

Supporting Student Mothers on Campus

Maria Ramirez

New York University



About the Researcher...



Maria Ramirez
maria.ramirez@nyu.edu

- Current Master's candidate in NYU– Steinhardt's Higher Education & Student Affairs program
- Specific research focus on social justice and student success for historically disadvantaged groups
- Current Academic Advisor in NYU Steinhardt's department of Applied Statistics, Social Science & Humanities

Learning Outcomes

- Understanding of the **socio-political context** of the **feminization of poverty** in the U.S.
- Understanding of the various support systems required for **persistence, retention and degree completion** of college student mothers based on student development theory.
- Appreciation of the **economic and psychosocial benefits** of a college degree for impoverished single mothers.
- Specific **strategies** that may be implemented at your institutions to support this student population.

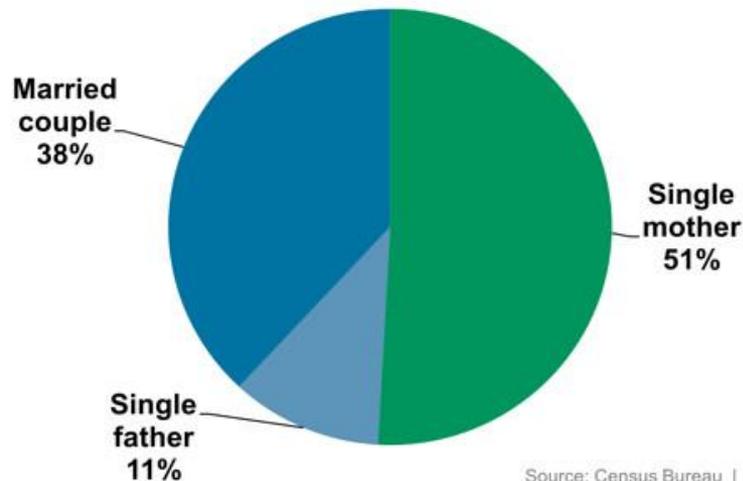


context

Over half of all poor families in America are headed by a **single mother**.

Families in Poverty

Characteristics of families with children living in poverty



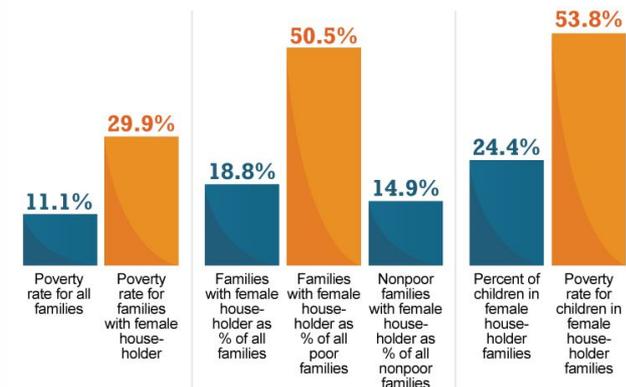
Source: Census Bureau | WSJ.com

FACT:

Single-mother families make up half of all households in poverty

Among all families, nearly one in five is headed by unmarried women, compared to one in two among poor families. One in three families headed by unmarried women is poor, compared to one in 10 of all families. One in four children lives in single-mother families, but one in two children living in such families is poor.

FAMILY POVERTY RATES, 2009



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2010.

Facts & Figures...

- **9.8 million** families in the U.S. are headed by single mothers
- **52%** live in extreme poverty with incomes below half of the federal poverty level – about \$9,900/year for a family of 3
- Over **1/3** are “food insecure”
- Families headed by a single mother make up **75%** of all homeless families nationwide
- The poverty rate for families headed by single mothers **without** a college degree is **84%**



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Family Homelessness

for every child, a chance

Single Mothers & Higher Education



Photos courtesy of Misericordia University



Key Findings

The number of single mothers in college **more than doubled** in the 12 school years between 1999 and 2012.

Nearly 2.1 million students—or **11 percent of all undergraduates**—are raising children without a partner.

