what I have in mind right now.

Sharon's explained that she was attending school so that, 'When I get big I could have an education. Get an education to get a proper job. I want to be a teacher'. Charlene believes that,

School is for learning things even though the school bad. You come to learn, so it wouldn't matter how the school is. It just matter how your book sense is. If I don't get a career, I'll be nothing. Ill be out in the streets somewhere.

To Hazel education is important. She goes on to explain,

After my mother had passed through a hard life and she see the importance of education and I really-it very important because failing Common Entrance is very-an example to see when you never listen. I never used to study, take she on for no Common Entrance but now, as I have the opportunity to write the School Leaving, all she ask of me is to study, put my full activation attention to my school work.

Parental provision of resources to build literacy

All mothers or guardians reported striving as hard as possible to ensure that their children were provided with as much as they could afford according to their financial situations. To build literacy the mothers/guardians ensured that there was reading

material. Interestingly enough, none of the students were members of the public library system but had access to reading material in their homes. Items such as books, encyclopedias, newspapers, Bibles, religious brochures and magazines for study were available to them.

For Marlon, there were, 'story books, language books and thing'. For Hema, 'any book she can get her hands on will do. Home, school, anywhere'. She further explained, 'Like when we have books at home, I read all the books. My sister and all have books. We read in school when it's library period'.

Sharon reads, 'big books at home. Encyclopedias. A whole set. Cinderella, Snow White, The Ugly ducklings'. Charlene reads books that her aunt sends her. She has 'about twenty something of them'. Hazel reads the Bible and the many Jehovah's Witness magazines that are a compulsory part of her religion. All students spoke about having had access to books in their homes from an early age, in some instances, like Sharon's, they remember their mothers/guardians reading to them until they could read for themselves.

Parental Moral Expectations

All of the women indicated that they talked to their teens about moral issues. June speaks to Charlene about relationships and matters pertaining to life, in general. She recounted using the example of what her sister eventually did as a moral lesson for Charlene.

Colleen [her sister] left a year before and she came back last February and she asked if she could come home and I said, 'No one sent you anywhere.'

This is your home'. So I took her back in and then she started to give me problems and when I started to correct her she decided she's gonna leave again. So, she's out again. So, I have no problem with that. and I don't know where her mind is at because she wants to be out there and when trouble takes her she wants to be here. Up to Christmas she wanted to come back and I said, 'No', just like that. I said, 'Listen to me, you're 19 years, you made the choice to go out there a second time. The first time you chose to go out you didn't tell anybody anything. You came back I said okay, no problem'. I said, 'On the second occasion you find contributing was a bit too much'. She didn't want to do anything. She just wanted to laze around whole day and I couldn't stand for that because I was the only one working. I have to support you, right? If you have to go out there and look for work, I have to give you the money to go. So while I'm out working hard, there's no problem with washing a dish, passing a broom that kind of stuff. She didn't take too keen on that so she left again. So, there, out there you made a choice. Stick it out. And I left her out there. How I look at it, I do not know what you've been doing out there all those months. I do not know who you had a relationship with, what kind of acquaintances that you have but I see you're alive, so, you have survived. So, you continue to survive because if each time you have a problem I say come home, you will not learn. So, whenever I have a conversation with Charlene I try to instill in her, 'You know your sister

left home, right?' I say, 'There're not here so I need to talk to you because

I do not want you to follow that road'.

June and Charlene also discuss sexual matters.

We sit down and we talk about boys. I work in a VD clinic, so some of the experiences I come home and I tell her because she's 14 years and she's in secondary school which is co-ed so she'll hear the boyfriend and girlfriend talk, all kind of conversation and added to that, they have Sex Ed. in school. Even though I try to prevent her from knowing certain things, she's going to know it anyway because it's part of the educational system.

So, I prefer to let her know it first hand so I sit down and I talk to her.

Victoria admits to talking to her teenage daughter about the facts of life and using the religious material as stimuli for such discussions.

We [Jehovah's Witnesses] have books to teach them all these different points about life and so forth, right? So that as they growing up each day I will correct them, I will help them see what is life, going out, your body parts and so forth and as a girl I will show them like what things you supposed to look out for and too, the congregation help us a lot too, because of the - Thursday night we had a talk on rape. Now, if there are certain points that I might not be able to express myself I was able to emphasize it more. I say, 'Hazel, you heard the talk, I hope you ready to put it into practice and listen attentively. Do act responsibly'.

Kay is keenly aware of the dangers that exist for young women in society. However, she explains though that she infrequently talks to her daughters about them, believing there is not yet the need for constant reminders because her daughter is still childlike in her approach to life.

Too much wolves out there. I love my daughters. Every night I get up during the night. I go and look at them sleeping. I really love my two last daughters...I don't really talk to Sharon about that [boys] cause she not on that now, you understand. She ain't studying that. When she go down by the father he does say, 'This is a lil child still', you know because sometime when you're a single parent and you have a child, especially a girl and they go by they father, the father is say, 'You see the same thing I telling you, how you have my daughter?' That's why you see I's prefer to send her down there and let him see, you know.

Carol talks to Marlon about 'life'. At the time the data was collected their latest discussions focused on Marlon's insistence on maintaining a relationship with an older man who engaged in immoral activities. She explained that this man would have women of 'questionable character' at his home, would have alcoholic drinks available and would at times show pornographic movies.

Nirmala talks to her daughters constantly, citing real life examples, like June, for knowledge about male-female relationships.

Sometime when I traveling to work, you now like boys carrying them here and giving them money that they parents mightn't give them and because they lacking money, I don't know, they does go with this boy. They spoil

themselves and they come home with children and all of that. I don't want that for my children. I do tell them that... I do sit down and put my children, I say, 'Man, watch how Sharma is going. You see when you have education and you have a job, nobody, no man, nobody could make style on you. When you have a job you could make without somebody. Don't let children and boyfriend be the first priority in life. Let your books be first. After books it has a lot of plenty time for boys and other things. Right now, you see right now, make the best use of it. And I sure Sharma does regret a lot. I use people for instance with my children.

She also offers advice to them on the importance of honesty, again using real life examples and modeling the behaviours she would like them to adopt.

You must tell them where they are going wrong and where they are going right.

Because when Hema was a little girl going to primary school and I cleaning their book bag in the morning and I take up to see like what sums they get she daddy used to call her 'little one'. He used to say, 'Little One, come here what is this pencil doing in your bag here?' 'Mom, that is my friend'. 'I don't want to see that in your bag. I bought a pencil for you. Give back your friend her pencil'. For sometime little things do make children handle for wrong things, when you see something and it doesn't belong to you. I don't have nothing but I'll make sure that my children ain't thief nothing from nobody. If you want something ask me, I'm the parent. Plenty parents do see their children—they want it, they take it, that is okay. They say 'Charity begins at home'. If you want to see your

children go and make themselves a better person, you have to show them what it means to be a better person.

Nirmala encourages her daughters to not compare themselves to others or seek to follow in the footsteps of every classmate since they could be led to error. She recounted an incident where her daughter wanted another hole pierced in her ear.

I ask her, 'If your friend wants to stand on the white line in the road to get a bounce, will you do the same thing?' if she wants to do that and she parents like it, you are a school girl! Don't tell me what your friends have and what your friends want to do and you want to do the same. You could vex, you can't do me anything and I'm telling you for the right.

Parent-teen Communication

With the exception of Kay, all the women in the study expressed the need for constant open communication with their children. June ensured that her family met monthly, to discuss any challenges with each other in a democratic manner.

Victoria tried to ensure that her children were happy. This she would do by taking a special interest in all areas of their lives and showing them respect.

