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“I STAYED A LITTLE TOO LONG IN THAT STRENGTH”: TRANSMITING THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN NARRATIVE AND SPIRITUAL COPING AMONG SPIRITUAL BLACK WOMEN

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Aiesha Te’Rah Lee

May 2022

“I STAYED A LITTLE TOO LONG IN THAT STRENGTH”: TRANSMITING THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN NARRATIVE AND SPIRITUAL COPING AMONG SPIRITUAL BLACK WOMEN

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother who is my role model, my best friend, my rock, my inspiration, my biggest supporter, and my growth partner. This dissertation is also dedicated to all the Strong Black Women who are still here. May this dissertation help empower all your voices.

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Acknowledgments

Before all else, I must give praise to God who brought me to this moment. It is through His plan, His will, and his purpose for me that I have been able to do this work. There is a reason that I latched on to Proverbs 3: 5-6 as a child. Meditating on that scripture which states, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your path," allowed me to continue to acknowledge God is His will for me throughout every struggle and triumph of this journey. In this acknowledgment, my work has not only centered Black communities, but has also centered God in all His forms. I will continue to acknowledge Him in all my ways as my journey progresses.

Secondly, I must acknowledge my parents, whose sacrifices and hard work gave me abundant opportunities to fulfill my God ordained purpose. My parents were pioneers in their family in many ways. Above all their firsts, my parents were spiritual pioneers in their immediate families. I am grateful that they found the church, found each other in the church, and passed their spiritual experience down to me. I am also grateful for my spiritual parents who not only supported my parents in their spiritual journeys but helped shape the beginnings of mine. You have all watched me grow up and have helped shaped my foundation that is rooted in God and love.

Next, I acknowledge my amazing committee. Dr. Parker, your beautiful spirit and love for this work always shined through as you provided me guidance through this work. Thank you for being a calming space in the storm of dissertation. Dr. Cashwell, your humility and humanness throughout this phase of my development gave me permission to be human as well. Thank you for holding space for me as a sunk deeper into my human experience. Dr. Avent Harris, I want to be like you when I grow up. Thank you for helping to pave the way into this

research. Lastly, Dr Haskins, your guidance has been invaluable throughout this process. You challenged me to think deeper, be patient, and trust the research process. I have so many more lessons to learn from you and I look forward to every one of them.

I also must acknowledge my William & Mary community. To my "forever third years," Nancy, Okenna, Adrienne, Michelle, Nathaniel, and Leila, your support has kept me sane when I felt like I was losing myself. Thank you all for always being willing to support and guide me through this experience. Thank you for the love, drinks, laughter, and genuine friendship. To my cohort, thank you all for being my partners on this journey and allowing me to partner with you on yours. There will always be a special place in my heart for Kenson, Unity, Kaitlin, and Morgan who began an in-person program with me and ended it in a pandemic with me. We are a dope bunch of individuals, and I am so proud of every one of us. To Dr. Mullen, thank you for seeing me before I saw myself. You gave me permission to explore my identity as a researcher which has become an important part of who I am as a professional. As I embark on my journey as an educator, I will take bits of pieces of all my mentors with me, but I will take your spirit of mentorship with me the most. You are an amazing mentor and educator and I appreciate all you have done for me over these past few years. Lastly, to the second years, first years, and all the students I have been blessed to teach, supervise, or mentor, thank you for continually reminding me why I decided to become a Counselor Educator. The love and support you all have poured into me rejuvenated me when I didn't think I had anything left to give.

Lastly, to my participants, thank you for your willingness to be vulnerable. Thank you for believing in me enough to share your experience with me. I will continue to strive to make you all proud.

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“I STAYED A LITTLE TOO LONG IN THAT STRENGTH”: TRANSMITING THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN NARRATIVE AND SPIRITUAL COPING AMONG SPIRITUAL BLACK WOMEN

Abstract

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore the transmission of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) narrative and spiritual coping among spiritual Black women. The researcher utilized a social constructivist framework to guide the research process. After a review of the literature, the researcher recruited five mother and daughter pairs for the study. Data was collected using a demographic questionnaire, individual interviews, mother and daughter interviews, and identification of a meaningful scripture. To analyze the data, a cross-case synthesis of patterns related to the SBW narrative and spiritual coping resulted in five themes. Novel findings, implications, limitations, and future research is also discussed.

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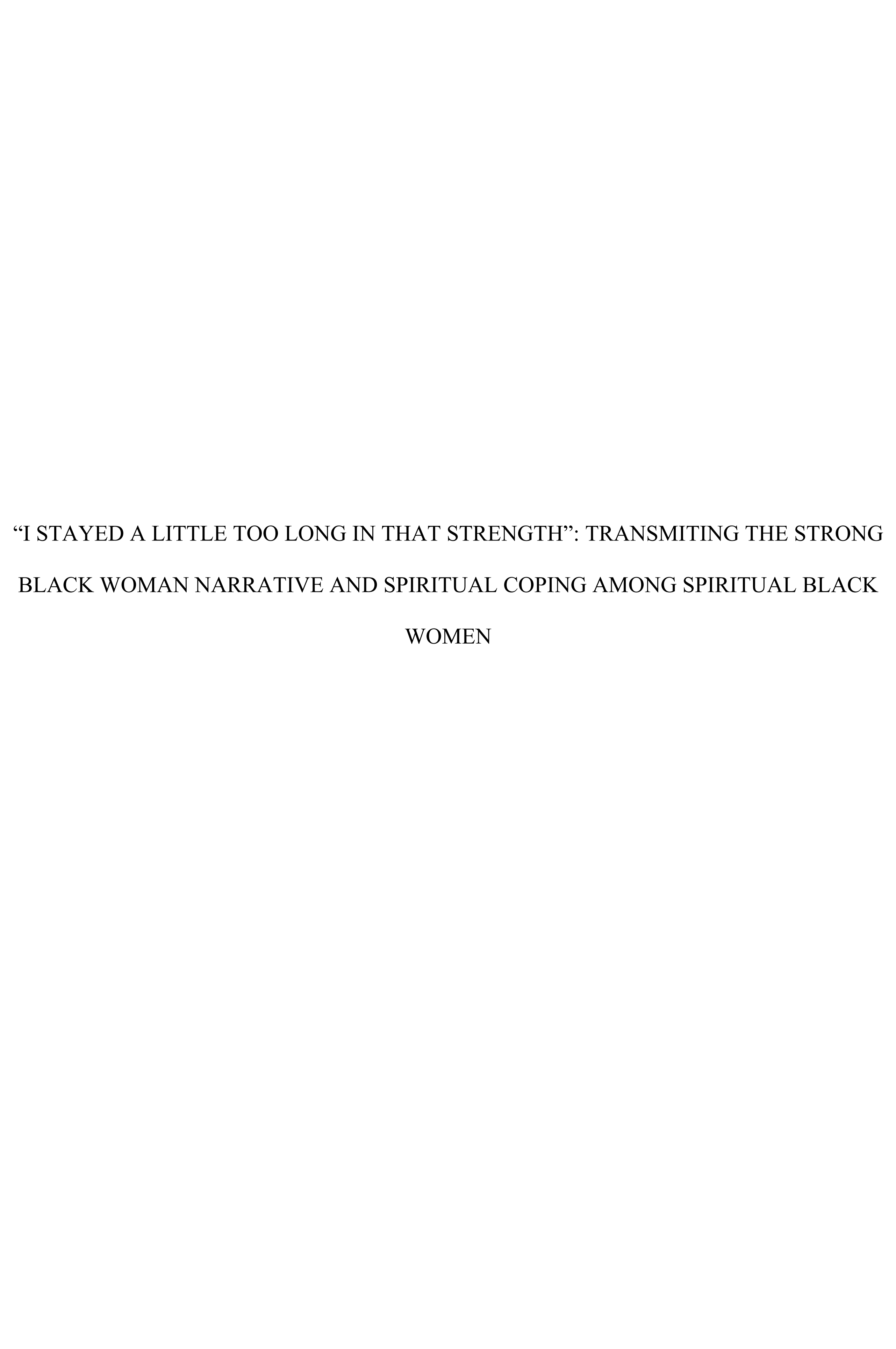

"I STAYED A LITTLE TOO LONG IN THAT STRENGTH": TRANSMITING THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN NARRATIVE AND SPIRITUAL COPING AMONG SPIRITUAL BLACK WOMEN

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

During one of our nightly conversations, my mother updates me on the recent family news regarding the seemingly emerging pattern of her aunts' husbands leaving them, taking all the money and assets, and soon after passing away. My mother remarked, "I hope this doesn't become a trend." Thrown off by my mother's immediate response to classify these two incidents of 40 year old marriages ending abruptly as a potential legacy, I rebutted her hypothesis and attempted to reframe these tragic events. Instead of accepting my invitation to resist internalizing the events that have recently unfolded in our family, my mother recollects the relationship between her grandmother and grandfather stating, "He treated her like dirt and she worshiped the ground he walked on." Realizing that what my mother was discussing was the very thing I aim to better understand, I sat silently contemplating the intergenerational trauma that my mother must be experiencing at this very moment. After a few uncomfortable moments of silence the only words I could find were "How heartbreaking."

In just our 20 minute conversation, I recognized the hurt, fear, and confusion that my great grandmother, great aunts, and now my mother carry with them as Black women in America. Unfortunately, stories similar to these, in which Black women are mistreated by their partners, are not new (Gomez & Gobin, 2020). Specifically, Black women experience higher rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) than their racial counterparts and thus are more susceptible to depression, anxiety, PTSD, eating disorders, substance use and suicide (Devries et al., 2014; Lacey et al., 2013; Sabri et al., 2013). Historically, female slaves in America were not only brutalized and sexually assaulted by slave masters and owners, but by male slaves as well (Geyton et al., 2020). From this, we see a trend, or as my mother would put it "legacy," of the mistreatment of Black women by society and those in her own home. The fact that my mother,

and possibly even I, still experience the effects of this legacy accentuates the reality of intergenerational trauma (i.e., the transmission of traumatic experiences from one generation to the subsequent generation; Milner et al., 2010) in the Black community, specifically amongst Black women.

Although Black women's rate of psychological distress is not exorbitantly higher than women from other racial and ethnic groups, the sociopolitical stressors Black women face are significant and should be considered when examining their mental health. Specifically, while Black women report 4.7% of psychological distress compared to White women who have reported 4.8% of psychological distress in 2018 (CDC, 2021), Black women must endure the systemic oppression of racial and gender discrimination as a result of their intersecting identities. These intersecting identities provide Black women with a dual-minority status that manifests as gendered racism (Geyton et al., 2020). As such, it is imperative the counseling field continues to gain understanding of the impact of systemic oppressions such as gendered racism, how these oppressive circumstances are transmitted throughout generations, and the potential mental health needs of Black women as a result.

The following chapter will discuss the problem the study is addressing which will include a brief overview of the background and context of the identified problem. Additionally, the theoretical frameworks that will guide the proposed research study will be identified and discussed as well as the significance of the study, research questions, and an overview of the proposed methodology. Lastly, this chapter will review potential limitations of the proposed study as well as define salient terms related to the target population and phenomena.

Background and Context

To understand the mental health of Black women, it is necessary to review the sociopolitical factors that have and currently impact their daily lives. Systemic oppression has a large role in the experience of Black women in the United States. More specifically, Black women endure gendered racism which encapsulates the intersecting impact of oppression from racism and sexism (Essed, 1991). These oppressive "isms" are embedded in institutional, societal, and cultural practices and, as such, are experienced daily. Although the term gendered racism was first used by Essed in 1991, the enactment of the phenomenon has a much longer history. Specifically, Black women have endured unjust treatment since their arrival in the United States and thus it is necessary to understand the historical context of their current experience.

Historical trauma is the re-experiencing of a large traumatic event throughout generations that has a spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical impact (Brave Heart, 2003; Hampton et al., 2010; Phipps and Degges-White, 2014). A key characteristic of historical trauma is the impact of the trauma being felt by generations who did not directly experience the trauma (Hampton et al., 2010). For the Black community, slavery was a large traumatic event that is being re-experienced through the perpetuation of oppressive structures. During slavery, Black men were desecrated for the purpose of isolating the Black woman and leaving her on her own. Seen as strong and independent, Black women were not seen as feminine beings except when a slave owner or even a male slave wanted to sexually assault her (Geyton et al., 2020). It is evident that these thought patterns still exist today in considering stereotypes ascribed to Black women (i.e., strong black woman, jezebel, etc.; Geyton et al., 2020). A specific mode in which

these stereotypes and the unjust treatment of Black women has been passed down from the slavery era to present day is intergenerational transmission of trauma.

Often, intergenerational trauma is likened to historical trauma. Intergenerational trauma, however, is the specific and direct transmission of trauma from one generation to the next (Milner et al, 2010). In addition to attempting to understand the behavioral transmission of trauma amongst Holocaust survivors and their offspring (Conolly, 2011), researchers have attempted to understand the epigenetic impact and transmission of trauma (Bowers & Yehuda, 2016). Despite the increased understanding of the phenomenon across disciplines, a specific inquiry into how intergenerational trauma functions within the Black community, one that is different from the communities impacted by the Holocaust, has not been explored. Although studying intergenerational trauma that stems from slavery may not be entirely possible, it should be noted that slavery can still be considered in the transmission of trauma intergenerationally. Specifically, DeGruy (2017) conceptualized Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) as the intergenerational process of transmitting trauma from the slavery era. DeGruy (2017) postulated that PTSS is the specific experience of intergenerational trauma in the Black community in which Black Americans currently experience side effects from slavery and multigenerational experiences of oppression. With this, it is expected that the Black family has been significantly impacted by the historical trauma of slavery and the intergenerational transmission of traumatic responses.

The Black Family and Black Women

Black families in America began with the degradation of the Black man, isolation of the Black woman, and the breakdown of the Black family (Iliffe, 2017; Lynch, 2014). The breakdown of the African family was particularly detrimental to the family system as the African

culture was a collectivistic one, in which the support of family and community members was essential for survival (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011; Bernal et al., 2015). With this, African women became leaders of the family and this legacy continued throughout history as Black men were often imprisoned or killed post slavery (Pope, 2019). As intentional or unintentional leaders of the family, Black women have been identified as matriarchs who, because they are often sole providers, have much of the responsibility in households.

The Western depiction of the Black matriarch also aligns with the Strong Black Woman (SBW) archetype that is often ascribed to Black women. Possibly due to slavery conditions or their matriarchal status, Black women have been characterized as independent, strong, and emotionless beings who put others before themselves (Abrams et al., 2014; Geyton et al., 2020). Black women have adopted, rejected, and redefined this role throughout the years, but often use it as a way to persevere through oppressive circumstances (Abrams et al., 2014; Geyton et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2016). Despite the strength the SBW archetype might provide, the pressure of aligning with this particular depiction can be harmful to Black women's mental health.

Mental Health of Black Women

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2019), Black Americans have one of the lowest rates of severe psychological distress (3.8%) compared to American Indian or Alaska Native individuals (4.5%), White individuals (3.9 %), and Asian Americans (2.1%). However, Black Americans report higher rates of symptoms indicative of depression. Specifically, Black Americans reported the highest rate of feeling sad most of the time (4.3%) as compared to White individuals (2.8%), and Asian Americans (1.6%) and reported the second highest rate of feeling sad some of the time (11%) as compared to Asian Americans (11.6%), American Indian or Alaskan (10%), and White Americans (8.1%). An inverse trend is seen when measuring for

hopelessness, with Black individuals reporting a lower rate of feeling hopeless most of the time (1.8%) as compared to their White (2.4%) and Asian (1.4%) counterparts but the highest rate of feeling hopeless some of the time (6%) in comparison to American Indian or Alaska Natives (5.4%), White individuals (4.8%), and Asian Americans. Black Americans have not reported much higher rates of worthlessness, with 1.8 percent reporting feeling worthless most of the time compared to 1.9 percent of Asian Americans, 2.3 percent of White Americans, and 3.4 percent of American Indian and Alaskan individuals. Additionally, 4 percent of Black Americans report feeling worthless some of the time compared to 3.2 percent of Asian Americans, 3.9 percent of White Americans and 5.5 percent of American Indian and Alaskan individuals. Lastly, Black Americans reported the highest rate of feeling that everything is an effort with 10.8 percent reporting this sentiment most of the time and 12.6 percent reporting this sentiment some of the time as compared to their Asian, 6.7 percent and 9.3 percent respectively, American Indian and Alaskan, 10.5 percent and and 9.8 percent respectively, and White, 6.6 percent and 11.5 percent respectively, counterparts (CDC, 2019). Black Americans reported the highest rate of distress in half of the domains examined by the CDC (2019), suggesting they are experiencing a higher rate of mental and emotional distress.

With this, Black women experience racism as well as sexism. Racism has been discussed as having a significant negative mental health impact on individuals of color (Evans et al., 2016; Pieterse & Powell, 2016; Williams et al., 2014), causing traumatic responses likened to those of rape and domestic violence survivors (Lowe et al., 2012). Defined as the belief that those from a different culture are inferior and should not maintain power (Evans et al., 2016), this phenomenon can explicate the disproportionate rates of hopelessness, worthlessness, and sadness reported by Black individuals (NHIS, 2019).

To address the mental health needs of Black women, researchers have utilized the current postmodern era to conceptualize culturally responsive approaches that incorporate intersectionality (Walton & Oyewuwo-Gassikia, 2017), narrative therapy (Gomez et al., 2020; Mbilishaka, 2018), and other creative strategies to cope with oppressive structures (Gomez & Gobin, 2020; Holden et al., 2014; Nichols, 2015). Furthermore, researchers have adapted established theories to create culturally responsive trauma approaches (Hinton et al., 2012; Mosley et al., 2020). To further understand how to serve Black women, researchers have conducted studies that highlight the impact of racial discrimination on psychological distress (Chao et al., 2012; Chao et al., 2014) and examined psychometric properties of scales related to race-based trauma, gendered racial microaggressions, and gendered racial socialization (Brown et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2013; Lewis & Neville, 2015).

Despite the efforts to provide culturally responsive care to Black women, researchers have yet to fully address intergenerational trauma in Black women. These conceptual therapeutic approaches do not view oppressive structures as a systemic issue that can be transmitted throughout generations (Gomez & Gobin, 2020; Gomez et al., 2020; Mbilishaka, 2018; Walton & Oyewuwo-Gassikia, 2017). Furthermore, the trauma approaches that have been developed to be more culturally sensitive do not take into account the strengths of Black families and women which include familial influences and support (Bell-Toliver & Wilkerson, 2011). As such, it is imperative that additional research is conducted to understand the transmission of trauma between Black women.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of a research study serves as a blueprint that guides the researcher as they develop the rationale, research questions, methodology, etc. of the research

study (Grant & Osanloo). A social constructivist framework was used for this research study. Social constructivists maintain that individuals' experiences and their subjective meanings are rooted in their worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, universal truth is not possible as subjective experiences are vast and complex and can all be considered truths (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012). Instead, social constructivists believe knowledge is constructed through social interactions that are often influenced by societal events (Hays & Singh, 2012). Researchers seek to understand individuals' subjective experience through collaborative dialogue in which the researcher asks general questions that prompt the participant to construct their understanding and meaning of a specific experience or research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005).

More specifically, the ontological view of social constructivism states that the nature of reality is contextual and thus there can be multiple realities of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005). As such, the epistemological view is that knowledge is constructed by the participant and researcher (Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005). The axiology (i.e., values and assumptions of the researcher) of social constructivism considers the values of all those involved in the research process (researcher, participant, and research setting) when engaging in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005). Similarly, the rhetoric (i.e., how data is presented) of social constructivism reflects the participants' voices while considering the positionalty of the researcher and research setting (Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005). Lastly, how data is collected (i.e. methodology) within a social constructivist paradigm hinges on the collaborative decision of the researcher and participant. Furthermore, the scientific inquiry must be relevant and trustworthy according to trustworthiness standards (Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

The legacy of Black women in America, which can include the Strong Black Woman (SBW) narrative, has been tumultuous yet triumphant. Mothers within the Black community have been tasked with overcoming sexism and racism while simultaneously rearing children who will have to overcome the same obstacles of oppression. As suggested by PTSS developer DeGruy (2017), while mothers are managing the trauma of their own experiences of gendered racism, they are raising children who may also receive their mother's internalized trauma responses to oppression. More specifically, as a result of the trauma of slavery and subsequent oppressive structures, Black women have adopted specific characteristics (e.g., strength, caretaking, and invulnerability; Abrams et al., 2014; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007) that have manifested as the SBW narrative. In turn, and due to the continued oppression of Black women (i.e., racism and sexism), this narrative has been and continues to be passed down throughout generations. Furthermore, while religion and spirituality have historically been salient in the Black community, particularly in coping with oppression (Frame & Williams, 1996), it is possible that Black individuals are utilizing spirituality to avoid difficult emotions. More specifically, individuals may be engaging in spiritual bypass which is a process, oftentimes unconscious, of avoiding psychological distress (Welwood, 1984, 2000). With this, it is not surprising that Black Americans utilize mental health services at a significantly lower rate than their counterparts (Harris et al., 2020) as they have been utilizing their spiritual beliefs to bypass their mental health needs.

Specifically, in 2019 13.6 percent of Black Americans, as compared to 23 percent of White Americans and 12.9 percent of Hispanic Americans, received mental health treatment (Terlizzi & Zablotsky, 2020). One reason for this discrepancy is Black Americans' distrust in the

healthcare system (Armstrong et al., 2013; Harris et al., 2020). From the mistreatment of African American bodies during slavery, to the unethical Tuskegee experiment, and even present day discrepancies in care, Black Americans have been and continue to be neglected by the American healthcare system. For example, approximately 27% of Black Americans reported knowing someone who was hospitalized or died due to COVID-19 as compared to 13% of Hispanic and White Americans (Lopez et al., 2020). Additionally, Carter et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analytic review of 105 research studies related to racial discrimination and health. Across the 105 studies, the researchers observed consistent findings related to the adverse impact racial discrimination has on mental and physical health. More specifically, researchers found that after accounting for socioeconomic factors such as educational level and income, African Americans maintained a statistically significant association between perceived discrimination within a healthcare setting and race (Abramson et al., 2015). The researchers noted that African Americans are 3.6 more likely than White Americans to report racial discrimination which is consistent with their research findings.

Even if a Black individual can overcome this seemingly innate fear of healthcare, there are other cultural barriers and preferences that may deter them from utilizing mental health services. First, there continues to be a stigma surrounding mental health and counseling within the Black community (Fripp & Carlson, 2017). Additionally, the belief that one is weak for seeking help is often upheld as well as the notion of "keeping our business out of the streets." Specifically, it is a common belief and cultural norm that the concerns of an individual and their family remain in the family. After considering the historical and intergenerational trauma of the Black community, one can see how maladaptive behaviors and psychological distress is maintained in the lineage. Furthermore, researchers have identified finances, lack of knowledge,

fear of misdiagnosis and being labeled, brainwashing, and preferring other methods of coping, including spirituality, as reasons African American adults do not seek help (Harris et al., 2020; Thompson et al., 2004).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative, collective case study was to explore the experiences of intergenerational trauma among spiritual Black women. Specifically, this study utilized the mother-daughter relationship to ascertain potentially traumatic messages surrounding the Strong Black Woman narrative and spiritual coping that have been intentionally or unintentionally communicated from mother to her daughter. Moreover, this study explored how spiritual Black women cope with potentially traumatic generational messages. The themes that emerged from this research study provide additional insight into intergenerational trauma in the Black family and contribute to the scant literature related to this phenomenon. Additionally, themes related to how spiritual Black women heal from intergenerational trauma within the transmission process emerged. The results of this study provide insight into the process and impact of intergenerational trauma in communities of color which counselors and counselor educators can utilize to address generational trauma in counseling practice education.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions for this study were:

1. *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?*
2. *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?*

Significance of Study

Despite some increase in use of mental health services and psychological well-being within the last decade, the mental health of the Black community is still of major concern. Specifically, the higher rates of symptomatology and prevalence of PTSD provide evidence for the disproportionate experience of this community. These discrepancies can be attributed to the historical and intergenerational oppressive trauma (i.e., discrimination-based trauma) the Black community has faced. Although counselors, educators, and researchers may be more aware of perpetuation of social injustices against the Black community, there continues to be a struggle to address these issues in counseling (Hemmings & Evans, 2018). With the shift toward social justice, this is an optimal time to begin to do more than just know the major problems. Counselors and educators must also understand the impact of these problems on the Black culture and the culture's subsequent response. Now, not only must the client be met where they are, but the client's culture and cultural history must also be met and honored. However, this cannot be adequately done by utilizing current approaches with the surface knowledge currently held. Additional knowledge and understanding of the Black community's experience is needed, and a major part of that is their experience of intergenerational trauma and use of the cultural coping mechanism.

Research Design and Method

The researcher utilized a collective case study research design to explore spiritual Black women's experience of transmitting the Strong Black Woman (SBW) narrative and spiritual coping. With a social constructivist paradigm, the researcher employed criterion sampling (i.e., recruiting participants who meet specific criteria; Hays & Singh, 2012) to acquire five cases of mother and daughter pairs who are over the age of 18 and identify as spiritual Black women. The

data collection process began with the approval from the university to conduct the research study and continued with obtaining informed consent from participants, conducting semi-structured and interactive interviews, and collecting one scripture from each participant. Upon completion of data collection, the researcher engaged in data analysis which involved (a) orienting to guiding theoretical frameworks; and (b) identifying and refining themes and categories within and across each case study (Crowe et al., 2011; Yin, 2009). To ensure trustworthiness throughout the research study, the researcher utilized the strategies of member checking, peer debriefing, audit trail, gaining thick descriptions, reflexive journaling, and triangulation.

Limitations

Despite the measures of trustworthiness that were taken to increase the rigor of the present research study, there are a few limitations to consider. First, despite the researcher's openness to recruiting participants from various religious and spiritual affiliations, the sample of the present study was limited to Black women who identified as Christian. Additionally, the majority of participants reside on the East Coast, thereby limited representation of other regions. Furthermore, the researcher's identity as a spiritual Black woman, and thus as someone who qualified for the research study, may have factored into how the researcher interpreted the data. However, utilizing peer debriefers and reflexive journaling assisted in the researcher's resistance to their voice outweighing the participants'. Lastly, while the researcher engaged in trustworthiness procedures to increase transferability, due to the nature of the research design, the findings can not be generalized.

Definition of Terms

Black/African American. Black, African American, and Black American will be utilized interchangeably to describe Americans of African descent who identify with the aforementioned identities.

Spirituality. The inner meaning making experience of an individual's relationship with a being deemed higher than themselves regardless of religious affiliation (Frame & Williams, 1996; Frankl, 1963).

Religion. The organized conceptualization and institutional expression of spiritual experiences (Frame & Williams, 1996). For the purposes of this proposal, religion refers to an organized system that necessitates specific beliefs and rituals regarding an individual's relationship with the system (Marty & Appleby, 1991).

Trauma. The experience of actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Historical/Cultural Trauma. The re-experiencing of a large traumatic event throughout generations that has a spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical impact on those who directly and indirectly experienced the trauma (Brave Heart, 2003; Hampton et al., 2010; Phipps and Degges-White, 2014). This traumatic event becomes a part of the narrative the community perpetuates regarding the world, themselves, and their survival (Volkan, 2001). For the purpose of this paper, historical/cultural trauma refers to African chattel slavery in the United States.

Intergenerational Trauma. The direct transmission of trauma from one generation to the next (Milner et al, 2010). For example, a mother who has experienced a car accident does not drive. As a result, her daughter has developed a fear of driving as well. The mother's trauma was transmitted to the daughter and the daughter is experiencing intergenerational trauma.

Ethical Considerations

For the present study the researcher adhered to ethical standards of conducting research as described by the American Counseling Association's (ACA) code of ethics (2014). These measures included obtaining permission to conduct the research study from the William & Mary Educational Institutional Review Board (EDIRC), obtaining informed consent from all participants, utilizing pseudonyms when reporting findings, and securing all data on a secured drive.

Summary

This chapter discussed the background and context of the present study including a description of the problem and significance of the study. This chapter also reviewed the theoretical framework, methodology, and limitations of the present study. The definitions of key terms were also provided along with ethical considerations for this research study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The unjust treatment of Black individuals is not a new phenomenon. Oppression that is born out of racism is rooted in the American system. Specifically, as discussed by Ture and Hamilton (1968), racism is the "predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group" (p. 3-4). The authors note that there are overt and covert forms of racism as well as individual and institutional (i.e. systemic) forms of racism. These ideals have permeated the American system at least since chattel slavery in which the selling and buying of African bodies was seen as an economic movement (Iliffe, 2017). Although slavery was abolished, systems (i.e., laws, institutions, federal programs, etc.) continued to be developed from the foundation of racist thought. Just as these ideals have been passed down through American history, so has the impact, or trauma, of systemic racism on the Black community. Specifically, the historical and intergenerational oppression of the Black community has perpetuated the impact of traumatic events that began centuries ago.

Historical Trauma

Described as "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences" (Brave Heart, 2003, p. 7), historical trauma was originally discussed within the context of the trauma and prolonged grief experienced by Indigenous people. Phipps and Degges-White (2014) also describe historical trauma as a "subjective re-experiencing and recollection of traumatic events by an individual or a community over multiple generations" (Phipps & Degges-White, 2014, p. 177). Furthermore, Sotero (2006) presented a model of historical trauma utilizing historical trauma theory which posits that there are physical, environmental, and social pathways from which the physiological and emotional of a traumatic experience are transmitted through generations. As a

result, the subsequent generations experience “an intergenerational cycle of trauma response” (Sotero, 2006, p. 95). The three phases of historical trauma as discussed by Sotero (2006) are as follows: (1) the subjugation of a marginalized group by a dominant group through violence, displacement, economic deprivation, and cultural dispossession; (2) direct victims experience psychological, physiological, and social consequences such as depression, a compromised immune system, and poverty; and (3) subsequent generations are affected by original trauma through various means such as genetic transmission of depression, impairment of genetic expression leading to physiological issues, or maladaptive behavior. From this, the memories of trauma also become the memories of the population as children are taught to “share in the ancestral pain of their people” (Sotero, 2006, p. 100). As a result, children, who become parents and grandparents, can develop feelings of distrust, persecution, and unresolved grief (Sotero, 2006). Moreover, their current experiences of social injustice can validate and reinforce the effects of historical trauma (Sotero, 2006). With this, it is understood that trauma, and consequent reactions, can be passed down and absorbed into a cultural identity just as traditions of language, food, and music (Phipps & Degges-White, 2014).

Hampton et al. (2010) provided a specific definition of historical trauma as it pertains to and impacts the Black community: “the collective spiritual, psychological, emotional, and cognitive distress perpetuated intergenerationally deriving from multiple denigrating experiences originating with slavery and continuing with pattern forms of racism and discrimination to the present day” (p. 32). While Hampton et al. (2010) emphasized the intergenerational nature of historical trauma, I assert that what makes events such as slavery and the Jim Crow era historical traumas is their continued impact on generations that did not directly or indirectly (e.g., via parents or grandparents) witness the traumatic experience. This differs from intergenerational

trauma, discussed later on, which emphasizes direct or indirect intergenerational trauma. The distinction between the two phenomena punctuates the severity of historical trauma and gives reason to consider its effects in counseling practice and research.

Slavery

One major, if not the largest, historical trauma of the Black community can be identified as the over 400 years of slavery that began with the Atlantic Slave trade of Africans. As an economic movement, the Atlantic Slave trade utilized African people as current to gain goods and labor (Iliffe, 2017). An estimated eight to 15 million African men, women, and children became property of the highest bidder who separated them from their families and their culture (DeGruy, 2017; Graff, 2011; Iliffe, 2017). As a newly acquired property, slaves worked in unfavorable conditions and endured inhumane treatment (e.g., whippings, imprisonment, and humiliation) as their owners adhered to Slave Codes (i.e., laws that governed the behavior of slaves; Carson, 2013; Penrice, 2021) and followed guidelines set forth by individuals such as Willie Lynch. As a successful slave owner in the West Indies, Willie Lynch visited Virginia in 1712 and provided a speech to assist American slave owners with their problems with their slaves (Lynch, 2014). Today, this speech is known as the Willie Lynch Letter.

