

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION PROJECT: From Single Mom to Supermom: A Transformative Journey to Heroine

STUDENT: Emilee Mabrey

DEGREE: Doctor of Education in Adult, Higher, and Community Education

COLLEGE: Teachers College

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Research tells us that poverty rates are higher for female-headed households compared to other household makeups. Furthermore, women with children are more likely to live in extreme poverty, and over half of all poor children live in families headed by women. The impact of poverty housing is detrimental to the physiological and psychological well-being of children and their caretakers. As wages stagnate and housing costs continue to soar, unaffordable housing is prevalent throughout the U.S. This lack of affordable housing contributes to a transient and unstable population, directly impacting the lives of women and children and the communities in which they reside.

Through a series of semi-structured interviews, this study tells the transformative journey of eleven single mothers who live in Affordable College Apartments, located in central Appalachia. This housing and education initiative enables heads-of-households to reach self-sufficiency. Prioritizing single-parent families, participants receive counseling, workshops, and

support from neighbors and staff, while fulfilling academic or vocational training coursework as full-time students.

The data consist of narratives of each participant interviewed. Their stories were used for a narrative analysis where several themes emerged and were used to answer the research questions. Each narrative was evaluated under Mezirow's transformative learning theory, with critical attention given as to whether women uniquely learn and transform based on their experiences. The findings also focused on the idea of intersectionality and how women have multiple identities in which they use to navigate and interpret their experiences. Participants' narratives were used to explain what they felt it means to be a woman based on their experiences growing up, throughout their education, and becoming and being a mother, or better said, a supermom.