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Black girl magic: The endurance of enslaved mothers' lessons

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Black Girl Magic: The Endurance of Enslaved Mothers' Lessons

An Ethnographic Study Exploring the Intergenerational Lessons of Black Mothers

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the women who came before me; my grandmothers, both of whom have left a beautiful and immense legacy. Grandma Beverley, although I never had the opportunity to meet you, your tenacious spirit runs through my veins.

To my Mary Lou, my own othermother, a woman with the kindest and most giving heart. This one is for you. While I never pictured achieving this accomplishment without you by my side, I thank you for reminding me to persevere through it all. Thank you for showing me that strength is not only in dominance, but also in the softness and love one gives out, especially in a world that is filled with so much of the opposite. I miss you more than words could ever express. I hope this makes you proud.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

Abstract

Intergenerational trauma involves a traumatic event that began years prior to the current generation and has impacted the ways in which individuals cope with and heal from trauma. Intergenerational trauma can negatively impact families and individuals as a result of unresolved emotions and thoughts about a traumatic event. Motherhood has always been an important role for Black women (Green, 1990) and although all women face challenges in their role as mothers, Black women are faced with unique tasks that their White counterparts are not. Black women are often the transmitter of culture to their children and frequently set the example of what it means to be a Black adult (Collins, 1987; Greene, 1990). For daughters, mothers are often seen as role models as girls identify with their mothers and learn to embrace their femaleness often through emulating their mothers (Collins, 1987). Racism and sexism imprint a legacy on Black women, which affects their children's lives (Greene, 1990b). In fulfillment of dissertation research and to continue enhancing the current research on Black motherhood, this study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of six Black mothers and the intergenerational messages that are sent from Black mothers to Black daughters. Through an ethnographic study, six themes emerged from data collected via three semi-structured focus group interviews. Implications of these findings for the counseling field and counselor educators, including the need for dedicated space for Black mothers to process their experiences, are discussed.

Keywords: Black women, Black mothers, motherhood, counselors, historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, enslavement, multicultural competence

Chapter 1: Introduction

Black Americans have been profoundly affected by enslavement and its aftermath both psychologically and emotionally (Wilkins et al., 2013). The trauma associated with enslavement is unique because it has yet to be accepted as having deep implications on those who experienced it and how it can still be affecting Black Americans (Wilkins et al., 2013). The very nature of the institution of slavery is contrary to humanity and the practices of submission endured by the enslaved have reproduced trauma responses throughout generations. Failure to understand the ways in which enslavement, and other historical traumas, affect clients, their experience, and presenting problems may lead clinicians to have limited perspective and conceptualizations, thereby causing ineffective treatment or, worse, harm (Wilkins et al., 2013).

America's History with Enslavement

From the time the Africans were captured they faced continuous danger. In addition to being treated as less than livestock, those who were enslaved were made to endure some of the worst physical assaults daily. Those who were enslaved faced not only physical trauma during their time in bondage but emotional and psychological trauma as well, via messaging that one was less than human and knowing that one's life could be taken away at any moment without consequences to the executor. The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a warning regarding toxic stress and its harmful impact on children. It warned that signals of a hostile or uncaring environment can flood an infant, or even a fetus, with stress hormones like cortisol in ways that can disturb the body's metabolism or the construction of the brain (Kristof, 2012). It can be argued that enslaved

Africans were living with untreated trauma and studies across species, cultures, and trauma types have shown that stress can be transmitted from generation to generation (Levin, 2016).

The field of epigenetics studies changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself. Epigenetics shows us that genes hold "memories" and explains how a significant enough trauma, or life-threatening event, can alter one's genetic coding and is responsible for the intergenerational transmission of trauma.

Intergenerational trauma involves a traumatic event that began years prior to the current generation and has impacted the ways in which individuals cope with and heal from trauma. Intergenerational trauma can negatively impact families and individuals because of unresolved emotions and thoughts about a traumatic event. Literature suggests that in studying Holocaust survivors the massive psychic trauma that has scarred a generation continues to affect subsequent generations in ways that are complex. Therefore, if researchers have found that trauma can be passed down from surviving generations regarding the Holocaust, it would be plausible to hypothesize that after over two hundred years of oppression, captivity, exploitation, and dehumanization Black Americans would also continuously pass down trauma through generations.