During his speech, Willie Lynch discussed how to make a slave, how to make a negro, marriage between slaves, and breaking the African woman. Lynch specifically states that the tools of fear, distrust, and envy will garner maximum control as Black slaves will begin to distrust each other (i.e., old versus young and darker skin versus lighter skin) and depend more on the slave owner (Lynch, 2014). In his discussion of breaking the African woman, Lynch encourages brutal treatment, to the point of death, of the Black man be performed in front of the woman. In this, the Black woman will be left alone,

> "...unprotected, with the male image destroyed, the ordeal caused her to move from her psychological dependent state to a frozen independent state. In this frozen psychological state of independence, she will raise her male and female offspring in reversed roles. For fear of the young males life she will psychologically train him to be mentally weak and dependent, but physically strong. Because she has become psychologically independent, she will train her female off springs to be psychologically independent. What have you got? You've got the nigger women out front the nigger man behind and scared. This is a perfect situation of sound sleep and economics" (Lynch, 2014, p. 18).

Jim Crow

Although slavery was legally abolished in 1863, the subjugation of Black individuals continued. For example, slaves in Galveston, Texas were not notified of the Emancipation Proclamation and thus remained in slavery until June 19th of 1865 (Higgins, 2017). Even those who were freed shortly after the 13th Amendment was passed continued to endure cruel treatment (i.e. beating, murder, psychological abuse) and faced new laws, the Black Codes, that supported these acts (DeGruy, 2017). Specifically, Black Codes were created to continually remind Black Americans of "their place" and maintain control over them who, although now free, continued to be seen as inferior laborers (Woodward, 1955). Established by Johnson in 1865, the Black Codes mitigated fear of an insurrection and mimicked slavery ideals (Woodward, 1955). Reminiscent of Slave Codes, these codes continued to regulate the lives of Black Ameircans, criminalizing their behaviors and prohibiting civil liberties such as voting, serving on juries, and using the court system to obtain justice (Black Codes, 2015; Penrice, 2021). Eventually the Black Codes were found to be too harsh causing congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the fourteenth amendment (1868), and the fifteeneth amendment (1869)

giving Black Americans more equal rights (Black Codes, 2015; DeGruy, 2017). Soon after, however, Jim Crow laws were passed, launching the United States into the Jim Crow era.

Between the 1860s and 1890s, alongside laws providing Black Americans civil liberties, many states began implementing laws that segregated Black communities from White communities (Jim Crow Laws, 2015; Jim Crow Laws, 2011). Under these laws Black men had to pay taxes and pass literacy tests to vote, interracial marriage was prohibited, Black Americans could not inhabit property in White neighborhoods, and they were not permitted in many public spaces White Americans inhabited such as schools, restaurants, and places of worship (Jim crow laws, 2015). As these laws became more widespread and stringent, many Black Americans moved from rural areas into urban areas and began building their own schools, restaurants, and churches (DeGruy, 2017; Jim crow laws, 2015). During this shift in law, Black Americans continued to endure inhumane treatment by White Americans. Lynchings became frequent as just one method of serving justice for crimes, such as being literate or looking at a White woman, that were not formally adjudicated (DeGruy, 2017). Although the laws applied to all, it was difficult for Black men and women to find justice for the atrocities they faced.

Black Women in the Jim Crow Era

The "weapon of terror" (Roberts, 1997, p. 29) utilized to maintain dominance over enslaved Black women maintained its use throughout Jim Crow (Thompson-Miller & Picca, 2017). Specifically, Black women continued to experience sexual abuse by White men who used "rape to affirm white dominance or superiority" (King, 2014, p. 184). To further understand experiences such as these, Thompson-Miller and Picca (2017) interviewed 92 African Americans, 62 of which were women, who were raised in the Jim Crow south. The researchers noted prevalent themes including the normalization of assaults against Black women, the defense

against and avoidance of Whites, and the debated morality of Black women as their virtue was forcibly taken. The authors discuss the socialization children of the Jim Crow received as reminiscent of PTSD symptoms and behaviors such as avoidance, hyperarousal, and shame (Thompson-Miller & Picca, 2017). With this, it is speculated that many Black individuals, and particularly women, maintained a hypervigilant fear of White Americans.

In addition to physical and sexual attacks from varying aggressors, the mothering practices of Black women were also attacked as they were seen inferior to the standard practices outlined and perpetuated by White culture (Edmonds-Cady, 2017). Specifically, acceptable motherhood depicted a woman staying home to rear the children while the father worked (Collins, 1987). However, this oftentimes was not the reality of Black motherhood which often necessitated employment. As such, the right to be a mother was often taken away from women through sterilization programs aimed toward impoverished Black women (Edmonds-Cady, 2017). Additionally, Margaret Sanger of Planned Parenthood developed the Negro Project, a program presented to Black women as a potential solution to infant and mother mortality as well as poverty (Johnson, 1943). However, this birth control program created by White women for Black women was predicated on a report entitled, "Birth Control for the Negro," by Hazel Moore in 1937. Moore's (1937) report discussed the results of a project in Virginia and concluded with the notion that Black women were ignorant about birth control and controlled by religious superstition. As such, the Negro Project promoted an educational program on child spacing which was perceived as another way the dominant culture tried to control Black motherhood (Edmonds-Cady, 2017).

The New Jim Crow

Unfortunately, the impact of the Jim Crow era is still felt amongst the Black community and greater American society (DeGruy, 2017; Winters, 2020). In fact, Alexander (2011) discusses the current system of mass incarceration as a redesigned racial caste system identical to the Jim Crow era. Outlining the civil liberties taken away from convicted felons, Alexander notes that "old forms of discrimination - employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, and exclusion from jury service - are suddenly legal" (p. 8). The author makes a salient point regarding the similarity between mass incarceration and the Jim Crow era. In fact, a form of mass incarceration, convict leasing, also occurred in the Jim Crow era.

Prior to mass incarceration, and immediately following the Emancipation Proclamation, Black Codes were implemented and authorities were given ample reason and opportunity to imprison Black Americans (Black Codes, 2015). Once imprisoned, Black Americans were subjected to the convict leasing system which permitted the leasing of prisoners to private owners to work on plantations, construct railroads or mine coals (Pope, 2019). The work and working conditions these prisoners experienced, whether they were convicted of murder or a simple theft, were akin to slavery, being so grueling that about a quarter of leased convicts died (Butterfield, 1995). While there were Slave Codes that instructed overseers to avoid incapacitating the slaves (i.e., overseers can do what they see fit to slaves as long as the slaves can continue to work; Pope, 2019), there were no rules on how to treat leased convicts. As such, and because the prisoners were not the lessee's property, if one died, they were able to simply get another one (Alexander, 2011).

Although the Punishment Clause within the Thirteenth Amendment stated that slavery was prohibited, the quote "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been

duly convicted" (CONG, 1864) was utilized as justification for the convict leasing system and thus provided a loophole back to African slavery (DeGruy, 2017; Pope, 2019). More specifically, the convict leasing system provided regions of the United States, namely the South, a solution to the large number of freed Blacks, recent loss of cheap labor for plantation owners, and lack of funding to build and maintain prisons for Black individuals who committed crimes (DeGruy, 2017). Although Black individuals were now "free," many of them ended up back in slavery after being convicted of a crime by a system comprised of individuals who did not believe they were a whole person. It can be speculated that the psychological toll of this system was vast. One can imagine that Blacks who found themselves as convicts felt a compounded defeat, having gained freedom and quickly losing it. This is reminiscent of the hopelessness many Black individuals may experience today; the feeling that no matter what they do, they will still fail. And for some this may very well may be the case.

Although prisoners are no longer working on plantations and in mines, the American prison system continues to adversely impact the Black community. Specifically, while Black individuals comprised approximately 12% of the United States population in 2018, they made up 33% of the population in correctional facilities (Gramlich, 2020). Furthermore, in 2019 the imprisonment rate for Black men was 5.7 times that of White men and the rate for Black women was 1.7 times the rate of White women (Carson, 2020). Recognizing the disproportionate number of marginalized individuals represented in the penal system, Garland (2001) discussed mass incarceration in reference to the increasing rates of incarceration in the United States. According to Garland (2001) these high rates disproportionately impact marginalized communities to the extent that incarceration becomes a normal part of their family life cycle. With this, and because Black men are disproportionately represented in the prison population

(Petit & Gutierrez, 2018), it is understood that the family life cycle may also include single mothers and children who experience the impact of an incarcerated parent.

Children with an incarcerated father experience an increase in aggression, delinquency, anxiety and depression (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011). Furthermore, if a child's father has been incarcerated, they are more likely to experience poverty (Sykes and Pettit, 2014) and have a 94 to 97 percent chance of experiencing homelessness (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2013). The increase in behavior and economic struggle is understood as a parent or spouse who goes to prison leaves their partner to maintain the financial, mental, and emotional needs of the family on their own (Pettit & Gutierrez, 2018). This can often lead families into distressing situations that can also impact future generations (Harris, 2016). Once released, the distress is not resolved as former incarcerated individuals have difficulty reintegrating into society and experience economic and social hardships that impede their ability to support and engage in healthy relationships with their families (Geller, 2013). With the high rate of Black incarcerated individuals, it is expected that Black families experience these difficulties at disproportionate rates. It is evident that the practice of breaking apart the Black family and leaving the Black woman to bear the entire weight of the family's wellbeing was not unique to the slavery era.

Intergenerational Trauma

Investigation into the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma has focused on Holocaust survivors and their offspring (Milner, et al., 2010). Researchers recognized the emotional difficulties children of Holocaust survivors were experiencing (Connolly, 2011) and thus sought to understand this phenomenon which Milner et al. (2010) described as the witnessing of the effects of a trauma that is continually renewed throughout generations. The function of intergenerational trauma, intergenerational transmission, is the process of a child learning how to

engage with the world around them from their parents' behaviors (Bowers & Yehuda, 2016). Thus, the intergenerational transmission of trauma can be understood as the impact a parents' psychological distress and maladaptive behaviors has on the formation of healthy parent-child attachments (Phipps & Degges-White, 2014).

In recent years, researchers have investigated the process of intergenerational transmission to increase the understanding of intergenerational trauma. Felsen (1998) reviewed early empirical findings of controlled studies examining intergenerational transmission amongst Holocaust survivors. The author begins by discussing Sigal's (1973) conceptualization of transgenerational transmission as parents' display of "distorted capacities." Felsen moves on to discuss researchers' attempt to understand the degree of parental traumatization by categorizing the type of experience a Holocaust survivor had (i.e., whether they were in concentration camps, labor camps, in hiding, etc.). Some researchers found that those in hiding experienced the most significant trauma (Kanter, 1970; Klein et al., 1963), others concluded that those in concentration camps had the most severe experience (Sigal & Weignfeld, 1989), while researchers such as Alexandrowicz (1973) and Winik (1968) found no distinct differences in trauma severity across categories. This analysis led Felsen (1998) to conclude that the impact of traumatic events and how said impact is transmitted generationally is not necessarily determined by the category or severity of the traumatic experience. Instead, according to Klein et al. (1963), specific oppressive circumstances including "destruction of family, slavery and isolation, emotional and social deprivation, chronic frustration, humiliation, insecurity, fear of death, disregard of personality, hunger, sleep deprivation, physical traumatization, and infectious diseases" (Felsen, 1998, p. 45) more accurately measure the degree of parental traumatization. Furthermore, researchers have discussed other important factors of parental traumatization including: the age of the traumatic

experience with adolescence identified as the most influential age of trauma (i.e., adolescence; Danto, 1968; Fink, 1968; Grubrich-Simitis, 1981; Segall, 1974); children's perceptions of parental trauma (Blumenthal, 1981; Felsen, 1998; Lichtman, 1983); whether both parents have experienced trauma (Karr, 1973; Sigal et al., 1973); and the gender of the traumatized parent with mothers identified as the most influential parent (Karr, 1973; Keller, 1988; Lichtman, 1984; Schulman, 1987). After his extensive review of early literature, Felsen (1998) concluded that the empirical investigations that occurred between 1973 and 1998 displayed a pattern of "greater difficulties around the process and outcomes of separation-individuation, a greater proneness to anxiety, depressive experiences, and psychosomatic complaints, and difficulties in the expression of aggressive impulses and assertive behavior" (p. 62 - 63).

Presently, researchers are continuing inquiry into the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma. For example, Fitzgerald et al. (2020) utilized the Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN; Runyan et al., 1998) data set to investigate the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Specifically, the authors examined the relationship between maternal trauma and relationship quality, harsh parenting, and children's mental health and behavioral concerns. Participants included 361 mothers involved in the Child Welfare System of which 57.4% possessed marginalized identities, 47.6% made less than $10,000 a year, and 46.5% experienced 4 or more traumas. The researchers conducted a path analysis to test the relationship between the variables and confirmatory factor analysis to confirm their model for relationship quality.

Fitzgerald et al. (2020) found that negative relationship quality mediated the relationship between maternal trauma and children's mental health. Furthermore, maternal trauma was positively correlated with negative couple relationship quality and negative couple relationship

quality was longitudinally associated with children's mental health. Additionally, harsh parenting, which was associated with income, race, and educational level, significantly correlated with children's mental health, aggressive behavior, and positive and negative relationship quality. However, harsh parenting was not associated with maternal trauma. Although Fitzgerald et al. (2020) were unable to prove all of their hypotheses, the use of a systems perspective to examine maternal trauma's impact on family relationships provided a novel approach to investigating intergenerational transmission of trauma. Specifically, from a Family Systems Theory perspective, the finding that harsh parenting (i.e., the behaviors and possible coping mechanisms of mothers) was correlated with children's mental health (i.e., the unhealthy patterns adopted as a possible result of harsh parenting) can easily be understood as a function of multigenerational emotional processes as explained by Bowen (Ballard et al., 2016; Nichols, 2012). With this, researchers and clinicians can conceptualize the childrens' behavior as a reaction to a systemic issue rather than a pathological concern. This is especially salient for communities of color, which were the majority demographic represented in this study, as the behaviors of children from marginalized identities are often pathologized (e.g., frequent diagnosis of oppositional defiant disorder in young Black males; Grimmett et al., 2016).

Additionally, in her study examining the coping mechanisms of Black mothers and daughters, Hall (2018) utilized the mother daughter relationship to further understanding of the intergenerational transmission of stress and coping practices within the Black family. Hall (2018) interviewed 168 Black mothers and daughters inquiring about their relationship with each other, communication habits throughout the relationship, and the lessons about stress and coping they learned from their mothers. Interviews were conducted in mother-daughter dyads or mother/daughter/granddaughter triads between 2014 and 2016. To analyze the transcribed

interviews, the researcher utilized a grounded theory approach and discovered three themes each encompassing four subcategories.

The first theme, dimensions of stress, outlined the various areas and roles (i.e., work, family, time demands, and finances) in life that the participants manage as Black women. The second theme, stressors, revealed the socioeconomic and political difficulties (i.e., racism, colorism, sexism, and physical and mental health problems) that impact the lives of African American women. Lastly, Hall (2018) illuminated the coping strategies participants identified using to manage daily stressors which include social support, religion or spirituality, self-care, and professional help. In discussing the themes that emerged, Hall (2018) noted that Black mothers are tasked with preparing their daughters how to cope with the stress of oppressive structures, and have done so effectively through intergenerational dialogue. Hall (2018) concluded, however, that Black women continue to struggle with the particular stressors of racism and sexism despite the lessons learned from their mothers. Perhaps, if Hall (2018) applied Family Systems Theory to the findings the author could have conceptualized this continued struggle as the transmission of family patterns (Ballard et al., 2016) that transcend the intergenerational dialogue. Despite this, and although the results of Hall's (2018) study are not generalizable, they provide initial insight into the intergenerational processes between African American mothers and daughters.

In the same book of work Felsen provided a meta analysis of empirical investigations into intergenerational transmission, Cross (1998) discussed the impact slavery can have on the psychological functioning of Black Americans. The author first discusses the horrific memories his father recounted that "lie just below the surface of [his] father's worldview," (Cross, 1998, 388) contributing to his father's "racial anxiety" (Cross, 1998, p. 387). Cross (1998) goes on to

explain how he himself experienced a similar, but different, anxiety as he questioned whether his educational conquests would allow colleagues and potential employers to see past his race. The author's prerequisite recollection of the impact of racism leads to his explanation of the psychological shields the Black community has built to adapt to racist ideals perpetuated from the slavery era. While arguing that slavery does not have a direct impact on the current Black community, Cross outlines the opportunities America missed to right the wrongs of slavery and provide Black American's equitable resources to prosper. In other words, after slavery, the country systematically and deliberately contributed to the underdevelopment of the Black community (Anderson, 1988; Cross, 1998). Although the author does not directly discuss these mechanisms of oppression as multigenerational traumas, he provides compelling evidence of the multigenerational mind-set of American society (i.e., racism) that required the Black community to adopt a multigenerational protection-acculturation mindset. According to Cross (1998) this mindset "protects or shields against racism, provides a sense of group affiliation, and establishes links to the larger, nonblack or multicultural world within which most blacks are located" (p. 399). Family Systems Theory provides a suitable reasoning for this multigenerational protective mindset, which can be viewed as interconnected emotional patterns that families have transmitted throughout generations for survival (Ballard et al., 2016; Nichols, 2012).

Although Cross (1998) provided a compelling foundation from which researchers can begin to investigate the transmission of trauma within the Black community, there is very little research on intergenerational trauma within Black families (Watson et al., 2020). Recognizing this gap in the research, Leary (2001) introduced the phenomenon of *post-traumatic slave syndrome* (PTSS) as the intergenerational traumatic effect of slavery on the African American community.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

While considering the impact of slavery on the violence of African American male youth violence, Leary (2001) posited that African Americans continue to experience the traumatic injuries of racism and oppression as a direct result of slavery and the dissolution of the African culture. Symptoms of this transmission of trauma (i.e., PTSS), are similar to those of PTSD (e.g., angry outbursts, difficulty concentrating, and hypervigilance; Hardy, 2013). However, the theory of PTSS differs from PTSD due to its focus on the impact of perpetuated racism and oppression. With this, it is speculated that survivors of slavery endured and displayed these PTSD-like symptoms which were then passed down through generations (Degruy, 2017; Leary, 2001). As such, and due to the continued unjust treatment of the Black community, it is suspected that PTSD-like symptoms and behaviors are reinforced and thus adopted as cultural norms (DeGruy, 2017). DeGruy's (2017) emphasis on the impact of perpetuated racism that began during the slavery era echoes Cross' (1998) conceptualization of multigenerational mindset of Black Americans and the American society, thus aligning with multigenerational emotional process emphasized within Family Systems Theory (Nichols, 2012).

Specifically, the theory of PTSS posits that there is a deleterious effect on individuals who simultaneously experience multigenerational trauma from centuries of slavery and current institutionalized racism and oppression (DeGruy, 2017). As such, these individuals have patterns of thoughts (i.e., belief they do not have equal access to resources) and beliefs that impact their daily functioning and interaction with the world around them. DeGruy (2017) outlines specific patterns of behavior that negatively impact those who suffer from PTSS: vacant esteem (little to no self-worth which is perpetuated by societal beliefs); ever-present anger (i.e., perpetual underlying anger as a result of blocked goals and undermined dreams); and racist socialization

(i.e., "adoption of the slave masters' value system; Degruy, 2017, p.116). Despite the external and internal oppression PTSS presents, DeGruy (2017) postulates that healing is possible. Just as present-day African Americans are a product of intergenerational trauma, so too must healing take place over generations. The author notes the African family is what was broken and thus the African American family is what needs healing and the vessel through which healing can occur. Specifically, DeGruy (2017) asserts that those who suffer from PTSS can heal by combatting learned helplessness with learned self-efficacy, past injuries by creating healthy habits, vacant self esteem by increasing self-esteem, racist socialization with racial socialization, negative perpetuated behaviors by modeling healthy behaviors for children, silence by telling one's' story.

Degruy's (2017) theory of PTSS provides insight into the specific nature of intergenerational trauma within the Black community and family. However, the conceptualization and understanding of intergenerational trauma within the Black family is still in its infancy. Thus, further research is needed to validate PTSS theory and its treatment process.

The Black Family and Black Women

The history of the Black family in America began with the separation of African families as they were individually sold into slavery (Iliffe, 2017). For the slave owner, there was no meaning to the African family except when it provided economic advantage (i.e., produce more slaves; Clarke, 1971). Furthermore, the tactic of removing the social support of family members mitigated the risks of opposition for the slave-master (Davis, 1981) and as such deliberate efforts were made to reverse and upend African familial structures (Lynch, 2014).

The Black Family

Prior to slavery, African families remained close to one another for support, which foreshadows the interconnectedness of the Black family (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011). This

often extended beyond the nuclear family making extended family members equally important sources of strength and prosperity. The enslavement and subsequent separation of African families, however, severely harmed the family structure from which the African people thrived (Bernal et al., 2015). From this, women became the leaders of families as the Black man, who was deemed dangerous and a threat to the slave owner, was either separated from his family or physically and mentally broken down. By breaking down the Black man (i.e., leader and strength of the Black family), it was believed that Black women and children would be easily controlled (Lynch, 2014). Furthermore, as generations progressed, mothers would teach their children that the way to survive is to fall in line with the oppressor (Wilkins et al., 2013). Specifically, mothers had to actively silence, oftentimes via physical punishment, their sons' appropriate rage toward slave owners for fear of an even worse fate served by the slave owner themselves (Wilkens et al., 2013). As a result, men learned to submit to oppressive systems and women became the hypervigilant female leader of the family (i.e., matriarchs) who ensured the safety of their children. This was the making of the Black family in America.

Systemic oppression continues to impact the Black family in significant ways. First, in addition to teaching their children how to be successful citizens of the world, Black caretakers must also teach their children how to navigate the oppressive structures they will inevitably face (Wilkins, 2013). Black children, and specifically Black males, are often taught not to challenge oppressive systems which according to Wilkins (2013) impacts "themes of powerlessness, family organization, and loss" (p. 19). This echoes the task of a mother during the slavery era; ensuring that children not aggress toward slave masters to keep them safe (DeGruy, 2017).

Additionally, the fear of losing a child is speculated to both contribute to lack of praise and promotion of family loyalty. Specifically, DeGruy Leary (2005) speculates that because

enslaved children were taken from their parents when they came of age, Black parents now have an innate fear of loss that makes it difficult for them to praise their children. Watson (1998) had a different perspective as he examined the loss of family during the slave trade and its implications for the collectivist culture seen within present day African American families.

An example of these oppressive circumstances is the exorbitant rate in which Black men and women are incarcerated in comparison to their racial counterparts (Petit & Gutierrez, 2018). When a Black individual is incarcerated, it is likely they are being taken away from their family. Regardless of how present the parent is in a child's life, their incarceration still impacts the family system. Specifically, Murray et al. (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of 40 empirical investigations of the impact of parental incarceration on children. The researchers concluded that there has been strong evidence to suggest that parental incarceration is associated with antisocial behavior later in life, but not mental health concerns (Murray et al., 2012). Alternatively, Dallaire et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative inquiry into the experiences of children who have a mother currently incarcerated. The sample, which was 61.7% African American and 29.8% Caucasian, comprised 151 children, 117 incarcerated mothers, and 118 caregivers. The researchers found that when controlling for general environmental risks, children were at greater risk for internalizing and externalizing behaviors in relation to their mother's incarceration (Dallaire et al., 2015). From these investigations and the rate of Black individuals incarcerated, it can be inferred that many Black children are at high risk for internalizing, externalizing, and antisocial behaviors. Left unaddressed, these children go on to raise their own children who are now learning about the world through the eyes of a parent who never healed from the separation from their parent; and so the cycle continues.

Despite the systemic oppression the Black family has faced since their arrival to the United States, scholars recognize the resilience of Black families. Billingsley (1968) recognized the collectivistic nature of African American families and noted that they often utilize bonds between each other and extended support systems to cope. Hill (1971) emphasized the strong social support within the Black family that has resulted in unofficial adoption networks. Furthermore, the author identified five strengths of the African American family: an ability to adapt family roles (i.e., resilience and creativity in meeting the needs of the family), robust kinship (i.e., strong and unique bonds with nuclear and extended family), strong work orientation (i.e., highly valuing hard work), strong achievement orientation (i.e., a drive to do and better which includes educational aspirations) , and strong religious affiliation (i.e., using religion, spirituality, or faith as a moral guide in resolving problems; Bell-Tolliver et al., 2009). Wilkins et al. (2013) recognize these attributes as residual effects of slavery that showcase the immense resilience of the African American family. A significant characteristic of this resilience, as Hill (1971) pointed out, is a strong spiritual belief system.

The Role of the Black Woman

Due to the submission tactics employed by slave owners and masters, the role of the African woman changed, in that, she became the hypervigilant leader of the family while simultaneously having her body degraded by slave masters and African men (Wilkens et al., 2013). Similar patterns of behavior and violence continued throughout the Jim Crow era; a time in which many Black bodies were leased to property owners for work and desecrated in various ways (Pope, 2019). As such, it can be presumed the roles Black women have possessed throughout these periods of time have been shaped by slavery and subsequent oppressive circumstances. For example, now approximately 45 % of Black families are headed by women

with no present male partner (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Thus, in nearly half of Black American families, the Black woman has the only roll which includes the responsibilities of caretaker and provider.

Matriarch

As discussed in Daniel Patrick Moynihan's (1965) report on the Negro family, matriarchy refers to the reversed roles men and women have in Black families. Specifically, Black women have uncharacteristically more power in Black families and are seen as dominant in comparison to White women in White families. The Moynihan report (1965) depicted this "reversed" family structure as a pathological response to the difficulty Black men had obtaining employment. Today, matriarchal images continue to depict a domineering Black woman who has too much power and makes Black men leave the family (Dixon, 2017). The result of this matriarchy is the destruction of the Black family and a cyclical process of undermining Black men and creating more matriarchal family structures (Brito, 2013; Dixon, 2017).

However, many scholars have spoken against matriarchy as a myth amongst the African American community. This aligns with Dietrich's (1975) investigation into the validity of the Black matriarchal family as the researcher found that low SES married Black couples shared decision-making responsibilities. With this, though, the researcher noted that wives had more decision-making power than husbands in four out of five domains and typically carried out the agreed upon decision. Dietrich's (1975) findings highlight the power Black women have in the family system which the patriarchal system that was forced upon them during slavery and the subsequent oppressive sociopolitical climate does not give room for. Davis (1981) points out that the term matriarchy includes an assumption of power that enslaved women could not have. Thus, the matriarchal system inhabited by the African community could not be upheld in slavery

conditions. However, Dixon (2017) notes that African slaves were able to retain strong cultural values around family and marriage, allowing many African traditions to remain intact despite not looking exactly as they did previously.

From an anthropological viewpoint, and recognizing matriarchies exist in many cultures, Goettner-Abendroth (2012) discussed recurrent characteristics of matriarchal societies which include:

(1) a family lineage that follows the mother's line as she heads the family

(2) inheritance, identity, politics, and wealth determined by the matriarch

(3) women determine the economy of the community

(4) men engage with outside communities on behalf of the matriarch

(5) women's sexuality is attended to as they are reproductive agents and

(6) marriage is not institutionalized and women can choose their husband

(7) women head the spirituality of the community

(8) the maternal line is salient to the children

(9) roles of men and women are complementary not hierarchical

(10) although clan chiefs are male, women select them

Dipio (2019) utilized Goettner-Abendroth's (2012) theory of matriarchy as well as African proverbs to trace and provide evidence of African matriarchal communities. The author extrapolated categories of womanhood which include the wife, motherhood, mother as homemaker, symbolic traces of matriarchy in cultures, transcendent/sacred nature of mother, and grandmother and mother-in-law. Within each category, Dipio (2019) relates African proverbs, that symbolize values of the African culture, to matriarchal characteristics. Dipio (2019) concludes that women are held in high esteem in African culture and thus can be considered

patriarchs of their clans. However, this is not in opposition to the husband or father as he has an equally important role outside of the home.

Motherhood

Discussed by Collins (2000) as the transmission of cultural values to children, motherhood holds a special significance for Black women and communities (Mitchem, 2002). However, this significance has been overshadowed by White hegemonic ideals that suggest Black women can not be adequate mothers (Solinger, 1999). During the slavery era, Black motherhood was seen as a mere means of economic gain for slave owners (Iliffe, 2017). Additionally, Black women have been subjected to the ideals, theories, and expectations of motherhood according to the White or male culture (Mitchem, 2002; Wiedmer et al., 2006). So, while Black women's bodies and beings were being degraded (Thompson-Miller & Picca, 2017), they were given specific messages about their roles as mothers or caretakers and thus as Black women. For example, the stereotype of "mammy" reduced Black women to the role of the faithful, domestic servant of White families and children (Collins, 1987; 2000). As Black women persevered through such narratives and fulfilled the role of "transmitters of culture" within their communities (Collins, 1987), they continued to be attacked with White hegemonic messages that suggest they are not good mothers such as the Moynihan report (1965). Specifically, Moynihan (1965) attacks the matriarchal organization of the Black community, suggesting that Black women are both too weak and too powerful to maintain the appropriate familial structure of a male leader in the home.

However, as noted by Collins (1987), motherhood "can be invoked by Black women as a symbol of power" (p. 6). As communal beings, Black women are not only heads of the house, but mothers to the entire community (Mitchem, 2002). Within the African American community

motherhood signifies the “creation of black identities and communities” (Mitchem, 2002, p. 51). Bloodmothers and othermothers (i.e., other women in the community who serve as mother figures) have utilized the church to move away from the oppressive pressures of slavery and ensure the survival of the Black community, of which has been largely attributed to Black women who led many slaves to freedom (Mitchem, 2002). More specifically, othermothers are seen as mothers of the community who strive to uplift the entire community so all can be successful (Collins, 1987). Despite, or in spite of, their crucial role as mothers of the Black community, Black women are demonized for occupying a role in accordance with their culture and intersecting identities rather than in accordance with views of the dominant culture (Brito, 2013; Dixon, 2017). What is often forgotten is the mental (i.e., impact of gendered racism; Essed, 1991) and physical (i.e., diminished resources or risk of sexual violence; Geyton et al., 2020) environment she endures while raising her community.

In conclusion, a present day understanding of the Black matriarch and motherhood is influenced by various factors including traditional African culture and the oppression of the African American community. What is evident, however, is the necessity and commonality of Black women leading households and communities and the connection of this reality to African culture. Although slavery violated the traditions of African people and is the foundation of the continued oppressive structures facing Black women in American, Black women can be empowered by the strength suggested by motherhood and the matriarch archetype. However, while focusing on the survival of the community, it is possible that Black women have overcompensated for their losses and now perpetuate (i.e., reinforce and transmit through generations) the Strong Black Woman stereotype that is also often ascribed to Black women.

Strong Black Woman

The phenomenon of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) archetype is rooted in depictions of the African slave woman who, to justify her mistreatment, was seen as “innately strong” (Geyton et al., 2020). With this strength, she was also independent, resilient, a caretaker, and invulnerable. More specifically, the SBW archetype depicts a Black woman who suppresses the weakness of emotion in order to care for others and succeed (Abrams et al., 2014; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). Today, Black women have adopted this schema as a part of their identity that informs their behaviors and allows them to face adversity (Geyton et al., 2020). To further understand how Black women conceptualize the SBW schema, Abrams et al. (2014) conducted focus groups with 44 Black women. The researchers discovered four themes that described the SBW schema: (a) Embodies and Displays Multiple Forms of Strength (i.e., strength is a core value that encompasses independence, resilience, and matriarchal leadership), (b) Possesses Self/Ethnic Pride in Spite of Intersectional Oppression (i.e., positive self-concept and confidence in Blackness and womanhood), (c) Embraces Being Every Woman (i.e., having multiple roles that can require sacrificing self to care for others), and (d) Anchored by Religion/Spirituality (i.e., the mechanism from which the SBW perseveres and is empowered).

Furthermore, Nelson et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative inquiry to understand how Black women perceived the SBW archetype. Through semi structured interviews of 30 Black American women, the researchers extrapolated themes related to women’s conceptualization and identification with the SBW schema. The participants conceptualized the SBW as independent, taking care of family and others, hardworking and high achieving, overcoming adversity, and emotionally contained. Additionally, 77% of the participants identified with the SBW role and 23% rejected the role. As such, the themes related to identification with the SBW schema are as

follows: rejecting, “I don’t like labels”; ambivalent, “I do and I don’t”; and appropriation “By my definition.” The researchers also noted contextual factors that influenced how participants conceptualized and internalized the SBW schema including their relationship with their mothers and sociodemographic factors (i.e., Caribbean American women were more likely to scrutinize the SBW schema than African American women). From this study, it is understood that the SBW schema still has an impact on Black women. Whether they are rejecting, identifying with, or redefining the narrative, all participants were aware of this predetermined image of Black women described as the SBW. As Black women re-author this narrative, however, conflict between enacting the stereotype or not may lead to isolation from other Black women, resentment, and psychological distress (Nelson et al., 2016).