Women of color in college are especially likely to be single parents.

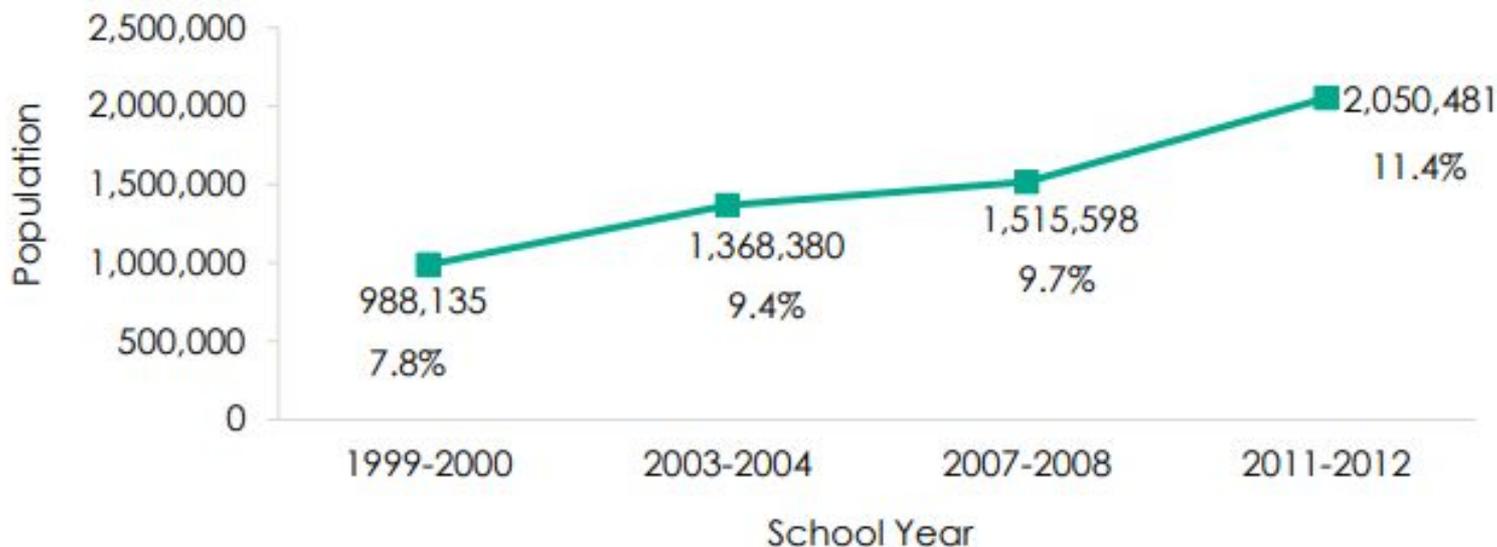
30 percent of single student mothers attend for-profit institutions—**triple the rate** of women students without children.

In 2015, **just 31 percent** of single mothers ages 25 and older held a college degree, compared with 54 percent of comparable married mothers and 40 percent of women overall.

4 in 10 women at two-year colleges say that they are likely or very likely to **drop out of school** due to their dependent care obligations.