Lingering Effects of Enslavement

While some behaviors may have been reproduced for survival it is important to question the helpfulness of these behaviors today. Enslavement has had a lasting effect on the intrapsychic functioning of Black Americans and the effects of enslavement continue to affect and shape societal dynamics (Wilkins et al., 2013). The lasting effects of

enslavement can be seen in a multitude of ways including colorism, cultural mistrust, childrearing in the Black family, a sense of powerlessness in communities of color, and an ever-present fear of loss.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of enslavement and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today (DeGruy, 2017), supports the belief that there are lasting effects of enslavement that are still present and thriving for Black Americans. The syndrome piece of PTSS implies a pattern of behaviors that are brought about by specific circumstances (DeGruy, 2017). DeGruy categorizes these patterns of behavior into three categories: vacant esteem, ever-present anger, and racist socialization. The effects of this abhorrent institution were numerous with one of the most profound legacies being its effect on the Black family. This was a key contributor to the enslaved submitting to their enslaver.

The Black Family

Mothers, fathers, and children were often sold off and separated by their enslavers. Families were made matriarchal as fathers were sold off or "broken-in". Black men were seen to be dangerous, needing to be controlled. Matriarchies in families were created because of the ongoing oppression the enslaved faced (Wilkins et al., 2013). Enslavement not only led to the breakdown of the Black family, but gave way to Jim Crow, which subsequently paved the way for The War on Drugs and Mass Incarceration.

The surge in the growth of prison systems has changed urban policy and poverty. African American males are incarcerated at exponential rates which also affects the families of these men profoundly. Urban communities now deal and are made to cope,

with husbands and fathers being lost to incarceration. Just as many Black fathers are incarcerated as those not incarcerated. The systemic racism involved in the justice and penal systems has contributed to the breakup of the Black family. Due to the fact that Black men are incarcerated at higher rates than White men, there are more Black fathers, husbands, and partners incarcerated which leaves women and mothers to be the primary care provider for many children.

While many narratives surrounding the Black community are based on trauma and the adversities which they are made to overcome, it is equally as important to understand the protective factors within the Black community and how they enable individuals to overcome these unique difficulties which they face. Historically, African American families have had to find their own social supports (Brown et al., 2008). This comes not only from those who are part of their nuclear family but also those external to that nuclear family who may play a huge part in their support system. This includes extended family, fictive kin, and the community as a whole. This social network can help individuals within this community overcome adversity.

Motherhood

Motherhood has evolved throughout American history. Motherhood is simultaneously diminished and adored (Greene, 1990), which is problematic on multiple fronts. This paradoxical position often creates a double bind for the women who occupy these roles who are being sent mixed messages about their societal position. More pressingly, White culture has heavily influenced the ideals of motherhood, often pressuring Black women to fall in line. The long-ingrained narrative from White culture tells women that motherhood is one's true calling (Collins, 1987).

Motherhood has always been an important role for Black women (Green, 1990). Historically, Black motherhood has been predicated on ideas and theories formulated by men, both Black and White, and these theories about Black mothers have prevailed (Wiedmer et al., 2006). Greene (1990) points out that although all women face challenges in their role as mothers, Black women are faced with unique tasks that their White counterparts are not. Black women's child-rearing values and behaviors are often affected by the socio-cultural and racial environments they experience. Black women are also tasked with being the transmitter of culture to their children and often set the example of what it means to be a Black adult (Collins, 1987; Greene, 1990). An important lesson for Black children is learning to interpret the messages of the outside world especially when it comes to how the larger society will view them (Greene, 1990; Turner, 2020). Black mothers must teach their children these lessons, all while shifting and negotiating this for themselves (Greene, 1990).

The mother-daughter bond is an intimate and complex relationship that greatly impacts the development of daughters (Everet et al., 2016). This bond is more emotionally intense than any other dyad relationship. The intersection between gender and race, along with the historical, psychological, and social context influence the way Black mothers raise their daughters. Racism and sexism imprint a legacy on Black women, which affects their children's lives (Greene, 1990). For women, their relationships with their own mothers largely influence their self-image as well as how they socialize with their own children, more specifically their own daughters.

Counseling Related Connections

Race, although a social construct, is a deep-seeded ideology in American culture. Race, racism, and prejudice are systemically ingrained into almost every institution and system in the United States. Racism can be defined as the idea that one is inferior due to prejudiced beliefs against his or her ethnic group, outward appearance, or asserted "biological nature" (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006, pp. 2).

Racism is used to justify the harmful, unjust, and demeaning treatment of a person who is seen as inferior (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). Racial incidents can be traumatizing and affect both children and adults who identify as an ethnic minority (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). Race-based trauma is the "physical and emotional pain that results from racism in the forms of racial harassment, racial discrimination, or discriminatory harassment" (Carter, 2007, p. 88). It can also be defined as the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual impact an individual endures after their safety and sense of self have been threatened due to racism (Evans et al., 2016; Hardy, 2013; Paradies et al., 2015).