The aforementioned depictions of Black women are just two stereotypes that are imposed on Black women that produce significant stressors on their own. Black women have also been labeled angry, jezebel, and mammy to name a few (Geyton et al., 2020). These stereotypes can be considered an intergenerational trauma that have been perpetuated by the Black community and the larger society, contributing to the oppression of the Black woman. However, as Nelson et al. (2016) found, Black women are challenging these roles given to them by majority cultures and, in alignment with womanist theology ideals, are redefining their identities (Mitchem, 2002). However, with little voice in society, the mental health of Black women must be examined.

Significance of Religion, Spirituality, and the Black Church

Historically, Black communities, and specifically Black women, have utilized religion and the church community to cope with the impact of trauma, including discrimination, racial injustice, and oppression (Blakey, 2016; Dill, 2017; Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Nguyen, 2018). Despite efforts by slave owners to keep slaves from engaging in religious and spiritual

practices, African slaves found ways to attend "hush hollows" (i.e., secret prayer meetings; Dill, 2017; Jones, 1989) and utilized their spiritual beliefs to persevere through the atrocities they endured. During this time, African religious traditions combined with the Christian faith provided by slave owners (Humphrey et al., 2008). Becoming a means to freedom from oppression the churches they secretly formed also served as their sources of mental health treatment (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Frame & Williams, 1996; Iliffe, 2017). Furthermore, they often saw themselves in biblical stories, identifying with the oppression bible characters, and even Jesus, endured (Avent & Cashwell, 2015). As such, they maintained a belief that spirituality is pervasive in every aspect of life which served as a foundation for spirituality to be used as a way to free oneself from injustice. While this principle may have begun during the slavery era, the sentiment has transcended generations as the Black community continues to endure racism and systemic oppression.

In fact, the institution of the church has become an integral part of the Black community, being commonly referred to as "the Black church" (Plunkett, 2014). Serving as a center for social, economic, and political information and support (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011; McRae et al., 1999; Mitchem, 2002), the Black church has empowered Black communities (Moore, 1991; Taylor & Chatters, 1989) and served as a conduit of cultural transmission (Mitchem, 2002). As a safe haven from an oppressive society, the Black church has been a communal forum for social change and liberation (Douglas & Hopson 2000; 2001). James Cone, a prominent theological figure, has dedicated much of his work to explicating this connection between the Black church and liberation, outlining Black theology as a liberation theology (Cone, 2010). In this, Cone (2010) has described Black theology as:

> "...a theology of liberation because it is a theology which arises from an identification with the oppressed blacks of America, seeking to interpret the gospel of Jesus in the light

> of the black condition. It believes that the liberation of the black community is God's liberation" (p. 5)

Cone's (2010) theological view emphasizes the Black community's identification with oppressed figures in the bible as well as their ability to overcome strife as equal to the "power to break the chains of oppression" (p. 5) that Black individuals possess.

With this notion, the Black church has served as the purveyor of religious thought surrounding the strength or identity of Black communities and mental health. Based on biblical principles, churchgoers come to believe that the healing of one's suffering is God's divine intervention in their lives (Plunkett, 2014). Specifically, passages such as Matthew 17:15-17 and Mark 9:17-29 depict Jesus healing a demon-possessed boy who experienced seizures and blindness. Scriptures such as these are ones in which the Black church utilizes as beacons of hope (Plunkett, 2014) as well as evidence that all that is needed to heal suffering is God (Cook & Wiley, 2000). Scriptures such as these may be ones that pastors utilize to provide church members guidance during difficult times (Hankerson et al., 2013) as it is common for church members to seek religious support for a multitude of concerns (Avent er al., 2015).

As the Black community continues to experience racial oppression on a daily basis, they also weave spirituality into their daily lives to combat oppressive circumstances (Frame & Williams, 1996). Furthermore, the Black community has utilized spirituality as a protective factor against negative psychosocial factors. For example, because spirituality can be utilized as a moral compass and guide to understanding daily experiences, Black Americans have utilized this connection to a higher being to resist engaging in risky behaviors such as substance abuse (Frame & Williams, 1996). In understanding the importance of spirituality and the church in Black history, it stands to reason that the cultural norm of leaning on spiritual beliefs to persevere through difficulties is maintained.

Specifically, researchers have discussed Black women's use of religion and spirituality as integral coping strategies. In their study examining intergenerational stress and coping amongst Black women, Hall (2018) found that over half of their participants identified religion and/or spirituality as a coping strategy when managing life stressors such as work demands, family demands, and gendered racism. Furthermore, Avent Harris et al. (2019) discuss Christian African American Women's preference to seek mental health support from their religious community. The researchers noted the stigma about mental health their participants held as well as the positive and negative spiritual coping strategies participants employed. These negative coping strategies allude to a spiritual struggle between believing full reliance on God is enough to persevere through difficulties and feeling spiritually isolated or betrayed. This notion is indicative of spiritual injury which has primarily been discussed amongst military and veteran populations as a spiritual crisis post traumatic event that leads one to question or completely negate their spiritual beliefs (Battles et al., 2019; Berg, 2011). A maladaptive coping strategy that has been discussed specifically within the Black community, however, is spiritual bypass. Avent Harris (2021) discusses the connection between the Black Superwoman narrative, akin to the SBW narrative, and spiritual bypass. Spiritual bypass has been discussed as the utilization of spiritual beliefs to avoid or bypass psychological distress (Welwood, 1984, 2000). So, while religious and spiritual beliefs are often utilized amongst Black women to cope with oppression, it is noted that women who endorse the SBW narrative are susceptible to spiritual bypass due to their nature to suppress their psychological concerns in order to care for the community (Avent Harris, 2021).

Currently, 97% of Black Americans believe in God or a higher power (Mohamed et al., 2021). While a vast majority of these individuals identify as Protestant (66%), others identify as

Catholic (6%), other Christian faiths (3%), non-Christian faiths (3%) or are not affiliated with any particular religion at all (21%; Mohamed et al., 2021). Of those who do not identify with a religious affiliation, 3% identify as agnostic or atheist while 18% simply do not ascribe to a religion. Furthermore, millennials and Generation Z are less likely to be affiliated with a particular religion, however still maintain a belief in a higher power (Mohamed et al., 2021). More specifically, 55% of millennials, those born between 1980 and 1995, identify as Protestant and 33% are not affiliated with a religion. Similarly, 52% of Generation Z, those born after 1996, identify at Protestant while 28% are not affiliated with a particular religion. In comparison, 76% of Baby Boomers are Protestant as compared to 11% who are not affiliated with a religion. These statistics highlight the declining trend in religious affiliation amongst Black Americans (Mohamed et al., 2021). While the majority of younger generations such as millennials and Generation Z identify as Protestant, the gap between religious affiliation and non-religious affiliation is closing. It should be noted, however, that the increase in this gap does not indicate an increase in Black Americans who are not spiritual. As such, and to recognize the religious and spiritual diversity of the Black community, the present research study utilizes the identity of spiritual, rather than religious or any particular religious affiliation.

Mental Health of Black Women

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA; 2015), Black Americans experience depression at a rate of 5.4 percent, which was the same rate reported for Hispanic Americans, but lower than White Americans (7.9%) and higher than Asain Americans (4.4%). Similarly, Black adults experience anxiety at a rate of 5.88 percent compared to White adults (7.06%), and Hispanic adults (6.29%) (Goodwin et al., 2020). However, Families USA reports that Black individuals are 20% more likely to report

psychological distress and Black adolescents are 61% more likely to attempt suicide due to depression (2019; Winters, 2020). With these discrepant statistics, it is apparent that the percentage of the Black community that are reporting their mental health status are experiencing a significant amount of distress but may be identifying it differently, highlighting the miscommunication between the Black community and mental health standards and diagnoses. Researchers posit that the Black community experiences a high amount of mental distress due to the systemic issues they face (Halloran, 2019). In particular, Black Americans manage economic, social, educational, and health disparities that are speculated to be due to marginalization and oppression (Halloran, 2019). These oppressive systems have been organized to impede the fair treatment of marginalized individuals such as the Black community, who are marginalized due to the color of their skin (i.e. racism; Evans et al., 2016).

According to the CDC (2021) 4.7 percent of Black women, as compared to 4.8 percent of White women, experienced psychological distress in 2018 despite the increase in severe impairment due to major depression reported by SAMHSA (2020). However, researchers have discussed the chronic stressors Black women face that impact psychological functioning such as work, financial, and familial stress (Hall, 2018; Lincoln, 2019). Such stressors have negative impacts on the physical and mental health of Black women (Erving et al., 2021). For example, Black women experience intimate partner violence (IPV) at higher rates than other racial or ethnic groups which has shown to produce symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance use and suicide (Devries et al., 2014; Lacey et al., 2013; Sabri et al., 2013). In their study examining the impact of social context and intimate partner violence on the mental health of Black women, Lacey et al. (2015) noted that severe physical IPV was associated with anxiety, mood, and eating disorders as well as suicidal ideation. Additionally, the researchers found that

neighborhood stressors (i.e., drug and crime problems) were contributing factors to overall mental health disorders in Black women. Similarly, Lamis et al. (2014) surveyed 144 Black women to investigate the mediating impact of spirituality on neighborhood disorder (i.e., negative physical and social factors such as vandalism and substance use) and parenting stress. The researchers found that neighborhood disorder was associated with increased parenting stress, however, existential and religious well-being mediated their experience of stress.

Donovan et al. (2013) investigated the impact of perceived racial discrimination on depressive and anxious symptoms in Black women. In their investigation, the researchers delineated between racial microaggressions (i.e., daily covert racist exchanges) and racial macro-aggression (i.e., overt expressions of racism) as previous research only discussed the negative impact of microaggressions on Black Americans (Soloranzo et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008). The researchers surveyed 187 undergraduate students who identified as female and African American, Black African, Afro-Caribbean, or biracial. The results indicated that Black females experienced perceived racial microaggressions (96%) more often than perceived racial macroaggressions (63%), both of which contributed to depression symptoms. However, perceived racial macroaggressions were a significant contributor to depressive and anxious symptoms. The authors speculate that Black women may be accustomed to microaggressions, which primarily contribute to microaggressions, and can cope with them easier than macroaggressions. Although these results are not generalizable due to the specific sample of undergraduate students in the Southeast, it is important to note that throughout the lifespan of Black Americans, those in the 18–25 age range have the second highest rate of depression, and 9.5% of young Black adults have had serious thoughts of suicide (SAMHSA, 2018). Of 18–25-year-old Black Americans, Black females experience a higher rate of depression than males.

Thus, it is speculated that it is likely counselors will encounter college age Black women with similar experiences of racial discrimination.

Internal pressures as well as external pressures also impact the mental health of Black women. Specifically, the SBW schema can negatively impact the physical and mental health of Black women (Donovan & West, 2015; Jones et al., 2021; Watson-Singleton, 2017). For example, Donovan and West (2015) surveyed 92 Black female college students to investigate the moderating impact of the SBW schema on stress and mental health. The researchers found that moderate to high levels of SBW schema endorsement moderated the relationship between stress and depression. Additionally, Watson-Singleton (2017) found that the SBW schema was positively associated with psychological distress and negatively associated with perceived emotional support in a sample of 158 Black women. Furthermore, Jones et al. (2021) surveyed 240 Black women and found that high levels of SBW schema endorsement was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms. The researchers also noted that the coping mechanism of disengagement (i.e., distancing from the stressor) not only partially mediated the relationship between the SBW schema and depression, but also increased depressive symptoms.

The anchor of the stressors of Black women as well as their identification with the SBW archetype is the social location of Black women. Specifically, researchers posit that Black women must endure gendered racism that adds to daily life stressors (Moody & Lewis, 2019; Erving et al., 2021). Barlow (2018) even discussed gendered racism as a trauma of intersecting identities that impacts the well-being of Black women and is passed down through generations. As such, the mental health of Black women must also be discussed in the specific context of their intersecting identities.

Intersectionality

The experience of Black women is one of intersectionality in which an individuals' multiple identities (i.e., race, sex, religion, gender, etc.) contribute to the whole of their identity and worldview (Crenshaw, 1989). Black women's most seen identities are that of Black and woman and as such they endure the oppressive structures of both identities (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). Specifically, Black women are faced with racism and sexism which are pervasive throughout various aspects of an individual's life (i.e., personal, institutional and sociopolitical areas; Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). Geyton et al. (2020) discuss the intersectionality of Black women as a "dual-minority" that isolates while condemning vulnerability, voice, and visibility. Researchers posit that the psychological distress Black women experience is due in large part to this dual-minority status.

For example, Szymanski & Stewart (2010) surveyed 160 African American women to examine the connection between external and internal racism and sexism to psychological distress within this demographic. Utilizing correlational analyses, the researchers found a significant positive relationship between perceived experiences of racist and sexist events and psychological distress in African American women. Additionally, the researchers found that perceived racist events were positively correlated with perceived sexist events (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). Specifically, the more likely a Black woman is to experience racism, the more likely she is to also experience sexism. With this, her psychological distress also increases, giving evidence for the dual impact of Black women's intersecting identities.

In a similar study, Carr et al. (2014) examined the predictive validity of sexual objectification, racism, and gendered racism (i.e., oppressive experiences due to the intersection of gender and race; Collins, 1991; Essed, 1991) on depressive symptoms with 144 low-income

African American women. Furthermore, the researchers hypothesized that internalization (i.e., blaming self for oppressive experiences; Wei et al., 2010) will mediate the relationship between depressive symptoms and sexual objectification, racist events, and gendered racism. The researchers' mediation analysis showed a positive relationship between depressive symptoms and sexual objectification, racism, and gendered racism. With this, however, racism was the only oppressive experience that was a positive predictor of depressive symptoms. However, the results did show that internalization mediated the relationship between depressive symptoms and the oppressive experiences of sexual objectification and racism. From this, the researchers concluded that due to the sociopolitical status of low-income African American women, racism and sexual objectification may be the most prevalent experiences this sample can relate to depression so much so that gendered racism can not be detected (Carr et al., 2014). These results clearly indicate, however, that the mental health of low-income Black women is impacted by oppressive experiences related to their race and sex or gender.

Moody and Lewis (2019) furthered the research on the mental health impact of Black women's intersecting identities by examining the relationships between gendered racial micro-aggressions, gendered racial socialization (i.e., how Black parents teach their children to navigate racism; Peters, 1985), and traumatic stress symptoms. The researchers surveyed a sample of 228 Black/African American women and conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test their hypotheses. The results of the analysis supported the researchers' initial hypothesis of gendered racial microaggressions being positively associated with traumatic stress in Black women. Furthermore, the researchers found that Black women who experienced high levels of gendered racial microaggressions and internalized gendered racial oppression were more likely to experience traumatic stress. The researchers suggest that a negative impact of gendered racial

socialization can be internalized oppression (Moody & Lewis, 2019). With this, it can be speculated that the messages transmitted from parents to Black women can perpetuate traumatic stress, providing indirect evidence of intergenerational trauma.

It is evident that Black women experience a high level of psychological distress. Their mental health is severely impacted by a multitude of stressors including work demands, familial stressors, and gendered racism. Although only 10.3% of Black women are utilizing mental health services (SAMHSA, 2012), the evident psychological stress this population endures gives reason to review how the counseling field is addressing the mental health needs of Black women.

Approaches to Counseling Black Women

With a commitment to socially just practices, there have been efforts to identify and utilize culturally appropriate practices. This shift toward multiculturalism was propelled by Sue et al. 's (1992) call to the field and development of multicultural competencies and standards. Specifically, during their call, Sue et al. (1992) provided the field with competencies and standards that a culturally competent counselor adheres to. In response, cultural considerations have increased in training, practice, and research. The following section will discuss specifically how counseling theory and practice as well as counseling research have answered this call for Black women.

Theory guides clinical practice, and as such is an integral part of the counseling profession. With the growth of the profession has also come a shift in theoretical perspectives. Specifically, counseling theory has begun to adopt a social constructivist paradigm and postmodern approaches. Social constructionists believe that individuals make meaning of their lives based on their cultural experiences (Hansen, 2010). With this framework, it is understood that knowledge and what individuals deem as reality is socially constructed. Postmodern

approaches maintain this same ideal, emphasizing the coexistence of multiple truths (Hansen, 2010). Pushing against the preceding modern epistemology, postmodernism moves beyond individualistic Western ideals of absolute truth and the fixed self, providing room for the values of various cultures (Hansen, 2014). Moreover, counselors utilizing a postmodern approach center the relationship and recognize the client as the expert (Hansen, 2015).

For example, Walton and Oyewuwo-Gassikia (2017) proposed a strengths-based intersectional practice framework entitled "#BlackGirlMagic" to address depression in Black women. Heeding the recommendation of Copeland and Butler (2007) the authors center the cultural experience of Black women, including intersectionality, in their sociocultural framework. The #BlackGirlMagic framework aims to "(1) gives Black women the space and authority to assert their greatness; (2) allows Black women to move beyond the limitations imposed on them by systems of oppression, namely, racism, sexism, and misogyny; (3) acknowledges a more just understanding about the lived reality of Black women from a strengths-based perspective; and (4) recognizes the aspects of Black women's social identities as inextricable from one another (McClaurin-Allen, 1990)" (Walton & Oyewuwo-Gassikia, 2017). Utilizing the methods of inclusion of positive affirmation (i.e., recognizing Black women for their accomplishments), fostering and nurturing sisterhood (i.e., recognizing the importance of relationships and support amongst Black women), and self-love as practice (i.e., an ongoing practice of self appreciation and self-care), the scholars recognize the diversity, salient narratives, and specific needs of Black women. More specifically, the framework assumes that Black women are not monolithic but, nonetheless, need a framework just for them that centers their narratives.

Mbilishaka (2018) also recognized the salience of the narrative in the Black community. Specifically, the author discussed “PsychoHairapy” as a therapeutic approach that utilizes narrative interventions and centers the safe community spaces of barbershops and hair salons that Black men and women frequent. As a prevention and intervention mental health program, PsychoHairapy involves training hair care professionals in basic counseling skills and evidenced-based skills to cope with trauma as well as allowing mental health professionals to utilize salons and barbershops to hold counseling sessions and mental health educational workshops (Mbilishaka, 2018). A crucial technique utilized in PsychoHairapy is the Guided Race Autobiography (GRA) developed by Burford and Winston (2005). Created as an assessment instrument, Mbilishaka (2018) posits that the GRA can provide Black individuals opportunities to re-experience traumatic circumstances through narration in the safety of a hair salon or barbershop.

Additionally, Gomez et al. (2020) posit that the deconstruction of meta-narratives, of which may be discovered through approaches such as PsychoHairapy, can promote resilience in women of color who have experienced sexual violence. Specifically, the authors discuss the theoretical approach of Narrative Therapy (NT) to address societal trauma in women of color. As a “consciousness-raising movement” (Hoffman, 2002, p. 27) NT assists women of color in finding the voice that has been silenced as a by-product of intersectionality. Gomez et al. (2020) discuss the specific Narrative techniques of multi-storied beings, externalizing conversations, re-authoring conversations and unique outcomes, re-membering conversations, and scaffolding conversations as useful in deconstructing negative narratives and promoting resilience in women of color.

Similarly, Gomez and Gobin (2020) discuss the cultural betrayal trauma (i.e., sexual violence) Black women often experience as a result of their intersecting identities. The authors posit that as a result of their social location, Black women are more vulnerable to sexual assault and often become dis-empowered. Gomez and Gobin (2020) present additional therapeutic options when treating Black women who have experienced a cultural betrayal trauma. First, the authors posit that healing can take place in and out of the therapeutic environment through activism creative outlets (i.e., poetry, dance, music, and art), and safe online forums. Secondly, Gomez and Gobin (2020) discuss Emotion Emancipation Circles (EECs; Grills, 2013) as a community healing tool to heal cultural betrayal trauma. Specifically, EECs are "community-based self-help groups focused on emotional emancipation, healing, and wellness for Black people" (Grills, 2013, p. 279). In partnership with community leaders, creating EECs in the community that are specifically for Black women can provide a safe space for healing (Gomez & Gobin, 2020). With a similar sentiment, the authors also discuss the significant influence of the Black church. As a safe haven and support system in the Black community, collaborations between Black churches and mental health professionals can extend the reach of psychological healing. Specifically, collaborations that provide education about mental health concerns such as sexual assault can serve as a pivotal prevention and intervention strategy that attends more closely to the needs of this community (Gomez & Gobin, 2020).

Moreover, Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) has been discussed as a culturally responsive and socially just approach to counseling (Haskins & Appling, 2017; Jordan, 2001). RCT scholars recognize the relevance of cultural experiences, including oppression, in connection and disconnection (Comstock et al., 2008; Miller, 1986). With this understanding it is believed that healing occurs through growth fostering relationships which are characterized by an

increased sense of zest, increased ability and motivation to act, more accurate picture of self and others, an increased sense of worth, and an increased feeling of connection with others and motivation to make connections (Jordan, 2001). Furthermore, the relational emphasis of RCT lends itself to understanding and potentially healing trauma. For example, Blakey and Grocher (2020) utilized RCT as a foundation from which to understand the relationships between African American women who have experienced severe trauma and their substance abuse counselors. The authors' study highlights the nuances of counseling African American women who have experienced trauma, emphasizing the crucial components of culture and growth fostering relationships. As an approach that is rooted in the consideration of minoritized identities, RCT presents as a culturally responsive approach.

Additionally, researchers have adapted modern approaches to meet the needs of marginalized populations who have experienced trauma. For example, Hinton et al. (2012) discuss culturally adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CA-CBT) as an empirically supported approach (see Hinton et al., 2005; Hinton et al., 2011; and Hinton et al., 2004) to treating refugees and ethnic minorities who suffer from PTSD. Key adaptations of CA-CBT are the integration of emotional (i.e., regulation), physiological (i.e., muscle relaxation), and spiritual (i.e., meditation) considerations in the treatment process. Positing that traditional trauma treatments do not suit many minority cultures, the authors adjust standard trauma and CBT approaches while outlining "twelve key components of the culturally sensitive treatment of traumatized refugees and ethnic minorities" (Hinton et al., 2012, p. 344). The authors' thorough exploration and implementation of a culturally responsive trauma approach exhibits the field's shift toward inclusive practices.

Furthermore, in their discussion of critical consciousness and counseling to resist racial trauma, Mosley et al. (2020) identified Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and Narrative Therapy (NT), among others, as culturally responsive trauma approaches. TF-CBT has been endorsed as an evidenced based approach that includes parents and guardians in the therapeutic process of healing trauma experienced by children and adolescents (Cohen et al., 2006; Phipps & Thorne, 2019). Recognizing the pervasive impact of historical and cultural trauma (i.e., race-based trauma), on Black youth, (Phipps and Thorne, 2019) proposed an approach that incorporates racial identity development and Afrocentric ideals into TF-CBT to mitigate the impact. The authors' conceptualization of an approach grounded in TF-CBT to address intergenerational trauma experienced by Black youth exhibits the cultural responsiveness of this theory as well as the field's commitment to cultural issues.

The implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) encouraged health care providers to work in tandem and thus create integrative health care models (Holden et al., 2014; Kawaii-Bogue et al., 2017). Specifically, primary care, mental health, and community support providers have begun collaborations to better serve the community (Kawaii-Bogue et al., 2017). As such, researchers have paid closer attention to disparities in access to health care to determine effective ways to provide access to the underserved and streamline the health care process. The integrative care models that have emerged accentuate the value of a holistic and person-centered approach to care (Holden et al., 2014; Kawaii-Bogue et al., 2017). Counseling professionals have incorporated various practices in the therapeutic process as well. For example, Nichols (2015) conducted a grounded theory study to examine counselors' use of complementary therapies (CT; i.e., art, meditation, EMDR, spirituality, etc.). The theoretical model that emerged considered and incorporated counselors' experience and beliefs surrounding CT as well as their development

of competence and continued practice (Nichols, 2015). While this is only one example of the inquiry into holistic counseling, the fact that researchers are investigating these practices suggests a shift toward this perspective.

Additionally, Manda (2015) examined the holistic impact of political trauma on the South African community, noting that the effects go beyond bio-psychosocial considerations. From the narratives gathered at the end of a four-year participatory action research study, Manda (2015) made the claim that a holistic approach to trauma treatment must move beyond the standard bio-psychosocial approach and incorporate moral and spiritual aspects as well. In this, Manda (2015) displayed how the narrative approach gives space to an integral cultural identity. From this, Manda (2019) conceptualized a holistic narrative approach to trauma which integrates narrative therapy and spiritual practices to address traumatic experiences and their impact. Manda's (2019) seamless integration of these two phenomena is evidence of the flexibility of the narrative approach to adapt to various cultural identities.

It is evident that scholars have taken into consideration the social location of Black women while formulating postmodern approaches to their treatment. Specifically, many researchers have begun to consider intersectionality and the oppressive structures that impact Black women's well-being. Thus, scholars are recognizing the necessity of considering Black women's unique location in society in addressing their mental health. Theorists are not alone in this awakening. Researchers are also conducting studies to better understand and address the mental health needs of Black women.

Counseling and Trauma Research

As theory has shifted, so too has the research and literature. Many scholars have addressed the relevance of trauma and cultural considerations in counseling practice. Much of

this research is conceptual and not within counseling journals (e.g., Ranjbar et al., 2020), however a few researchers across various disciplines have laid the foundation for a strong rationale for the counseling profession to pay particular attention to cultural trauma.

First, Chao et al. (2012) examined the impact of perceived racial discrimination on the functioning of African American college students. Utilizing archival data from multiple counseling centers, of which 59% of the data sample were African American women, the researchers found that one in four African American students have experiences of perceived racial discrimination distress. Additionally, these students are encountering multiple adverse reactions such as difficulty with relationships, internal struggles that lead to maladaptive eating, and anxious and avoidant behaviors. The results of this study have provided the field with additional evidence of the pervasiveness and impact of perceived racial discrimination on Black students, and thus, can serve as an impetus for normalizing the Black students' experience. Furthermore, with this information, clinicians, educators, and researchers have reason to look closely at the interaction between oppression and traumatic responses (Chao et al., 2012).

Another study conducted by Chao et al. (2014) supported these findings. After surveying 394 African Americans (54% female and 45% male), the researchers found that higher rates of perceived racism made it more difficult for individuals to maintain a low psychological distress level. Despite previous research, the individuals' level of self-esteem does not mitigate the impact of perceived racism. The same trend was found when the researchers examined the relationship between shyness and psychological distress as moderated by level of perceived racism (Chao et al., 2014). In alignment with the shift toward social justice, Chao et al. (2014) concluded that sociopolitical factors must be taken into consideration when counseling and gaining understanding, through research, of African Americans.

Culturally appropriate assessment of Black Americans has also been addressed. For example, while Carter's (2007) early work on race-based trauma was conceptual, the researcher went on to test and support his theory through scale development and subsequent empirical investigations. After extensive examination of literature on PTSD, trauma, and psychological symptoms of the two, Carter et al. (2013) developed and found construct validity of the Race-Based Traumatic Stress Symptom Scale (RBTSSS) utilizing an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Carter et al. (2017) continued the examination of the RBTSSS by completing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM). The researchers found the initial model developed by Carter et al. (2013) to be a good model fit, thus supporting the validity and reliability of the scale. Additionally, Carter et al. (2018) examined the validity of the RBTSSS with Black Americans, as the previous investigations included a diverse sample, and found support for the construct and predictive validity of the RBTSSS for Black Americans. The culmination of this research has provided the field with an assessment to further understand how particular events of racial discrimination impact individuals and, in particular, Black Americans. While research with this particular scale is just beginning, it is evident that the mental health field is heeding the impact of cultural traumas such as racism.

More specifically, Lewis and Neville (2015) developed the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale for Black women. Utilizing research on microaggressions, intersectionality theory, and gendered racism, the researchers aimed to create a measure that evaluates "intersecting experiences of racial and gender microaggressions" (Lewis & Neville, 2015, p. 292) of Black women. After conducting an exploratory factor analysis with a sample of 259 participants who identified as a Black, African American, or African female, the researchers identified a four-factor model that comprised the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale

(GRMS). The factors discovered were assumptions of beauty and sexual objectification, silenced and marginalized, strong Black woman stereotype, and angry Black woman stereotype. To continue their inquiry into the construct validity of the GRMS, the researchers conducted a confirmatory factor analysis with a sample of 210 Black, African American and African females and found the four-factor model of the GRMS to be an acceptable-to-good fit. Furthermore, the researchers found a significant positive relationship between the GRMS total scores and psychological distress. The researchers concluded that the GRMS provides mental health professionals insight into the reality and impact of gendered racial microaggressions that Black women experience. Furthermore, by utilizing intersectionalist theory, the researchers grounded the scale in a framework that considers the complexity of the Black woman experience (Lewis & Neville, 2015).

Additionally, Brown et al. (2017) developed the Gendered-Racial Socialization Scale for Black Women (GRESS-BW). In its inception, the researchers aimed to create a measure that captured the gendered racial-ethnic socialization Black women experience through the messages received from their families. The preliminary investigation into the GRESS-GW utilized a sample of 174 African American female college students. The exploratory factor analysis produced a nine factor solution with 63 items that accounted for 57.63% of the data's variance. With an excellent reliability (α=.94), the nine factor solution encompassed the following factors: gendered racial pride and empowerment (α=.96); family expectations and responsibilities (α=.89); internalized gendered racial oppression (α=.94), independence, career, and educational success (α=.84), sexual behavior (α=.83); oppression awareness (α=.72), sisterhood (α=.75), religious faith and spirituality (α=.77); and gendered racial hardship (α=.72). The researchers posit that this initial development of the GRESS-GW provides insight into gendered racial-ethnic

socialization experiences of college-aged Black women that can contribute to oppressive structures and psychological distress.

The mental health field has made strides toward understanding and addressing the mental health of Black women through conceptual inquiry, empirical investigation, and scale development. Researchers sought to understand the impact of cultural trauma and intersectionality as well as how Black women are coping with these experiences. Additionally, researchers are making strides toward understanding the process of intergenerational trauma which can occur as a result of adaptive or maladaptive coping with trauma and racism. With this, counseling and counselor education professionals have ample evidence to make the shift toward social justice as intended.

Gaps in Current Approach

The counseling profession has made strides toward culturally responsive care. Sue et al.'s (1992) call to action advanced the field toward culturally competent practices. The more recent discussion of culturally responsive care and cultural humility have come with postmodern approaches that welcome and flex with the diverse society. With such a diverse society, it is necessary for our field to continue to understand the unique experiences of those we serve. Of which, Black women have a unique experience that, due to their significant need for mental health services, must be explored and honored in the counseling process. The field must now move beyond acceptance and consideration of culture and into a deeper understanding, or at the very least knowledge of, cultural experiences. Ratts et al.'s (2015, 2016) Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies highlight the salience of seen and unseen impacts of cultural identities. For example, the intersecting identities of a Black individual and a woman hold the privileges and oppressions of both cultural groups. Not only must a Black woman experience the

discrimination based on her race, but also her gender. Unfortunately, there are still gaps in the approaches to counseling Black women as well as the counseling and mental health research related to Black women.

Culturally Responsive Practice

It is apparent that two major coping mechanisms Black women utilize are social and familial support and spirituality (Baldwin-Clark et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2021). As such, in providing culturally responsive counseling to Black women, these strategies and protective factors should be taken into consideration. Unfortunately, scholars such as Walton and Oyewuwo-Gassikia (2017), Mbilishaka (2018), Gomez et al., 2020, and Gomez and Gobin (2020) do not explicitly consider the roles of familial and religious support in the healing process of Black women. Although additional protective factors such as self-esteem, self-care, and mastery (Erving et al., 2021; Hall, 2018) and heavily considered in these theoretical approaches, the authors negate two foundational pieces of the Black woman.

Furthermore, while the evolution of counseling theory has provided a dramatic change in how counselors engage the client in the therapeutic process, there still remains a gap in the integration, rather than just incorporation, of social justice in theory. For example, researchers have demonstrated how Narrative therapy is a flexible theoretical approach that leaves room for contextual topics and gives voice to Black women's stories (Gomez et al., 2020; Manda, 2015; Witney, 2012). Just because the room is provided, however, does not mean it will be occupied. Without an explicit awareness of systemic oppression, it may be difficult for a counselor to see the intergenerational race-based trauma a Black woman may be portraying in their story. The same concept can be applied to Solution Focused Therapy (SFT), a strength-based approach that is said to relinquish power to the client and include their cultural identities as an integral part of

understanding the problem and solution (Ime, 2019). Although the SFT counselor may submit to the client's worldview, ignorance of the impact of systemic oppression and unidentified bias can blind a counselor to the true strength minority individuals possess. Without the explicit integration of systemic trauma in the theoretical approach, the strengths-based approach of SFT is limited, preventing the counselor from truly encouraging and empowering the client to take ownership of their goals and progress.