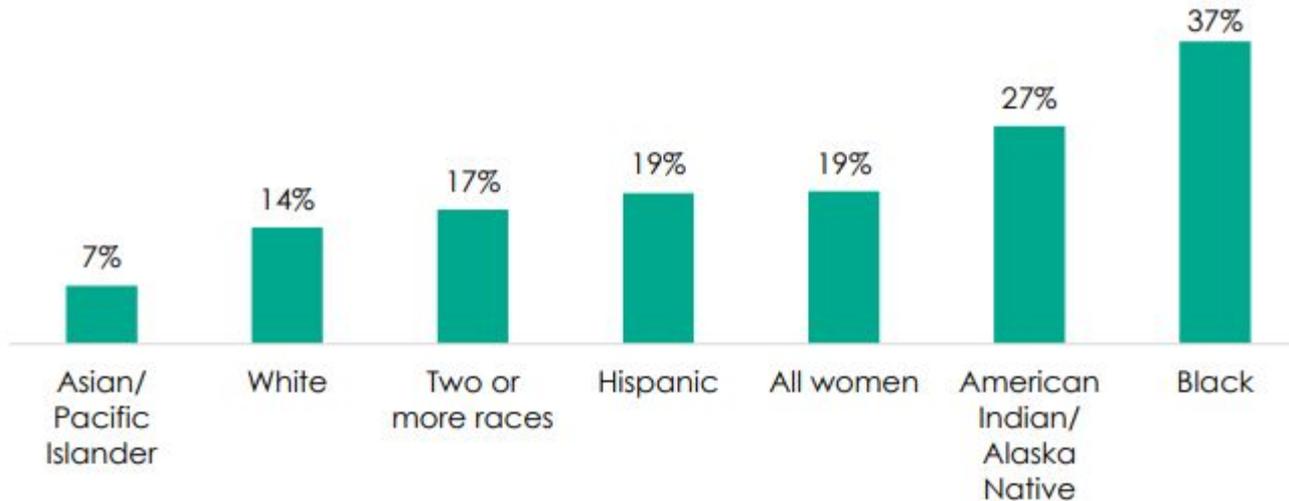
Figure 1. Number of and Share of Undergraduate Students who are Single Mothers, 2011-12



Source: IWPR analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:00, NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, NPSAS:12) and the Integrated Postsecondary Aid Survey (IPEDS) 1999-2012.



Figure 2. Share of Women Undergraduate Students who are Single Mothers, by Race/Ethnicity, 2011-12

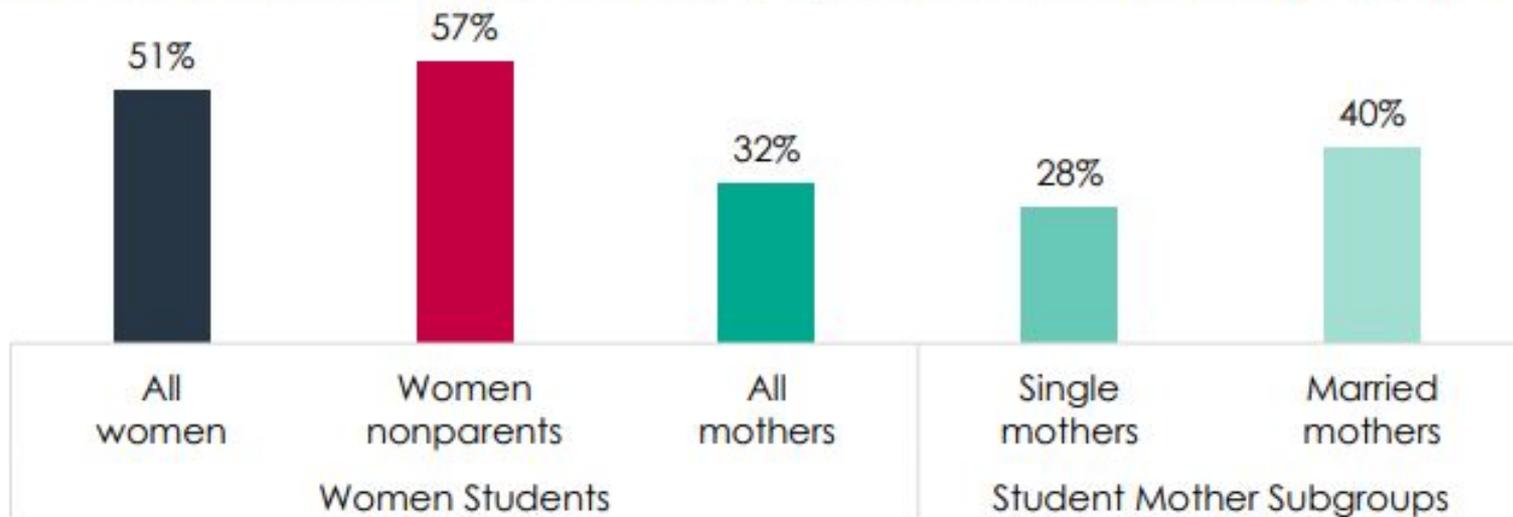


Note: Only includes students enrolled at degree-granting institutions.