Critical race theory (CRT) is a paradigm that is used to give insight into race and racism in a contemporary context and highlights how these social constructs are more powerful and enduring than one may think (Brown, 2003). Despite the "progress" that is said to have been made in Western culture, CRT emphasizes the racial dynamics of marginalized groups and just how deeply ingrained racism truly is (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). Critical race theory argues that race is central to prominent policies and laws in the United States and challenges models that deemphasize race (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). There are five salient tenets of critical race theory which include: (1) permanence of

racism, (2) Whiteness as property, (3) interest conversion, (4) counter-storytelling, and (5) the critique of liberalism.

Black Americans underutilize therapeutic services and evidence suggests that they are receiving inadequate mental health care when they do (Wilkins et al., 2013). It is essential that clinicians address and acknowledge historical trauma in the therapeutic process as people of color are strongly connected to both the historical and contemporary dynamic and it is necessary to heal from the scars of the past (Wilkins et al.). Therapists must move from acknowledging that race exists to actively challenging racial injustice (Wilkins et al.).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to uncover what messages were sent to Black mother participants from *their* own mothers, how these messages affected participants, and how these messages impact participants' mothering their own daughters. This study aimed to explore the themes of Black motherhood that continue to get passed down generationally from mother to child, particularly from mother to daughter.

This study challenges the dominant culture's beliefs of motherhood while also applying a Critical Race Theory and Race-Based Trauma lens to explore and uncover the lessons of Black motherhood. This qualitative study also pulls from ethnographic inquiry and intends to examine the lived experiences of Black mothers.

Statement of the Problem

As trauma can be passed down intergenerationally through genes, it is thought that messages, or lessons, both overt and covert, can also be passed down throughout generations. Due to the profound effects of slavery, it is necessary to examine Black

motherhood. Historically, Black motherhood has been predicated on ideals established by White culture (Collins, 1987). As a central component to the Black experience, it is important to explore Black motherhood and uncover core themes and lessons that get passed down through the mothering experience, particularly in the mother-daughter relationship.

Research Questions

The researcher was intentionally mindful of the population of interest in creating the research questions. The research examined the relationship between Black mothers and their mothers, as well as the relationship with their daughters. The specific research questions of this qualitative study were:

1. What are the covert messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?
2. What are the overt messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?
3. How do participants' relationships with their mothers influence their relationships with their daughters?
4. What are the intergenerational patterns in the messaging sent to Black mothers from *their* mothers, which they then pass to their daughters?

Conclusion

While alarming, the fact that there is not an Afrocentric lens through which we critically examine black motherhood is not shocking. It is essential to better understand the lived experience of Black Americans, particularly the Black woman, one of the most oppressed and underrepresented groups in one's society. The purpose of this study was to uncover what messages were sent to Black mother participants from *their* own mothers, how these messages affected participants, and how these messages impacted participants'

mothering their own daughters. This study not only increases understanding and knowledge but may also increase cultural competence for clinicians who serve communities of color, particularly Black women.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Historical trauma is often like complicated grief in that it affects individuals deeply. This trauma not only affects those who experience it directly but can also be passed down to subsequent generations (Levin, 2009). Epigenetics explains how one's environment can affect genetic expression (Spiegel, 2014). Studies across species, cultures, and trauma types have shown that stress can be transmitted from generation to generation (Levin, 2016).

Black Americans have been profoundly affected by enslavement and its aftermath both psychologically and emotionally (Wilkins et al., 2013). The trauma associated with slavery is unique because it has yet to be accepted as having deep implications on those who experienced it and how it can still be affecting Black Americans (Wilkins et al., 2013). Survivor syndrome has often been used to describe those who have survived atrocities such as the Holocaust. It is defined as chronic anxiety, depression, nightmares, irritability, fear of persecution, impaired social relationships, and psychosomatic disorders (Mark et al., 1995). It can be argued that African Americans, whose ancestors survived slavery, experience many of these symptoms. Failure to understand ways in which slavery and other historical traumas affect clients, their experience, and presenting problems may lead clinicians to have a limited perspective and conceptualizations, thereby causing ineffective treatment or, worse, harm (Wilkins et al.). It is important to understand America's history with slavery, the residual effects of slavery, and how counselors can respond to Race-Based Trauma (RBT).

America's History with Enslavement

American history books emphasize that enslaved peoples came to America in 1619; however, evidence suggests that the enslaved were brought to America as early as 1513 (Waxman, 2019). Regardless of the official start of enslavement in America, the atrocities that occurred during chattel slavery are agonizing. The triangle trade was the route between Europe, Africa, and the Americas where goods were sold and exchanged. The Middle Passage was one leg of the triangular trade used to transport enslaved Africans and has more recently been referred to as the Black Holocaust and Maafa, which in Swahili means disaster, calamity, or catastrophe (DeGruy, 2017).