Well, as a mother, first of all, all mothers should have that deep love for their children. Having that deep love for their children, having that respect for them. Have a lot of patience with them. My advice to parents, especially single parenting, because you already bring them and keeping in mind that is your responsibility if the father could come and even turn his back, you

don't turn your back because he turn he back. No. You as mother, you go all out to try to make your children happy with you and this is what I always try to do.

Carol and her son would engage in many activities together. Among these would be 'playing cards, draughts, going for walks around the area and to the shop' and talking about how his school day elapsed. Nirmala strongly believes in open, honest communication.

When there's a problem I does always tell them, 'Don't let my neighbours tell me, don't let friends tell me, whatever, I want to hear it and I want to hear it from both of you mouth. Listen, if I have to work and I have to send all you to school, I don't always have to know everything but at least when something wrong, I want to know. I want to know. Being a mother and father, I want to know that.

Allowances for relationships

During adolescence, as the teen satisfies his need to learn about larger society, he moves away from his family circle and becomes more independent. Yet, the adolescent does not want to be solitary, he enjoys the presence of other individuals who like the same activities. (Woodhead, Faulkner & Littleton, 1999).

Friendships are an integral part of the adolescent stage. Friends become part replacements for family, as companions, serve as allies with whom the adolescent explores the world, assist in the formation of identity, share discussions of ideas and opinions on larger society.

All mothers reported that their daughters or wards had platonic relationships with persons of their age groups or older. These relationships existed primarily with other immediate relatives – older siblings and so on, friends from their student bodies, neighbourhood or the religious organizations they attended.

With the exception of Kay and Victoria, the children of all the other women were allowed to form relationships with friends from their neighbourhoods. However, there was the indication that the strongest relationships encouraged were those among immediate family members. All reported going on outings together as a family when money was available. These outings were to the zoo, San Fernando hill, cinema, the museum, the beach, to homes of other relatives, to religious gatherings, to Expositions, to window shopping when money was not available, even on exercise walks and runs.

Kay felt that her children were sufficiently provided for at home and thus did not need to interact with neighbours. She stressed that they were allowed to interact with their older siblings.

Sharon don't really mix with these things [people], that's what I showing you, she don't mix and meddle. The way I does live, I don't really mix with people and thing, I's, 'Good morning', 'Good evening'. I don't be in nobody house, you understand. And I does make it possible that they will have everything so they don't have to go by no neighbour and ask for nothing. You know normally you have children 13 years, you have worries with them. As a girl child you have lil boys hanging round your house and all of that; not with she. No, is from home, she by my daughter, by my

son, by she big brother which is my big son but they living surrounding. I don't have no problem with her.

Victoria's children interacted with relatives or with other children when they went to their religious meetings on a weekly basis or when they had major gatherings called 'conventions'.

They have relatives all over. I'll take them to my brother or to their aunt. So they don't really be bored. Then we always have assembly activities. Jehovah's Witnesses hands always full, as I mentioned to you. Like for Carnival, we normally ask for a ground, either Technical ground and a few congregation come together and the children have fun that entire day.

Nirmala's daughters socialized primarily with family members.

The onliest time I go out if we have my family invite me. I take my two children with me, right, because if I ain't going nowhere, they don't go nowhere, you know.

At times, Hema, the more outgoing daughter, was allowed to go visit the neighbour with whom Nirmala had a close relationship. June allowed Charlene to have friends primarily from her school. I met one of them personally and was taken to her home for a visit one afternoon during the data collection phase. All of the recreation tended to be done as a family.

We used to go for walks. We don't do that again because for the simple reason that, ah, how I work. It's a bit tiring at times. But evenself[sic] they don't go with me, they could go out the road together or like I get that extra money, I'll give them and they would go cinema. A couple years ago it was

easier to go everywhere as a group. We used to go to the museum, Memorial Park. We'll go to the zoo, we have gone a lot of bus rides. Rides to San Fernando Hill, you know, we jump a blue and white bus and we just drive. Go down Gulf City, just go in town and window shop. We didn't have any money but we just take the bus, go in town, we walk around, window shop, watch what it have in stores. Everybody like[sic] that. They want this and that but of course they not getting it because we didn't have any money to buy it.

Carol had allowed Marlon to interact with one of her mature male friends and other friends from his neighbourhood and age group (in bike riding primarily). However, based on the nature of her son's relationship with her male friend ('Where he going there, he liming with big friends, big man and thing and I believe this man, that it have boys does go down there and thief and thing'), she had planned to find a way to prevent it from continuing.

Like June, years before, she was able to take her children out but could not afford it by the time this research was conducted. Lately, she would allow them to spend time mainly with relatives or to go on school trips.

Thus these mothers and guardians took an active role in developing relationships with their children or wards. They also tried to guide them to have positive relationships with those with whom they allowed them to interact.

Parent-school interactions

An emerging category was that of Parent-school interactions. Such interactions facilitated the educational process. All mothers / guardians reported positive relationships with their children's teachers. All reported going to Parent-teacher meetings or sending a representative. With the exception of Kay, they also explained that they paid visits to the teachers with the aim of finding out about the children's behaviours and performance in school, also to inquire about requests made by the teachers for items or money and so on.

Though she would attend Parent-Teacher meetings, Kay believed that it was sufficient not to enquire of the teacher on her child's performance but to daily observe her daughter's books.

You see, when I watch Sharon's books on evenings, there's no need for I to come in the school and ask the teacher how Sharon going because as Sharon come home from school, look last night when I come home about 9 o'clock I have to wake up Sharon to bathe because Sharon tired. When Sharon come from school, Sharon in a book, on Sunday, Sharon pick up a book right through.

Carol would go often to Marlon's teachers infrequently.

I used to go into his school. Is not to say that is something that is first time I do. As I tell him, with all he bigger sister and brother and them I always used to go. I used to go to the class teacher to find out how they going in the class or anything like that.

I working right. Sometimes even, I 3 months I call the school.

Sometimes the older daughter will go and make sure the school.

Though she finds her behaviour and language somewhat aggressive, Marlon's teacher is able to relate to her.

She (Carol) had a child earlier in, ah, Post Primary Year 2. Yes and once she came in and the child wasn't in school but I was in school and, ah, she ask me where the child is and I didn't know where the child is. However, the child had gone to the Ministry of Education office with another child who I sent and I send the other child not Marlon's sister. Thank God for that. She was really loud and aggressive and threatening. Towards the child, not me.

She wonders if that may be the reason why Marlon does not communicate fully with his mother,

I usually wonder about what kind of relationship he has at home because a number of things we tell him to go home and tell his parent, some things The principal was telling me about your (the researcher's) visit, he didn't tell them.

And, you know, well apparently, the relationship - that's why I'm saying that.

Nirmala also visited the school or sent her older daughter when she could not make it. She would also use the telephone to inquire about Hema's progress.

The first day I take her to school (post primary Centre0, being a big girl, that's 12 years, she was crying when I leaving. The female teacher will hug her and tell her, 'Mummy have to work'. The male teacher she make friends with him and when I used to go (visit) he would tell she she's a very quiet child. I used to tell them I working, right? Sometimes every 2, 3 months I call the school.

Sometimes the older daughter would go and make sure, you know.

Victoria goes unasked to see the teachers. She considers it important to do so.

I go on my own. I go on my own. I talk to Hazel's teacher, as a matter of fact, all the teachers in the school and we always have a good conversation going. I take time out and when I drop in Hazel don't even know when I coming.

Like Nirmala, primarily because of her work schedule June received calls from Charlene's teacher to discuss her performance in school. She would also pay visits to the school.