Source: IWPR analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the 2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12).



Figure 3. Share of Female Undergraduate Students Who Attained a Degree or Certificate within Six Years of Enrollment, by Parent and Marital Status, 2003-09



Source: IWPR analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003-04 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up (BPS:04/09).



Figure 4. Average Unmet Need among Women Undergraduate Students, by Marital Status and Institution Type, 2011-12



Note: Four-year institutions include both public and private colleges and universities.

Source: IWPR analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12).



Table 4. Percent Change in Number of Student Parents and Number of Institutions with On-Campus Child Care by Region, 2004-12.

Region	Share of Campuses with Child Care, 2011-12	Percent Decrease in Campuses with Child Care, 2004-12	Percent Increase in Student Parent Population, 2004-12
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	14.7%	-14.3%	21.3%
Mid East (DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA)	17.2%	-12.1%	18.3%
Great Lakes (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	16.0%	-14.4%	19.0%
Plains (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)	17.4%	-20.0%	61.2%
Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)	10.8%	-19.0%	26.2%
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	12.2%	-19.8%	67.5%
Rocky Mountains (CO, ID, MT, UT, WY)	15.5%	-13.2%	60.4%
Far West (AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, WA)	19.9%	-4.0%	5.5%
All regions	15.1%	-14.2%	29.6%

Practical Solutions



Institutions

- Establish a task force that addresses campus policies and programs with a specific emphasis on financial stressors
 - Admissions, Financial Aid, Res Life, Student Life, Institutional Research
- Administrators/staff should coordinate with existing off campus resources
 - TRIO programs, CCDF, TANF, SNAP, non-profits like Single Stop USA, iMentor, and Year Up



Institutions Continued...

- Create a separate, family-friendly orientation to extend on-campus resources
 - Financial Aid, Career Center, Counseling, Academic Support Services
- Create new programs and services tailored for student parents
 - On-campus child care, nutritionist, social worker, residential programs, advocates

The Women with Children Program



- Housing/Living-Learning Communities
- Financial Aid
- Orientation to campus
- Child care stipends
- Free course books
- In-house social worker/Coordinator
- Children's enrichment
- Required counseling sessions
- Career development opportunities

How??

- Buy-in from the governance of your university – especially regarding housing.
- Director with background as a clinician/Student Affairs professional
- LOTS of grant-writing
- Cross-departmental collaboration in academic affairs *and* student affairs