From the time the Africans were captured they faced continuous danger. They were taken from their homes, stripped of their culture and language, chained to other human beings, deprived of water and food, and made to deal with insufferable conditions. They were thrown overboard, exposed to various forms of abuse, and plagued by diseases aboard ships. Sources note that anywhere between ten to fifteen million Africans were bought to the Americas via the transatlantic slave trade and many scholars agree that just as many died along the way (DeGruy, 2017).

Enslavement, by nature, is contrary to humanity. It strips individuals of free will and self-determination. It is abusive and abhorrent and is a form of trauma. American slavery is referred to as "chattel slavery" because the enslaved were items of personal property and their owners were free to do with them what they pleased (DeGruy, 2017). Laws were enacted to keep those who were enslaved from being seen as human and being afforded the most basic human rights. The Three-Fifths compromise stated that Black enslaved people were equivalent to three-fifths of a human being. The Virginia

code of 1705, also referred to as the casual killing act, removed criminal consequences for killing an enslaved person in the act of correcting them (DeGruy). This meant that White Americans could legally kill any Black enslaved person without any consequence from the law.

In addition to being treated as less than livestock, those who were enslaved were made to endure some of the worst physical assaults daily. They were whipped, worked under the sun until the point of exhaustion daily, deprived of food and water, sexually assaulted, castrated, and lynched (DeGruy, 2017). The goal of enslavement was to keep those in bondage physically strong, as to ensure labor and "profit" on the enslaver's investments, but mentally weak. To "keep the body but take the mind" (Lynch, 2014). The purpose was to take away the enslaved people's will to resist their enslaver. Those who were enslaved faced not only physical trauma during their time in bondage but emotional and psychological trauma as well, via messaging that one was less than human and knowing that one's life could be taken away at any moment without consequences to the executor.

The enslaved were also plagued with constant threats and fear from their masters and overseers. This victimization arguably guaranteed a trauma response not only to the individual experiencing these acts but also to their descendants. In January of 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a warning regarding toxic stress and its harmful impact on children. It warned that signals of a hostile or uncaring environment can flood an infant, or even a fetus, with stress hormones like cortisol in ways that can disturb the body's metabolism or the construction of the brain (Kristof, 2012). While the argument can be made that the enslaved were constantly operating in a hostile environment which

could have had biological effects on their children, what seems more salient is the attacks on their subjectivity. Gump (2000) argues that the subjectivity of the enslaved was destroyed. She goes on to state that "there is no shame as profound as that which destroys subjectivity, which says through word or action, 'what you need, what you desire, and what you feel are of complete and utter insignificance' (Gump, 2000).

It should be noted that many civilizations across the world have had some form of slavery. However, slavery in America was different. It differed in the way the enslaved were acquired, the way they were treated, the duration of servitude, as well as the way the enslavers viewed the enslaved (DeGruy, 2017). In most civilizations, slavery was the result of war. Slavery in America, on the other hand, made the capturing, shipping, and selling of human beings into a business, which helped to make America one of the world's wealthiest nations (DeGruy, 2017). In the West colonization and slavery go hand in hand. "Without the colonization of the New World, the West as we know it would not exist, and without slavery, there would have been no colonization" (Foner, 2011,p.27)

As previously stated, the first enslaved Africans were bought to America in the 1500s and the transatlantic slave trade was made illegal in the United States in 1808, resulting in over 200 years of bondage for Black Americans. Although the slave trade ended in 1808, slavery wasn't made illegal until 1863 (DeGruy, 2017). Estimates put the number of enslaved individuals at twenty to thirty million during that time (DeGruy, 2017). It could be assumed that the unaddressed trauma experienced by the enslaved would affect every aspect of their personhood. It is important to understand the trauma experienced by individuals who experienced slavery and how that has potentially serious lingering effects on Black Americas still, today.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Slavery

Individuals react differently to experienced events. As previously detailed, in response to the abhorrent treatment of enslaved Africans, a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) could have been warranted. Using what is known about the institution of slavery in America and looking at Criterion A for the PTSD Diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), one can hypothesize that those who were enslaved could have met the criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD (DeGruy, 2017,). Criterion A states:

> Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one or more of the following ways:
>
> 1. Directly experiencing the traumatic events
> 2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others
> 3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
> 4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic events (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

The DSM-5 states that experiencing these stressors in any one of the above ways is enough to warrant a diagnosis of PTSD (DeGruy, 2017; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). DeGruy argues that those who were enslaved experienced them all and not just once, but repeatedly. Epigenetics and intergenerational trauma are concepts that illustrate the longstanding impact of trauma, beyond the PTSD diagnosis.