He (Charlene's teacher) used to call and we would chat on the phone. Ever so often I would go in and enquire how she's conducting herself and her progress and so.

In keeping with the methodology of qualitative research, a tentative theoretical construct for parental involvement based on the findings from these five (5) female-headed single parent homes in Trinidad was drawn in Figure 1.

Parental involvement is a multidimensional construct consisting of processes which range from concrete activities to psychological and social ones. For the mothers and guardians from Trinidad, with their family background kept as a constant (i.e. unchanging), the next two areas of major influence for these female heads appeared to be, Headship/matrifocality (how in fact they conceptualized their roles as heads) and Coping / support (how they managed and what factors

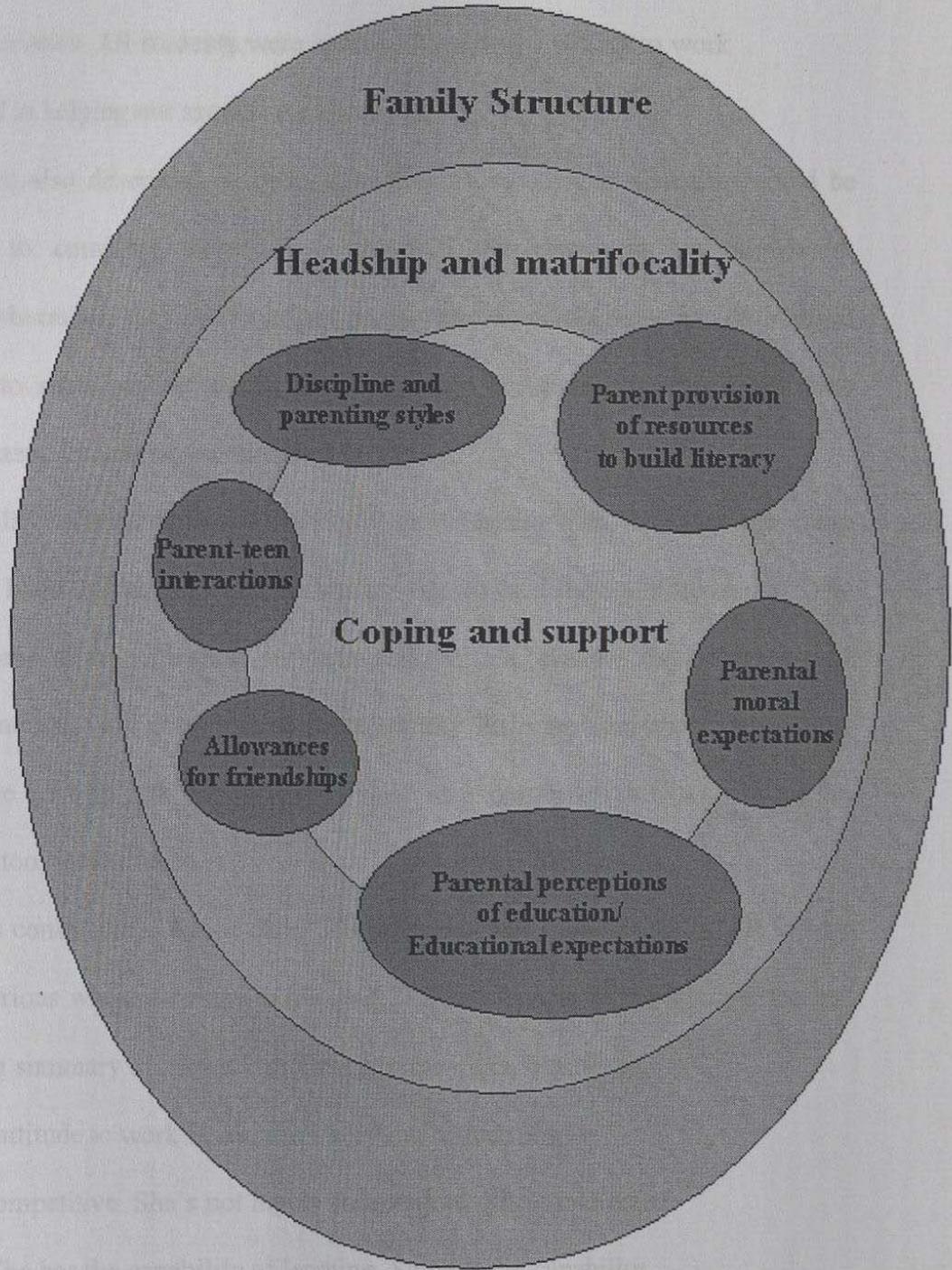
encouraged them to go on). These are psychological/emotional levels of parental involvement.

These two areas impact on and are impacted upon by the following forms of involvement (behaviours and activities):

- Discipline and parenting styles
- Parental perceptions of education/ Educational expectations
- Parental provision of resources to build literacy
- Parental moral expectations
- Parent-teen interactions
- Allowances for relationships

I wish to stress, therefore, that the relationships are not linear. Figure 1 is a tentative theoretical construct to describe the process.

Figure 1
Parental involvement in five female single-parent homes in Trinidad



Emerging issues

Student characteristics

There was a marked similarity in the descriptions given by the teachers of the students' characteristics. All students were described as always willing to work academically and in helping out around the classroom.

They were also described as being disciplined to the extent that they could be depended upon to complete tasks set to them in the classroom and homework assignments. Furthermore, they displayed a general positive disposition that encouraged all the teachers to sit down and easily discuss matters pertaining to school and their personal lives. Hazel's teacher commented,

That [ability to communicate] isn't only with Hazel. With the class the entire class, we have that kind of relationship. It's one-to-one, they confide in me. They would come to me with their problems and we talk. Besides class work we do one-on-one and very confidential. Right, so any little problem she would come, "Miss, we have to talk" or any other child as a matter of fact. And to all the teachers, too, same thing.

Marlon is considered, 'a nice child' His teacher says, 'I like him a lot. He is very serious. Quite serious when it comes to his work'. The response of Charlene's teacher served as a fitting summary of how all teachers felt towards the students,

Well her attitude to work is, ah, she's very interested. She is slightly competitive. She's not highly competitive. She's interested to learn. She has the capability of learning. She has the capability

of doing very well. Probably because of her circumstances, that hindered her progress before but because of her personality she can do it because she gets along with everyone so you will not have any difficulty with teacher student relationship or, in fact, all teachers will love her. Right, so all the teachers will always give her the extra help and so, therefore, that will always mean that she will always be on the top of whatever she has to do. She's always encouraging, she's open and she's a very disciplined girl, very, very disciplined. If you tell her, "Don't do that", she wouldn't do it. She, if she does and you watch her she'll stop, right? So she's very, very disciplined. I think one of the most disciplined person in this class. And that's a key factor to getting along with persons and learning.

Teacher support.

All of the teachers of the students in this study were aware of the circumstances of their students' family lives and had empathy for the mothers and their children. Sharon's teacher explained, 'I know the mother. I used to teach Sharon before in infant class and I know the mother. The mother and I have a good relationship in the fact that she knows she can come to me and I can call her at anytime'.

All had high expectations for the students and were willing to work with them to see those expectations realized: 'We expect good results', was the general feedback from the teachers.

Teachers were also most understanding when parents were unable to attend PTA meetings. According to Hema's teacher, 'I met her mother on 2 occasions. Never came before because she is sole breadwinner. No problem, more to see her face than anything else'.