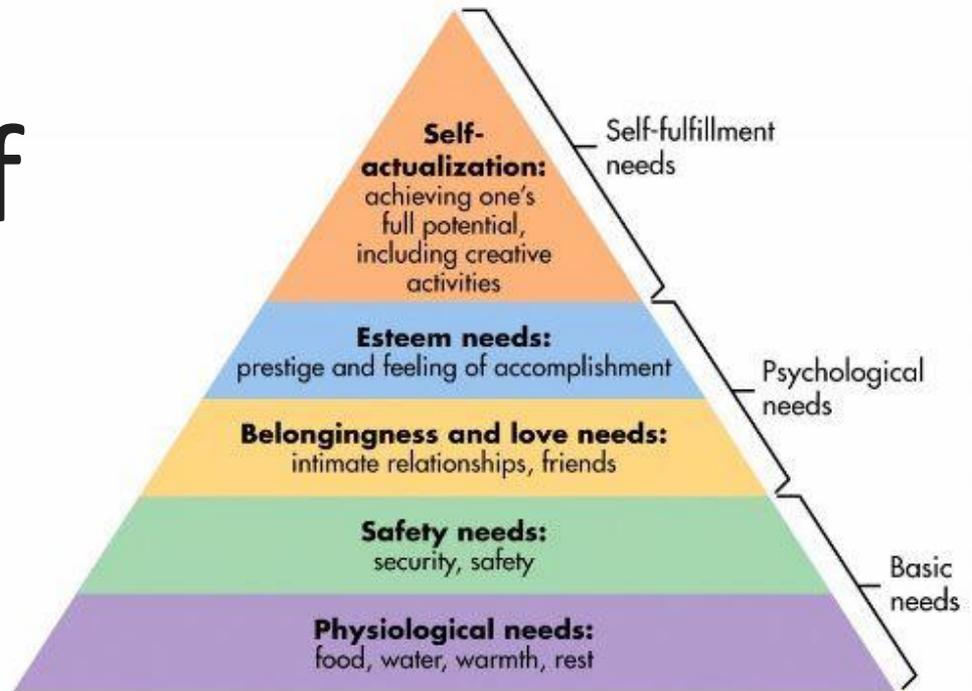
Activity

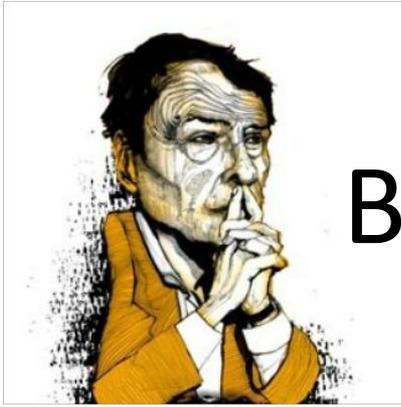
- Form groups of 3-5
- Discuss the case studies provided
- Brainstorm what stakeholders you might discuss this with at your institution. Who might you create a task force with?
- How might you identify these students on your campuses?
- What might you do to encourage student success among these students?

theory

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In order for student mothers to achieve success, we must first provide food security, housing, and physical safety for their families.