Epigenetics and Intergenerational Trauma

The field of epigenetics studies changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself (Howie et al., 2022). Genes hold "memories" and behaviors triggered by events can be passed down in one's genes. Therefore, the environment can influence our genes, which supports the fact that trauma can be transmitted from generation to generation. A significant trauma, or life-threatening event, can alter one's genetic coding and this can be passed down for several generations (Henriques, 2019).

Brave Heart (2003) described historical trauma as "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences" (p. 7). Additionally, Phipps and Degges-White (2014) described historical trauma as a "subjective re-experiencing and recollection of traumatic events by an individual or a community over multiple generations" (p. 177). Historical trauma is often used to describe the long-term influence of colonization and has been used as a synonym for postcolonial distress. This use changes its meaning slightly, as *postcolonial* references the contemporary as much as it does the historical and *distress* is much broader than trauma (Kirmayer et al., 2014).

Intergenerational trauma involves a traumatic event that began years prior to the current generation and continues to impact the ways in which individuals cope with and heal from trauma (Franco, 2021). Intergenerational trauma can also be described as the renewing of traumatic stress through each generation as the effects of the original trauma are continually witnessed (Franco, 2021). Intergenerational transmission has been described as the process of children learning how to respond to their surroundings in a

similar way as their parents responded to their own surroundings (Bowers & Yehuda, 2016). Intergenerational trauma can negatively impact families and individuals as a result of unresolved emotions and thoughts about a traumatic event. Literature suggests that in studying Holocaust survivors the massive psychic trauma that has scarred a generation continues to affect subsequent generations in ways that are complex (Bergen-Reiss, 1995). Therefore, if researchers have found that trauma can be passed down from surviving generations regarding the Holocaust, it is plausible to hypothesize that after over two hundred years of oppression, bondage, mistreatment, and dehumanization Black Americans would also continuously pass down trauma through generations. While it is easy, and common, to make comparisons between mass traumas like enslavement and the Holocaust, there are unique and distinctive differences that must also be kept in mind (Kirmayer et al., 2014). The goal of the Holocaust was the eventual extinction of an entire group of human beings while enslavement aimed to maintain a system of degradation, oppression, and free labor of another group of human beings. The legacy of slavery, however, has led to the ongoing and continual suffering of Black Americans that not only is rooted in the past but is also persistent in ongoing structural violence today (Kirmayer et al, 2014).

Intergenerational or historical trauma is not confined to wartime experiences and is quite widespread (Abrams, 1999). It often occurs when the generation that has experienced a traumatic event doesn't seek help or may not have access to appropriate support to resolve their symptoms. In the case of enslaved Africans, and their descendants, newly liberated enslaved Americans were more than likely not receiving

mental health treatment for their PTSD and were actually excluded from hospitals and state facilities in the years that followed slavery (Wilkins et al., 2013).

Lingering Effects of Enslavement

While some behaviors may have been passed down through generations for the purposes of survival most are now more of a hindrance to success than helpful (DeGruy, 2017). Those who survived chattel slavery were raising children with their own untreated psychological injuries and their children likely learned those behaviors (DeGruy, 2017). Today some of those behaviors are still being passed down through generations in Black families.

Enslavement has had a lasting effect on the intrapsychic functioning of Black Americans and the effects of slavery continue to affect and shape societal dynamics (Wilkins et al., 2013). It is important to examine Black Americans' current social position from a historical perspective as it helps to make connections between enslavement and current challenges explicit (Wilkins et al., 2013). The lasting effects of slavery can be seen in a multitude of ways including colorism, cultural mistrust, childrearing in the Black family, a sense of powerlessness in communities of color, and an ever-present fear of loss.

During enslavement, individuals who were of a lighter complexion were seen as more valuable. The closer one was to Whiteness, the more “privilege” one had. Often this meant a different form of abuse, as opposed to overtly abusive behaviors toward darker-skinned individuals, from White enslavers and overseers (Greene, 1990). This gave rise to the preferential treatment of those with lighter skin over darker-skinned individuals. Those that were lighter-skinned were often viewed as more beautiful and desirable which

gave rise to jealousies and resentments between darker-skinned and lighter-skinned people (Greene, 1990).

While this is still a vexed topic, and while a good majority of those in Black communities recognize that this is a tactic to keep Black people fighting amongst themselves instead of unifying for a bigger cause, some of this mentality still exists in the Black community today. Davis Tibble et al. (2019) conducted a focus group study regarding messages about skin color and hair. They found that in several focus groups participants shared that skin color was the topic of family and societal judgment and conveyed that the colorism hierarchy that placed light skin at the top still existed. They went on to say many of these messages came from mothers and aunts who noted lighter skin being associated with being more beautiful, being more respected, and having access to better opportunities.