The group of teachers explained that they did not use textbooks but prepared material and made photocopies where necessary or simply had the students make notes in their copybooks. Marlon's and Sharon's teachers' explanations encapsulate the responses of the group,

Marlon hardly have, ah, any money to do anything. We subsidize him a lot. Like the children in the class, if we have to get photocopies, we will do it for him. We try not to make him feel uncomfortable. What he would have is copybooks but so far my, ah, group don't have any textbooks. I do the research and they just, ah, take notes...

Well, we don't use books as such. We have no textbooks, no written textbooks. When I ask the mother for money for things like paper to photocopy like that, she's able to give most of the times, not all of the times. For there are instances when she had to go on one of the outings at New Grant and we paid for her, right? She's not able to supply everything but she supplies all her school needs and thing. Probably about 95% of her needs.

That there were other factors operating in the lives of these students is understandable. The student is embedded in a micorsystem of intrafamilial relationships. Beyond the family is the mesosystem of which the school is one part. All systems have an influence on the child to some degree and contribute to his development. In the next and final chapter I make some recommendations based on the findings.

Table 8

Common parenting practices in 8 ve female single parent households in Trinidad

-
- 1. Strong parental commitment to education (desires to see one's child succeed in school beyond one's level of schooling)
 - 2. Provision of material needs for educational success
 - 3. Involving other adults/siblings in encouraging the educational skills of students
 - 4. Provision of material to build literacy in the home
 - 5. Effective and consistent parenting (with an emphasis on authoritative parenting, though a range of styles are employed)
 - 6. Monitoring of children's activities so that attention is given to school work
 - 7. Avoiding overloading the children with chores so that they can have sufficient time to school work
 - 8. Encouraging children to take responsibility for their own actions and to some extent educational outcomes
-

Implications

There are several practices that could be gleaned from the successful families in this study. The commonalities across sites are summarized in Table 8:

Table 8

Common parenting practices in five female single parent households in Trinidad

-
- Strong parental commitment to education (desiring to see one's child succeed in school beyond one's level of schooling)
 - Provision of material needs for educational success
 - Involving other adults/siblings in encouraging the educational skills of students
 - Provision of material to build literacy in the home
 - Effective and consistent parenting (with an emphasis on authoritative parenting, though a range of styles are exhibited)
 - Monitoring of children's activities so that attention is given to school work
 - Avoiding overloading the children with chores so that they can allot sufficient time to school work
 - Encouraging children to take responsibility for their own actions and to some extent educational outcomes
-

The parents in this study serve as primary role models to their children. In the process of educating children, parental beliefs and values of education, reflected in part through their expectations and commitment impact positively on pupil performance. The activities in which the parents engage the child also reflect these values. Their positive values are reflected by their involving other adults/siblings in encouraging the educational skills of students, the provision of material to build literacy in the home, the monitoring of children's activities so that attention is given to school work, the avoidance of overloading their children with chores so that the students could allot sufficient time to school work.

Furthermore, they engage in effective and consistent discipline (primarily, authoritative parenting but with some degree of authoritarianism). Authoritative parenting has been noted to encourage children to develop a sense of responsibility and autonomy (Dornbusch et al., 1987). It is possible that the children's willingness and ability to work unsupervised, assess their performances and make adjustments, such as decisions to work harder, for example, may have been as a result of this type of parenting style.

It should be mentioned that with the exception of Hazel, all the other families had children older than the student participants who had gone on to secondary school and were either still at that level or had moved beyond it to jobs in some instances (like the older sons of June, Kay and Carol).

Recommendations

Parental involvement.

Research over the last decade indicates that there are benefits to be derived from parental involvement. Different researchers have focused on different dimensions of parental involvement. Many definitions for the term exist.

'Parental involvement' has several dimensions. Vandegrift and Greene (1992) proposed a working definition that encapsulates these dimensions. The definition has 2 key elements: those of 'support' and 'active participation' by the parent on behalf of the child.

Supportive parents encourage their children and are sympathetic, reassuring, understanding and committed to their children and their education. What they do as a result of this support is observable. Thus, they may actively participate in their children's education by doing such things as attending workshops, reading in the classroom, helping with homework, attending parent-teacher meetings and so on (p57). These researchers found that parents fall into one of 4 categories:

- Supportive of child / Active participation. These parents fully support their children and also attend workshops, make phone calls, get involved with the parent-teacher meetings. This role, they suggest is not a comfortable one for many parents nor should it be considered the ultimate goal of parental involvement especially for single parents for whom such commitments might be difficult.
- Supportive of child / Inactive participation. Some parents are not 'joiners'.

- Not supportive of child / Active participant. Some parents pay lip service to education by attending activities and events but ignoring or ill-treating the child at home.
- Not supportive of child / Inactive participant. With such parents, the basis for their failure to become involved should be examined

They observed parental interactions through the previous dimensions and found that in populations, in general and particularly where there were challenging environments or circumstances, it is impractical to attempt to find an 'ideal parent' who is both willing and able to participate and is committed to his child's education.

Full parental involvement, though valuable, is unrealistic; a more appropriate starting point would be to assess parents' needs, get to know them, personalize home-school communications, make parents feel comfortable and adapt to their availability to attend school events (p59).

Single parenting.

Statistics show that single-parent families headed by women considerably outnumber those headed by men. Though we group all such families together, the single parent population is a diverse one brought about by several circumstances.

Socially and economically, the circumstances of single parents vary. Many are struggling to make ends meet, caught in low-paying jobs or none at all. Some female heads have the benefit of extended families while many remain alone with their children, experiencing feelings of isolation. Some allow their children to maintain contact with non-residential parents, yet others do not.

In addition to all of these circumstances, family background, personality and coping styles also influence how the single parent family functions and how its children develop.

Furthermore, intrafamilial processes in a family that became single parent due to the death of a spouse or divorce may differ from those which, through choice, are that way.

Research has tended to focus on the dysfunctional aspects of such families. Though historically in Trinidad & Tobago, we have had the female single parent family, the colonial influence of the concept of the family as being two-parent, still pervades our society. Fortunately, female single parents in this study did not find themselves socially stigmatized. Though they performed a great deal of the parenting on their own, the women found various sources of support including their children's teachers and neighbours from their communities (in those homes where the mothers allowed such relationships).

The teachers' positive and empathizing attitudes appeared a major source of support for these families. Efforts should be made to move beyond the stigma attached to single parents, by perceiving them as capable or having the potential to become so and their children as having the potential to succeed in a positive manner similar to those coming from two-parent homes. All the teachers demonstrated a great deal of respect for their students and their guardians. They worked along with them in the interest of the positive all round development of the student.

All families may need some form of support. The families face financial challenges. Educators would need to be cognizant of these facts when planning classroom

activities. For example, tests that need to be photocopied may need to have such costs absorbed by the school rather than place the parent in an uncomfortable and embarrassing position. Such was the case with Marlon. His teacher had requested money for tests but his mother found the cost of seven dollars difficult. Educators would need to be more sensitive in such instances. Field trips are activities where consideration should be given to those students whose parents may genuinely not be able to afford to pay.

Poverty can lead to reduced opportunities for recreation and cultural experiences as was evident in the lives of the women and adolescents in this study. In planning a curriculum for students care should be taken in devising experiences for the students that could fill the voids where their homes cannot afford to provide them with specific cultural activities.

Poverty can also result in mental health issues for women and their wards, such as higher rates of depression (Nirmala, Carol, June), anxiety (Nirmala, Victoria), low self-esteem (Nirmala, Victoria), and dissatisfaction with their lives (Nirmala, Victoria, Carol, Kay), Marlon often feels uncomfortable about school outings and the money for photocopying costs because finances are limited. Based on this study, the following are some broad recommendations for educators:

- Understanding the home background of the child (to be done as a practicum at the Teachers' College level or afterwards) where teachers take a family as a case study and spend perhaps a month engaged in ethnographical research with them
- Strategies for interacting with parents. Methods of communicating other than parent attendance at parent-teacher meetings.