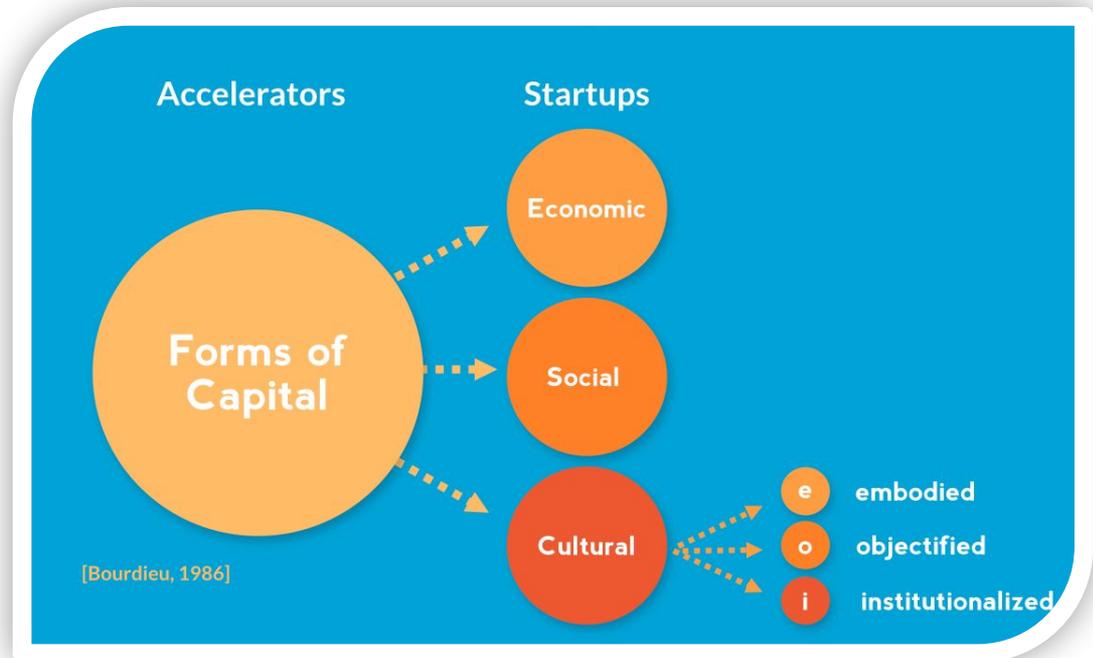




Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Reproduction

Three Forms of Capital

- **Economic capital**- that which can be “directly convertible into money” as well as institutionalized in the form of property
- **Social capital**: resources derived from networks of people and groups. Social capital is essentially social networking as an “investment strategy”
- **Cultural Capital**: forms of knowledge; skill; education; any advantages a person has which give them a higher status in society, including high expectations.
- Exists in three forms: embodied state, objectified state, institutionalized state



what is

cultural capital ?

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, **credentials**, etc. that one acquires through being part of a particular social class. Sharing similar forms of cultural capital with creates a sense of collective identity and group position. Bourdieu also points out that cultural capital is a major source of **social inequality**. Certain forms of cultural capital are valued over others, and can help or hinder one's social mobility just as much as income or wealth.



Maria Williamson Ramirez
Misericordia WWC Alumna '14



thank
you

References

- Adair, V. C. (2001). Poverty and the (broken) promise of higher education. *Harvard Educational Review, 71*(2), 217–240.
- American Council on Education. (2005). *College students today: A national portrait*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Austin, S. A., & McDermott, K. A. (2003). College persistence among single mothers after welfare reform: An exploratory study. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice, 5*(2), 93–113.
- Brooks, R. (2012). Student-parents and higher education: a cross-national comparison. *Journal of Education Policy, 27*(3), 423–439.
- Buteau, R. (2007). *Balancing Acts: A Phenomenological Study of Single Mothers Who Are Successful in Higher Education*. Chicago, IL: Chicago State University.
- Cook, B., & King, J. E. (2004). Low-income adults in profile: Improving lives through higher education. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Fenster, J. (2004). Can welfare mothers hack it in college? A comparison of achievement between TANF recipients and general population community college students. *Journal of College Student Retention, 5*, 421–430
- Goldrick-Rab, S. (2010, February 21). The child-care crisis. *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Haleman, D. (2004). Greater expectations: Single mothers in higher education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 17*, 769–784.
- Huelsman, M., Engle, J., & Policy, I. f. (2013, July). Student Parents and Financial Aid. Retrieved from Institute for Women's Policy Research: <http://www.iwpr.org/initiatives/student-parent-success-initiative/resources-publications/#resources1>
- Huff, D., & Thorpe, B. (1997). Single parents on campus: A challenge for today. *NASPA Journal, 34*, 287–302.
- Jing, J., & Mayer, L. (1995). Single parents: In need of a support network. *Community College Journal, 65*, 44–48.
- Lee, S. (2007). *Keeping moms on the job: The impacts of health insurance and child care on job retention and mobility among low-income mothers*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2002). *Nontraditional students*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *Fast Facts*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>
- Patron, E. J. (2014, January 12). *Higher Education: Interrupting the Cycle of Poverty*. Retrieved from The Shriver Report: <http://shriverrreport.org/higher-education-interrupting-the-cycle-of-poverty-eduardo-patron/>
- Rose, S. J., & Hartmann, H. (2008). *Still a man's labor market: The long-term earnings gap*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.
- Schulman, K., & Blank, H. (2009). *State child care assistance policies 2009: Most states hold the line, but some lose ground in hard times*. National Women's Law Center Issue Brief.
- Yakoboski, Tamara. (2010) *Going At It Alone: Single-Mother Undergraduate's Experiences*, *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 47*:4, 463-481
- U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (2016). *Federal Poverty Level (FPL)*. Retrieved from <https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-fpl/>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Child care access means parents in school program*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/campisp/funding.html>