Cultural mistrust is also directly correlated to enslavement and its' aftermath. Cultural mistrust are the feelings that many Black Americans have of distrust, avoidance, and apprehension regarding Caucasians (Wilkins et al., 2013). Black Americans have developed cultural mistrust because of the mistreatment of their ancestors and have relied on this stance for survival. Throughout history, Black individuals have been used for medical experiments, blamed for crimes they never committed, and as previously stated, could have their life taken by a White citizen without repercussion or regard (DeGruy, 2017). This has established a distrust of White people and institutions. Since most mental health professionals are White, the mental health field has become a White institution to the Black community (Taylor et al., 2018). Cultural mistrust is a key factor in Black Americans' reluctance to seek mental health treatment, disclose less in session,

prematurely terminate therapy, and why there is an immense need for clinicians of color. The lack of cultural understanding keeps people of color from seeking therapy (Wilkins et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2018).

During slavery, the enslaved had to stifle their natural response to bondage and adopt a non-threatening identity (Wilkins et al., 2013). They watched their enslavers and their brutality and realized that passivity meant their survival. This is what enslaved parents taught their children. It was necessary as a means of survival in dangerous conditions. It also corresponds to the use of physical punishment. Parents would be excessively punitive to save their children from the savage punishment that would be inflicted on them if their enslaver or an overseer got to them first (Wilkins et al, 2013.). Both can still be seen today, as many Black Americans are careful not to be outspoken in fear of retribution and physical punishment still being used in childrearing in Black homes.

It is important to recognize that enslaved parents were always raising their children with an ever-present fear of loss, which was directly correlated to their difficulty with praising their children. Enslaved parents were afraid that their children would be taken away from them by their enslaver. If one was to brag about how strong their boy was becoming or how beautiful their girls were growing to be, they ran the risk of master putting them to work in the field, selling them off, or something much worse, such as sexual assault, for their girls. Although today, there is no risk of them being sold off, the notion of not praising one's children has and continues to be, passed down through generations (DeGruy, 2017).

Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) is defined as a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today; accompanied by the belief (real or imagined) that the benefits of the society in which they live are not accessible to them (DeGruy, 2017). PTSS is the persistent presence of racism despite the significant legal, social, and political progress made during the second half of the twentieth century, which has created a physiological risk for Black individuals that is virtually unknown to White Americans (Wilkins et al., 2013). The syndrome piece of PTSS implies a pattern of behaviors that are brought about by specific circumstances (DeGruy, 2017). DeGruy categorizes these patterns of behavior into three categories: vacant esteem, ever-present anger, and racist socialization.

Vacant esteem is the state of believing one to have little or no worth intensified by the reinforcement of this belief by society, community, and family (DeGruy, 2017). It is important to note that vacant esteem is not a measure of one's actual worth, but rather their beliefs about their worth (DeGruy, 2017). Families contribute to vacant esteem when parents believe that they have no value and pass those beliefs on to their children; communities, by their beliefs on a member's worth; and society contributes to vacant esteem through its laws, institutions, policies, and media (DeGruy, 2017).

Ever-present anger involves an unspoken, always present anger that can be seen in Black Americans (DeGruy, 2017). Anger is typically a response to a blocked goal or fear of failure and even today, Black families are still teaching their children to survive in the face of oppressive conditions and disrespect that ultimately blocks their goals

(DeGruy, 2017), which keeps anger welling just below the surface. In addition to these blocked goals, the denial of racism's existence and its effects have historically been denied adding to the racial pain, hurt, and rage that Black Americans face (Greene, 1990).

Racist Socialization is the "adoption of the slave master's value system" (DeGruy, 2017). This is not uncommon for people being held captive and can be seen as adopting the belief that all things associated with Whiteness are superior and that Black and all things associated with Blackness are inferior. This can be seen in beauty standards in the Black community, colorism, or feeling threatened by one another's accomplishments.

The Enslaved Black Woman

Very little Focus has been given to enslaved women and their unique struggles (Davis, 1983; Jones, 1982). The multi-dimensional roles of enslaved women within both their families and communities can shed light on Black women's current position and cultural standing (Davis, 1983). The enslaved woman was not primarily a wife, mother, or homemaker like her white counterpart but rather a full-time worker (Davis, 1983, Jones, 1983).