- Increasing resources to schools to cater for children who may not be able to afford them. Restructure the curriculum to reduce the number of texts to be used by students or provide them on a rental basis
- Introduction and maintenance of an 'active' library in each school (from preschool upwards)
- Enhancing listening and communication skills of parents, teachers and students

Areas For Further Research.

The following have been identified as areas for further research:

- The need to expand this study beyond 5 families to examine other single parent households (male-headed also and those where students may not be performing well so as to have comparative studies)
- The need for cross comparative studies involving single & two-parent households
- The need for cross comparative studies involving different socioeconomic groups

All the students in this study went on to attend Junior Secondary schools beginning at the Form 2 level. In 2001 I met Hazel. We hugged and I commented on the beauty of the 'under a year old' baby she carried on her right hip. It was her daughter.

Below is a paraphrase of our conversation:

Me: How your studies going?

Hazel: I drop out of school.

Me: Why?

Hazel: Mummy die and I move out from by grandma and leave the other 2 children.

Me: Where your brother and sister? They went with you, too?

Hazel: No, they stay with grandma.

Me: What you going to do now?

Hazel: I don't know yet. I want to do a course or something.

Me: Where you living?

Hazel: With him (she uses her head to indicate a young man in his early 20s walking out of the grocery).

Me: You must call me. Give me your number.

Hazel: I don't have no phone. Give me your number and I'll call you.

Me: Here (writing the number). Please call me, I want to hear from you!

She runs off with her daughter, the young man and a small grocery bag.

In May 2004, I again saw Hazel. This time she was on a page in a newspaper, dressed in a beautiful, classy, outfit modeling for one of Trinidad's well-known designers.

Today at 3p.m., a little child, born in the hospital, went home with his mother to a shack in some part of our Trinidad & Tobago. There are no concrete walls, only galvanize, loosely held together with some rusty nails. There is no running water and no toilet. There is no 'real' stove or electricity. His bed will be the piece of sponge on which his mother sleeps.

Two miles away, another little child went home from the medical centre. As babies behave nowadays, his eyes were 'bright open' (as Trinidadians would say), not seeing well but if he could have, he would see the colorful mobile – imported of course, which hangs over his immaculate white crib, in his own personal baby blue bedroom. If

he were to cry during the night, his mother would leave the master bedroom (with its personal washroom area) – one of six bedrooms in the house, because she heard him from the intercom device set up between his room and hers.

The choice of where to be born and with whom has never been and will never be given to any human being. What can we do for students who have potential but fall away due to adverse circumstances? Are we as parents and educators obligated to do anything? Or should we try at least, to make some effort?

It is my fervent hope that this research serves as a drop in the ocean of encouragement for those involved in policy planning, educators and parents to do something - *act in some positive way to assist the less fortunate* because even if we do not yet see it or want to admit it, *we are all interrelated.*

The family that society generally dislikes, ignores or fails to assist can emerge to have a devastating impact upon another family that is well respected and admired. Life many times seems filled with irony.

I challenge each reader to provide some form of support for those who are less fortunate. With patience, to some degree there will be positive results – increased resources at their disposal, the healing of intrafamilial processes, renewal and an increase in hope.

When one family is challenged, and lose their way and their hope, let us be willing to stand in the gap to lend our hope for a while, until they can regain the path on which they must walk for successful functioning.

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Appendix A

Appendices

SURVEY

Post Primary students living in single-parent homes

Name of Centre.....

Name of principal/teacher in charge.....

Contact no. for that teacher in charge of the centre at school
or home (if possible).....

1. Total no. of students enrolled at the centre for the 1997/1998
year.....

2. No. of students (in Year 1 class) living in single-parent
homes:- Male students..... Female students.....

3. No. of students (in Year 2 class) living in single-parent
homes:- Male students..... Female students.....

4. Of all the single-parent students, how many are:
MALES - Afro-Trinidadian .. Indo-Trinidadian .. Mixed ..
Other (please specify).....

FEMALES- Afro-Trinidadian .. Indo-Trinidadian .. Mixed ..
Other (please specify).....

5. Of the single parent students:-
No. living with male parent/guardian.....
No. living with female parent/guardian.....

6. In your opinion, approximately what percentage of these
students is performing well academically?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix A

SURVEY

Post Primary students living in single-parent homes

1. Name of Centre:.....
2. Name of principal/teacher in charge :.....
Contact no. for that teacher in charge of the centre at school
or home (if possible):.....
3. **Total no.** of students enrolled at the centre for the 1997/1998
year:.....
4. No. of students (in Year 1 class) living in single-parent
homes:- Male students:..... Female students:.....
5. No. of students (in Year 2 class) living in single-parent
homes:- Male students:..... Female students:.....
6. Of **all** the single-parent students, **how many** are:-
MALES - Afro-Trinidadian ... Indo-Trinidadian ... Mixed ...
Other (please specify).....
FEMALES- Afro-Trinidadian ... Indo-Trinidadian ... Mixed ...
Other (please specify).....
7. Of the single parent students:-
No. living with male parent/guardian:.....
No. living with female parent/guardian:.....
8. In your opinion, approximately what percentage of these
students is performing well academically?
.....%

Thank you for your cooperation

SURVEY

Post Primary students living in single-parent homes

1. Name of Centre:.....
2. Name of principal/teacher in charge :.....
Contact no. for that teacher in charge of the centre at school
or home (if possible):.....
3. **Total no.** of students enrolled at the centre for the 1997/1998
year:.....
4. No. of students (in Year 1 class) living in single-parent
homes:- Male students:..... Female students:.....
5. No. of students (in Year 2 class) living in single-parent
homes:- Male students:..... Female students:.....
6. Of **all** the single-parent students, **how many** are:-
MALES - Afro-Tobagonian ... Indo-Tobagonian ... Mixed ...
Other (please specify).....
FEMALES- Afro-Tobagonian ... Indo-Tobagonian ... Mixed ...
Other (please specify).....
7. Of the single parent students:-
No. living with male parent/guardian:.....
No. living with female parent/guardian:.....
8. In your opinion, approximately what percentage of these
students is performing well academically?
.....%

Thank you for your cooperation



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
ALEXANDRA STREET
ST. CLAIR

..... September 11, 1997

Dr Ewart Taylor
Chairman
Postgraduate Subcommittee
The University of the West Indies
Faculty of Humanities and Education
School of Education
St Augustine

Dear Dr Taylor:

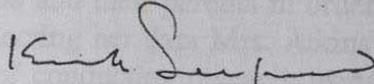
Re Mrs. Nathalie Atkinson.

Your letter dated 1997 September 08 refers.

Approval is granted for Mrs. Atkinson to carry out her research at Post Primary Centres.

Grateful if she can contact Mr. Alfred in the office of the Director of School Supervision to obtain all relevant data re Post Primary Centres.

Yours sincerely,


Kenrick Seepersad
Chief Education Officer
/E/PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

pc: Mr F Alfred
DSS' Office

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION
School of Education

Cable: "STOMATA" PORT OF SPAIN



ST. AUGUSTINE,
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO,
TEL : 662-2002/662-4279
Ext. 2118/2119
FAX: 662-6615

Our Reference.....

September 08, 1997.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Mrs. Nathalie Atkinson is currently registered as an M.Phil student at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies. She has completed the coursework component of the M.Phil programme and is working on her thesis. The topic she has chosen to work on is:

" Maternal involvement with high achieving post primary students."