Relational Cultural Theory has a lot of promise as a theoretical framework. The focus on relationship (i.e., connection and disconnection) and how cultural factors (i.e., marginalization) impact an individual in the relationship not only gives room to social justice issues, but more plainly calls for its integration. Furthermore, the relational focus of this framework allows room for the most prevalent and more natural coping strategies (i.e., social and familial supports; Hall, 2018) Black women possess. However, RCT is but a framework from which a counselor can engage in the therapeutic relationship or a researcher can understand the relationships Black women engage in (e.g., Blakey & Grocher, 2020). There are no prescriptive techniques nor are there guidelines for conceptualization and treatment of the client. As such, RCT is often paired with other theories (e.g. Haskins & Appling, 2017) to provide a comprehensive therapeutic approach. Furthermore, taken on its own, RCT does not adequately address the inherent trauma brought about by the systemic issues it claims to prioritize. To fully address an individual's cultural trauma then, inclusion of a trauma theory is necessary.

Unfortunately, many of the more utilized trauma approaches (i.e., CA-CBT, TF-CBT and Narrative therapy) are adapted from other theories, and in the case of TF-CBT, only serves a certain type of clientele (i.e. youth). Other well known trauma approaches, such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (Shapiro, 1996), Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 1995),

and Somatic Experiencing (Levine, 2010), do not necessarily incorporate cultural considerations such that a counselor utilizing these approaches would naturally discuss the impact of systemic oppression. More specifically, the major trauma theorists do not focus on societal and familial influences of trauma, which are crucial considerations in counseling Black women. While the cause of trauma, for some, may be due to a societal issue (i.e. race-based trauma) or family, those who present with a different type of traumatic experience (e.g., sexual assault) may not be prompted to explore potential contextual factors (e.g., family messages about women's bodies or societal messages about the color of someone's skin), thus may continue to internalize oppressive messages despite "healing" the trauma. Furthermore, addressing the intergenerational transmission of the impact of gendered racism, researchers must connect the past to the present and be open to exploring current and historical oppressive structures that contribute to psychological distress (Barlow, 2018; Hines, 2019; Watson et al., 2020).

The social constructivist movement has opened many doors for cultural considerations and socially just counseling practices. There is still a gap in counseling theory, however, that necessitates the integration of general frameworks, theory, or "additional cultural considerations" in order to enact these practices. What is needed, instead, is theory based in multiculturalism and social justice, as this applies to all those who are served, from which culturally responsive practices become habitual.

Above all else, much of the literature on counseling Black women is conceptual. There are very few research studies that test the efficacy of treatment approaches with Black women. Furthermore, there is little empirical evidence of effective trauma approaches and no research on addressing the intergenerational trauma of Black women in counseling.

Counseling and Trauma Research

Researchers have done a significant amount of work to produce valuable research and literature from which the field can continue to learn. Unfortunately, however, much of the literature related to improving counseling and education to better serve the diverse population is either conceptual or continues to just alert the field of the disparities and need for change. Empirical evidence that enacts change in the conceptualization and treatment of marginalized and traumatized communities, specifically Black women, is slow moving.

Despite this, researchers are attempting to make sense of the intergenerational process of trauma. However, the intergenerational trauma that is being considered in these studies do not explicitly consider the experience of the Black woman, who not only carry past traumas but continue to be traumatized in current society (DeGruy, 2017). For example, Danieli et al. (2016), attempted to construct a model to explain how and what is transmitted from survivors of the Holocaust to their decedents. While this population is ideal to study the direct impact of a historical trauma, results of these investigations may not be inclusive of the Black experience. An exception to this is Hall's (2018) study examining the intergenerational transmission of stress and coping between Black mothers and daughters. While the researcher considered the intersectionality of Black women, they did not incorporate research on trauma despite identifying gendered racism as having a negative impact on this population. Additionally, the authors, such as Hall (2018) and many other authors who contribute to this arena of literature, are not from the counseling field. As such, while social work, psychology, and psychiatry are similar to the counseling field, the research conducted within these disciplines may not adequately reflect the culture of the counseling profession.

Literature within the family therapy field, however, is making strides toward understanding intergenerational trauma and addressing sociocultural issues. Fitzgerald et al. (2020) utilized a pre-existing data set to examine how a mother's trauma history impacts the couple relationship, parenting behaviors, and children's internal and external behavior. The researchers found that the mother's trauma history did impact the quality of relationships but was not related to children's internal and external behavior or harsh parenting behavior. Nonetheless, Fitzgerald et al. (2020) are one of the, if not the, first to examine intergenerational transmission of trauma from a systemic perspective. Despite this, there were limitations within this study such as the missing views of other family members as only mothers were surveyed, consideration and examination of cultural differences amongst participants, and data coming only from families involved in Child Welfare Services. Another example of research advances is Knudson et al.'s (2019) discussion of Socioculturally Attuned Family Therapy which considers power dynamics and societal context in the family therapy process. The authors outline six guidelines to assist family therapists in enacting and prioritizing socially just counseling (Knudson et al., 2019). However, much like RCT, this approach is an overarching framework that does not necessarily consider intergenerational trauma. If Fitzgerald et al. (2020) and Knudson et al. (2019) conducted research together, perhaps the gaps in their work would be filled.

While there has been a significant amount of work done in areas of multiculturalism, with the inclusion of spirituality, social justice, and trauma, there continues to be a gap in connecting all of these phenomena. Specifically, there is a lack of empirical research examining the relationships between intergenerational trauma, the Black family system, and spirituality.

Summary

According to Bell-Tolliver and Wilkerson (2011), therapists identified kinship and spirituality as two primary factors in the positive functioning of African American families. Additionally, Guiterrez et al. (2014) emphasized that the whole family (i.e. nuclear and extended members) has an impact on an African American adult's religious socialization. As such, it is evident that with the foundation of strong family and spiritual values, the integration of intergenerational family systems theory, the history of the Black family, and spirituality provides a comprehensive viewpoint of the Black individual, family, and community. The three seemingly can not be separated and thus must be considered together in serving this population.

What we know is Black women are suffering from psychological distress and trauma. What we know is much of this strife has been perpetuated by oppressive structures that began during the slavery era. What we know is the Black community, in general, thrives on spirituality and kinship (i.e. family; Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011). As such, it is necessary to conceptualize the notion of intergenerational trauma within the Black community utilizing these concepts to more adequately address the mental health of African American women. Specifically, in conjunction with a social justice framework, a perspective that is grounded in systems theory and spirituality can provide room in the therapeutic process to address the intergenerational traumas that have been passed down from the slavery era. This is not to say that this perspective will "save" the Black community from the oppressor, but rather, will assist in liberation from the bondage of "generational curses."

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this collective case study was to seek understanding of the transmission of intergenerational trauma in Black women who identify as spiritual. As a matriarchal culture, Black communities have depended on the Black woman to be the foundation of the family and community. With this responsibility comes great stress which is passed down from generation to generation. As mothers uphold the Strong Black Woman schema, it is suspected that their daughters are learning how to interact with the world around them as their mothers do. By definition, this process exemplifies intergenerational transmission. However, to date, there is limited research examining how this transmission occurs between mother and daughter. While researchers have begun to examine such phenomena, literature has primarily focused on the identification and expression of negative mental health in Black women, rather than how it is developed and tied to family and community. As such, gaining insight into the transmission of trauma and traumatic responses, such as the SBW schema, is necessary to not only understand the current experience of Black women, but be proactive in fostering positive mental health in the Black community.

The following research questions guided the current study:

1. *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process?*
2. *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process?*

This chapter outlines the methodology of the research study. An overview of the research paradigm, design, collection and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations is provided. Additionally, the author will discuss the researcher's positionality, methods of trustworthiness, and limitations.

Qualitative Research Design: Collective Case Study

With a framework grounded in subjective experience and multiple truths, it stands to reason that this research study utilized qualitative research methods which provides the researcher insight into individuals' experiences and the meaning these experiences hold (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012). More specifically, qualitative research involves the exploration of phenomena in the context they occur to understand the meaning individuals ascribe to the investigated experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012). Concerned with the process of and experience rather than the overall outcome, qualitative researchers immerse themselves into participants' natural environment to acquire thick descriptions of individuals' experiences (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012). Due to the depth of information the researcher hopes to gain regarding a specific experience, they utilize purposive sampling to intentionally invite participants who can provide ample information about the phenomenon being explored (Hays & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, because of the exploratory nature of qualitative research, researchers must be reflexive and open to how the emerging data guides the research process (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research can be performed in many different ways, however, because the proposed study aims to understand the process of the transmission of trauma between mother and daughter, the case study approach is best suited (Hays & Singh, 2012).

The case study methodology is a universal research tradition that aims to explore a phenomenon within the context of its occurrence (Yin, 2003). This method allows researchers "to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). A phenomenon's context or real-life event can be referred to as the case being studied (Yin, 2003). More specifically, cases are bounded systems with working parts that exhibit patterns of

behavior (Stake, 2005). The bounded system has boundaries that can include time, place, or activity (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). The current study considers the mother/daughter relationship or dyad as one case in which the transmission of trauma was investigated. In this case, the relationship or, from a systems theory approach, the parent/child subsystem (Nichols, 2012), was considered the bounded system. Additionally, the research study was a collective or multi-case study in which multiple cases, or dyads, were examined to ascertain the experience of intergenerational trauma within spiritual Black women (Stake, 2005; 2013). Through examination of multiple cases the researcher gained insight into the phenomenon or the quantain (i.e., the collective target) being studied (Stake, 2013). To do this, single case and cross case analysis must occur.

The collective case study methodology was appropriate for the present study as this research design aims to understand phenomena within their real-life context (Schwandt, 2001) that have not yet been fully understood (Creswell, 2006). Furthermore, the case study methodology is appropriate for how and why questions (Schwandt, 2001) which aligns with the researcher's inquiry of how trauma is transmitted from a mother to her daughter. Lastly, the researcher was able to obtain rich data that can aid in theory development through thorough analysis of each case and a subsequent cross case synthesis (Hays & Singh, 2012; Yin, 2009).

Research Questions

Qualitative research questions are broad inquiries into the concept to be studied that considers the goal of the research study, the guiding paradigm and tradition, and the researcher's conceptual framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2005). The research questions that guided the current study are as follows:

1. *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process?*

2. *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process?*

Researcher Positionality

Qualitative researchers engage in intensive experiences with participants and can interpret data from their lens oftentimes requiring researchers to bracket their assumptions and biases (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2013). As such, it is necessary for the researcher to take stock of their positionality (i.e. social locations and identities) when engaging in the research process. As a Black woman who identifies as spiritual, I recognize that I qualify to be a participant in this study. For that reason, it is especially important for me to take inventory of my identities and social location.

First, my identity as Black and a woman has shaped my personality, how I relate to others, and how I relate to the world. Specifically, as a Black individual, I am a part of a culture that has simultaneously been deemed strong and weak. I have adopted this conundrum and found myself in a paradoxical circumstance as a human being that I imagine many of my counterparts experience. Additionally, as a woman, I am a part of a culture that cultivates without fair return. The intersection of these dominant identities leads to a strong identification with the Strong Black Woman narrative. However, this narrative has provided me with a nuanced identity that has been both empowering and oppressive. Specifically, as discussed by Jones et al. (2021), the SBW narrative has unwittingly provided me a guide to engagement with the world and myself. With this, I am also familiar with the coping mechanisms, as outlined by Everett et al. (2010) and West et al., (2010), that Black women may utilize. Specifically, my identity as spiritual has provided me with a way to cope with stressors.

My parents, who were not raised as Christian, met at a Christian church. Shortly after my birth my parents realized the church was no longer fulfilling their spiritual needs. They began

engaging in spiritual practices with a group of individuals who felt the same at their religious institutions. In the preceding years, my understanding of church and religion came from bible studies in our and family friends' homes twice a week. Because of my parents' choice to continue with these spiritual practices, I have limited experience with the Black church. It was not until later in my life (i.e., college) that my parents chose to return to the church institution. With this, my understanding of faith and religion was never rooted in an institution, but rather the belief that Christianity was a lifestyle. I have fought against and tried to surrender to this lifestyle that has felt oppressive and liberating throughout various stages of my life. As I continue to grow and make sense of spirituality and religion on my own accord, I have come to believe that the former is preferred over the latter. This is why I utilize the term spiritual throughout the research process, as I believe everyone's relationship with their identified higher power looks different and does not belong within confined boundaries. Despite this, I maintain many Christian beliefs including God as my higher power and the bible as a sacred text. With this, I have utilized my spiritual beliefs to navigate difficulties related to being a Black woman as well as struggled with my spiritual beliefs possibly due to my identity as a Black woman.

Although I continue my spiritual journey to come to a more cohesive understanding of my own, a large part of my experience with religion (i.e., bible study twice a week) has led to my strong passion for family. In fact, I have more memories and stronger relationships with the families who attended those bible studies than I do with extended family members such as aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. As such, these individuals, who I saw on a weekly basis for over 15 years, are my family. With this, I chose to specialize in marriage and family therapy when I pursued a counseling career. This training has given me a systemic framework in my counseling practice.

While the aforementioned pieces of my identity contribute to my choice in research interest, my primary motivation stems from my relationship with my mother. My mother is my primary familial influence and I believe I have taken many lessons from her directly and indirectly. What I realize, though, is that many of those messages, which turned into beliefs about myself and the world around me, were not healthy. In fact, as I began this research process, I continued to identify myself and my mother in the literature which at times has perpetuated oppressive structures (i.e., SBW narrative) and been difficult to engage with. Nonetheless, my experience with my mother and as a Black woman has led me to engage in this research which I believe is salient for the counseling profession.

Data Collection Procedures

The following section reviews the sampling and recruitment procedures for the present study. Additionally, this section briefly discusses the participants and data collection methods.

Sampling

The first two steps in case study research is to define the case and establish the boundaries of the case (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). To examine the transmission of the SBW narrative and spiritual coping amongst spiritual Black women, the researcher defined the case as the mother and daughter pair or relationship. The boundaries of the identified case were as follows: the pair must identify their relationship with one another as a mother and daughter relationship and both mother and daughter must identify as spiritual Black women. Additionally, because the researcher recruited multiple pairs and participants' experiences of transmission was observed, the present case study can be considered a descriptive collective case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). The following section will outline recruitment procedures and review the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Recruitment

Because qualitative researchers aim to acquire thick descriptions of phenomena, acquiring a sample that can provide such depth is paramount. As such, purposive sampling, in which researchers identify specific criteria prior to recruitment that participants must meet, is ideal for qualitative research (Hays & Singh, 2012). Specifically, this study utilized criterion sampling which requires the researcher to only select participants who meet salient (i.e., identify as a spiritual Black woman) criteria (Hays & Singh, 2012). The researcher utilized ListServs, social media, and academic relationships to recruit participants. Furthermore, the researcher utilized snowball sampling which is a type of convenience sampling in which the researcher asks participants who have met the specific participant criteria if they know others who meet the same criteria (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Participants

The researcher recruited five cases which amounted to 10 total participants who were individually interviewed and participated in a within-case dyadic interview. All participants identified as spiritual Black or African American women. Additionally, while their denominations varied, all participants identified as Christian. Lastly, the majority of daughters were in their 30s and the majority of mothers were in their 60s. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic description of each participant and case along with their pseudonyms.

Table 1. *Participant Demographics*

Participant and Pseudonym	Occupation	Age	Location	Raised by	Siblings	Children	Parenting Partner	Spiritual Affiliation
Case One								
Charise	Retired educator	64	New Jersey	Mom & Dad	4	2	Yes	Baptist
Aniya	College administrator	35	Virginia	Mom & Dad	1	0	No	Baptist
Case Two								
Tamika	Retired	66	Texas	Mom & Dad	10	2	No	Christian
Sophia	Consultant and student	38	Mississippi	Mom	3	3	Yes	Christian
Case Three								
Mildred	Associate director at a 4 year university	56	Virginia	Mom & Dad	3	2	Yes	Christian
Grace	School counselor	25	Virginia	Mom & Dad	1	0	No	Christian
Case Four								
Debra	Program assistant, Adjunct professor	62	New Jersey	Mom & Dad	4	2	Yes	Nondom Christian
Sydney	Banking, air force reservist	33	New Jersey	Mom & Dad	1	0	No	Nondom Christian
Case Five								
Brenda	Student, part time clinical assistant at community clinic, Reiki practitioner	60	Illinois	Mom & Dad	12	7	No	Christian
Briana	Supervisor of counseling services	38	New Jersey	Mom	7	2	Yes	Christian

Data Sources and Collection

The initial step in data collection involved obtaining approval from William and Mary's Educational Institutional Review Board. Next, the researcher began recruiting participants who read and signed an informed consent agreement identifying they are willing to participate in the

research study. Specifically, the informed consent, provided in Appendix C, outlined the purpose of the study, the risk of the study, and the benefits of the study. Additionally, the researcher informed participants that while all data obtained will be confidential, they can resign from the study at any time. Once the participants consented to the research study, the researcher engaged them in a recorded semi-structured interview via teleconferencing (i.e., Zoom) and phone. More specifically, three interviews were conducted within each case: an interview with the mother, an interview with the daughter, and an interview with both mother and daughter. At the beginning of the individual interviews, demographic data was collected. Additionally, a description of the SBW narrative as outlined in research was provided at the beginning of each dyadic interview. There was no specific order in which the interviews took place, however, the majority of cases followed the following interview sequence: mother interviewed first, daughter interviewed second, and dyad interview completed last. For case three, the daughter was interviewed before the mother. For case five the dyad interview was completed first, followed by the mother's interview, and then the daughter's interview. The interview questions stemmed from literature regarding the experience of Black women, the SBW narrative, spirituality, and intergenerational trauma. Additionally, the researcher requested participants identify a meaningful scripture, quote, or saying that depicts their experience of being a SBW as an artifact to triangulate data and enhance trustworthiness. Artifacts are utilized in qualitative research to provide additional richness to the data and thus a deeper understanding of the observed phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

According to Esterberg (2002), the semi-structured interview is the most culturally appropriate interview method due to its flexibility. As such, a semi-structured interview method was utilized in which the researcher implemented a protocol (see Appendix B) composed of

questions based on literature. Due to the researcher's positionality and the use of social constructivist paradigm which promotes collaboration between the researcher and participants (Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005), the researcher also utilized the technique of interactive interviewing. Interactive interviewing involves an open dialogue between researcher and participant (McMahan & Rogers, 1994). This type of approach to the interview aligns with the case study methodology which encourages researchers to engage in a fluid interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Specifically, according to Yin (2009), case study interviews should meet the needs of the researcher's inquiry while posing open-ended and "non-threatening" questions. To engage in such an interaction, Kezar (2003) and Campbell et al. (2010), identify the following characteristics of interactive interviewing:

(a) balancing power differentials as the participant is invited to question the engagement and the researcher has permission to self-disclose,
(b) processing the feelings of the participant and researcher as they arise in the interview,
(c) mutual engagement,
(d) mutual trust,
(e) researcher reflexivity,
(f) commitment by the researcher to an empathetic and caring approach,
(g) increased opportunity for advocacy.

In this, the researcher takes great care in the interaction with the participant to honor the narrative being provided (McMahan & Rogers, 1994).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis can be viewed as a cyclical process of reducing, presenting, drawing conclusions from, and verifying data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). McLoed (2001) identified eight specific steps in qualitative data analysis:

(a) Reduce data by specifying the focus of data analysis
(b) Collect data utilizing methods aligned with research question and design
(c) Memo and summarize data to begin initial analysis.
(d) Organize text by transcribing data and organizing additional notes
(e) Code, or label, sections of data
(f) Identify patterns amongst codes to create themes
(g) Create a codebook to organize previously identified codes and patterns
(h) Develop a main narrative based on the patterns and themes that emerged from the data

First, the researcher reduced the data by employing a thorough review of the literature and narrowing the target phenomenon, intergenerational trauma, into two specific areas of interest: the SBW narrative and spiritual coping. Secondly, the researcher collected data utilizing semi-structured interactive interviews and collection of artifacts (i.e., scriptures). Throughout the data collection process, the researcher checked in with participants to ensure the narratives being provided reflected their true experience. Additionally, the researcher engaged in reflexive journaling throughout the data collection process which assisted in initial data analysis and bridling behavior. Due to the researcher’s positionality, it was essential that their reflection included bridling as they explored how they were making meaning of the data in relation to their identities. Lastly, before engaging in the formal data analysis process, the researcher utilized a transcription service, Rev.com, to transcribe the data to text.

Case study data analysis is convergent and thus all sources of data are analyzed simultaneously (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). As such, the researcher utilized McLoed's (2001) analysis guidelines to analyze transcripts and artifacts together. The researcher coded each text to highlight critical ideas and make meaning of participants' descriptions of their experience. All codes were inputted into a horizontalization chart which assisted the researcher in identifying patterns and themes within and across cases (McLoed, 2001; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Specifically, the researcher utilized the case study analysis technique of pattern matching in which the researcher identifies patterns within the data that are based on predicted patterns of the examined phenomenon (Yin, 2009). In other words, utilizing the McLoed's (2001) initial step of data analysis, reduction of data, provided the researcher with patterns of the SBW narrative and spiritual coping amongst spiritual Black women. From these identified and predicted patterns, the researcher identified patterns within the data.

Additionally, the researcher utilized the case study analytical technique of cross case synthesis (Yin, 2009). Cross case synthesis views each case study in a collective case study as an individual research study. Once the individual cases have been analyzed, the researcher compares and contrasts the findings of each case study (Yin, 2009). The researcher engaged in cross case synthesis for the present study by comparing and contrasting the findings from the five cases. The cross-case synthesis, which allows for more robust data and potentially transferable findings (Yin, 2009), resulted in seven themes across all cases which are presented in chapter four. An excerpt from the cross-case analysis can be found in Appendix E.

Trustworthiness

As in quantitative research, qualitative research must uphold standards of validity to ensure that the outcome of the research is authentic and useful (Fraenkel et al., 2015). While

quantitative researchers examine their assessments and research design for content, criterion, and construct validity (Fraenkel et al., 2015), qualitative researchers have a more nuanced task of establishing the trustworthiness of (i.e., how much of the participants' voices are being heard) their findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Just as quantitative researchers have criteria of validity, so too do qualitative researchers have criteria of trustworthiness which are as follows: credibility or believability of findings; transferability (i.e. applicability to others); dependability or how consistent the findings are across multiple studies; confirmability or sincerity of participant expressions; authenticity (i.e., representativeness of participant voices); coherence (i.e., the inclusion of research epistemology throughout the research process); sampling adequacy (i.e., appropriateness of participants and sample size); ethical validation or the extent to which the research is useful to practice; substantive validation or how the research contributes to knowledge; and creativity (i.e., use of novel research methods; Angen, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Kline, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Whittemore et al., 2001).

To meet the criteria for trustworthiness, the researcher utilized the following strategies throughout the present study: member checking; peer debriefing; use of an audit trail; acquiring thick descriptions; reflexive journaling; and triangulation (Hays & Singh, 2012). Specifically, in member checking, the researcher engaged in continuous dialogue with participants to ensure their true meanings are being represented (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). By doing this, the researcher contributed to the confirmability, authenticity, sampling adequacy, ethical validation, and substantive validation of the research study. Additionally, the researcher consulted with a peer to remain accountable to the credibility and ethical validation of the participants' voices and the research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The peer consulted was an experienced qualitative researcher who has engaged in many qualitative inquiries throughout their career. Another

method of ensuring credibility as well as transferability, confirmability, authenticity, coherence, substantive validation, and creativity is the use of an audit trail in which the researcher documented the data collection and analysis process (Hays & Singh, 2012; Whittemore et al., 2001). Additionally, the researcher engaged in triangulation of data by utilizing the individual and dyadic interviews as well as identified scriptures as data points in the analysis process. Lastly, to further enhance the trustworthiness of the proposed qualitative research study, the researcher utilized a reflexive journal to engage in bridling and document the impact of the research process on the researcher (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

While the researcher utilized multiple strategies to ensure trustworthiness, additional measures were taken in consideration of ethical standards. Specifically, in accordance with the American Counseling Association's (ACA) code of ethics (2014), the researcher obtained permission to conduct the research study from the William & Mary Educational Institutional Review Board (EDIRC) which also ensured the researcher adhered to researcher responsibilities. Additionally, the researcher obtained informed consent from participants which outlined the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, and the dissemination of findings of the research study. The informed consent also explained the limitations of confidentiality, highlighted the participant's ability to withdraw from the study at any time, and provided the researcher's contact information in the event the participant(s) had any questions or concerns about the research process (ACA, 2014). Furthermore, the informed consent included a consent to be recorded to allow the researcher to transcribe the interview verbatim. Lastly, the researcher utilized pseudonyms and stored data in a secure drive as measures of confidentiality.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research design of the present study including data collection and analysis procedures. This chapter also reviewed the researcher's efforts to ensure trustworthiness, including providing an overview of the researcher's positionality, and the ethical considerations utilized throughout the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

With a social constructivist paradigm, the researcher utilized a multiple case study design to understand the experiences of intergenerational trauma among spiritual Black women. The present study aimed to understand how the Strong Black Woman (SBW) narrative and spiritual coping were transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women. The following research questions guided the qualitative exploration of the phenomena: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women? How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* The individual and dyadic semi-structured interactive interviews gave participants the opportunity to explore and share their experiences related to the observed phenomena. In this chapter descriptions of each case and their participants are provided along with a description of the themes found within and across the five cases.

Case Summaries

For the purpose of the present study, the case is defined as the relationship between a mother and daughter who both identify as spiritual Black women. Cases were obtained through recruitment of spiritual Black women who volunteered to discuss their experiences of generational family messages. Five women answered the recruitment call and enlisted the participation of their mother or daughter to form the case. As such, the present study examined five unique cases comprising a total of 10 participants. Demographic information including age, occupation, current location, and family constellation was collected from each participant. The following section will provide an overview of each case.

Case One

Charise, a retired educator, is a 64-year-old Black female who identifies as Baptist. She was raised by her mother and her father along with one brother, two sisters, and a half sister. She has raised two children with the support of her husband and currently lives in New Jersey. Aniya is a college administrator at a four-year university. She is a 35-year-old Black female who identifies as Baptist. She was raised by her mother and father along with one brother. She currently resides in Virginia and does not currently have children but is a godmother to children of her friends and family and considers her brother's children her own.

Case Two

Tamika, who is retired from the hospitality industry, is a 66-year-old Black female who identifies as a nondenominational Christian. She was raised by her mother and father along with 10 other siblings. She has raised two children as a single mother and currently resides in Texas. Sophia is a 38-year-old Black female who identifies as a nondenominational Christian. She currently resides in Mississippi and is employed as a consultant and student. She has three siblings and 3 sons whom she parents with a partner.

Case Three

Mildred, an associate director at a four-year university, is a 56-year-old Black female who identifies as Christian. She was raised by her mother and her father along with three siblings all of whom immigrated to the United States when the mother was in her 20's. She has raised two children with the support of her husband and currently lives in Virginia. Grace is a school counselor. She is a 25-year-old Black female who identifies as Christian. She was raised by her mother and father along with one sister. She currently resides in Virginia and does not have children but has been a mentor to youth in her church community.

Case Four

Debra, a program assistant and adjunct professor, is a 62-year-old Black female who identifies as a nondenominational Christian. She was raised by her mother and her father along with four siblings. She has raised two children with the support of her husband and currently lives in New Jersey. Sydney is an air force reservist who also works in banking. She is a 33-year-old Black female who identifies as a nondenominational Christian. She was raised by her mother and father along with one brother. She currently resides in New Jersey and does not currently have children.

Case Five

Brenda, a student, part time clinical assistant at a community clinic, and Reiki practitioner, is a 60 year old Black female who identifies as Christian. She was raised by her mother and father along with 12 siblings. She has raised seven children as a single parent, including fostered and adopted children, and currently resides in Illinois. Briana is a supervisor of counseling services. She is a 38 year old Black female who identifies as Christian. She currently resides in New Jersey and parents two children with her partner.

Data Analysis and Results

The analysis of a multiple case study involves multiple analyses within and across cases (Yin, 2009). Specifically, the researcher analyzed data from the two individual interviews, dyadic interview, and identified scriptures of each case to identify the patterns and rich themes unique to each case (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). After completing analysis for the individual cases, the researcher analyzed the patterns and categories that emerged across each case to identify common patterns across cases (Yin, 2009).

Within-Case Analysis

Results of the within-case analysis are based on data obtained for each case. The data sources for each case included an individual interview with the mother of the case, an individual interview with the daughter of the case, an interview with both mother and daughter, and the scriptures provided by mother and daughter. The following section reviews the findings of each within-case analysis.

Case One

In relation to the guiding research questions, the following themes emerged in case one: "my mother never showed any emotion", Strive for the Best, The Strong Black Woman, "the power of a hug at church", and using Scripture to Cope.

Theme 1: "my mother never showed any emotion". The theme of "my mother never showed any emotion" emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Charise and Aniya discuss how messages about not expressing emotion have been modeled and verbally taught by their mothers. While reflecting on what she learned about emotions from her mother, Charise shares:

> "...I just had a conversation with my cousin and she was saying that our family never showed emotion."

Charise also reflects on her mother's emotional expression during the passing of her brother,

> "...my mother never showed any emotion. The only time I saw her emotional…I didn't even see her emotional in the passing of my brother."

Additionally, Aniya reflects on the messages she received for Charise's mother about emotions:

> "She would be able to spin everything and I would get so frustrated. I'm just like,

‘Grandma, I just want to be upset for a quick minute.’ And she's just like, ‘No.’ That just, it wasn't allowed.”

This specific pattern was transmitted through Charise’s modeling of emotional restriction as well as verbal messages related to not showing emotion. In reflecting on what she learned about emotions from her mother, Aniya discusses the absence of messages about emotional expression:

“Nothing, nothing at all. We don't talk about emotions. I feel like I taught my mother about emotions.”

Additionally, Aniya reflects on her family’s expression of love:

“So I told her, I was like, ‘You don't say I love you. I've never heard you say it to me, but you say it to your granddaughter now…All of a sudden you're using the love word. But that's not something that we've ever exchanged’... And then she said, the fact that her mother doesn't say it.”

In recognizing the harm surrounding not expressing emotion, Charise and Aniya have begun to formulate and transmit messages around communicating emotions and caring for themselves. Specifically, Charise reflects on new messages she is actively modeling and for her daughter and grandchildren:

“...even though they didn't get it growing up, when they went away to school, when it was time to go, it was the hug. And when they came back, it was the hug. But now it's like every time. They live in different states, but when we see each other, it's definitely the hug.”

Additionally, Charise discusses the verbal messages she is currently passing to her children about self-care while also recognizing her own role in perpetuating this pattern:

“I keep telling my daughter, stop wearing yourself out. And I know she probably got it

from me, where I never trusted that someone could do it as well."

Aniya has recognized this shift in behavior and reflects on her mother's changed behavior:

"And it took some time. Because at first it was like, 'I love you.' It was like, 'This is fake.' But now we won't leave each other or hang up the phone without saying it.

Furthermore, Aniya discusses her current experience of teaching her godchildren and students about expressing emotions and self-care:

"So I talk to my students about self-care and taking breaks and I implement like, not study sessions, but study breaks…So although, like I said, I don't have children, I do break the cycle in terms of teaching this with my students."

Despite the messages modeled and taught to the women of this family about not expressing emotions, Aniya's awareness of and encouragement to shift this narrative has prompted an intentional change in behavior and new generational message.

Theme 2: Strive for the Best. The theme of Strive for the Best emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Charise and Aniya how messages about familial values of having pride in their heritage and striving for the best have been modeled, verbally taught, and instilled in them by their mothers. Charise shares what she learned from her mother about their heritage:

"My mother had strong roots and she let us know she was from Johns Island, South Carolina. She was a geechee. She made sure we knew about coming from Johns Island…Harlem and Johns Island was instilled in us."

Similarly, Aniya reflects on the transmission of family history her mother has modeled:

"So I grew up in the Blackity-Black, Black, the Black, Black, Black household…I went

to African American school on Saturdays and that was a school where my mother taught…And it was teaching about African American history, and where we came from, and just to build the strength of Black community."