While there were a significant number of enslaved women occupying roles as house servants, many of them were field workers (Davis, 1983; Jennings, 1990; Jones, 1982). Their responsibilities were just as heavy as the men's (Davis, 1983; Jennings, 1990). As girls became of age, they were assigned to work the soil, pick cotton, cut cane, and harvest tobacco right alongside the boys. The oppression of women was identical to that of men and therefore rendered them genderless (Davis, 1983; Jennings, 1990; Jones, 1990). However, Black women during enslavement suffered in only ways women could (Davis, 1983; Jennings, 1990).

Enslaved women were victims of sexual assault and violence (Davis, 1983). When it was profitable for enslavers to exploit women as if they were men, they were genderless (Davis, 1983; Jennings, 1990). However, when they could be exploited and punished in only the way women could, they were viewed in their female role (Davis, 1983; Jennings, 1990). Women were often required to be as "masculine" as men in their work and Black women were profoundly affected by this.

Black women have always worked outside of the home and enslaved women's work constantly overshadowed every other aspect of their life (Davis, 1983). Today, work continues to occupy a large space in the lives of Black women and adheres to that pattern that was started hundreds of years ago during enslavement (Davis, 1983).

Enslaved Women and Motherhood

After the slave trade ended, enslavers became dependent on natural reproduction to replenish their slave population (Davis, 1983; Jennings, 1990). This caused the enslaved woman to become valued for her reproductive capacity. The more offspring a woman could produce, the more valuable she was (Davis, 1983). These enslaved women did not enjoy the "status" that motherhood provided to their White counterparts (Davis, 1983; Jennings, 1990). Enslaved women weren't seen as mothers at all (Davis, 1983). They were simply breeders ensuring the continuance of the slave labor force. This reinforces the notion of the enslaved, particularly enslaved Black women, being seen as nothing more than animals whose value was predicated on their ability to produce offspring (Davis, 1983).

Enslaved women had no legal claims to their children, which reinforced the narrative of them being breeders as opposed to mothers (Davis, 1983). However,

dichotomously, on many plantations, birth records did not list the names of children's fathers - only their mothers (Davis, 1983). In many southern states, legislatures adopted the principle that the "child adopts the condition of the mother (*partus equitur ventrem*)" (Davis, 1983, p.12). Many scholars such as Davis (1983), argue that this was due to the enslavers having fathered some of their enslaved children. While not as widely discussed, this refusal by the enslavers to acknowledge their enslaved children was directly correlated to a matriarchal family system (Davis, 1983; Jennings, 1990).

Stereotypes

Labeling people using stereotypes is a longstanding tradition in America (Rosenthal et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2004) with most ethic groups having cultural images, or stereotypes, about them (Jewell, 1993). While most of these images change over time, for Black women their stereotypes have remained consistent with very minute changes throughout history (Jewell, 1993; Brown et al., 2013). These stereotypes are pervasive, have withstood the test of time, and are used to describe Black women regardless of age (Brown et al, 2013). While there are some images that are accepted, and sometimes welcomed by Black women, most of these stereotypes are negative and have evolved out of enslavement (Brown et al., 2013; Jewell, 1993; Rosenthal et al., 2016). These images often juxtapose Black women with femininity, womanhood, and beauty (Jewell, 1993).

Mammy. This image can be found in almost every form of media and is deeply rooted in American culture (Jewell, 1993). It was created by those with privilege and has been conserved by the mass media. Mammy is typically seen as strong and motherly (Rosenthal et. al, 2016). The mammy is often portrayed as an obese woman of dark

complexion, with large breasts and buttocks, and shining white teeth (Jewell, 1993). The mammy is always seen smiling as she is depicted as a domestic worker who is happy with her duties in her caregiving role, which directly challenged critics of enslavement who stated that the institution was harsh and demeaning (Jewell, 1993; Rosenthal et al., 2016). She is also typically depicted as wearing a headscarf which was commonplace for enslaved females (Jewell, 1993). The Mammy is also depicted as having a socially acceptable relationship with her enslaver (Jewell, 1993). This perpetuated the idea that female slaves were mostly assigned domestic roles, instead of the harsh reality that they were also working the fields. This stereotype is comedic in nature typically due to her size as culture typically devalues women of larger stature. Archetypally, women who are overweight are seen as matronly and humorous and are expected to humor others. Mammy's unusually large breasts and butt were so exaggerated that they were outside the realm of desirability (Jewell, 1993; Rosenthal et al., 2016). This allowed the enslaver to disavow the idea that there was any sexual interest in Black women and if there was a relationship of a sexual nature, it was sure to be at the advance of the enslaved female and not the enslaver (Jewell, 1993).