In order to collect data for her thesis, she would need to carry out interviews with post primary teachers, students and their parents in order to ascertain the levels of parental involvement with the students. In collecting her data Mrs. Atkinson would undertake to observe all protocol concerned with the ethics of conducting research using human subjects.

I would appreciate if you could facilitate her in the conduct of this part of her research at your centre.

Accompanying this letter is the approval granted by the Ministry of Education for Mrs. Atkinson to carry out research at post primary centres in Trinidad.

Yours sincerely

Ewart Paylor
Dr. Ewart Paylor
Chairman
Postgraduate Subcommittee

Appendix D

26 Crichlow Street
San Fernando

10th September 1997

<Field for teacher's name>

<Field for teacher's address>

Dear <Field for teacher's name>,

Re: Request for assistance through survey completion

My name is Nathalie Atkinson and I am a student at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, currently pursuing my Masters of Philosophy in Education degree.

I have chosen for my thesis, a study of how mothers are involved in parenting with high achieving students in post-primary centers. (Please see the attached copies of letters granting approval for this research from the Ministry of Education and the university).

I hereby require your assistance by the completion and return of the enclosed survey in the envelope included.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions concerning my research. I could be contacted at 662-2002 Ext. 2116.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Nathalie Atkinson

Appendix E

Interview Schedule (Mothers/Guardians)

1. What is your name/ address/ age?
2. Do you work?
3. How long have you had to raise your children on your own?
4. What is/has it been like raising them?
5. Do you have support from other relatives or are you in a new relationship, by chance?
6. How do you feel about your daughter's/ ward's school performance?
 - a. Does she do home work at home?
 - b. Do you supervise her or assist her, in any way?
7. What are your hopes for your daughter/ward?
8. Do you talk to her concerning your hopes/ her school work?
9. When she does well how do you feel?
 - a. Does she know that you feel that way?
 - b. How does she know?
10. Is there a TV/ radio/ books etc. in your home?
11. Do you all go out together?
 - a. Where?
12. If you have decisions to make, concerning your daughter/ward, do you both discuss them?
13. What kind of relationship do you have with your daughter/ward?
 - a. What type of child is she?
14. What are your hopes for your daughter?
15. Did the results of the CE exam change your hopes for your daughter/ward?
16. Does your daughter's/ward's school have PTA meetings?
 - a. Do you go to them?

17. Do you ever visit your daughter's teacher?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What do you talk about?
18. If you had to offer advice to other single parents whose children are not doing well in school, what would you tell them?

2. What can you tell me about the behaviour of the student?
3. How would you describe the relationship which you have with the child? How do you and the student get along?
4. What do you think about the student's parent? How do you and the parent get along?
5. Does the parent visit the centre/come to see you? Why? How often?
6. Besides the criteria that I gave you for the type of student I wanted, was there any other reason why you chose this specific student?
- Do you notice any differences in the performance of the male students as compared to the female ones?
- Can you, perhaps, suggest why that is so among your students?
7. Is there a written school policy regarding parental visits/parental involvement in the school?
8. Does this centre engage in any activities involving parents during the year/term/month?

Interview Schedule (Teachers)

- What is your name?
1. How does the student perform academically?
 2. What can you tell me about the behaviour of the student?
 3. How would you describe the relationship which you have with the child?/
How do you and the student get along?
 4. What do you think about the student's parent?
How do you and the parent get along?
 5. Does the parent visit the centre/come to see you?
Why? How often?
 6. Besides the criteria that I gave you for the type of student I wanted, was there any other reason why you chose this specific student?
-Do you notice any differences in the performance of the male students as compared to the female ones?
-Can you, perhaps, suggest why this is so, among your students?
 7. Is there a written school policy regarding parental visits/parental involvement in the school?
 8. Does this centre engage in any activities involving parents during the year/term/month?

10. Does your mother/guardian supervise you when you do your school work?
a. Is she around always when you are doing your school work?
b. Does she assist you with your school work?
11. What kinds of things do you and your mother/guardian do together?
a. Where do you go together?
b. Does she allow you to go out with your friends? Where?
12. Does she visit your school?
a. Why?
b. How often?
13. Do you know your father?
a. Do you see him?
b. How often?

Interview Schedule (Students)

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where do you live?
4. What does your mother/ guardian do?
5. Tell me about school.
 - a. How do you feel about learning and education?
 - b. How do you behave in class?
 - c. What do you hope to do, after school?
6. Do you have:-
 - a. All your school equipment?
 - b. Books at home?
 - c. A television/stereo at home?
7. What do you usually do each day, after you get home from school?
8. How would you describe your mother/guardian?
 - a. Does she beat you/ quarrel with you/ talk often with you etc.?
9. What do you think your mother/guardian wants you to do/be, later on in life?
 - a. Why do you think so?
 - b. What job do you think she might expect you to do?
10. Does your mother/guardian supervise you when you do your school work?
 - a. Is she around/aware when you are doing your school work?
 - b. Does she assist you with your school work?
11. What kinds of things do you and your mother/guardian do, together?
 - a. Where do you go together?
 - b. Does she allow you to go out with your friends? Where?
12. Does she visit your school?
 - a. Why?
 - b. How often?
13. Do you know your father?
 - a. Do you see him?
 - b. Do you visit him or does he visit you?
 - c. How often?
 - d. What do you do together?

This test contains 30 items. Answer each question by shading the letter on your answer sheet which represents the most suitable response. You have 45 minutes to complete the questions.

1. Five thousand, three hundred and twenty, written as a numeral is
 - A. 5320
 - B. 50320
 - C. 53020
 - D. 530020
2. 120302 can be written as
 - A. One million, two hundred and three thousand and two
 - B. One hundred and twenty thousand and thirty-two
 - C. Twelve thousand, three hundred and two
 - D. One hundred and twenty thousand, three hundred and two
3. In the number 56403, the value of the underlined digit is
 - A. 60
 - B. 600
 - C. 6000
 - D. 60000
4. $207 + 15 + 310 + 96 =$
 - A. 628
 - B. 618
 - C. 528
 - D. 518
5. $\frac{1}{9} + \frac{2}{9} =$
 - A. $\frac{2}{81}$
 - B. $\frac{3}{18}$
 - C. $\frac{2}{9}$
 - D. $\frac{1}{3}$
6. $\frac{2}{5} + \frac{3}{5} + \frac{4}{5} =$
 - A. $\frac{24}{125}$
 - B. $\frac{9}{15}$
 - C. $1\frac{4}{5}$
 - D. $1\frac{9}{5}$
7. Five thousand and eight dollars and eighty cents, written in numerals is
 - A. \$50008.80
 - B. \$5800.80
 - C. \$5080.80
 - D. \$5008.80
8. I left home 8:30 in the morning and arrived at school 45 mins. later. I arrived at
 - A. 9:45 a.m.
 - B. 9:15 a.m.
 - C. 9:00 a.m.
 - D. 8:45 a.m.
9. $x + 38 = 57$ The value of x is
 - A. 19
 - B. 21
 - C. 29
 - D. 95
10. Each candy box has 15 chocolates. How many chocolates are there in 13 such boxes?
 - A. 60
 - B. 135
 - C. 185
 - D. 195
11. $\square - 136 = 19$
The number which is missing from the box is
 - A. 155
 - B. 145
 - C. 127
 - D. 117
12. $\frac{3}{5}$ of \$15.75 =
 - A. \$26.25
 - B. \$9.45
 - C. \$5.25
 - D. \$3.15

13. $12 - 3\frac{3}{8} =$

A. $15\frac{3}{8}$

B. $9\frac{5}{8}$

C. $9\frac{3}{8}$

D. $8\frac{5}{8}$

14. If $\square = \frac{1}{6}$, then $4 \times \square =$

A. $\frac{1}{24}$

B. $\frac{2}{3}$

C. $\frac{5}{7}$

D. $\frac{6}{4}$

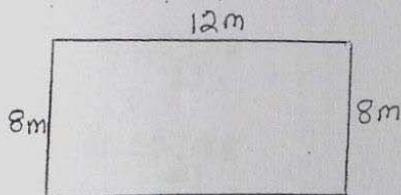
15. $\$16.26 - \$7.45 =$

A. \$8.81

B. \$9.81

C. \$11.21

D. \$23.71



16. In the diagram above, the distance around the rectangle is

A. 20m

B. 28m

C. 40m

D. 96m

17. $16 + 25 + 14 = N + 10$

What number is N?