Furthermore, Aniya has recognized and adopted her mother's emphasis on pride in their culture and reflects on her mother's transmission of this message to her grandchildren:

"So I try to, at least with my nieces and nephew, let them know…We need them to know, my mother will do pop quizzes, like, "Do you know what this is? Or do you know what this thing means?" So I do want my kids to know some of the traditions of the family and why it's important."

With pride in their heritage, Charise and Aniya reflect on the clear message passed down from their grandmother about striving for the best. Specifically, in the dyadic interview Aniya explains to her mother how she received the "strive for the best" message through academic expectations:

"I got in trouble. This is you. I got in trouble if I got a B, it was like, well, why isn't it an A?"

Charise, however, discusses the importance of this message based on the cultural experience of being a Black American:

"...I wish I can say now that I'm a grandmother that I could stop this, but we can't. And I don't know when we're going to get to the point where we can teach our children just to be them. What I'm talking about is, we have to teach our children that, and I guess that comes with the good, better, best, we have to teach our children that they have to be the best. We have to teach our children that just because so and so can be the average, you have to be above average."

Additionally, Charise emphasizes this message she received from her mother verbally:

> "The whole thing is, 'Good, better, best, never let it rest until your good is better and your better is best.' And we heard that all out. We always had to strive to do the best."

Although Charise and Aniya have found value in the strong cultural message of "strive for the best" they have both come to recognize the harm of this generational message. Specifically, Charise reflects on the pressure she has put on her daughter:

> "And right, thinking about it now that was just putting more pressure on her, because she was doing everything everywhere else. Because she joins every organization, every committee, every club. And she's always been like that…And the thing is, it's everywhere she goes. And it's every aspect of her life to every member of her family, at work, at school, in organizations. And now I'm telling her, you need to start taking things off your plate"

Aniya also reflects on the internal and external pressure to "strive for the best" she experiences:

> "So I think some of those tools, if I learned it earlier, I wouldn't be as hard on myself, not wanting to disappoint or not wanting to be the best in everyone's eye, because it wasn't just mother and father. I literally had the entire family that had expectations of me, the entire church family that had expectations of me, the entire board of education that had expectations of me because I was involved in so many things that they were like, there were so many eyes on me."

Charise considers the transmission of the "strive for the best" message and recognizes the harm:

> "I have a shopping bag full of books and a laptop, but the whole thing is this, go, go, go that I learned from my mother and [Aniya] learning from both of us, now I'm realizing it's not good."

In her response to her mother, Aniya reflects on her recognition of the harm of “strive for the best” and her conscious effort to not pass on harmful aspect of this message:

> “As much as I continue to do it, because I will keep a research article in my purse. So if I have some downtime, I can use my time wisely. I don't pass it on. So I talk to my students about self care and taking breaks and I implement like, not study sessions, but study breaks. And I tell them, I was like, listen to me, don't watch me. So I'm fully present in that I don't want them to continue this. So although, like I said, I don't have children, I do break the cycle in terms of teaching this with my students…And if they say, "I'm trying to be like you or I see you doing it," I will be very transparent with them, don't be like me.”

Although Charise and Aniya recognize the cultural significance of the “strive for the best” message, they have come to realize the harm that this message of survival can incur.

Theme 3: The Strong Black Woman

The theme of The Strong Black Woman emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Along with the family expectation to “strive for the best” comes the inherent strength that is the foundational principle of the Strong Black Woman narrative. In conjunction with their discussion on this family message, Charise and Aniya discuss the messages surrounding the characteristics of the women in the family that have been modeled including strength, independence, being a caretaker, maintaining an “it takes a village” mentality. Charise reflects on the message of strength that was modeled by her mother:

> “And one thing, I had strong women in my family, my aunts, my mother, my grandmothers. It was strong women.”

Aniya endorses the transmission of strength from her mother when reflecting on specific messages that have been transmitted between the women of her family, “Strength, sometimes to a fault.”

In considering her experience of her mother, Charise reflects on how her mother’s strength coincided with her modeled independence:

> “She was going to do what she needed to do for her family. She was going to do what she needed to do for herself. And that was my role model. So as far as being a woman, I'm like, ‘I can do anything that anybody can do,’ not any woman can do, but anyone can do, because that's what I was taught.”

Aniya reinforces the transmission of independence from her mother when reflecting on specific messages that have been transmitted between the women of her family, “Independence, sometimes to a fault,” and discusses her experience of independence in the dyadic interview:

> “I never delegated it. To that point, I never delegated it. And that was something that she would always say to me in terms of you need to learn to delegate, but I also never trusted that anyone could do it like me.”

With the inherited characteristics of strength and independence, Aniya notes the dominance and leadership of the women of her family:

> “So it was a woman-dominant family. My grandmother was the head of the family. Just thinking about that side of the family, it was a woman-dominant family. Essentially grandma made the decisions.”

Aniya discusses her experience of othermothering in her family:

> “I feel like I have multiple mothers. So as I told you, my mother has two sisters. So they

think they're my mother as well…And my mother just gives them mother rights.

So I have to answer to everybody."

Along with her experience of othermothering, Aniya explains her difficult experience with boundaries:

> And then I had to ask my mother for some boundaries because I'm like, "I don't need y'all to have a conference on decisions I'm making because I'm grown." So my business is all the way out in these streets and I haven't told either of them. So that was really hard for my mother."

Despite this difficulty with boundaries, Aniya and Charise speak highly of their experience of having a village. Specifically, Charise reflects on the village that raised her children:

> "And one thing I can say, and I'm always saying this because I actually say it in church quite often, that my children was raised by the village. It was actually the village that raised my children, especially my mother and my sister. For a long time, my mother lived in a house where she lived upstairs a two family house. So she lived upstairs. My other sister lived downstairs and my other sister lived down the block."

In a dialogue, Charise and Aniya discuss the modeling of the "it takes a village" message:

Aniya: "And I think that's why, I think I said something similar in our last talk, because even things that she didn't necessarily care about, her sisters, my other mothers might have been more strict about."

Charise: "I told you there was a village."

Aniya: "So her other sisters might have been more strict about certain things that

she just was like, nope, it's fine. Or she was just not, didn't even occur to her, for it to be a thing or to be a restriction."

Theme 4: "the power of a hug at church"

The theme of "the power of a hug at church" emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* In relation to their family's village mentality, Charise and Aniya reflect on messages about being involved in the church community that have been modeled by their mothers. Specifically, Charise reflects on her children's involvement in the church community, "they were heavily involved in the church so I felt that the church actually helped raise my children." Aniya confirms her receipt of the modeled message surrounding the importance of the church community, "So I was very consistent with going to church. And that meant something to me, based on how I was raised. And I was active in the church, running ministries".

Additionally, Aniya discusses the emotional support she receives from her church community,

"...and also just the power of a hug at church is, especially if you live alone, and life is rough, and you just like the community of being in church and just like getting that recharge on a Sunday was a refuel for me.'

In the dyadic interview, Charise and Aniya discuss the impact of having a church community in difficult times:

Aniya: "I think about a situation specifically, just to give an example, when my father was in the hospital and my mother yes, is a reverend. But if your husband is in a situation where life is unsure and uncertain, [00:41:30] you still need your pastor. So no matter how many years of seminary, how

many prayers you pray for yourself, how close you are with God, you still need someone to pray for and pray with you during those times. And I knew in that moment, not to call her sisters, not to call my brother. My first call was the pastor. spiritual leader as emotional support And I knew that was the voice that she needed in that moment.

Charise: "It was what I needed where, I'm going to say fortunately and unfortunately, it gave me a release to break down. And I'm saying, fortunately, because I needed to let it out…but that voice gave me permission to go ahead and break down."

Theme 5: Scripture to Cope

The theme of Scripture to Cope emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* In addition to the support of the church community, Charise and Aniya discuss how reading scripture has been a modeled coping mechanism during their dyadic interview. Specifically, Charise discusses a particular scripture she has utilized to manage life difficulties:

"It's Proverbs 3:5-6. And that's trust in Lord with all your heart because we have to trust God in everything. Trust the Lord with all our hearts. Lean not on our own understanding. And I have to keep telling myself, don't try to figure out, God's got this. I have to acknowledge him in all things. He got this. And allow Him to lead my way. And that has brought me through many, many years of thinking I can do it on my own, thinking I know it all, knowing that it's not supposed to be like this, everything's supposed to fall into place because I'm doing the right things. And then I realized that God knew better. So I have to trust him and acknowledge him and let him lead."

Charise accentuates her use of scripture to cope with 2020:

> "And my pastor actually said, "What's your scripture that brought you through 2020?" That brought me through 2020. That brought me through so many things, because I can't lean on my understanding. I have to acknowledge God in all things."

Similarly, Aniya reflects on the modeled message of utilizing scripture to cope, "She [grandmother] would have either a Bible verse or…just a hymn, a verse, a lyric to explain why it's not bad." Aniya also discusses the scriptures she utilizes to manage life difficulties and notes the modeled messages about scripture and spirituality she received from her mother:

> "So a scripture that has helped guide me kind of the grad school and beyond, has been Jeremiah 29:11. 'I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper for you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' And then another one that I think of, that I have up in my office and I used to keep in my car just to keep me from not going rogue is the serenity prayer. And I just remember it being up in the den at home, my mother's space at home. So that in turn me, once I got my first, once I got out of college, I was like, I need this. It just reminded me of home. So I needed it for myself. So just to center me in terms of God giving me the ability to accept the things that I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. I used to repeat that on my way to work. So now I have it in my office. So things need to center. I just look on the wall and that helps me."

Case Two

In relation to the guiding research questions, the following themes emerged in case two: Don't Dwell, "women have a lot of power," Family Sticks Together, God's got it, and Coping through Prayer.

Theme 1: Don’t Dwell. The theme of Don’t Dwell emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Tamika and Sophia discuss how messages about not dwelling on hardships have been modeled and taught by their mothers. Specifically, during their discussion of a family conflict during the dyadic interview, Tamika asserts that she “can’t just dwell on what happened.” Tamika tells her daughter that “To keep my sanity, I have to let it go.” Specifically, Tamika discusses her need to move forward after an abusive relationship.

> “Let me put it to you like this. I'll never forget it, never. As long as I am here. There's time when you can say something and then it'll take me back. And I might say, ‘Well, so, so, so, so. I don't want to hear this.’ Because I know what I went through. I know I went through abusive relationship. That was just it. But in order for me to move forward, I had to put that behind me. Long as don't nobody mention it to me, it don't cross my mind. And that's the only way I can move. I couldn't sit there and dwell, it would've hurted me.”

With this, Sophia reflects on the modeled messages she received from her mother about not seeking help. Specifically, Sophia identifies the message of “it’s not okay to seek help” as one she received from her mother:

> You can have emotion, that's fine. You can cry, you can be mad, whatever. Now, you don't need to be thinking. You don't need to be saying stuff like you got anxiety or anything, any symptom that looks like a actual diagnosis or something that you think might be a diagnosis. You don't need to be saying that stuff. And if you say stuff like, "I feel depressed." No, the devil is a lie. You can't say that stuff. She has a lot of stigma,

basically, around mental health. And that has played into whether or not a person should seek help."

Furthermore, Sophia, a mental health professional, discusses her belief that her mother suffers from depression, "I think my mom had clinical depression throughout my life, but she's never been diagnosed. I think she still has it, but she won't go seek help."

Tamika's message about not dwelling on hardships and emotions has been recognized by Sophia. However, Sophia has also recognized that her mother's stigma about mental health has kept her from seeking the help she may have needed.

Theme 2: "women have a lot of power." The theme of "women have a lot of power" emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Tamika and Sophia discuss how messages about strength have been modeled, verbally taught, and "inherited" from their mothers. Specifically, Tamika reflects on the message her mother taught her about believing in herself that she taught her children:

And their words were, they would come and they would say, 'Well, mama, I can't do this.' 'Yes, you can. Don't never let someone tell you, you can't do something. You can do it. If you put your mind to it, you can do it.' And that's what I always told them. 'Never say never. Because until you try, you don't know what you can do, really.' There was things I felt like I couldn't do, but I never gave up. I kept going and I did. So that's what I taught them. Because that's what way I was taught."

Sophia confirms that she received this message from her mother, "And she also instilled in me this idea that nothing's impossible," and also identifies another salient message of financial responsibility her mother taught her, "my mom was really responsible financially and taught me

how to balance a checkbook and pay the bills and that stuff at a young age." Additionally, Sophia discusses the modeled message of getting an education she received from her grandmother modeled this lesson:

> "...she actually didn't graduate high school until she was, I think she was about 47. She went back and got her GED. And I would never forget that because when she did it, she looked at all her grandkids and she was like, 'If I did it, you can finish school too.' She was getting her GED while I was in high school. And I remember going to her graduation... I remember it like it was yesterday. And it was an important part of my life because what she was saying is, it's never too late to change and to achieve whatever your goals are."

Tamika also received this message from her mother about the importance of education, "What my mother did when the last child graduated from high school, my mother went to school and got her GED and graduated." And explicitly recognizes the lesson as once she received and also taught her children, "Because she instilled us to get an education and that's what I did for my kids."

With messages of nothing is impossible, striving for an education and financial responsibility have also come messages about strength and hard work. Tamika states "I know my mama was a strong woman." Sophia also reflects,

> "I've always sort of thought about also maybe I got some of that from them, and didn't even realize it because I'm a very strong, matriarchal kind of figure in my immediate household here."

Sophia also discussed the modeled message of hard work she received from her mother, "My mom was a hard worker, She worked a lot her whole life."

She also commented on the impact of her mother's work ethic,

"She really wasn't active in my life. I lived with her my whole life but she wasn't really active and understanding what was going on in my life and the different things that I was, as I was developing, the different things I was learning or the challenges that I had. She was really unaware because she was at work all the time…"

Alongside her mother's work ethic, Sophia also received modeled messages of integrity from her mother,

"But the part of just working and earning, your keep and... Being a owner of something, that is definitely something that I learned from her and just the integrity of it. My mom has a lot of integrity, too much integrity. mother's traits - integrity But people will tell you that are in the field with me, I definitely took that from her…And I want to share that with my children because I think that's also important for all parts of their lives."

As a woman of integrity, Tamika discussed the family message of respect she received from her mother, "But she always told us, "You always show respect for everybody." When reflecting on the lessons she learned from her mother, Tamika reports the message of "to always respect themselves" as one that she has also taught her children. With such prevalent messages about the strength, integrity, and respect passed down between the women of this family, Sophia recognized the power that Black women have:

"And the thing that I was thinking about is I feel like the women, black women, how we define family and how we navigate family and what that is and how that looks and works, has a lot to do with what family is. Think whether we have children or not, or

whether we're the auntie or the niece or the daughter, the women in black families really do have a lot of power in the family dynamics."

Theme 3: Family Sticks Together. The theme of Family Sticks Together emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* As powerful figures in their family, Tamika and Sophia discussed how messages about caretaking and family closeness have been modeled and verbally taught by their mothers. Specifically, Tamika reflected on a message she was taught about family sticking together, "I was just taught we was a family, we did for each other." Tamika reiterates this message in the dyadic interview, "we are family, we stick together," and reflects on her closeness to her mother, "As people used to say, 'When you seen one, you seen the other.' That's how close I was to my mom." In their closeness, Tamika's mother was integral in the care of her children, "When we went to work, we didn't have to pay her. If she needed to keep them overnight, she would keep them overnight. Because as she'd say, 'We are family, we have to stick together.'

Tamika also discusses the caretaking role her mother modeled for their immediate family as well as the community,

"Actually, that was all our babysitter. We never took our kid to a daycare or babysitter. She was one that took care while we were working. She didn't mind. And they called her, Gran Gran. Even other kids in the neighborhood would call her, Gran Gran."

Sophia recognized Tamika's receipt and internalization of this message as she commented on her mother's role as caretaker within her family.

"And I'm saying that too, just thinking about like my mom said, her being the oldest and

taking care of her siblings. One of my aunts is definitely, this is thanks to my mom, partly. Their parents, of course, raised them, but my mom, she's not going to toot her own horn, but she's the oldest. And so the age difference is so far in between that like she said, she bought class rings for some of her siblings. She has worked and she's raised multiple families is the thing. And so she really has been influential and she has... I always say I'm a first generation college student, but the truth is my mom made sure and helped…her younger sister got... The first person was her sister who's been an RN now for over what? 20, 30 years."

While Tamika has worked hard to care for her family, she also recognizes her tendency to put others first, "but if somebody need me, I'm there for them and I let whatever I got going, just go…I put others before I put myself. I'm not selfish at all." Sophia endorses this trait in her mother but also notes the harm in this habit, "I think for my mom, yes, she definitely has everything she said about sacrificing and putting others first. That's true about her, but I think it's been detrimental in many ways." Sophia goes on to reflect on her mother being a SBW and putting others first has had a negative financial impact,

"Mom, I'm thinking about how you worked so hard to acquire the things that you did. And I know it's just material stuff, but I always think about how hard you work as a single parent, all those hours for very little pay in that factory and how you were able to buy your land and buy your home. And for that to be snatched from you by your own family in a sense, and you were being a strong black woman about it."

While Tamika takes great pride in the self-sacrifice of being a Strong Black Woman, Sophia noted the generational harm associated with putting others first, "it didn't actually happen to me, but in a sense, it did happen to me because I'm your heir."

Theme 4: God's got it. The theme of "God's got it" emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Tamika and Sophia discuss how messages about faith have been modeled and taught by their mothers. Specifically, when reflecting on the family conflict over land, Tamika noted, "I'm okay with it. God took care of me." Furthermore, Tamika reflects on the lesson her mother taught her about coping with the difficulties of being a Black mother,

> "At time it gets hard on you. But I have always learned the way my mother, mother told us…you give your problem to God, coping strategy - give it to God let him solve it. She would, 'It's not going to be easy, but you got to give it to him.' And that's what I do."

In discussing the messages she received from her mother, Sophia reflects on her mother's modeled messages about utilizing faith to cope with trauma,

> "...she had a lot of trauma and she overcame that and that's where her faith kind of kicked in because when I was young, she was in a relationship that was domestic violence. And she never really talks about that, by the way. But she might talk about that in our interview. I don't know. I doubt it. But in that relationship, I think her faith really kicked up because in order for her to leave and stay out of it, it took a lot."

Sophia also recognized her receipt of this modeled message as she also utilizes faith to overcome challenges, "My mom, she also, in terms of my faith, I think I also find myself being more, leaning in my faith for overcoming things, challenges."

Theme 5: Coping through Prayer. The theme of Coping through Prayer emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* In addition to their use of faith to cope, Tamika

and Sophia discussed how messages about using prayer as a coping strategy have been taught by their mothers. Sophia notes, "...I definitely find myself praying more…when I'm going through something." Sophia also reflected on her mother's messages about using prayer to cope that may not be as helpful,

> "And I remember reaching out to her one time when I really strongly wanted to make an attempt. I never made an attempt, but I remember one particular time where I really strongly wanted to. And I reached out to her and I had a plan and she was like, 'You just need to pray.' And I was like, 'Yeah, that's not... I already did that. It's not going to help right now.'"

However, Tamika reflected on how prayer has been an integral part of her life as it helped her cope with her mother's passing.

> "It bothered me at first because when my mother passed it was during the pandemic and I wasn't able to go home. But I prayed about it. I prayed about it and it took me a while, but I understand. And that's what helped me get through it."

Case Three

In relation to the guiding research questions, the following themes emerged in case three: Pride in Identity, Lessons of Liberation, Faith Shapes Identity, Church Involvement Strengthens Faith, and Prayer to Cope.

Theme 1: Pride in Identity. The theme of Pride in Identity emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Mildred and Grace discuss how messages about having pride in their identity have been modeled and verbally taught through their close

relationships with their mothers. Mildred discussed the cultural norm of her mother's role as caretaker led to a close relationship,

"You're going to get a strong cultural lens here. In the Caribbean, it was not the norm for mothers to work…The norm was more most females worked up until they got married, and then until they got pregnant. Then, most stayed home with their kids. I grew up with that…it was a norm for me seeing it. My mom did it and did it well, and never worked outside of the home…We'd come home. She'd help with homework. We hung out. I grew up with my mom as my best friend, but as a mom, not as a friend."

As a positive modeled message, Mildred continued the family norm of mother as caretaker.

"Even though I knew I wanted to be home with the girls, I found a job that I could do. And as I said, even with the master's degree, I found a job I could do that was part-time that allowed me to be the kind of mom I wanted to be, right? I think that was part of that message that I do want to be... I wanted them to have the experiences I had with my mom, that knowing that she was always there. She helped us through everything. When we got home in the evenings after school, she was there. Dinner was cooked. The house was clean. So I wanted all of that for my kids."

Part of Mildred's closeness with her mother included her mother's fierce support,

"But I will tell you the one thing I did learn from her transmitted messages that no matter what I said, especially if somebody did something, it's like you're complaining about you're angry because somebody did you wrong, or that kind of a thing, or somebody hurt you. My mom was a little hell cat. How dare you? Blah, blah, blah. You've been doing it wrong. She would just go in to this litany of 100% support for me."

Mildred took this modeled message and transmitted it to her daughter, “When they were younger, it was that same, that 100% support. How dare they? I will fight for you. You tell me how I can fight for you.”

Grace discussed how she received this message from her mother as they navigated racism,

> “I remember when I was in... I don't know if it was elementary school, middle school, she could tell you she was really mad about it. But one of the two, somebody called me an Oreo, and I was like, ‘Okay, whatever.’… And I went home and told her about it, and she was like, ‘And what does that mean?’ And so I told her and she was like, ‘Oh no, no, no, no, you need to go back and tell them this.’"

Additionally, Grace reflected on the unsolicited and valuable wisdom she receives from her mother, “She'll pick up the phone and be like, ‘...I got to tell you something.’ And she'll just start saying something and it'll be a whole gem of a message, and I'm like, ‘Okay, I got it, I'm here, I'm listening.’"

Through closeness with their mothers, Mildred and Grace have garnered an emotional intelligence. Mildred reflected on how her mother modeled this message when faced with difficult emotions, “I was allowed to talk it out. She was more the sounding board. Right? And was never quick to jump in and give advice.” Grace discussed how Mildred has modeled this same message for her,

> “So I'm in college, I get a bad grade, I blow up. I'm depressed, I'm whatever, I can't handle my own self. I'm in my bed, I'm flunking out of the class. That is a trajectory that we see all the time for people that have parents who handled their emotions, and that was never something that she did for us. And she was always like,

"Okay, so what are you going to do about it?" It was always put back on us, it wasn't a thing she handled. So those two things I think were the most important things that she really taught me on how to handle emotions and deal with them appropriately."

Grace also reflected on how her mother created her to be emotionally intelligent,

> "My mom has always been the mom who is like, 'I'm here for you, I'm going to listen to you, but you have a time a of when you can be sad, and you have a time when you can be angry, you have a time for emotions but you have to make a choice and a change, and you have to do that in a way that is going to be good.' And I think she really taught me it's okay to feel your emotions, but it's what you do with it that matters. And so even from a young age, we all... We talk about emotional intelligence now, especially in the school counseling world, that's all I talk about, emotional intelligence. And I think, really and truly, she created me to be emotionally intelligent."

Additionally, Grace learned how to manage her emotions in the face of oppression from her mother. She reflected,

> "And just getting to watch her have to jump through hoops that should not have had to have been jumped through just because she was a black woman. And I just remember sitting back and having a conversation and her and I was like, 'That's not fair. That's not fair. Why does this person just automatically get to go through, but you have to jump through the hoop? That doesn't make sense.' And she was like, 'That's just how it is.' And once again it was that she can be angry about it, but it's what you do about it."

With these messages surrounding emotional intelligence that Grace intends to pass to her children, "I would just want to be able to create a safe space where emotions can be talked about

and dealt with in an appropriate way," Mildred and Grace have also gained a pride in their identity. Mildred noted an intentional message she taught her daughters to combat oppression,

> "I think that's one of the things that I did not have a playbook for. Again, I couldn't ask my friends. One of my closest friends had boys. It was a totally different experience. But being able to say to them you are strong, you are intelligent, you are... We traveled a lot. So, you're well read. You're well traveled. Don't let anybody put you down for who you are…".

In reflecting on what she learned from her mother, Grace confirmed she has received this message,

> "She taught me that being a black woman is such a privilege because you get to just be this beautifully melanated person in the world, and you get to be different and you get to have a chance to show people this different side of culture that they typically don't get to see. And I think she just really taught me the power of being who you are, and not dimming who you are to fit the mold of what other people are expecting to see. So she was always the advocate for just being the black person you are, and if people love you, they love you, and if they don't, they don't. And just standing in that truth of, 'No, this is what it is, and you need to get your life together, because that's not what it is.'"

Theme 2: Lessons of Liberation. The theme of Lessons of Liberation emerged in response to the following research questions: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Mildred and Grace discussed the modeled messages of independence and respect. Although Mildred's mother modeled dependence,

> "I did not like how dependent she was on my dad. If she wanted to go to the grocery

store, he had to take her. She can just pick up and go. She wanted to go visit her sisters in the Caribbean, even when we're living in Trinidad. If she wanted to go visit her sisters, she had to ask when he could take her, or if we could take her out."

Mildred made the conscious decision to not perpetuate the message of dependence, "I think my mom depended on my dad a lot and I did not want that for me and I did not want that for my girls," and as a result taught her daughters messages that promote independence, "That independence, I guess probably that comes in with that wealth and that building equity and stuff. Never wait on a man to be your security." In their dyadic interview, Grace noted the clear modeled message of independence she received from Mildred, "I definitely do think she's independent. That's one of the things that I for sure got from her. She's the most independent woman that I know."

Additionally, Mildred instilled the importance of hardwork and perseverance. Specifically, Grace reflected on her mother's modeled messages to her,

> "She's shown me how to be a hard worker and how to go for the things that I want. My sister and my dad make fun of me all the time because they're like, 'You're just like your mother,' and I'm like, 'I know I am. I know I am.' But she really has just taught me how to go for the things that I want and to not stop myself short. The only reason why I even am in the career path that I am in is because she pushed me into it."

The last lesson of liberation, respect, began with Mildred's mother who "commanded respect." Mildred pointed out that, "My dad would not mess with her," to punctuate the clear modeled message of respect. Now, Mildred continues the message through verbal teachings,

> "Those conversations I've had with my girls from young, because again, I wanted that foundation to be set from very early in life, so that no matter what they went through,

that was a given, that that was part of who they...that came up through their pores. Never be disrespected. Never let a man disrespect you. Never let a man hit to you. And not even hit, just touch you in anger. And be proud of who you are."

Theme 3: Faith Shapes Identity. The theme of Faith Shapes Identity emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Mildred and Grace discussed the modeled and verbal messages passed down about their faith and identity. These messages have culminated in a generational legacy of faith which started with Mildred's mother,

"It started with her as a mom because her parents, she got kicked out of her house when she became a Christian. They kicked her out. They're like, 'You're not going to church and staying in this house.' And she had to go live with her sister. She fought hard for that lifestyle."

The lifestyle Mildred's mother fought for has also been taught to Grace, who reflected on how her grandmother has modeled faith,

"We always joke she has a direct line to Jesus. Because she asks for something in prayer and it's done, it is done. And we don't ever have to second guess that, question it. She says, 'God told me.' We're like, 'Yes, ma'am. He told you and it's done…' She always showed me how to just unapologetically love Jesus, and to love him in a way that wasn't in your face at people, but also was just this kind, nurturing piece of loving Jesus. And she, I think, was the first real definition for me of being the hands and feet of Jesus in a loving, kind, nurturing way that wasn't just serving. It was I'm going to be the love of Jesus, I'm going to be the heart of Jesus, I'm going to be the praying warrior of Jesus, I'm going to be the peace of Jesus."

With this legacy, Mildred and Grace have grounded their identity in their faith. Midred reflected on how her solidified faith helped combat racial prejudices,

> "But then, when I moved to the United States, I start doubting my worth because of the racial prejudices. Those lessons came to the forefront that I am worthy in Christ, that as a Christian, I have worth and value. Even if people don't see it, I know it's there, that my parents see it, that they've taught me to respect myself and to respect my stance and my view."

Grace received the same message,

> "And it was this subliminal message that was kind of passed on. It wasn't like my mom was like 'You're a child of God, know who you are.' There were a couple times it was that, but it was just seeing my mom model that in her marriage, seeing my grandma model that in her marriage, seeing how they walked outside of the…box of their marriage. As individuals, as a married couple, as a friend, as a sister, as a mom, whatever it may be, what area it may be, where that self-worth comes in and how we act on that."

Mildred and Grace also note that their coping mechanism of having faith in God also produces their strength. Grace reflected on how the strength she has observed in her mother comes from Jesus,

> "I think the way that she is strong is different because it's rooted in Jesus and it's not just a, 'I'm strong on my own and I can take care of everything on my own.' It's a strong in, 'I know I have this help in Jesus.' So, it's different."

Mildred recognized her modeled messages about faith and strength have been received by her daughters,

> "...I really believe it's because of their faith, as they see their value in Christ. So it's not

like a drummed up kind of a, "I'm strong. I'm this. I'm that. Look what I've accomplished or look..." It has nothing to do with that. It's about who they are in Christ and the value they have in Christ."

Mildred also discussed the lesson she received from her mother about utilizing faith to get through difficult times and believing that God has a plan,

> "With difficult situation, we walked it through with faith. I learned to walk through difficult situations with faith. Just understand God has a plan. Right? You may not understand why this is happening now, but you will see it. I promise you, you will see it."

Additionally, Mildred reflected on her modeled messages of faith she passed to her daughters as Grace managed a difficult situation, "But I would pray with them. I think that was something that they knew that was always there, that they had their faith to fall back on in the hard times." Grace reinforced this message learned from her mother and grandmother as she reflects on her belief that "we have a God who is going to handle it for us."

Theme 4: Church Involvement Strengthens Faith. The theme of Church Involvement Strengthens Faith emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* As an integral part of their identity, Mildred and Grace also discussed the importance of church involvement and a personal relationship with God. Specifically, Mildred discussed the intentional message she modeled and verbally taught Grace about being involved in church,

> "...we had a conversation with them that, "Look, you live in our house. We feed you. We clothe you. We pay for your education. We do all of this stuff and there is an expectation that you go to church every Sunday. You don't have to like it. You don't have

to listen. You don't have to be involved. We don't care. You will be there. That is because you're part of our family and that is the expectation. So, deal with it."

Mildred also discussed, however, the message she instilled about having a personal relationship with God, “We were very, very careful about not making our faith their faith, but having them have their own experiences with that and giving them the space to have their own experiences with that.”

Grace reflected on how the family requirement of church attendance positively impacted her life,

> “Even though it was so annoying as a kid, and we were like, ‘We just want to go home and eat. We don't want to be here anymore. We feel we live at the church.’ But just knowing that that small, simple... I don't want to say request, it was not a request, they made us do it. It's that small, simple, requirement for us changed the trajectory of my life, realistically for the better because I had that foundation, and I had a deeper foundation than just coming and being a spectator at church, and I had to involve myself.”

Grace also noted, “And I think that is one of the main reasons why I still have a relationship with Jesus, because I was so invested and involved in ministries from a young age.”

Grace went on to discuss her intentions to teach her children about the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus,

> “And so I would want my kids to understand their relationship with Jesus isn't going to be the relationship I have with Jesus, it's not going to be the relationship that their grandma has with Jesus, or their great grandma or their aunt or their uncle or whoever it may be. It has to be your own, and you have to figure out what that means to you and what each thing means to you.”

Theme 5: Prayer to Cope. The theme of Prayer to Cope emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* With a personal relationship with God, Mildred and Grace utilize prayer to cope with life's uncertainties. Specifically, Grace reflected on the generational message about utilizing prayer to cope that has been passed down,

> "I think some of the most important things that have been passed down from my grandma to my mom to me, and even to my aunts, some of them have even said things to me in conversations that I know come from my grandmother. And I think it's just, one, the importance of prayer, and how we truly do not have to sit in this place of worry"

Mildred also reflected on how she modeled the use of prayer to cope when Grace was managing a difficult situation,

> "We would pray it through. And be real about it, not just like, 'Oh, Holy Father,' blah, blah, blah. But I mean like, 'God, you know what? This girl is pissing my daughter off and I am so sorry this is happening. Lord, she had the most horrid roommates in college. I was like, 'So sorry this is happening. Just give my daughter strength and grace.' Then, my other daughter was like, 'God, I hate that this is happening with her. I pray that you…' But I would pray with them."

Furthermore, Grace emphasized the power of prayer she learned from her mother and grandmother,

> "I understand the concept of what prayer can do in your life. That's the only reason why I can even have a conversation about this now, because I knew that I was going to be okay no matter how I was feeling in the moment about what was going on in my life."