A. 35

B. 45

C. 55

D. 65

18. Andy has 150 marbles in his collection. Thomas borrowed 19, Steven 53, Maria 23 and Matthew the rest. Who borrowed the most marbles?

A. Thomas

B. Steven

C. Matthew

D. Maria

19. Kevon's sister has 75 stickers. Her friend gave her 19 more. Now she has 12 more than Kevon. How many stickers does Kevon have?

A. 68

B. 82

C. 94

D. 106

20. Dawn has 66 hair beads, Debbie 31 less than Dawn and Sharon 15 more than Debbie. How many beads do they have in all?

A. 151

B. 143

C. 116

D. 112

21. Jace ate $\frac{1}{4}$ of a pizza and Marc $\frac{1}{5}$ of the remainder. How much did Marc eat?

A. $\frac{1}{20}$

B. $\frac{3}{20}$

C. $\frac{9}{20}$

D. $\frac{11}{20}$

Maria

$\frac{1}{5} = \frac{3}{15}$

22. From Monday to Wednesday, Allison left home, walked to her grandmother's house to drop lunch and walked back home. If the houses are $\frac{5}{8}$ km apart, what distance did she cover?

A. $1\frac{3}{8}$ km

B. $1\frac{7}{8}$ km

C. $3\frac{5}{8}$ km

D. $3\frac{6}{8}$ km

23. One-fifth of the 45 students in our post primary class love cricket only. Two thirds of them like basketball only and the rest hate all sports. How many hate sports?

- A. 6
- B. 9
- C. 30
- D. 39

24. Jason is $\frac{4}{5}$ kg heavier than Allison. If Allison weighs $35\frac{3}{8}$ kg, how heavy is Jason?

A. $35\frac{7}{13}$ kg

B. $35\frac{7}{40}$ kg

C. $36\frac{7}{40}$ kg

D. $36\frac{12}{40}$ kg

25. Miss Sharp was collecting donations for the poor. Debbie donated \$124.00, Sharon \$1.75 and Dawn \$32.55. Jeff gave a sum equal to what all the others had given. How much money was given, altogether?

- A. \$79.15
- B. \$158.30
- C. \$174.05
- D. \$316.60

26. Andy's mother gave him \$100 to buy himself a present. He bought his gift, bought lunch for \$12.75 and lost \$15.00. He was left with \$2.25. How much did his gift cost?

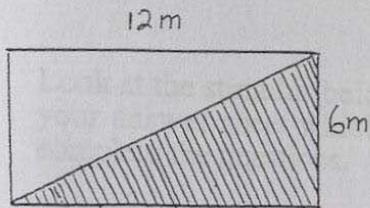
- A. \$130.00
- B. \$74.50
- C. \$70.00
- D. \$30.00

27. Jackie and Dexter are saving 25c pieces in the same piggy bank. Jackie put \$10.50 and Dexter \$7.25. How many 25c pieces are in the piggy bank?

- A. 1775
- B. 71
- C. 42
- D. 29

28. My square garden has a perimeter of 16m. Its area is

- A. $4m^2$
- B. $8m^2$
- C. $16m^2$
- D. $64m^2$



29. In the rectangle above, the area of the shaded region is

- A. 72m^2
- B. 36m^2
- C. 18m^2
- D. 9m^2

30. At my centre I arrive at school at 8:30a.m. and leave at 3:15p.m. How long do I stay there?

- A. 5hrs. 15mins.
- B. 5hrs. 45mins.
- C. 6hrs. 45mins.
- D. 11hrs. 45mins.

English Language Test

Look at the stimulus below and answer the questions which follow by shading the letter on your answer sheet which represents the most suitable response. You have 45 minutes to complete the questions.

'Conqueror,' is the name of King Beebee's calypso for this carnival season. How do people feel about the calypso? The responses are varied. Some consider it a masterpiece, a work of art. Others feel it is trashy and immoral. Whatever the reactions, this calypso is receiving the most airplay for the season!

The last sentence of the stimulus ends with an exclamation mark (!). This is one form of punctuation. Identify the forms of punctuation which are missing from sentences 1-6

A - Capital letter B- Full stop C- Question mark D- Apostrophe
E- Comma

1. mary had a little lamb and some roast beef.
A. A and C
B. B and D
C. A and B
D. B and E
2. David Rudder Cro Cro and Chinese Laundry sang at the Marlin Clubs carnival fete.
A. A and D
B. B and E
C. C and D
D. D and E
3. Candice and i are playing netball tonight at the Jean Pierre complex.
A. A and B
B. A and C
C. A and D
D. A and E
4. Can we fish with Johnnys net on the beach today
A. A and B
B. B and D
C. C and D
D. D and E

5. Do you love to eat kfc, cake and ice-cream .

- A. A, B and E
- B. A, C and D
- C. A, C and E
- D. B, C and E

6. While going to school I carried Gails bag.

- A. A, B and E
- B. A, B and D
- C. B, D and E
- D. C, D and E

In the sentence: 'The responses are varied.' The words underlined represent the **subject** of the sentence.

Identify the function of the underlined word/s in sentences 7-10:-

7. The masman carried the costume to the other end of the savannah.

- A. Subject
- B. Verb
- C. Object
- D. Extension

8. The student placed the textbook in his bag.

- A. Subject
- B. Verb
- C. Object
- D. Extension

9. Bring the game to me.

- A. Subject
- B. Verb
- C. Object
- D. Extension

10. While walking, she slipped and fell.

- A. Subject
- B. Verb
- C. Object
- D. Extension

The words underlined in the sentence below are adjectives:
 'Others feel it is trashy and immoral'.

In sentences 11-18, identify the parts of speech which the underlined word represents:-

11. The maxi driver drove recklessly on the road.
 - A. Adverb
 - B. Noun
 - C. Pronoun
 - D. Verb
12. Put my keys on the table, please.
 - A. Adjective
 - B. Noun
 - C. Preposition
 - D. Pronoun
13. My mother is ill.
 - A. Adjective
 - B. Adverb
 - C. Preposition
 - D. Verb
14. Hazel said that she saw him yesterday.
 - A. Adjective
 - B. Noun
 - C. Preposition
 - D. Pronoun
15. I am an aerobics trainer.
 - A. Adjective
 - B. Adverb
 - C. Preposition
 - D. Verb
16. There is a mango tree in our backyard.
 - A. Adjective
 - B. Adverb
 - C. Noun
 - D. Preposition
17. Sudden misfortune can happen to anyone.
 - A. Adjective
 - B. Adverb
 - C. Noun
 - D. Verb
18. Our children love to play there.
 - A. Adjective
 - B. Adverb
 - C. Preposition
 - D. Verb

This sentence was taken from the excerpt:- 'Some consider it a masterpiece, a work of art'. It is grammatically correct.

For nos.19-26, shade (A) for those which are grammatically correct and (B) for those which are incorrect:-

19. The dog in the road.
20. Stand up properly.
21. Them people are always harassing me.
22. The quick brown fox.
23. Having fun is necessary.
24. Not to go in there.
25. We going home late today.
26. Stacy's not feeling well today.

In the sentence: 'Whatever the reactions, this calypso is receiving the most airplay for the season!' The underlined words are in the correct tense. For nos. 27-30, select the appropriate verbs to complete the sentences:-

27. Siobhan _____ very well, yesterday.
 - A. swam
 - B. swimmied
 - C. swim
 - D. swims
28. Earlier today, Ronnie _____ hiding the game in his bag.
 - A. is seen
 - B. are seen
 - C. was seen
 - D. were seen
29. These rare plants are _____ right here in our country.
 - A. grow
 - B. being growed
 - C. grown
 - D. growed
30. I _____ still in the shower when she _____ my home.
 - A. will be, visited
 - B. am, visited
 - C. was, visits
 - D. was, visited

Appendix G

SURVEY

Post Primary students living in single-parent homes

1. Name of Centre: ARIMA WEST GOVT.
2. Name of principal/teacher in charge: Mrs. M. NOEL.
Contact no. for that teacher in charge of the centre at school
or home (if possible):.....
3. Total no. of students enrolled at the centre for the 1997/1998
year: 53
4. No. of students (in Year 1 class) living in single-parent
homes:- Male students: 6 Female students: 4
5. No. of students (in Year 2 class) living in single-parent
homes:- Male students: 1 Female students: 0
6. Of all the single-parent students, how many are:-
MALES - Afro-Trinidadian 6 Indo-Trinidadian 3 Mixed 3
Other (please specify).....
FEMALES- Afro-Trinidadian 1 Indo-Trinidadian 0 Mixed 3
Other (please specify).....
7. Of the single parent students:-
No. living with male parent/guardian: 2
No. living with female parent/guardian: 9
8. In your opinion, approximately what percentage of these
students is performing well academically?

50%

Thank you for your cooperation

I: Why?

J: Because he has something that is nice about him. You know after she came and she quarreled, after that I say, well, you know, I not doing anything again but no! The other children in the class tell me, "Miss, Marlon is a nice child." Marlon is always quiet but now and then I'll find him doing some mischief but I know is always 'boy' things, right, and I don't bother about it. I like him.

Student Disposition
Student with m
Teacher unwillingness
Students perception of Marlon
Student disposition
Student behavior attributed to gender
Teacher's approach

I: What kind of attitude does he have towards his work?

J: He is very serious. Quite serious when it comes to his work and I know he desperately wants to go to the Junior Sec. I know for a fact.

Student attitude to studies
Teacher knowledge
Student academic desire

I: How do you know that? Is it that you all sit down and talk about it or is it reflected in the things he's doing? How do you know?

J: Ah, sometimes, we talk but he's always be shy so you don't get him to talk much and you call him and make a joke. Sometimes, if I have something and I say, "Marlon you want some?" "No." But if I send him outside he'll take it.

Teacher manner obtaining in
Student disposition
Teacher-Student relationship

I: Okay.

J: And er, coming back to, er, I think it is in his work, basically. You know, and er, I think his sister who was here before told me once he always talks about a friend of his who went to the Junior Sec.

Student aspiration she by his work
Sister attention
Student reference to friend who goes to Jun.

I: So, he's looking forward to doing that? You don't ever need to see the mother at all during the term? If you need to, will she send the sister or something like that?

J: No. If I ask for her, if I need to see Marlon's mom, she will come.

No unprompted visits by mother. Visits at teacher's request.

Appendix H

10th March, 1998

Reaction: Today I met one person who lives in an area which the Press consistently portrays as 'hell itself,' the POS and environ area.

Elaboration: For years, being a south person I had always wondered about the area called the POS and environ area. I would drive through there on my way to Port-of-Spain and observe the houses and persons liming around and wonder just what a week in there would be like. When Sharon mentioned to me that she lives on the, POS and environ area. I was glad that the teacher had chosen her for me to work with. I would get an insider's account of life there, what being in a family there means. Enter Janice, her mother.

We always go into situations with expectations. Throughout the research process I try to scrub off my expectations before going into the operating theatre, which the interview represents. This time I strove even harder, beforehand, to kill any thoughts I may have been carrying into this meeting. I just didn't know what to expect and I did not want to expect to see or hear anything, whatsoever. This was, for me, a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity. Just like in the novels, I relished the thought of finding out about my POS and environ area. participant, so much, that I felt like one of those villains who lick their lips in anticipation of some event. It is only that they look for one thing, evil. I was here to look at a picture, as the person painted it for me.

I wrote down the following statements which Janice made, because they suggest, for me, what the newspapers have never portrayed, the caring that is possible with whom many call, 'them people on the, POS and environ area. those kinds of people':-

"It ain't easy out there. Sharon say she want to be a nurse. If you want to be a nurse you have to work hard. Too much wolves out there. I love my daughters. Every night I get up during the night, I go and look at them sleeping. I really love my last two daughters. I want them to have what I didn't have. Coming from a poor home ain't easy. Eleven children. I don't want them to follow the road I had."

Contemplation: As Kay talked she appeared to have a quiet conviction. She touched me with her willingness to do anything (legal), to ensure that her children did not fall into the life she had to endure.

I was angered that the school's principal had introduced me, to her, as a person who could possibly help her in some way if she helped me. (Somehow it suggested that there was some tangible thing that I could and would give her when she talked to me. I was sorry that I could not do that and that the principal had introduced that kind of extrinsic reward system into our relationship. It was not that I was not ever willing to, but hey, I just did not have the finances). It was not only a question of money. Janice mentioned to me that she would have liked to obtain a job in 'Magic Mist' to make more money and whether I knew anyone there who could help her out. I'm sure that the principal's introduction encouraged this statement. I felt uncomfortable saying that I did not know anyone there.

Kay mentioned to me that if I needed to talk to her again, I could come to her home. I told her I had never been in that area. I asked her whether it was safe to visit and she assured me that it was, that she could have Sharon meet me and accompany me into their home. It seemed okay to do, then. I'll wait and decide.

(Tonight I talked to my husband, a detective, about the possibility of visiting this home. He was unwilling for me to go there alone. "Let me carry you in the police jeep," he said. "No way. I don't want anyone in the area to think that these people have any dealings with the police and jeopardize their lives in any way. I'll just wear old clothes and no jewellery and walk with a little bit of extra cash, so that just in case I'm robbed, I won't lose much," I replied. "You've got to be crazy," he said, which means my solution wasn't good enough and I'll have to give another before I could be allowed to go there. By the way, I've never had to ask permission to go to any place before. I guess the Press got through to him, also).

... one has ...
... role of woman managing
... households / generating
... income
... - lot of being poor affecting
... entire family
- limited food
- limited articles of clothing
- no electricity, lights
- taking available legitimate
jobs, even though low paying
- limited education
- determination & success
- some inheritance of parental
role
- living with different role and
demands by nature

To consider -

- ✓ No one had to rent
- ✓ Dual role of women: managing these households / generating income
- ✓ Poverty - Act of being poor affecting entire family →
 - limited food,
 - limited articles of clothing
 - no electricity & lights
 - taking available legitimate jobs, even though low paying
 - limited education
 - determination ⇒ success
 - some uncertainty of parental role.
 - Coping with different roles and demands by mothers