Case Four

In relation to the guiding research questions, the following themes emerged in case four: Ingenuity, Community. The Strong Black Woman, Emotional Awareness and Help Seeking, and God is in Control.

Theme 1: Ingenuity. The theme of Ingenuity emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Specifically, Debra and Sydney discuss the multiple roles of SBW that require independence, resourcefulness, strength, and perseverance. Debra reflects on the modeled message she received from her mother about independence,

> "And that's one thing I've learned too, independence. I've also learned too that it's important to have your own and to be able to support yourself and not to be able to have to rely on somebody, but sometimes too I think I learned that a little bit too well because sometimes I have the notion that, you know what? I could just do this. I could just take care of myself."

Sydney confirmed this generational message, "I think the women of my family are very self-reliant in a good way. They try to always use their own resources…So I think we pass down that spirit of kind of like doing it yourself and really almost like just engineering our own kind of experiences and livelihoods and things like that."

As independent and resourceful women, Debra and Sydney discuss the messages of strength, perseverance and confidence that have been modeled and verbally taught throughout generations. Sydney noted, "I do have a lot of strong women in my family," and in the dyadic interview asserted, "I feel like almost to exist as a Black woman, especially in America is to have

a degree of strength." Furthermore, Sydney reflected on the modeled message of perseverance she received from her mother,

> "She's like, 'You have the brain power, you have the grace from God, just figure it out and get it done.' Because she never let any of those things hinder her, being Black, being a woman, she's like, 'We're just going to just get it done.'"

Lastly, Debra discussed the messages she received from her mother that she made sure to pass down to her daughter,

> "being happy with who you are, knowing that you are beautiful and you're smart and you're intelligent, and that you could do anything in this life that you set out to do. Set your goals high and don't be disappointed if you don't achieve those goals. Enjoy life and don't allow anybody to make you think that you are less than who you are.

The generational traits recognized are not only akin to the SBW narrative, but aid in fulfilling the multiple roles of SBW. Debra noted, "And that's what we have to be. We have to be all things to all people," and discusses the roles she fulfills, "Because I sometimes laugh because sometimes I'm a plumber around here, I'm the computer technician, do the laundry. I go outside and fix things…". However, Debra asserted that part of being a SBW involves being a caretaker,

> "And being there for other people, because it's definitely about being there for other people and extending yourself to help others when you see that there's a need. Because it's not always about yourself. Part of the purpose that God brought us here is to be here to help others."

Theme 2: Community. The theme of Community emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* As an integral aspect of the SBW narrative and experience,

Debra and Sydney discussed the messages they have received regarding othermothering, love, and community. Specifically, Debra discussed the other caretakers in her life,

> "...my grandmother was one of them. She was also a Christian…my grandmother was very strong and she was such a sweet lady… And then I also had some aunts that were also there that helped me."

Debra also recognized the message of unconditional love she learned from her aunts,

> "And my mom was the youngest daughter, so they did just always embraced her and I just learned from watching them. And although sometimes too it was very challenging for them to be around her, it was still unconditional love and they loved her and me too, I love my mother."

With these messages, Sydney has also learned about the importance of community. During the dyadic interview she remarked,

> "I think that's one thing that's unique to the black experience is... I don't want to say it's always universal, but I feel like specifically with Black women, we typically look out for each other. We don't tend to be as standoffish. There's always been a strength in the community of helping each other. It's not so much like we're always competing against each other or things like that. It's like you see your sister, you help your sister. So I feel like that's one thing that's pretty distinct about the way that we are."

Theme 3: The Strong Black Woman. The theme of The Strong Black Woman emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Specifically, during the dyadic interview Sydney identified herself as a SBW, "I would say so, more or less, and Debra

concurs, “I would say I identify as a strong, Black woman,”. With this, the pair recognize the positive aspects of being a SBW and discuss their pride in their identity. Sydney remarks,

> “So I think that it gives us too, almost a relatability with more people because being a woman one is like a sisterhood in itself, and being black is also its own fraternity, sorority. So I think it's a way too where we're able to connect on a different level with more people because we meet those two demographics.

Additionally, Debra shared her pride in her identity as a Black woman,

> “And as a woman of color and I don't think my color has stopped me from enjoying who I am, because like I said, I love being Black. And I grew up during the times when James Brown had that song, Say It Loud I'm Black And I'm Proud, and I was like, Yes.’ And I think I'm one of those where you can't say it even more louder than now, I'm Black and I'm proud. And you can see from my hair and anything else on me that I'm Black and I'm proud and I love it. And so I know too that it's not so much about what's the outside of you, it's also the inside the heart and the spirit of God that makes the world a difference.”

However, Debra and Sydney also recognize the difficulties of being a Black woman. Sydney noted, “the world kind of doesn’t acknowledge us,” and asserts, “I feel like it's very easy to be...invisible as a Black female in a work setting.” More specifically, Sydney recalled an experience at work,

> “So it came to a point where my coworker got fired and then my boss left, my supervisor left, so it was just me. So I was literally sitting there every day. I knew that I did not have the luxury to just sit there and not do anything, even though no one was there to supervise me.”

In their dyadic interview, Sydney also noted her mother's lack of self care, "I guess maybe she could be stronger in extending the care she gives to others to herself," in which Debra responded,

> "It's funny you say that too, because I think one area that I just thought of that I could be stronger at, and that's to say no. And I'm learning that because a lot of times too, when you say yes to things and there is a level of suffering that comes with that…".

Theme 4: Emotional Awareness and Help Seeking. The theme of Emotional Awareness and Help Seeking emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* As part of her mother's caring for herself, Sydney discussed the modeled messages she received about limiting emotional expression,

> "I guess, she would get to a point where she's like, 'Well, you need to just pray about it.' And depending on how emotional she was at the time about whatever was going on in her life, she would just either just skip all that and be like, 'Well, just pray about it. I'm going through something right now, you need to take this to the Lord because I going to have to pass.' So sometimes it could feel a little dismissive, but also, she's a person too so it's like as I've gotten older, it's like she only has so much capacity to help you."

Despite this, Sydney noted that her mother has modeled an openness to talking about emotions, "I feel like during different periods of time, my mom, typically, was someone you could come to with your emotions and talk to her about it."

Although discussing emotions has been a modeled message, the pair reflect on the unawareness and stigma of mental health treatment. Sydney reflected on her grandmother's experience of mental health,

> "And I feel like, in a way, she's kind of like a product of the times. Her being a Black

woman, I feel like in the Black community, we don't always like to acknowledge mental health or want to label people and put a stigma. So I feel like in her life, it may have been a thing where people clearly saw she was not okay, but they were like, 'She's fine. Ain't nothing wrong with her' and things like that. But clearly, she's not very well when it comes to that. So yeah, I think her being a Black woman specifically has a big impact on how her mental health was treated from the beginning of her life."

Sydney noted that she intends to end the generational message of not seeking help,

> "So I think that's one thing I would probably not try to pass down from my mom. I think she is a very strong person and a very spiritual faith oriented person. But I think there have been times in her life, and especially considering the way she grew up with her mother, that she probably should seek some kind of help or guidance as far as that goes."

However, the modeled message of mental health stigma is shifting as the pair have adapted and intend to perpetuate the new message of caring for one's mental health. Debra notes that her family could have benefited from therapy when her parents got a divorce, "I only wish …growing up…I had had therapy or had the opportunity to talk to somebody about the issues that I had growing up as a young, Black woman, coming from parents that are divorced." Additionally, Sydney noted the message about mental health she has tried to impress on her mother, "...yeah, I think I've been trying to impress upon her a bit more like you can prayerfully go seek treatment," and noted the new messages she will teach her children,

> "I would want to tell them that it's important that if you're going through something to not necessarily keep it to yourself, because I feel like holding in certain emotions or things like that is, one, not physically healthy for you.... And I feel like I would want

them to speak to me about it, but if it's not something that they would think I could handle or want to share, I would want to go seek someone out to help them."

Theme 5: God is in Control. The theme of God's in Control emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Debra and Sydney discussed the modeled and verbal messages they received about the importance of their spirituality in their life experience. Debra reflected on her mother's modeled message of church involvement, "she made sure we went to church, her and my father took us to church. Every Sunday my mom was the... musical director and my father was a deacon in a church. So we grew up in a church," and asserted, "I know it has impacted me in a good way, in a positive way." From this, Debra asserted her current spiritual beliefs,

> "the center of your joy has to be Jesus. And that's what helps keep you grounded, especially now with this pandemic and all these things that are going on, and this holiday season that people are finding so much joy in the things of this world, but then when the season is over, they're going to go back to the way they were before. And then it's onto the next season. But we don't have these seasons, it's a 365 day of the year relationship with God where we can experience joy and happiness all the time.

Sydney exhibited her receipt of her mother's message about spirituality,

> "So I feel like just thinking on those things helps you put in perspective everything that's going on and it gives you a peace to know that God is in control of all those things, even though they seem to be out of control. So he's got a purpose, he's got a time, and he's in charge of even these evil principalities and things that are trying to come against the earth…So I think it gives me of just a foundation of just comfort to know that these things are out of my control or at least in God's control."

Case Five

In relation to the guiding research questions, the following themes emerged in case five: Caretaking, Harm in Putting Others First, Lessons for Survival, "How can I make it without God?", and "Just keep praying".

Theme 1: "Because That's What I am." The theme of "Because That's What I am" emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Specifically, Brenda and Briana discussed the lessons that were modeled and taught about being a Strong Black Woman. Brenda asserted in the dyadic interview, "...that's what I am," and noted "My mother was a very strong, Black woman, so I got that from her, so that's it." Briana also identifies with the SBW narrative and comments on the multiple roles of SBW, "Yeah, I think so. How so? Just naturally feeling like you got to... These are different roles you have to play, whether it's being a mom, being a working career woman, being a wife." Additionally, Briana noted the lessons about being a SBW she learned from her mother, "Hard work pays off and that you work, you balance it all, you make a way, you pray about it."

In balancing it all, Brenda and Briana also learned about being a caretaker. Specifically, Brenda asserted her identification as a SBW and notes, "I've always put other people first and I am very caring and taking care of everybody else before myself." Brenda reflected on this modeled message of caretaking she received from her mother,

> "But it was naturally with my mom, so she took care of everybody too. So she had 13 of us plus she took care of everybody else. So I think I just wanted to be like her so bad. And basically, I am like her."

Brenda highlighted how she is like her mother in discussing her experience with her fostered and adopted children,

> "They didn't have no structure, because they was put in foster homes, until I decided, you're not going to another foster home, you are staying here. I adopted two together…they always say today we know we gave you problems. My own boys aren't given me no problems Phew, I think I cheated my own kids, sometimes I hear them talk about it…Oh, I feel bad sometimes. But they accepted them as a family…when my kids get together they say things like, 'Oh wow, there was always somebody else in the house.'"

While Briana admires this trait in her mother, she has found her own way of caring for others that she is also teaching her children,

> "I admire that about my mom, for sure, just the fact that she... Even that, the heart and energy to take in foster kids. As we all know, foster kids come with a lot of stuff, which is probably why I don't go there in a way. But I will say I definitely take on that spirit of doing good because good will come back."...I find myself helping people in other ways, but definitely not taking care of people, like nah, I don't have that energy. Like she said, it is very draining. But I do do for people, like I'll donate, I'll go to community service, I'll try to teach the kids how to donate too, or just to stay involved in doing things, but not in the way that she's definitely raised us to."

Theme 2: Harm in Putting Others First. The theme of Harm in Putting Others First emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Brenda reflected on the message she received about putting others first within her experience of childhood abuse,

"... I come from a very abusive family where my dad beat my mom and us every day…No matter what we did, we got beat. abusive house I got so beat so much where I run away, ran away from home and my brothers would especially come and find me. I always went through woods trying to run away…and remembering a great thing my mother said and what she taught me…asking me not to ever hate my dad and take care of him… So being an abusive child and seeing my mother get beat and slammed every day, it wasn't easy. And she still got up and smiled when she was bleeding. So I've learned to take that and be stronger."

From this, Brenda noted the patterns of abuse she has repeated, "making me to think that evil when my father wanted to come out of me at times, and he did" as well as the pattern of abuse she also fell into, "And at first, it seemed like I was running into similar relationships, you know? I mean, I had to find myself again. It took a long time."

Briana confirmed this pattern of abuse,

"She wasn't physically abusive to us. She wasn't like her dad, but she was verbally abusive and it was because of the trauma. She won't even remember what, how bad she cussed us out…I know it was, she, it wasn't herself and she wasn't there because as soon she'd do it, it's like look at her, and she's not there. She would go back to her father doing it and remember that behavior. She never really apologized, but she had her way of making up for when things went that way."

Additionally, Brenda reflected on how her mother modeled putting self before others,

"Whether she was sick or in pain, whatever, she was always listening and wanting to help us and trying to make escape for us, and try to do everything she could to do for us. And she just did so much, she forgot about herself and I don't want to be like that. She

died pretty early, pretty, pretty early. So I don't want to be there in that way, in that sense."

However, she continued to put others before herself, "And then I have a habit of telling people, 'Oh, you know…you call me and I'll come through again.' I find myself taking on too many people, so I'm like, 'I need to stop. I need to stop.'"

Theme 3: Lessons for Survival. The theme of Lessons for Survival emerged in response to the following research question: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Specifically, and likely due to her own trauma, Brenda taught her children messages about resisting abusive relationships,

"Don't let nobody hit on you and curse you out and slap you around, if you with a partnership and he ain't or she's not you know, supporting you, run from that. I mean there's nothing in the bible saying that you got to stay in an abusive relationship. Even if it is not abusive, sometimes it can be mental. Don't stay in something that's not good for you, you feel bad about it, it ain't good. Leave it. I don't tell em, to leave, but I'm like, make up your mind what you need to do fix it. But just don't just drown in it. So I've taught them don't never let nobody belittle them, and make them feel like they just caved in with that person. You ain't obligated to be with nobody…We are only here with Gods grace for a short time. And that time you have not to be abused, and not to be sad every day…That's what I teach them, just be, don't be in a relationship that's miserable."

With this, Brenda also verbally taught and modeled emotional expression,

"So I tell them, I said, and the girls too, I said if you get hurt, or somebody hurt you, cry,

let it out, doesn't mean you have to keep crying, and there will be nights you gonna wake up crying, but that doesn't mean that it's not good to cry, and it's not good to be happy, and stuff like that."

Despite this message she provided, Brenda noted, " I got a few kids that don't show emotions at all, no they don't show them." Of which, Briana explained,

> "my mom is very, well back then when she was very emotional…She would cry…scream… fuss. She was very emotional…probably had a lot to do with her trauma…but what it did to me was it numbed me emotionally. I learned so much from her and her emotions that I did not want those same things."

However, with her extensive trauma history, Brenda has also modeled coping through spirituality, "And when people remind me of my past, I start to get real anxious and upset. And then I found myself, I used to react on it. But now, I just breathe and pray and I just don't dwell on it.

Theme 4: "How can I make it without God?" The theme of "How can I make it without God?" emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* During the dyadic interview, Brenda and Briana discussed the messages of faith that have been modeled. Specifically. Brenda discussed how she connects the SBW narrative to spirituality,

> " I've seen it through my mom. She was the best…everybody besides my two daughters. I think just having God overall is what makes me who I am. So I think both come together, has impacted me greatly to be a better person."

Briana confirmed receiving this modeled message from her mother and discusses her connection between being a SBW and her spirituality,

"I think that my spirituality and knowing God, I would know how to pray or know how important my faith was without my mom teaching us that base which, as growing up, you get annoyed with church or whatever. But as I grew older, I learned that it was beyond church. It was that spirituality that was important. So being a strong, Black woman, I guess that that was what helped."

Furthermore, Brenda asserted the importance of her faith as a Black woman in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic,

"I get weary. We all do. But being a strong, Black woman, again, going all the way back to your first conversation, your first question, how can we make it, how can I make it without God? What can I do? I mean, even with the COVID now and everything else, people say, "How can God do this?" I'm not trying to make it my understanding…right now, we got to trust in Him…That's how I feel like being a strong, Black woman, not falling down and forgetting about who made us. We got to remember who made us."

Theme 5: "Just keep praying". The theme of "Just keep praying" emerged in response to the following research question: *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Specifically, Brenda and Briana discuss the modeled messages they received about prayer. Brenda reflected on her use of prayer in maintaining boundaries for self-care,

"Even at my age now, I've…learned how to balance everything and…put it into perspective of really what I need to do and what I don't need to do. And what I see I don't need to do now, I don't do it and I don't care who get upset about it. I'll make up

> for it later. I don't feel inundated. I'm like, 'Okay, I'm not answering this call today, but I'll talk to them later,' something like that. But I think spiritually, I pray about it."

Brenda also noted that she has passed this same message to her children, "Just keep praying, keep your head up. The sun goes down but you have to bring it back up. You got to keep praying, that's all. Just keep on praying."

Briana reflected on receiving this message modeled from her mother, " I think growing up, I'm basically looking back and who I am, I guess I learned that prayer changes things. We don't got nothing else, you'd better get on your knees in prayer." Brenda shared her memory of her daughter's faith in childhood, confirming she received the generational message of prayer, "...always praying in her room. If you couldn't find her, she was praying somewhere or reading or just by herself."

Cross Case Analysis

Results of the cross-case analysis are based on the findings of each case. After completing an analysis of each case, the researcher analyzed the findings of each case together. In relation to the guiding research questions, the following seven themes emerged from the cross case analysis: Pride in Identity, "It takes a Village," Lessons for Survival, God's got me, Prayer to Cope, New messages about Self Care, and Changing the Narrative. The following section reviews each theme that emerged from the cross case analysis.

Transmitting the SBW Narrative

In response to the following research question, *How is the SBW narrative transmitted through the mother process?*, the researcher found three themes: Pride in Identity, "It takes a Village," and Lessons for Survival.

Theme 1: Pride in Identity. The theme of Pride in Identity was evidenced across multiple areas of the participants' lived experiences and in a number of different capacities. Specifically, participants discussed salient aspects of their identity and the identities of integral women in their families that they have learned to honor and respect. These traits, which align with the SBW narrative, include: strength, endorsed by cases one through four; perseverance, endorsed by case four; hard work, endorsed by case two; and independence and resourcefulness, endorsed by cases one, three, four, and five. However, another aspect of the SBW narrative, invulnerability, was also endorsed by cases one, two, and four.

Pride in Identity. Participants from cases one, three, and four shared explicit messages they received about having pride in their identities as spiritual Black women. Charise from case one reflects on the messages she passed down to her children about their identity,

> "I wanted them to be proud of who they are, proud of where they came from, and they had to know where they from. And I wanted them to make sure that they impart that on the next generation."

Charise's daughter, Aniya, discussed the messages her mother modeled about having pride in their identity through representation of Blackness in toys and books,

> " So Cinderella was Black. All my books are Black. I didn't grow up in, where people are saying that they're happy that recommendation is happening now, I didn't necessarily have that void because I was exposed to the Black version of the characters, not knowing that that was abnormal. I wasn't allowed to play with White dolls. If a neighbor or a family member gifted me with a White doll, my mother would hide it from me. She would take it. It was not something that she allowed in the household. It was

important to her that White was right was not a thing. It was Black and deep Black, was the mantra that was in my household."

Additionally, Grace from case three reflected on the messages she received from her mother about their identity,

> "She taught me that being a black woman is such a privilege because you get to just be this beautifully melanated person in the world, and you get to be different and you get to have a chance to show people this different side of culture that they typically don't get to see."

Lastly, Debra from case four discussed her pride in her identity as a Black woman which she has modeled for her daughter Sydney,

> "And as a woman of color and I don't think my color has stopped me from enjoying who I am, because like I said, I love being Black. And I grew up during the times when James Brown had that song, Say It Loud I'm Black And I'm Proud, and I was like, 'Yes.' And you can see from my hair and anything else on me that I'm Black and I'm proud and I love it."

Strength and Perseverance. As part of their identity, all participants identified with characteristics of the SBW narrative. Specifically, participants discussed the modeling of strength, hard work, and perseverance within the women of their family. Charise from case one reflected, "I had strong women in my family, my aunts, my mother, my grandmothers." Similarly, Tamika from case two reflected on the hardships her mother endured and remarked, "So I know my mama was a strong woman." Tamika's daughter, Sophia, reflected on her mother's work ethic, "my mom was always at work," and noted that her mother modeled this behavior for her, "and so I got a good work ethic."

Mildred from case three asserted that despite her employment status, her mother was a model of a strong woman, “we never looked down at…her because she never worked…Because she was such a strong, strong woman.” Sydney from case four also commented on the strength of the women in her family, “I do have a lot of strong women in my family.” During the dyadic interview Sydney also remarked, “I feel like almost to exist as a black woman, especially in America is to have a degree of strength,” and added, “...that's one thing that I think gives me pride as a Black woman, that even though we've always had things... We may have had more going on for us than most, we've still stood the test of time and we're still here.”

Independence. Participants from cases one, three, four, and five also discussed independence as a characteristic of the SBW women they have learned from in their family. Aniya specifically identified “independence” as modeled message she received from Charise. Anya also explained in the dyadic interview, “I never delegated…but I also never trusted that anyone could do it like me,” which Charise confirmed as a message she modeled, “she probably got it from me, where I never trusted that someone could do it as well.”

Mildred from case three discussed how her mother did not model independence, “I did not like how dependent she was on my dad,” and explained her conscious decision to not perpetuate this message, “I was like, "Oh, heck no." That is not going to be me. It will never be me. And it won't be my girls. I think that's about it.” In their dyadic interview, Grace confirmed that she learned this lesson very well,

> “I think I'm very independent, probably independent to a fault sometimes, where I don't ask for help even when I need it. It probably takes me a long time to ask for help, or I'm just like, I've exhausted every option and then I'm like, ‘Okay. Guess I have to ask for help now.’"

Debra also commented on independence as a characteristic of Black women, “I think it is definitely part of being a Black woman,” on the message of independence they received from the women in their family, and commented on her own assertion of independence, “sometimes I have the notion that, you know what? I could just do this. I could just take care of myself.” Sydney confirmed independence as a modeled message she received from Debra, “She will like be moving stuff and doing all these things and I'm like, ‘Can you sit down? We are here, we can help you.’" Briana from case five also recognized her own hyper independence that she learned from her mother who was a single parent,

> “I have a little bit too [much] independence, which is kind of, can be a good thing. As I listen to my peers who have kids and who are married, complain about their spouse not doing enough to help out and all those things. Don't get me wrong, I complain that my husband doesn't help, but I can hold it down with not helping. I think that's because I saw my mom do it and she balanced it and she did it.”

Invulnerability: Don’t Dwell. With their strength and independence, participants from cases one, two, four, and five discussed the modeled messages they received and passed down about not expressing their emotions. Sophia from case one stated, “We don’t talk about emotions,” and discusses her embarrassment when she showed emotion to a colleague, “And I just, I kept apologizing.” Charise confirmed this trait as a byproduct of strength that her and her daughter share, “ I can say with both of us, as far as work is concerned, we have this [models a blank face]. But we could leave work and get in our cars and we could cry.” Additionally, Tamika from case two modeled her motto of "don't dwell" during the dyadic interview,

> “I don't forget it. I don't dwell on it, I just let it go. Because I can't just dwell on what

happened. That even with my marriage, or anything. If I dwell on that, I can't move forward because I didn't give it to God because I'm holding onto it."

Alternatively, Sydney from case four discussed her mother's acceptance of emotions but lack of coping mechanisms outside of prayer,

> "But she didn't necessarily like shy away from... It wasn't anything where she would like tell you not to be emotional about anything or would…like encourage you to either trust your emotions or things like that. But yeah, I think, it usually always would end with, 'You need to pray about it.' So sometimes it could feel a little dismissive, but also, she's a person too so it's like as I've gotten older, it's like she only has so much capacity to help you."

Brenda from case five also noted her acceptance of emotional expression,

> "I tell them, I said, and the girls too, I said if you get hurt, or somebody hurt you, cry, let it out, doesn't mean you have to keep crying, and there will be nights you gonna wake up crying, but that doesn't mean that it's not good to cry, and it's not good to be happy, and stuff like that."

despite the lesson she learned from her mother, "not to be crying." She remarked, "I learned to be strong and I hold it in…she would want me to fight now, she wouldn't want me to cry."

Theme 2: "It takes a Village." It can be speculated that the messages surrounding not showing emotions and not dwelling are a byproduct of the caretaker role of SBW. As such, the theme of "It takes a Village" was evidenced across multiple areas of the participants' lived experiences and in a number of different capacities. Participants across all cases discussed the role of caretaker being modeled by the women of their family. Additionally, participants from cases one, four, and five discussed the prevalence of othermothering as they received the

message about the importance of a village in raising children. More specifically, case one highlighted the exact message of the village mentality being transmitted throughout generations while case two discussed the transmitted message of family sticks together. With this, however, participants from cases two and five also reflected on the sacrifices of self that are involved in caring for those in the community.

Caretaking. Participants from all cases discussed the modeled messages of caretaking they received from their mothers, often in the form of the close relationship they had with their mothers. Charise reflected on how her mother modeled caretaking, "being a mother of four, we wanted for nothing. I never even thought about finances or anything like that because it seemed like whatever we wanted, she gave us." Sophia, Charise's daughter, confirmed her grandmother's matriarchal presence in their "woman-dominant family," "My grandmother was the head of the family." Additionally, Sophia from case two recognized the modeled message of caretaker that she received from her grandmother,

> "I've always sort of thought about also maybe I got some of that from them, and didn't even realize it because I'm a very strong, matriarchal kind of figure in my immediate household here. And that's what she was to her children."

Sophia's mother, Tamika, also noted her trait for caretaking, "but if somebody need me, I'm there for them and I let whatever I got going, just go."

Mildred from case three framed the caretaking role as one that comes with a closeness between a mother and her daughter,

> "I loved how I grew up… I loved having that relationship. I loved having that

accessibility, knowing that she was always there, as she was always a sounding board…and knowing that... This sounds selfish, but kind of knowing that her life was dedicated to raising us. I enjoyed that. And I think I benefited from that."

and discussed her conceptualization of the mothering role, "The mothering role for me was really being available and accessible to my children and raising them myself." Furthermore, as a modeled message she appreciated, "I wanted that for my girls," Mildred actively modeled this for her daughters,

"I worked part-time, and I worked in the school system, so they're in their school. They were with me. They came to school with me. They didn't have to go to childcare. They stayed in my classroom until I was done, and then they came home with me."

In a similar vein, Debra from case four reflected on her modeled behavior of caretaking as a worthy sacrifice,

"...but a lot of times too, there are rewards in that because there's some things that are worth suffering for. And if you find that you're helping somebody out, even though you may have a limited amount of time, you see how that person is blessed and how it's something that they really needed, and they didn't know where else they would be able to go to."

Debra's belief in caring for others was punctuated by her identified scripture, Nehemiah 8:10, "..."Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared…"

Lastly, Brenda from case five discussed having a close relationship with her mother while also recognizing the sacrifices her mother made,

"she was my best friend, she taught me I was beautiful, she taught me that, no matter how

beat up she get, or how much I would see her bleedin' and cryin' and everything and she would hide me, and she would protect me so, she let me slip out on a date to the Prom. And um, she would take the slack for me."

Othermothering. Participants from all cases discussed their experiences of othermothering and being raised by a "village." Charise from case one explicitly recognized, "my children was raised by the village." Aniya confirmed her mother's use of the village, "I feel like I have multiple mothers…my mother has two sisters. So they think they're my mother as well. And my grandmother and I were very close also. " Tamika echoed this closeness with family members, "we was a close knit family," and reflects on her mother's involvement in raising her children,

> "When we went to work, we didn't have to pay her. If she needed to keep them overnight, she would keep them overnight. Because as she'd say, 'We are family, we have to stick together.'"

Debra from case four reflected on her grandmother's presence as helpful in coping with her mother's mental health concerns, "...my grandmother was very helpful," and noted how her aunts also helped her and modeled unconditional love,

> "And then I also had some aunts that were also there that helped me. I always watched them how they interacted with my mother...Sometimes they would just get in an argument and then they would move on, but they still showed her love and they loved each other, and that was the main thing."

Similarly, Brenda noted that her "aunty raised my mama" and reflected on her own close relationship with her aunt, "She taught me as a little girl she loved me, she showed me so much.

All of us, she would hug and kiss us. I couldn't wait to see her coming...She was really sweet." In turn, Brenda reflects on her act of othermothering through adopting,

> "They didn't have no structure, because they was put in foster homes, until I decided, you're not going to another foster home, you are staying here. I adopted two together…"

Sacrifice of Self. Participants from cases two, four, and five discussed the self-sacrifice that accompanies the caretaking role. Sophia reflected on how her grandmother sacrificed her health to provide for her family,

> "And she worked at the same factory that my mom worked at. And I remember hearing stories about how... And that people would say stuff like, 'Poor Mallory' she basically worked herself down to the bone, literally, because she got so ill that she didn't stop working until she couldn't anymore."

Debra from case four also noted, "when you say yes to things and there is a level of suffering that comes with that…because sometimes too, you maybe deny yourself with something".

Additionally, Brenda from case five reflected on her mother's acts of self-sacrifice, "Whether she was sick or in pain, whatever, she was always listening and wanting to help us and trying to make escape for us, and try to do everything she could to do for us." Furthermore, while confirming she identifies with the SBW narrative, Brenda explained her habit of putting others first, "Because that's what I am, that I've always put other people first and I am very caring and taking care of everybody else before myself." Briana, her daughter, also emphasized how she puts her family first, "So in doing all that, naturally, myself become after I get everything else done, or I will feel like I'm not relaxed until my kids are taken care of and everything around me is good, then I can chill out."

Theme 3: Lessons for Survival. The theme of Lessons for Survival was evidenced across multiple areas of the participants' lived experiences and in a number of different capacities. Cases one, four, and five produced findings related to protective messages that combat oppression. Additionally, cases two and three specifically outlined the transmission of the specific protective messages of financial responsibility and education.

Protective Messages. Participants from cases one, four, and five discussed the messages they received and passed down about protecting themselves from racism and sexism. Charise from case one explained the lessons she has had to instill in her children and grandchildren for their protection,

> "It's like when my parents will tell us, when we go down south, there's certain things we can't do. Unfortunately we're still having to talk with our children on how to behave, how to behave when you are driving a car, how to behave when you are with your friends, that they have to be careful with everything…And you don't want to teach them fear, but you have to teach them awareness…And in teaching them awareness, you are putting fear in them…So as a black mother, it's teaching them all the things that you know is not good for their psyche, but it's necessary for them to live on."

Additionally, Debra from case four explained the lessons she's tried to teach her children, "I always let my children know as Black, being..people of color, that the world wasn't always going to treat them fair." Her daughter, Sydney reflected on her mother's toughness, "But I feel like the toughness is never necessarily taken to heart because they're very tough on you and it's more so like a tool to get you to like learn quickly."

Lastly, Brenda from case five discussed the protective lessons she taught her children about resisting intimate partner violence,

"Even if it is not abusive, sometimes it can be mental. Don't stay in something that's not good for you, you feel bad about it, it ain't good. Leave it. I don't tell em, to leave, but I'm like, make up your mind what you need to do fix it. But just don't just drown in it. So I've taught them don't never let nobody belittle them, and make them feel like they just caved in with that person."

Financial Security. Participants from cases two and three discussed the messages they received and passed down about financial responsibility. Sophia from case two explained the messages she received from her mother about financial responsibility, "So my mom was really responsible financially and taught me how to balance a checkbook and pay the bill and that stuff at a young age." Mildred from case three also discussed the lessons she is passing to her daughters about financial responsibility,

"We just had this discussion about wealth, right? Saving for a house, putting more into your retirement account every month, so that when you retire, you have an extra amount in there because the state will match it. Things that were never said to me, because my parents were immigrants".

Education. Participants from cases one, two, and three discuss the lessons they have learned about education. Charise from case one explained what she learned from her mother, "We're a family of educated, she's instilled in us education." Tamika from case two also described what she learned from her mother about education, "my mom, when we was in school, she always told her, 'You put your education first.' Because I had friends at my age, had children before they graduated from school. And she would always tell you, 'You got plenty of time for that.'" Additionally, Mildred from case three reflected on how she modeled the importance of education, "...I started the doctoral program when my eldest went to college. By that time I had

two master's degrees..” and noted her daughters’ academic achievements, “they were always in honors classes.”

Transmitting Spiritual Coping

In response to the following research question, *How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process?*, the researcher found two themes: God’s got me and Prayer to Cope.

Theme 1: God’s Got Me. The theme of God’s Got Me was evidenced across multiple areas of the participants’ lived experiences and in a number of different capacities. Participants from cases one through four specifically discussed the transmitted message of faith in God as a coping mechanism. Additionally, cases one through four personified their faith as a belief that “God’s got me.” With this, cases three, four, and five discussed their faith as part of their identity as Black women and as such, also noted that their strength as strong Black women comes from God.

Faith. Participants from all cases discussed their faith in God as an effective coping strategy. For example, Charise from case one discussed the increase of her faith as a coping mechanism throughout life transitions,

> “I think it came into existence when I got married and I realized that I needed God in my life and then I thank God that there was people that was praying for me…And when I had children, that's when it was like 100 %, I can't do this without God. And as they grew older and I grew older, my faith got stronger. But it's like I had to find God for myself and it didn't happen until I felt like, ‘Okay, I'm starting this new life and I don't understand it so God, I need you.’ And then when with children, it's like, ‘God, I truly need you. I definitely can't do this on my own.’ And I can say that it just keeps building.”

Additionally, examination of the scriptures identified as meaningful by Charise and Aniya reflect their faith in God. Charise's scripture, Proverbs 3: 5-6 discussed having trust in God's plan,

> "Trust in the lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path."

Aniya's identified scripture, Jeremiah 29:11, also reflected a belief in God's plan,

> "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper for you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Tamika from case two reflected on the message of faith she taught her daughter, "Take it to God. And like I was told when I was coming up to put God first, I tell them the same thing. I tell them the same thing." Additionally, Sophia reflected on the modeled message of faith she received from her grandmother,

> "She had a lot of kids and everybody was poor, but she made things stretch. And so I think faith was a very important part of her life for those reasons. They didn't have a lot and she had a lot of children and so a big part of her life was going to church. That's where she had her social time, that's where she had time outside of the house."

Furthermore, Sophia's identified scripture, Ephesians 3:20, reflected a belief and faith in God's power,

> "Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think."

In her explanation of the scripture Sophia asserted, "God is able to do much more than we ask or think through his power working in us."

Mildred from case three also discussed the importance of faith in her life which she intentionally taught her daughters,

> "To deal with things, because those tools worked really well for me. And I wanted them to have that to be able to stand firm. I think one of the things I'm kind of... Well, again, I'll say I'm proud of it and I know it was because my parents did that, and God gave me the strengths to do that. But it's one of the things I'm pleased with as a parent, that I gave my girls the opportunity, taught them how to stand strong in their faith, not be embarrassed about it, not make up apologies for it, to just really stand strong in that. I think that has

Grace exhibited her receipt of her mother's message about faith in her conceptualization of her faith,

> "And when we are walking through something, sometimes we think about, 'Oh, when I get to the other side, I can have peace about it, or I can not have worry or concern about it.' But we can have peace along the journey as well, and that's what he wants for us. He wants us to have peace along the journey because he is asking us to trust him."

Debra from case four reflected on the modeled messages she received from her grandmother and aunts about faith, "So I learned a lot from my grandmother because she was a very strong woman of faith…all of my mother's sisters were women of faith. And so it was always good to see their examples of faith." In the dyadic interview, Debra also offered her conceptualization of Jesus and their relationship,

> "That's how I always think about Jesus. He's always saying to me, "I got you." So when whatever it is that I'm in need of, whatever it is, he's got me. And so that's one. And again, that's not a scripture, but I just always can think of God saying, 'I got you. My daughter, I got you.'"

Lastly, Brenda from case five discussed her experience of faith,

"But I trust in God and sometimes I get weary there. But God's work is going to stand no matter what, how weary I get, He's not going to change His word. He's going to come through, might not be this year, might not be next year, might 30 years from now."

Additionally, Brenda's identified scripture, Proverbs 3:5-6, reflected her trust in God,

> "Trust in the lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path."

Brenda's daughter, Briana, confirmed the modeled message of faith she received from her mother, "I would know how to pray or know how important my faith was without my mom teaching us that base."

Faith Shapes Identity. Participants from case three, four, and five explicitly discussed how their faith in God has shaped their identities. Mildred from case three discussed how her faith influenced her social experiences,

> "I remember the conversation and I thought, 'Okay, do you admit that you're a virgin and that you plan to remain in a virgin until you get married? Or do you just stay silent?' My decision to do that was purely because of my faith…Do you admit that in this crowd, in this group, where people would look at you like you're a freak? Or do you stay silent? I thought…'God, you got me here. I'm in college because of you. This experience is part of my religious journey. If I deny you because I'm embarrassed, that is ridiculous.'...And I literally remember saying, 'Well, I'm a virgin, so I don't know what you're talking about.'"

Mildred also recognized Grace's faith has also shaped her identity,

> "I'm proud of who she is. I'm proud of who she's grown to be. I'm proud of her lens and

the support she's been, her integrity, the life that she's lived. It's amazing to see her faith and how it has shaped her."

Grace confirmed her identity centers her faith,

> "...when you make it the core of who you are and how you act and what flows out of you, that's just what it becomes. Foundation is there. It's the core of your building."

Debra from case four reflected on her identity as a Black woman and how God has chosen her to be who she is, "It's just the fact that being a woman of God and loving who you are in God is an awesome thing and loving how God created you because he does not make mistakes. And he chose us to be this way so I love it." Additionally, Sydney reflected on her identity in relation to her spiritual beliefs,

> "I think my spirituality or my faith has impacted my life as a black woman because I think despite the fact that the world kind of doesn't acknowledge us or make us a part of the fold, I feel like with Christ, he lets us know that we're all equal and we're all on the same playing field. So it's like, even though they may treat you badly, it's like you kind of know and you have a sense of self as to who you are."

Lastly, Brenda from case five reflected on the modeled message of faith and identity she received from her mother, "But it was more in her. When she came home, she didn't change. A lot of people at the church, when they come home and they change. But mama, she stayed the same, she never changed." Brenda also commented on her own identity, "I think just having God overall is what makes me who I am. And so if I didn't have God, Jesus, Jesus Christ, I wouldn't... I don't think anybody would be able to function and have the love."

Strength through Faith. Participants from cases three, four, and five also explicitly discussed how their strength, and subsequently their ability to be strong Black women, comes from God. Mildred from case three explained that her strength comes from God,

> "It's nothing through us. It's through our relationship with Christ and that's why it's unshakable. So that's why I think it's strength because it is unshakable because that doesn't change. I mean, I could lose my job tomorrow. So my strength and my sense of who I am as a black woman, as a strong black woman is not in my job, right? I could lose my house tomorrow. It's not in my property. It's in my relationship with Christ and nobody can take that away from me. I think my daughter understands that she has gotten that concept and got that concept from young."

Debra also shared her conceptualization of strength through faith,

> "Well, I know for me, there's no separation because a lot of times too, when there's something that comes up that needs to be done, I'll pray and ask God for wisdom in how to get that thing done. Because sometimes in your own strength, you're like, 'I don't know how this is possible for me to even do.' But through praying and asking God for strength and wisdom, it makes a world of difference."
>
> "it's just knowing that we can be as strong as we can be, but our strength runs out, but the strength of the Lord doesn't. So it's good to know that he is an ever-flowing source of strength that we can go to"

Additionally, Sydney asserted, "I feel like we're created to be who we are, to be Black women. So I think there's no distinction or differentiating those things. They're all part of the same identity, to be a child of God, to be a black woman, child of God."

Lastly, Brenda from case five reflected, “But then again, I end up back where I was on my face, on the floor, in my bedroom, right on my face just give it to the Lord. And once I do that, that's it. That's how I become strong.” Briana also reflected on the importance of her faith in being a SBW, “But as I grew older, I learned that it was beyond church. It was that spirituality that was important. So being a strong, Black woman, I guess that that was what helped.” She also asserted, “So that definitely has helped me a lot with just knowing... If I'm scared about something or if I'm unsure, just knowing that God is my strength.”

Theme 2: Prayer to Cope. The theme of Prayer to Cope was evidenced across multiple areas of the participants’ lived experiences in very similar ways. Participants from each examined case discussed the messages they received from their mothers about utilizing prayer to cope with difficult circumstances. Charise from case one reflected on the need for prayer as a newlywed,

> “I thank God that there was people that was praying for me. And I got married early, I got married at 23. I thank God that there was people praying for me. But once I got married, I felt like I was praying for myself.”

Furthermore, Charise remarked that in “...being a Black mother, all I can do is pray.” Aniya received this message from her mother as she identified how her spiritual beliefs impacted her experience as a Black woman, “I would say prayer and having a church family.” Moreover, Aniya identified the serenity prayer as an integral coping strategy,

> “...another one that I think of, that I have up in my office and I used to keep in my car just to keep me from not going rogue is the serenity prayer… So just to center me in terms of God giving me the ability to accept the things that I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. I used to repeat that on

my way to work. So now I have it in my office. So things need to center. I just look on the wall and that helps me."

Tamika from case two reflected on her use of prayer as a coping mechanism after the loss of her mother, "I prayed about it and it took me a while, but I understand. And that's what helped me get through it." Additionally, Tamika discussed the message of prayer that she learned from her mother,

"At time it gets hard on you. But I have always learned the way my mother, mother told us, you pray, you give your problem to God, let him solve it. She would [say], 'It's not going to be easy, but you got to give it to him.' And that's what I do."

Additionally, Sophia notes, "I celebrate in my faith as well when there's not a challenge, but I definitely find myself praying more."

Mildred from case three discussed how she modeled the use of prayer as a coping strategy,

"I think that has made it easier for them to deal with the hard parts of life, faith makes life difficulties easier because I can always say, I was like, 'Okay, let me pray for you.' We would pray it through. And be real about it, not just like, 'Oh, Holy Father,' blah, blah, blah. But I mean like, 'God, you know what? This girl is pissing my daughter off and I am so sorry this is happening…God, I hate that this is happening with her. I pray that you…' But I would pray with them. I think that was something that they knew that was always there, that they had their faith to fall back on in the hard times."

Grace also noted that she received this modeled message about prayer from the women in her family,

"I think some of the most important things that have been passed down from my grandma

to my mom to me, and even to my aunts, some of them have even said things to me in conversations that I know come from my grandmother. And I think it's just, one, the importance of prayer, and how we truly do not have to sit in this place of worry, because we have a God who is going to handle it for us, and we're going to come out better for it and on top. And just knowing and seeing that the woman in my family have prayed for so many different things, and they've worked out in their favor. Or they worked out in a way that they thought wasn't going to be in their favor, but then turned out to be for the betterment of that situation, whatever it may be."

Similarly, Sydney from case four asserted that prayer should accompany reaching out for mental health care,

> "And I feel that it is good to pray. I don't ever dismiss the power of prayer. But I also feel like the Lord wants you to use your resources. He doesn't want you to suffer. And I feel like mental health is just like physical health. And I feel like the Lord performs miracles, but I also feel like if you have the means to do it, I feel like miracles are for when your back is pressed against the wall. But if there's a urgent care up the street, you should go to it. But yeah, I think I've been trying to impress upon her a bit more like you can prayerfully go seek treatment,"

Sydney's mother, Debra, also reflected on the use of prayer to support other strong Black women,

> "And also too, it's also important to lift each other up as strong, black women and to pray for one another, because we don't always know what any of us are going through at any given time, but to always constantly be in prayer for one another."

Lastly, Brenda from case five discussed how she uses prayer when setting boundaries for self care,

> "And what I see I don't need to do now, I don't do it and I don't care who get upset about it. I'll make up for it later. I don't feel inundated. I'm like, 'Okay, I'm not answering this call today, but I'll talk to them later,' something like that. But I think spiritually, I pray about it."

Briana confirmed the message of prayer she received growing up, "I think growing up, I'm basically looking back and who I am, I guess I learned that prayer changes things…We don't got nothing else, you'd better get on your knees in prayer." Additionally, Briana noted the importance of prayer as a SBW, " And spiritually, spiritually, it has been a big help being able to have God as my support, my prayer, if I need to talk to anybody, knowing that I could just pray about it." She goes on to

Miscellaneous Finding: Healing Generational Trauma

The following themes related to healing generational trauma also emerged from the findings: Changing the Narrative and New Messages about Self Care.

Theme 1: Changing the Narrative. The theme of Changing the Narrative was evidenced across multiple areas of the participants' lived experiences and in a number of different capacities. Participants from cases one, four, and five specifically discussed the awareness and intentional change of harmful generational messages as crucial for generational healing. Case one, along with case two, also discussed the salience of changing communication patterns to facilitate a change in narratives. Furthermore, case two specifically outlined the importance of not only changing the narrative, but resisting the transmission of messages that have been identified as harmful.

Intentional Change. Participants from cases one, two, four, and five discuss how they are currently or intend to intentionally alter harmful messages. Specifically, Aniya from case one discussed her realization of harmful family messages, “So I'm fully present in that I don't want them to continue this. So although, like I said, I don't have children, I do break the cycle in terms of teaching this with my students.” Additionally, Aniya’s mother, Charise, noted her dissonance with a family message that she intentionally changed,

> “But it was something that I didn't like as far as being raised because I don't remember my brother having... Hell, I don't even remember him having to do dishes, but I don't remember that. And that's one thing that I broke away from. There's no way that was going to happen. And then even looking at how my mother-in-law was with my husband, where I think his only job was to take out the garbage, I don't even think he had to clean his own room. He definitely didn't have to wash his own clothes and things like that. But when we got married, he knew that if it was going to get done, he was going to do it.”

Sophia from case two reflected on her motivation to make intentional changes in generational messages,

> “And so I think just listening to my mom say that, I think that is why we do this. This new generation, we have to because we're not trying to let this stuff repeat…One of the reasons being is because of the trauma, the things that we know have happened in both of our families that we don't want to impact the family that we're creating.”

Furthermore, Debra from case four reflected on the intentionality and prayer needed to change harmful generational messages,

> “I think you have to basically be intentional about it. You really do have to be intentional

where you might say, 'Oh, I saw my mom did something this way,' and you saw that maybe it didn't bring her joy, but you can pray and ask God to show you a better way. And then when you know that to do that, because sometimes we know things and we don't do them. So we know what's better for us, but we don't always do them. But just finding our way to do that, to be intentional about having a life that's better than what our mothers and grandmothers had. And that's different for different people."

Briana from case five also reflected on her changed behavior as a parent,

"What makes me different in my parenting is that I do make mistakes. I said, I wouldn't yell, but I find myself yelling at my boys all the time, but I had to be okay with okay. I don't need to yell. I can talk more, and if I mess up and if I say a cuss word or something that I go back and I apologize. I'm sorry. Mommy did not mean that. I'm very frustrated. I'm not having a good day. You know what I mean? That's a difference for me is that I definitely don't do the verbal abuse and if I do mess up somewhere in parenting, that I do apologize."

In the dyadic interview, she also reflected on the impact of the present research study as a reminder of the generational changes her and her mother are implementing,

"...those generational patterns and how the change has started with my mom, even though she may not realize it, but that she has been able to help change cycles, help change patterns. And then now, I'm trying to still continue to change patterns and to input healthier coping skills and things like that."

Healing through Communication. Participants from cases one and two explicitly identify communication and emotional expression as methods of changing the narrative. Charise

from case one noted the changed message about communication she is now passing to her children and grandchildren,

> "I stress the fact that have more communication with your children…I can say that I could have communicated more with my children, which I did not learn from my parents, other than asking questions, how was your day, and things like that. But there's a lot of personal things that I feel that you can do with your children at an early age instead of waiting until they're young adults."

Aniya also commented on improved communication, specifically regarding family boundaries,

> "I don't want this cycle of miscommunication to continue…And this cult-like lack of boundaries that, and I've been setting those, the shift with me now. Like, if I don't want to come for the holiday, I'm not going to come for the holiday."

Furthermore, Aniya noted the intentional messages she has helped her brother pass to his children about communicating emotions,

> "Well, I actually do that with my nieces and nephew, even though I don't do it. So I get after my brother all the time, specifically with his son, when I tell him, like, 'You need to talk things through with him. If there's something that he's holding in that he doesn't feel comfortable enough to share with you. You need to talk it through with him so that he has that outlet. Let him feel what he needs to feel.'"

Additionally, in their dyadic interview, Sophia from case two commented on her mother's mantra of "family comes first," "And I think the way to heal from that is if you're going to have that mantra, then you got to add some more mantra to that, that address when there's harm and how we handle that." In agreement, Tamika asserted, "There could be some healing did on all us, but what we have to do as a family is really get together and talk more." Sophia

added, “And so a part of doing that is setting better boundaries and not just acting like this stuff didn't happen and that it didn't impact us.”

Sophia also noted her intentional effort to communicate with her family,

> “But I've had to do this with dad, I've had to confront him. And so I don't think family gets a pass on my end. It's just that I have so many boundaries with your family, but in terms of me and my sister, we've never had to do this because we do this every day. We are honest with each other every day and so we don't have to have these moments where there's big rupture and then somebody needs to have a sit down, come to Jesus because we just talk about it anyway.”

Theme 2: New Messages about Self Care. The theme of New Messages about Self Care was evidenced across multiple areas of the participants’ lived experiences and in a number of different capacities. Participants from cases one, two, and four specifically discussed the messages they have received about not caring for themselves and having a stigma about mental health. Cases two and four also discussed the specific new messages of caring for one’s mental health that they will transmit to future generations. Furthermore, case two discussed specific teachings about mental health care that will be transmitted as a protective message for future generations. Additionally, case five discussed the new messages they are implementing regarding self-care.

“I stayed a little too long in that strength”. Participants from cases one, two, and four reflect on the modeled messages of not caring for themselves. In their dyadic interview, Aniya discussed the impact of being a SBW,

> “Well, I now have a chronic illness that is split up through stress that has been for the past almost I think about eight years. And when I'm in pain, my mother will just say,

‘That's just stress. We need to calm down.’ I've been in the hospital. I've had surgical procedures as a result of it. And unfortunately that's usually my wake up call. Hospital bills…And then I'll just ask one of my colleagues to bring my laptop to me so I can continue working. I want to be honest, I was in the hospital and asked my colleagues to bring me my laptop.”

Aniya also reflected on grieving the loss of her grandmother,

“I think about through the loss of my grandmother, I didn't give myself permission to grieve until probably two weeks later, because it was most important for me to be there for my mother. So not anything that she put on me. I put on myself to be whatever she needed in the time of planning the funeral and making those preparations and being in the state. And then I said to her that I needed to go home. And that's when I allowed myself to go through the process that I needed to go through… It took some time. I stayed a little too long in that strength, in holding it together…”

Sophia from case two also discussed the modeled messages she received from her mother about help seeking that were accompanied by spiritual messages,

“But see, what I've learned about emotions from her is it is not okay to talk about them. It's not okay to seek help. If you have a problem, you take it to God. And if you can't take it to God and leave it there, then that is sort of a problem that you have. You are weak in your faith if you can't just take it there and leave it there…You can talk about your emotions, but if you're going to talk about them, you still need to, at the end of the day, go take them to prayer.”

Additionally, Sydney from case four explained how the SBW narrative can be harmful,

"I guess it can be harmful in the sense of never wanting to be vulnerable or never wanting to be at rest. I guess that goes into the whole self-care thing where we just always drive ourselves to the ground and it's like, all right, we got to take a moment to step back from this. So I guess that can be harmful in that sense where you don't necessarily want to say you can't do something for any reason, but it's always healthy to take a step away."

New Beliefs about Self-Care. Participants from cases one, two, four, and five explain the new messages about self care they have adopted and will continue to model and teach the next generation. Charise from case one reflected on the shift in self-care she has made as well as the verbal message of self-care she is now perpetuating,

"And the thing is, probably around the same time, I think my mother recognized it when she retired. And then one of the things that she would always say, and we say it now, is listen to your body. And my sisters and I tell each other that all the time. I tell my children that all the time listen to your body because I think once she retired, she realized that she needed to slow down and she saw it in us. And then she started instilling that in us, but I didn't realize it until I retired and realized, 'Okay, you do need to slow down. You need balance in your life.' And I'm working on balance. I'm saying it to both of my children…"

Sophia from case two has also discussed efforts she has made in establishing a new generational message of mental health care,

"And I was not in the mental health field during this time, but I spent a lot of time with him talking about emotions for some reason. And showing him different pictures of things. Like, 'This person looks happy and this looks sad.' Or 'What do you think that

person feels?' As I was reading books and things like that to him. So he is very extremely advanced in terms of his empathy. So the way I talk about emotions with my children is like, 'It's okay to have them. Everybody has emotions and everybody has a range of emotions." Obviously, at this point, I'm a counselor. I use a lot of my counseling skills with my children. And I just talk about it like, 'It doesn't matter what emotion you have. That's fine. It's what you do with that emotion that matters.' And so let's make sure that we do things with our emotions that don't harm ourselves or other people. And so I started teaching my children deep breathing and muscle relaxation and meditation probably since they were two."

Sydney from case four described her experience with and new beliefs about mental health,

"...currently, I'm working on my own mental health, I actually started to go to therapy myself. And I feel that it is good to pray. I don't ever dismiss the power of prayer. But I also feel like the Lord wants you to use your resources. He doesn't want you to suffer. And I feel like mental health is just like physical health. And I feel like the Lord performs miracles, but I also feel like if you have the means to do it, I feel like miracles are for when your back is pressed against the wall…you can go and seek out help because the Lord will help you and strengthen you to go to get care because that's why he gave us doctors and things like that."

Lastly, Brenda and Briana discussed their changed behavior in caring for themselves. Brenda reflected on how the SBW narrative has impacted her,

"I feel it's impacted me to know now that since I've taken care of everyone since I've been

in the eighth grade, that now I feel like I need to take care of me now. So it's impacted me to help others, but to also stop at a point and look at what I need to do for myself and try to do the things that I want to enjoy for myself."

Briana also reflected on the impact of the SBW narrative in her life and her shift in awareness of her needs,

"I never really realized that it had a mental impact on me until after I had kids, and that transition from living that single life to having to deal with your own child, especially after being with little babies and trying to balance life and everything, that's when it impacted me mentally, just feeling exhausted and not knowing what I needed. I didn't know what I needed. So just that, that was something that was a big change and made me realize things…just making sure that I take care of myself. I'm always good with making sure everybody has their appointments, everybody is set. So I guess I have to... Physically, I have to make sure that I have to make my appointments as well."

Summary

This chapter provided summaries of each case. In addition, detailed descriptions of the findings for the within case analyses were provided. This chapter also detailed the findings from the cross case analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this collective case study inquiry was to understand the transmission of intergenerational trauma in spiritual Black women. Specifically, the researcher aimed to understand how messages surrounding the Strong Black Woman (SBW) narrative and spiritual coping are transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women. The findings from the present study expand the literature on intergenerational trauma. Specifically, current literature on intergenerational trauma largely focuses on Holocaust survivors and their descendants. The outcome of this inquiry was the first to explore and highlight the process of transmitting the SBW narrative and spiritual coping. In centering the voices of spiritual Black women to understand their experience of intergenerational trauma, the present study expands the counseling field's conceptualization and understanding of intergenerational transmission from a different cultural lens. To gain understanding of this transmission process, the researcher recruited and collected data from five mother and daughter pairs with each pair considered one case within the collective case study design. Thematic analysis across all five cases resulted in seven themes presented in chapter four. The following chapter will summarize the cross case analysis findings as well as discuss implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Research Findings

The following research questions guided the collective case study inquiry: *How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process?, How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process of spiritual Black women?* Analysis of findings across all cases resulted in five themes that directly answered the research questions. Two additional themes were also discovered. These themes depict specific messages related to

the SBW narrative and spiritual coping that were transmitted through the mothering process. Along with identification of the messages, the transmission process of these messages were identified as indirect and direct modeling and specific verbal messaging. According to current research, intergenerational transmission is the process of children learning to engage with the world from their parents through modeled behavior (Bowers & Yehuda, 2016). This understanding is related to Bandura's (1997) theory of social learning which posits that children learn about social behavior through observation and imitation. As such, the transmission of the SBW narrative via learned behavior aligns with the current understanding of intergenerational transmission and the foundational principle of social learning theory. Furthermore, family systems theory posits that an individual cannot be considered as a separate entity from their system (Fitzgerald et al., 2020; Nichols, 2012) and thus to understand ones' present functioning it is necessary to understand family patterns (Ballard et al., 2016). These family patterns can also be considered a form of intergenerational transmission. The following section will summarize the findings or convergent family patterns of the cross-case analysis and discuss their relation to current research. Furthermore, the findings will be discussed utilizing the conceptual frameworks of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome and Womanist Theology. Specifically, the researcher will review each identified theme in relation to the research questions, discuss the novel findings, and review unique findings.

Research Question One: How is the Strong Black Woman narrative transmitted through the mothering process?

In relation to research question one, the findings of the present study revealed three themes: Pride in Identity, "It Takes a Village," and Lessons for Survival. The following section discusses each theme in relation to existing research.

Theme One: Pride in Identity

All participants discussed their identities in relation to the SBW narrative. Specifically, participants identified strength, perseverance, independence, and invulnerability as traits they not only possess but were taught by their mothers. These traits have been discussed as salient characteristics of the SBW archetype (Abrams et al., 2014; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Geyton et al., 2020). Participants also identified the message of having pride in their identities as Black women that come with being a SBW, another salient aspect of the SBW narrative (Davis & Jones, 2020; Geyton et al., 2020; Watson & Hunter, 2016).

First, all participants discussed the messages of strength, hard work, and perseverance being modeled and taught. It is important to note the internalization of these messages and subsequent internal pressure to be strong which aligns with current literature on the SBW narrative (Donovan & West, 2015). Additionally, independence, and at times hyper-independence, was an endorsed trait by most participants. This finding also aligns with current research as independence has been identified as an integral component of the SBW narrative (Jones et al., 2021; Nelson et al., 2016).

With traits such a strength, perseverance, and independence, many participants identified with being invulnerable in many situations. This finding aligns with research that notes the SBW narrative as involving a suppression of emotion that gives way to strength, perseverance, independence, and even caretaking (Abrams et al., 2014; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). Lastly, most participants discussed the message of having pride in their identity as SBW. For these participants, being a SBW is an important part of their identity that they hold in high esteem. This aligns with research that outlines Black women's use of the SBW narrative to overcome

adversity, increase self-esteem, and enhance cultural pride (Davis & Jones, 2020; Geyton et al., 2020; Watson & Hunter, 2016).

Despite participants' pride in their identities as strong Black women, many of them noted the internal conflict of simultaneously fulfilling and rejecting this narrative. Specifically, Aniya from case one discusses her identification with and rejection of the SBW narrative,

> "I do, but I no longer stand proud or stand strong like I might have in the past. I used to celebrate superwoman…doesn't sleep because I'm being everything to everyone. And then I remember seeing this quote about I never want to be referred to as strong and resilient in all of this anymore because that gives people more permission to add more because they assume that you can handle everything. And I'm like, just because I can handle it well, doesn't mean that I want to. So I'm tired."

Aniya's mother, Charise, agrees with her daughter, "I don't want that role anymore. I had that role when I needed the role and I don't want it anymore."

Furthermore, the daughter from case two notes, "These days, I don't care to be strong." Lastly, after hearing a description of the SBW narrative, Mildred from case three exclaimed, "Some of that list made me kind of like, 'Ooh, that's not who I want to be as a strong black woman.'" So, while participants identify with and have pride in their identities as strong Black women, they have also expressed an awareness of the harm of the narrative which is resulting in a rejection and re-authoring.

In considering the traits participants identified as part of being a SBW as well as their rejection of the harm these traits perpetuate, the researcher notes the relation of the SBW narrative to PTSS. With a PTSS theory lens, traits such as strength, perseverance, and independence can be seen as a hypervigilant and traumatic response to historical and

intergenerational trauma. DeGruy (2017) notes that symptoms of PTSS are akin to PTSD and hypervigilance is a symptom of PTSD according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5; APA, 2013). In considering the treatment of Black women throughout history, it stands to reason that the traits of strength, perseverance, and independence are a trauma response that stems from slavery and subsequent oppressive circumstances. However, Womanist Theologians may interpret these traits and this theme as survival mechanisms that must be honored as part of Black women's cultural experience. Additionally, the message of having pride in their identity aligns with Womanist Theology ideals of empowerment and liberation that many of these traits can be seen as an avenue toward.

Theme Two: "It Takes a Village."

Along with their identification as strong Black women, participants of all cases discussed the accompanying tasks of caretaking, othermothering, and sacrificing self. Specifically, findings of the present study suggest that these tasks are part of the cultural experience of SBW in the United States. First, in discussing Black motherhood, all participants discussed some aspect of caretaking as part of this role. This not only aligns with scholars' understanding of motherhood (Collins, 2000), but emphasizes the cultural salience of caretaking and even matriarchy in Black communities. Specifically, participants did not discuss Black motherhood as a reversed role as Moynihan (1965) suggested, nor did they deem matriarchy as a detriment to the Black family structure. Instead, participants' experiences of Black motherhood aligned more with Dietrich's (1975) assertion that Black women have a significant amount of power in the Black family.

Womanist Theologians assert that Black women are integral in Black communities as mother figures to the entire community (Mitchem, 2002). The findings of this study support this assertion as the notion of othermothering was discussed within four of the five cases.

Specifically, participants emphasized the importance of community, or the village, in raising children. This sentiment echoes the circumstances of slavery in which many women cared for children who were separated from their mothers (Hill, 1971). The perpetuation of this narrative within the Black community supports DeGruy's (2017) theory of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome and thus the notion of generational transmission of messages that date back to the slavery era. Furthermore, the emphasis participants put on othermothering and the village supports research highlighting the communal nature of Black communities. Specifically, kinship, which extends beyond blood and immediate relatives (Mitchem, 2002), has been considered a strength of the Black community (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011) that also promotes the survival of the community (Mitchem, 2002). Womanist Theologians recognize that Black women have a rich connection to the notion of community as community is an integral part of Black women's meaning making experience (Mitchem, 2002). With this, and as this research study has centered the voices of Black women, according to Womanist Theology, it was inevitable that the findings would reflect a communal dimension to the experience of the SBW narrative.

With the salience of motherhood in Black communities comes the expectation of sacrifice. Specifically, in their strength and independence, Black women often sacrifice their own wellness in caring for others (Donovan & West, 2015). The same was found for the participants in the present study. In conjunction with motherhood, participants discussed the need to sacrifice their wellbeing to care for others. The idea of mothers' self-sacrifice has been seen as a cultural norm (Christian, 1985; Collins, 2000) and aligns with the SBW narrative (Abrams et al., 2014; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). Specifically, Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2007) noted the strength within

struggle or sacrifice that Black women endure in fulfilling the SBW role. Thus, it is through the struggle and sacrifice that the strength of the SBW is emphasized and potentially celebrated.

However, in considering PTSS theory, the harm in sacrificing self for one's community can be seen as a response to intergenerational trauma. First, not only has the idea that Black women must care for the community been potentially perpetuated since slavery (Wilkins et al., 2013), the behavior of self sacrifice can be related to the hypervigilance discussed by DeGruy (2017) that Black women must possess as leaders of their families. Even Womanist Theologians would agree that the communal core of Black women is fueled by a need to ensure the survival of herself and her community (Mitchem, 2002). DeGruy (2017) named this survival syndrome which is accompanied by psychological distress. So, although participants found great pride and joy in their emphasis on community and othermothering, Womanist theologians who strive for the overall wellbeing and liberation of Black women might question the cost Black women are paying to be the mothers of their community.

Theme Three: Lessons for Survival

Within their caretaking duties is mothers' responsibility to teach their children how to survive. Participants from the present study identified protective messages they have taught and been taught about resisting oppression. Before discussing these messages, it is necessary to briefly discuss the experiences of racism and sexism that the participants have experienced that continue to perpetuate the necessity of protective messaging.

In reflecting on her experience of cultural racism, Aniya from case one stated,

> "sirens stress me. I get anxiety just hearing the siren. And I've never been put in a situation where I've had to fear for my life with an officer…but for those who have been

put in that situation or have lost their life in that situation, some may have said that that was their first time also, if they have the ability to say something afterwards."

Furthermore, Sophia from case two discussed the hypervigilance she experienced the moment she found out she was having a son,

> "And when I found out I was having a boy, just to be honest with you, it really changed my life because I was like, "I'm finna have a Black son, what am I going to do? And what can I do to protect him?"

Mildred from case three also reflected on her experience as a Black mother protecting her children,

> "They were always in honors classes. They were always the only ones in their class, only African-American…The teachers would pick on them a lot. I may have their expectations lowered for them. Sometimes, I would have to go in and I would have to put on a full suit…because I knew if I went in jeans, I would not be heard. Go in in a suit, be professional but be very careful that I'm fighting for my child, and understand that she has parents behind her that will fight for her."

Debra from case four also reflected on a specific protective message she taught her children, "I always let my children know as…people of color…the world wasn't always going to treat them fair." Lastly, Briana from case five reflected a memory of the impact White Supremacy has on the Black community, "Within my own culture, my dad is Nigerian and my mom is African American. There's colorism…It's weird when your own black people don't, they don't accept you and love you as you think that they should because you're darker…".

These messages echo those taught by mothers during the slavery era (Wilkins et al., 2013). This again emphasizes DeGruy's (2017) theory of PTSS and thus the oppressive messages that have been perpetuated (i.e., transmitted throughout generations) from the slavery era. Additionally, as suggested by Sotero's (2006) theory of historical trauma and Lehrner and Yehuda's (2018) conceptualization of intergenerational trauma, this finding also emphasizes how historical and intergenerational trauma has impacted the cultural experience of Black Americans.

Additionally, messages about resisting intimate partner violence (IPV) and general dependence on men were prevalent across cases. Specifically, mothers who either experienced domestic abuse or received messages about their mothers' dependence on men were vigilant about passing down messages about protection against abuse. This finding is critical as the rates of IPV experienced by Black women are higher than those of other racial or ethnic groups (Devries et al., 2014; Lacey et al., 2013; Sabri et al., 2013). With this, it is anticipated that narratives that give way to IPV are being shifted. Part of this shift are mothers' messages to their daughters about education and financial security. Specifically, messages about independence typically came with messages about pursuing education and being financially responsible and independent. These messages can be a result of the high rate, 45%, of single motherhood in the Black community (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). While the majority of participants in this study were not single mothers and did not come from single mother homes, this finding supports the notion that within the SBW narrative, regardless of a mother's parenting assistance, there is an emphasis of independence through educational and financial freedom. Womanist Theologians, who aim to highlight the nuance within the intersecting oppressive identities of Black women (Mitchem, 2002; Thomas, 1999), would note this finding as integral in honoring the complexity of the Black woman's experience. They would also assert that in being their own activists within

their families and communities, mothers are intentionally passing down messages to their daughters about remaining safe from oppressors that are within and outside of the community.

Research Question Two: How is spiritual coping transmitted through the mothering process?

In relation to research question two, the findings of the present study revealed two themes: God's Got Me and Prayer to Cope. The following section discusses each theme in relation to current research.

Theme Four: God's Got Me

As stated by Mitchem (2002),

> "Black women's spiritual and religious understandings are culturally transmitted. Black women usually do not have to leave home and search for the concepts mentioned above: mothers take their daughters to the water, and grandmothers explain the meanings of the signs. This implies a communal dimension or socialization process into these ways of religious thinking" (p. 49).

The message of the importance of faith that was prevalent across all cases aligns with scholars' understanding of salient messages perpetuated within the Black community by Black women. Womanist Theologians assert that Black women serve as the primary purveyors of spiritual and religious thought (Mitchem, 2002). As the "backbone" of the Black church, Black women have utilized the church community as a space to raise their children as they receive support from other Black mothers (Grant, 2004; Mitchem, 2002). With such an intermingling of faith and motherhood within the Black community (Mithem, 2002), it would stand to reason that all participants discussed messages about spirituality before the researcher prompted the topic. This provides additional evidence of the interconnectedness of Black women's experiences and their

faith, a concept that Womanist Theologian pioneers centralized in the development of the theology (Mitchem, 2002). Specifically, all participants discussed the messages of using faith to navigate life they received from their mothers and even grandmothers.

In addition to receiving messages about centering their faith in their life experiences, many participants received the understanding that their faith shapes their identity. Specifically, participants discussed the interconnectedness between who they are as SBW and their spirituality, indicating a spiritual identity that cannot be separated from their Blackness or womanhood. This relates to Womanist Theologians assertion that the unique experiences of Black women are connected to God and have a significant meaning (Thomas, 1999). Furthermore, the pervasiveness of spirituality within the lives of the participants emphasizes scholars' assertion of the salience of religion and spirituality in the Black community to overcome oppression (Blakey, 2016; Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Dill, 2017; Nguyen, 2018). Additionally, this finding supports DeGruy's (2017) theory of PTSS and thus the notion that coping strategies that were prevalent during the slavery era (i.e., faith in God; Dill, 2017; Jones, 1989) are still present and thus have been transmitted throughout generations.

Furthermore, as the foundation of their identity as strong Black women, participants noted that they receive their strength through their faith in God. This finding not only supports the notion that spirituality is centered in the identity of the participants, but aligns with scholars' assertion that Black women receive strength from their spirituality (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Mattis, 2002; Nelson et al., 2016). Within this, too, is the salience of community which Black women also utilize as a source of strength (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Mattis, 2002; Nelson et al., 2016). The findings of this study also support this notion as participants highlighted the importance of church community in maintaining faith and staying strong. Womanist Theologians would

emphasize this finding as they recognize community as a central phenomenon within Womanist Theology (Mitchem, 2002). Thus, for Womanist Theologians, it stands to reason that the strength of community relates to a strength of faith.

Theme Five: Prayer to Cope

Along with their faith, participants across all cases discussed the importance of prayer to cope with life circumstances. Participants received strong messages from their mothers and grandmothers about how to use prayer to get through difficult times. This finding supports the ample literature on the use of prayer within Black communities to cope. For example, Harris et al. (2019) found that African American, Christian women utilized the positive religious coping strategy of prayer. Additionally, Hayward and Krause (2015) discussed African American and Caribbean Blacks' use of prayer to cope with racial discrimination. This finding also emphasizes the generational transmission of the coping strategy of prayer. Specifically, researchers have noted that African slaves attended "hush hollows," or secret prayer meetings, to engage in spiritual practices that promoted perseverance through oppressive circumstances (Dill, 2017; Jones, 1989). As a coping strategy that has transcended generations, the findings of this study support the emphasis of prayer as a coping strategy for spiritual Black women that has been transmitted throughout generations. This finding supports the theory of PTSS (DeGruy, 2017), as a coping strategy for oppression that was present during slavery is currently prevalent in the lives of Black Americans.

However, a few participants discussed their mothers' tendency to utilize prayer to negate psychological distress. This is reminiscent of spiritual bypass which is the process of utilizing spiritual beliefs to negate or bypass psychological distress (Welwood, 1984, 2000). It is understood, though, that this is also a salient aspect of the Black experience as the cultural

history involves utilizing the church as a source of mental health treatment (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Frame & Williams, 1996; Iliffe, 2017). While salient, participants' recognition of the potentially harmful message of utilizing prayer to bypass psychological distress notes a current shift in beliefs about prayer and mental health care. Thus, it is suspected that with new beliefs about mental health care generational messages are shifting to accommodate a belief in both spiritual tenets and the salience of professional mental health care.

Novel Findings

As a result of the present study there were two novel findings that presented themselves as additional, but salient, themes across cases. Participants from cases one, two, four, and five discussed their beliefs related to healing harmful intergenerational messages which are: (a) intentionally changing the narrative and (b) developing and passing down new messages about self-care and mental health.

Theme Six: Changing the Narrative

Four of five cases discussed changing the narrative of harmful messages in two specific ways, through intentional change and improved family communication. First, participants discussed that it is not only important to be aware of the harmful messages, but to also intentionally change behaviors that perpetuate harmful narratives. Similar to narrative therapy tenets of deconstructing and re-authoring narratives (Gomez et al., 2020), participants identified the deconstruction and re-authoring of these harmful narratives as imperative to healing generational wounds. As an aspect of these harmful messages, participants also noted the need to change communication patterns amongst family members. While it is understood that patterns of behavior are often transmitted through modeling (Bandura, 1977; Bowers & Yehuda, 2016), participants from the present study noted the necessity of overt messaging in alignment with

changed behaviors. As a salient aspect of changing and perpetuating narratives, participants identified general communication as well as specific communication about emotions as necessary for change and healing.

Womanist Theologians would assert that this novel finding is a prime example of the liberation Black women are doing for themselves and their communities (Grant, 2004; Mitchem, 2002). Understanding this, Womanist Theologians could utilize the process of intergenerational transmission as a purveyor of liberation, recognizing that each generation can add to the progression of liberation. As it can be presumed that the strive toward liberation began during the slavery era, the theory of PTSS marries well with the mission of Womanists Theologians. According to PTSS theory, healing intergenerational trauma is a generational process that must capitalize on the function of modeling in teaching children (DeGruy, 2017). DeGruy (2017) asserts that healing generational wounds of oppression requires adults to model success amidst a society that holds racist ideals. This finding highlights how the participants of this study are modeling their own successes. By changing the oppressive narratives they have been given and modeling the counter-narrative, the participants are actively healing their families. However, in considering DeGruy's (2017) call for examples of excellence, it can be questioned whether this task perpetuates the SBW narrative. It would seem that this method of healing asks Black women to continue to be strong and persevere to help heal her community. Understanding that this strength and perseverance often comes with a sacrifice of wellbeing, the question still remains; how do we help Black women heal?

Theme Seven: New Messages About Self Care

While activists and allies continue to search for an answer to the previous question, Black women are healing themselves. Specifically, four of the five cases discussed current harmful

messages about self-care and new messages that are being learned and passed down about mental health. First, participants recognized their difficulties caring for themselves which aligns with researcher's assertion that strong Black women sacrifice their well being (Abrams et al., 2014; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). Participants also recognized the family stigmas about mental health that are prevalent in the community. This is consistent with existing research that has explored mental health stigma within Black communities (Fripp & Carlson, 2017). With this, and in alignment with changing the narrative, many participants discussed bringing awareness to the need of self and mental health care. Moreover, the daughters of four of the five cases discussed "prayerfully seeking treatment," recognizing that one can have faith while also seeking mental health treatment. Womanist Theologians would emphasize and honor this sentiment as it speaks to the humanity and needs of Black women. By caring for themselves and prayerfully seeking treatment, Black women are actively liberating themselves from the bounds of the SBW narrative. Specifically, they are honoring their and their ancestors spiritual experience while combating PTSS which, according to DeGruy (2017), results in the psychologically harmful traits of vacant esteem (i.e., low self worth exacerbated by societal norms), ever present anger, and racist socialization (i.e., adoption of White supremacist ideals).

A Unique Case: Case Three

While many similarities were noted across cases, it is important to recognize the uniqueness of Case Three. Specifically, Mildred was the only participant who identified as an immigrant as well as a spiritual Black woman. Through this, Mildred discussed her experience of learning to navigate racism in America. Additionally, Grace discussed her experience of learning to navigate racism alongside her mother. So, as other mothers were well versed with this concept

and easily provided their daughters with knowledge to protect themselves, Mildred had to quickly learn how to protect herself and her children when she immigrated to the United States.

An important part of protection for Mildred and Grace has been their spiritual identities. The pair were the only participants who fully integrated their spiritual identity throughout the entirety of the interviews. The researcher noted the profound spiritual experience of Mildred and Grace as one that was unique and impactful. With this, case three was the only case that did not endorse the novel findings of “Changing the Narrative” and “New Messages about Self Care.” It may be that Mildred and Grace’s strong spiritual identities are protective factors against harmful narratives associated with the SBW narrative and spiritual coping and thus the new messages about healing discussed by other cases are already integrated into their experiences. This aligns, however, with research that highlights spirituality as a mediator between the SBW narrative and psychological distress (Liao et al. 2020).

Implications

The seven themes highlight the process of transmitting the SBW narrative and spiritual coping amongst spiritual Black women as well as potential methods of healing. The findings of this study provide insight into the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma specifically in regards to the SBW narrative and spiritual coping. With this, the findings from this study offer implications for counseling practice and counselor education.

Implications for Counseling Practice

The findings of the present study provide mental health professionals a better understanding of the transmission of the Strong Black Woman narrative and spiritual coping as aspects of intergenerational trauma amongst spiritual Black women. Several implications for counseling practice can be gleaned from the findings including (a) assessment of

intergenerational trauma, (b) assessment of religion and spirituality, (c) incorporation of spirituality in clinical intervention for trauma, and (d) incorporation of systems theory in trauma intervention.

First, it should be noted that there currently does not exist a standard method of assessing intergenerational trauma. Due to this, it can be difficult for clinicians to know if a client is being impacted by this phenomenon. The findings of this study provide preliminary guidelines (i.e., patterns of messaging) to assess the transmission of trauma among spiritual Black women. Counselors should take care to listen to and consider messages about one's identity that have been internalized, specifically if these messages are harmful for the client. Utilizing narrative family therapy techniques, an approach that has been discussed as culturally responsive (Gomez et al., 2020; Mbilishaka, 2018), such as the ones outlined by Suddeath et al. (2017), can serve as both assessment and intervention tools until formal assessments are developed.

Similar can be said about assessing for religious or spiritual affiliation and meaning making. While measurements such as the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (Plante & Boccaccini, 1997) and the Religious Commitment Inventory - 10 (RCI-10; Worthington et al., 2003) have been used to assess religiosity, it is understood that such measures have been normed on White men. The findings of this study emphasize the integral nature of religion and spirituality in the identity of spiritual Black women and, as such, these measures may not be sufficient for the population. With this, counselors should utilize religious and spiritual assessments as a general understanding of the clients' religious or spiritual experience and more so use them as a guide for deeper discussions about how Black women integrate their spirituality into how they make meaning of their experience. By gaining this insight, clinicians will be better equipped to provide therapeutic support according to the client's worldview.

From this, clinicians can begin to more adequately incorporate spirituality into clinical interventions. While researchers such as Gomez and Gobin (2020), Gomez et al. (2020), and Mbilishaka (2018) discuss creative narrative and community based interventions in counseling Black women, the present study provides an argument for making spirituality more prevalent in such interventions. Models such as the H.E.R.S. (History, Empowerment, Rapport, and Spirituality; Moore & Madison-Colmore, 2005) model, one that is not widely discussed in counseling literature, can offer a guide in centering Black women's spiritual identities. More specifically, the H.E.R.S. model is a holistic, four step approach to working with Black women.

Lastly, The H.E.R.S model can also be utilized to address intergenerational trauma in spiritual Black women as it also addresses the history, or herstory, of Black women in the therapeutic process. Because cultural trauma is intrinsically linked to one's identity (Lehrner & Yehuda, 2018), it is necessary to include the historical and generational trauma of one's culture in the conceptualization and treatment of Black women. Furthermore, clinicians should recognize the intergenerational impact of the narratives that can be developed from an approach like the H.E.R.S. model and incorporate critical theories such as Black Feminist Theory (Collins, 2000) or Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) to assist clients with the deconstruction and re-authoring of intergenerational trauma narratives.

Implications for Counselor Training

The findings of the present study provide counselor educators a better understanding of the transmission of the Strong Black Woman narrative and spiritual coping as aspects of intergenerational trauma amongst spiritual Black women. Two main implications for counselor training can be gleaned from the findings including (a) incorporation of trauma in CACREP

standards and (b) additional inclusion of spirituality in discussions about multiculturalism and social justice.

First, despite the attention to trauma-informed care following Feletti et al.'s (1998) study on the long-term impact of adverse childhood experiences, clinicians and educators must seek out additional, and oftentimes costly, trauma training from outside organizations. It has become evident that this training is essential for counselors as there is a high likelihood they will encounter individuals who have experienced trauma. Furthermore, there is a risk of misdiagnosing clients without proper training and consideration of their trauma experiences(s) (Mosley et al., 2020). While the CACREP (2016) standards do mention trauma a few times, it is often part of a larger course or specialty which runs the risk of being reduced to one class session; but trauma and trauma education cannot be reduced to one class. The findings of this study emphasize the pervasive nature of trauma, and specifically cultural and intergenerational trauma, that must be adequately addressed to provide competent counseling services.

Additionally, as the counseling and counselor education field has made moves toward social justice action, adopting Ratts et al. (2015) Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, religion and spirituality continue to be forgotten discussions. As outlined by the findings from Manda's (2019) study of a holistic narrative approach to trauma treatment that integrates narrative therapy and spiritual practices, the spiritual beliefs of clients can be integral to their processing and healing of traumatic wounding. Furthermore, researchers have noted that despite not receiving proper training in incorporating spirituality and ASERVIC (2009) spiritual competencies in counseling practices, counseling interns and clinicians are comfortable with spiritual concepts in practice (Dobmeier & Reiner, 2012; Reiner & Dobmeier, 2014). However, clinicians should be more than comfortable with spiritual concepts and should strive toward

competency in incorporating religion and spirituality into the therapeutic process, in accordance with the client's worldview. As outlined by the findings of the current study, the spiritual identity of Black women is integral in their experience and as such can be a major aspect of their counseling journey.

Limitations

The purpose of this collective case study inquiry was to understand the experience of intergenerational trauma in spiritual Black women. Specifically, the researcher aimed to understand the transmission of the Strong Black Woman narrative and spiritual coping within the mothering process of spiritual Black women. Despite its contribution to the field of counseling and counselor education, the present study is not without limitations.

The sample of participants who were recruited could be a limitation due to their spiritual identifications and locations. First, although the researcher utilized the identifier of "spiritual" in recognition of the multiple religious and spiritual identities within the Black community, all participants identified as Christian. Recruitment of mother and daughter pairs that have different religious or spiritual affiliations and beliefs may have elicited different results. Recruitment of mother and daughter pairs who identify as spiritual and do not follow an organized religion may have also elicited different results. Additionally, the majority of participants resided on the East Coast. Recognizing that families may have different cultural experiences based on their location, the present does not properly represent spiritual Black women from other regions in the United States.

Another limitation of the present study is the researcher's positionality. Despite using a reflexive journal and peer debriefer, the researcher's identities as a spiritual Black woman could have led to assumptive conclusions throughout the data analysis process. Lastly, qualitative

researchers aim for transferability of findings (Hays & Singh, 2012) and thus collect thick and rich descriptions of the examined phenomenon. While the present study provided rich descriptions of participants' experiences, it is an exploratory inquiry that does not represent the experiences of all spiritual Black women.

Recommendations for Future Research

To date, this is the first study that explored the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma among spiritual Black women by specifically examining the transmission of the Strong Black Woman narrative and spiritual coping within the mothering process. As an exploratory research study, the findings of the present study warrant continued research in further understanding the experience of intergenerational trauma amongst spiritual Black women. First, as a limitation of the present study, future research is needed to reflect the experiences of spiritual Black women from various religious and spiritual affiliations. Additionally, a replication of the present study should strive to obtain a sample that represents various regions throughout the United States as well as various generations (i.e., replicating the present study with teenagers or emerging adults). Furthermore, as seen with case three, immigration and first-generation children may have a different experience of the SBW narrative and spiritual coping. As such, additional research examining the specific experiences of spiritual Black women who have immigrated to the United States and their first-generation daughters is needed. Additionally, research into the experiences of refugees who maintain a spiritual identity and their children can also provide further insight into the unique cultural experience of this population.

Furthermore, the present study begins to expand on research that has examined spiritual injury among military and veteran populations after a traumatic experience (Battles et al, 2019; Smith-MacDonald et al., 2018). Specifically, the present study provides additional insight into

the intersection of spiritual identity and cultural trauma, which impacts one's individual and cultural identity (Lehrner & Yehuda, 2018). Additional research is needed, however, to gain a deeper understanding of how Black women's spiritual identity intersects with their other cultural identities as well as their cultural trauma. A qualitative analysis of how Black women view the intersections of their identities would provide this additional insight. It is also understood that the conceptualization of religion and spirituality is changing in the Black community. As outlined by research done by the Pew Research Center (Mohamed et al., 2021), younger generations within the Black community are identifying with specific religious affiliations at a lower rate. As such, additional research is needed to understand how these younger generations are conceptualizing spirituality and utilizing it to make meaning of their life experience. A qualitative inquiry into the conceptualization of religion and spirituality in younger generations as well as how they are making meaning of their experiences can contribute to the field's understanding of this phenomenon.

Additionally, being one of the only, if not the only, research studies examining intergenerational trauma amongst spiritual Black women, the present study serves as a foundation for a model of intergenerational trauma in Black women. Additional qualitative research is needed, however, to gain a deeper understanding of intergenerational trauma among spiritual Black women. Specifically, a grounded theory study of intergenerational trauma among Black women would be a rigorous method to gain a robust understanding and theoretical foundation of this phenomenon. Furthermore, scales such as Carter et al.'s (2013) Race Based Traumatic Stress Injury Scale or the Gendered-Racial Socialization Scale for Black Women (GRESS-BW; Brown et al., 2017) must be developed and validated to support a model of intergenerational trauma among spiritual Black women. So, after completing multiple qualitative

inquiries, quantitative methods to develop and validate an intergenerational trauma scale will be needed. Lastly, additional qualitative research examining the beliefs of healing intergenerational trauma that spiritual Black women hold is necessary. By gaining this insight, along with an empirically based model of intergenerational trauma, evidenced based therapeutic approaches that specifically address this phenomenon within the Black community can be developed.

Summary

The purpose of this collective case study inquiry was to understand the process of transmitting the Strong Black Woman narrative and spiritual coping within the mothering process of spiritual Black women. The findings of the present study were supported by existing literature and also contributed new knowledge to the literature. The seven themes provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma within the Black community and specifically amongst spiritual Black women. Implications of the present study assert the need for a broader and deeper conceptualization of the experience of spiritual Black women and thus challenge the counseling and counselor education field to enhance current approaches. While this study was not without the limitations presented in the present chapter, this inquiry provided an avenue for additional research to continue to understand the process of intergenerational trauma within the Black community.

Epilogue

Womanists bring forth the legacy of our grandmamas and great grandmamas and carry their notions in the embodiment of life that we create daily (Thomas, 1998, 490-491).

I decided to research intergenerational trauma in the Black community after my experience as a clinician at a community clinic in an inner city. The trauma that all of my clients, who were predominantly Black, experienced was overwhelming. Trained as a family counselor, I began to think about the pervasiveness of trauma in the Black community as a systemic issue. Being completely unprepared to adequately address the systemic concerns my clients faced, a task that my Blackness does not prepare me for, I knew there was a hole in the research that needed to be explored. As such, it seemed logical to me to follow this line of inquiry as I began my research journey. What I did not foresee, however, was the personal impact this research would have.

As I interviewed women who were just like me I maintained my awareness of my identification with the Strong Black Woman narrative and knew this research study would be important to me. However, the process of this immersive qualitative experience was not only academically challenging but spiritually liberating. The meta-experience of learning about how the Black women within this study strive toward their liberation and their lineage's liberation as I was enacting my own was truly transformative. I believe the passing of my last living grandmother, who was a powerful force within our family, in the midst of my data analysis process only enhanced the catharsis of this research study. I was always clear that one of the motivating reasons I have persevered through to this level of education was to make my mother proud. What became clearer, though, was the underlying, and very spiritual, motivation to make my grandmother, great-grandmother, great-great-grandmother and all those who came before

proud by giving them the voice they've always deserved. It has truly been a blessing to do this research study and I am so grateful that this is just the beginning of my journey as a researcher.

> "And that's one thing that I think gives me pride as a Black woman, that even though we've always had things...We may have had more going on for us than most, we've still stood the test of time and we're still here. So I think that's always profound. We have a lot going against us, but we also have a lot going for us, whether we create that opportunity or it's not given to us. We still have a lot to offer and we still have a place in this world where we're needed."

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Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

1. What is your occupation?
2. What is your approximate age?
3. What state or region are you located in?
4. Who were you raised by?
5. How many siblings do you have?
6. How many children do you have?
7. Do you/did you have a partner when raising your children?
8. What is your religious or spiritual affiliation if any? If you do not have an affiliation, how do you characterize/describe your spirituality?

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Individual Interview Questions

1. How does being a Black woman shape your life experience?
2. What did you learn about being a Black woman from your mother and/or grandmother?
3. How did your mother's parenting impact your parenting?
    a. (If daughter doesn't have children) How do you believe your mother's parenting will impact your parenting?
4. How have you experienced the role of Black mothers?
5. What did you learn from your mother about dealing with emotions?
6. What have you taught your daughter about dealing with difficult emotions?
    a. (If daughter doesn't have children) What would you teach your daughter about dealing with the hardships Black women face?
7. What messages have been passed down between the women of your family?
8. What lessons did you learn from your mother that you did or will purposely pass down to your daughter?
9. What lessons did you learn from your mother that you tried not to or will try not to pass down to your daughter?
10. Anything else you would like to share?
11. Do you know anyone who would be a good fit for this study?

Dyad Interview Questions

1. Do either of you identify with the description of the Strong Black Woman that has been provided?
2. How do you believe the Strong Black Woman narrative has impacted you?

3. How do you see the Strong Black Woman narrative connecting to your spirituality?
4. Please describe your chosen spiritual quote or scripture.
5. What are you noticing about the differences or similarities between the quotes or scriptures provided by each of you?
6. How do you believe we can heal from generational curses as a family?

Appendix C: Informed Consent

Thank You For Your Interest in This Research Study!

Aiesha Lee, under the direction of Dr. Natoya Haskins, is conducting a research study on the experience of intergenerational trauma in spiritual Black/African American women. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled Understanding Intergenerational Trauma Amongst Spiritual Black Women. The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of intergenerational trauma of Black/African American women specifically as it relates to the "Strong Black Woman" image and spiritual coping.

You are eligible to participate if you:
1) Identify as African American or Black
2) Identify as a woman
3) Identify as religious/spiritual
4) Are 18 years of age or older

Your participation will involve:

1) Two to three telephone or video interviews
    a) at least one individual and one with family member
2) An estimated time commitment of 2 hours
3) Discussions related to your experience as a Black woman in relation to your grandmother, mother, and/or daughter
4) A demographic questionnaire about your background
5) Reading and reviewing the transcript of the interviews provided by the researcher to ensure accuracy

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. At any time, you can request that the investigator destroy your data or that the investigator exclude your data from any analysis. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information. Your participation will not impact your educational status.

The interview will be audio taped to ensure accurate data retrieval and analysis. You will select a pseudonym and your responses will be recorded using this assumed name. At the end of the study any information linking your name to the pseudonym will be destroyed. The recordings will be deleted after transcription and coding are complete. The recordings will be stored on a secured, password protected drive. I will make every effort to keep your personal information

confidential and conceal your identity in the study's results and I will keep your personally-identifiable information confidential by using pseudonyms and password protected files. The results of the research study will be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used.

There are no anticipated risks in participating in this study. However, in the event a participant feels additional mental health assistance is needed following the interview, the researcher can provide referrals to mental health services. The benefits of participating in this study are that you will have the opportunity to express your views about your experiences as a Black woman and you will have the opportunity to help develop a research line of inquiry about this subject matter. Societal benefits include the ability to address the needs of Black/African American women in a culturally responsive manner. You can receive a copy of the results, if you so desire, at the conclusion of the research. You are not obligated to respond to all questions and at any time you are able to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your participation and involvement in this study by notifying the researcher by phone or e-mail.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call Natoya Haskins at (804) 240-4192 send an email to nhhaskins@wm.edu.

I am eligible to participate and consent to begin the study.

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Print Name

__________________________________ __________________

Signature Date

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY the W&M PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2021-11-15 AND EXPIRES ON 2022-11-15.

Appendix D: Excerpts from Reflexive Journal

Case One Coding Notes

- So the daughter had to put aside her own emotions to support her mother. I don't know if this needs an additional code but I do know it comes up in the daughter's interview
- Leaning on spirituality when feeling out of control
- Just the use of the word compliance here is frustrating. That we have to teach compliance in a way that extends beyond listening to the grown ups is frustrating
- Recurring theme of grandmothers caring for grandchildren to help daughter work/better self
- A point like this was made in an article about black spirituality. the importance of slaves or their descendants seeing themselves in biblical characters that were oppressed but still prevailed - comparing biblical characters to self
- I think this came up in the previous case - daughters bringing this awareness to mothers and then teaching/guiding them in expressing their emotions
- "I just want to be upset for a quick minute." And she's just like, "No." That just, it wasn't allowed." - this is familiar for me, i have these conversations with my mom

Case Five Coding Notes

- There's a theme emerging of conscious change in behavior.
- Coding case 5 mother was really tough, especially after losing my grandmother. Even though I didn't have a really close relationship with my grandmother, we still had some type of relationship. And it's so sad knowing that someone who has been there for you since you were born, whether you leaned on her or not, is gone. It's so sad to think about the loss my mother is currently going through. Even though the last couple years were rough, that was still her mother and that was still my grandmother. She still made an impact on my life.
- Recurring theme of mothers recognizing they need to care for themselves later in their life and trying to impart that on their children who have already adopted many of the same harmful traits.

Appendix E: Excerpt from Cross Case Analysis

Categories Related to Strong Black Woman Narrative

Pride in Identity	
Instilling pride in heritage	Case 1
Value - Pride in Culture	Case 1
Identity/Pride in Identity	Case 3
Pride in Identity	Case 4
Power, Strength, Independence, Perseverance, Resourcefulness	
Independence	Case 1
Strong	Case 1
Not Expressing Emotions	Case 1
Uncomfortability with expressing emotion	Case 1
Don't Dwell	Case 2
Don’t dwell	Case 2
Power of SBW	Case 2
Strength	Case 2
Hard Work	Case 2
Strength	Case 3
Mother's Dependence	Case 3
Changed Message - Mother's Independence	Case 3
Independence/Resourcefulness	Case 4
Strength/Perseverance	Case 4
Strength	Case 4
Independence	Case 4
Perseverance	Case 4
Emotional limitations	Case 4
Don't dwell	Case 5
Not showing emotion	Case 5
Independence	Case 5

"It takes a village"	
Care Taking	Case 1
Matriarch	Case 1
Caretaker	Case 2
Mom as Caretaker	Case 3
Mother's Closeness - Staying with Children	Case 3
Mother/Daughter Communication/Closeness	Case 3
Caretaker (Scripture finding)	Case 4
Positive Relationship with Mother	Case 5
Village	Case 1
Other Mothering	Case 1
Family Closeness	Case 2
Family Sticks Together	Case 2
Other Mothers	Case 4
Othermothering	Case 5
Sacrificing Self	Case 2
Neglect of self and relationships	Case 5
Put others first/Caretaker	Case 5
Messages for Survival	
Protective Messages - Oppressive Lessons for Survival	Case 1
Financial Responsibility	Case 2
Education	Case 2
Financial Security	Case 3
Protective Messages	Case 4
Protective Messages	Case 5

Categories Related to Spiritual Coping

God's got me	
Faith (scripture finding)	Case 1
God's got this (scripture finding)	Case 1
Spiritual Coping - God's got it (scripture finding)	Case 2
Faith	Case 2
Spiritual Coping - Faith/Trust in God	Case 3
God's Path for Us	Case 3
Generational Legacy of Faith	Case 3
Faith	Case 4
God's got me	Case 4
Faith Shapes Identity	
Faith Shaping Identity	Case 3
God & Identity	Case 4
Faith & Identity	Case 5
Strength through Faith	
SBW & Faith	Case 3
Strength through Faith	Case 3
Strength from God (scripture finding)	Case 4
SBW & Faith	Case 5
Strength through/from God	Case 5
Prayer to Cope	
Prayer	Case 1
Coping - Prayer	Case 2
Spiritual Coping - Prayer	Case 3
Prayer	Case 4
Pray	Case 5

Miscellaneous Categories: Healing

New Messages about Self Care	
New Message - Self Care	Case 1
Poor Self Care	Case 1
New Message - MH	Case 2
Protecting Self through MH Care	Case 2
New MH Beliefs	Case 2
Teaching about MH	Case 2
Don't Seek Help	Case 2
MH stigma/unawareness	Case 4
New Message - Caring for MH	Case 4
New Message - MH/Self Care	Case 5
Caring for Self	Case 5
Changing the Narrative	
Changing the Narrative	Case 1
New Message - Express emotion/communicate	Case 1
Healing through Communication	Case 2
Healing - Resist Passing Harmful Messages	Case 2
Healing - "be intentional"	Case 4
Healing - intentional change	Case 5
Awareness/Conscious Change	Case 5

Vita

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Education

PhD, Counselor Education and Supervision, CACREP Accredited — 2022
William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA

MA, Counselor Education, CACREP Accredited — 2018
Concentration: Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling and Therapy
The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ

BA, Psychology, *Business Minor* — 2014
Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ

Current Professional Positions

Mental Health Counselor — **August 2021 – Present**
Tailwinds Ranch
Williamsburg, VA

Director of Training — **August 2020 – Present**
The Flanagan Counselor Education Clinic, William & Mary
Williamsburg, VA

Publications

Lee, A. & Haskins, N. (2022). Toward a culturally humble practice: Critical consciousness as an antecedent. *Journal of Counseling & Development,* 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12403

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