Aunt Jemima. This image evolved from the image of mammy and is depicted similarly regarding appearance. Aunt Jemima is portrayed as having the same domestic tasks as mammy; however, she is relegated to the role of cook. She is also depicted as being extremely jolly and content in her role.

Sapphire. The sapphire image is depicted as being independent, headstrong, and talkative (Jewell, 1993). This image necessitates the presence of a Black man as they typically are seen arguing and having a contemptuous relationship. The sapphire is

portrayed as emasculating and aggressive (Rosenthal et al, 2016). Her sassiness is her most noticeable trait. She most commonly can be seen "telling people off" and is typically loud and opinionated. Sapphire is typically a mature adult who is brown to dark brown in complexion and her finger-pointing, head rolling, hand on hip depiction often creates a comedic nature to this stereotype as well (Jewell, 1993).

Jezebel/ The Bad-Black-Girl. The Jezebel is depicted as the sexually promiscuous fair-complexioned Black woman (Brown et al., 2013; Jewell, 1993; Rosenthal et al.,2016). She is typically depicted as youthful or as a young adult (Jewell, 1993). Her features are considered European as she is commonly depicted as having thin lips, long straight hair, a thin figure, and a slender nose in addition to her fairer complexion. This allows her to conform to the American standard of beauty more easily. The Jezebel is depicted as hypersexual, immoral, sexually available, and seductive (Brown et al., 2013; Jewell, 1993; Rosenthal et al., 2016). This image reinforces the stereotype of the hypersexual Black female which also contributed to the dismissal of sexual assaults from the enslavers. Again, if there was a relationship of a sexual nature, it was sure to be at the advance of the sexually available and seductive enslaved woman and not the enslaver himself (Jewell, 1993).

The Strong Black Woman Archetype

The Strong Black Woman (SBW) is one who displays strength, independence, caretaking, and invulnerability (Abrams et al., 2014, Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Geyton et al., 2020). The internalization of this historic archetype continues to affect Black women throughout generations. The SBW archetype is rooted in enslavement and was necessary for both the personal survival of Black women as well as community survival

(Geyton et al., 2020, Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Although a survival tactic, this notion of the super-strong Black woman was often utilized by enslavers to justify enslaved women's mistreatment (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; West et al, 2016).

During enslavement, Black women were forced to display superhuman strength due to the extremely abhorrent conditions they faced (Hall, 2017). They were denied the opportunity to display emotions as they would be seen as weak, so they instead masked their emotions even as their families were destroyed and broken down (Hall, 2017). Enslaved Black women had to become self-reliant and independent as there was no one else who could care for or defend them. These women cared for others, were self-sacrificing, and came to rely on their independence. Intergenerationally, Black women have passed on these beliefs and behaviors for the survival of the Black community and their families (Woods-Giscombé, 2010). The Strong Black Woman archetype has become ingrained in the way Black girls are socialized and has continued through to modern-day. Throughout generations, Black women have been made to cope with oppression, discrimination, and abuse (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007, Woods-Giscombé, 2010).

The Strong Black Woman archetype has become an alternative to the negative stereotypes of Black women such as mammy, jezebel, and sapphire (Abrams et al., 2014; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). The SBW archetype is both beneficial and problematic (Abrams et al., 2014; Collins, 2018). While it does help Black women cope with adversity, it simultaneously produces negative outcomes to Black women's mental and physical health (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Geyton, 2020). The internalization of this historic archetype continues to affect Black women often mandating that they display strength, deny their vulnerability, adopt independence, while also pushing down their

emotions (Geyton, 2020). Black women who exhibit the SBW archetype often suffer in silence due to the expectation that they are tough, fight hard, and continually bury their own pain and trauma (Hall, 2017). They continue to deal with their circumstances rather than heal from their trauma. Black women are often trying to heal amid new wounds being created and old wounds reopening.

Women who internalize the Strong Black Woman archetype strive to meet the expectations of those around them; friends, family, bosses, co-workers, etc., and often deny themselves (Geyton, 2020). In this archetype, their strength is valued more than their humanity. Not recognizing that everyone has a breaking point, these Black women continually feel as though they cannot put down their armor. Those who adopt this archetype often experience great pride in displaying this strength and resilience while also feeling guilt and inadequacy when they don't meet the expectations of the Strong Black Woman archetype (Geyton, 2020). Black women are often expected to mask themselves in this personified strength. The Strong Black Woman archetype continues to lead Black women to feel that they are expected to do better, do more, withstand, and endure (Hall, 2017, Geyton, 2020).

#BlackGirlMagic

"Black Girls Are Magic" was started by CaShawn Thompson in 2013 as a response to a controversial, and since retracted, Psychology Today article that concluded that Black women were the least attractive of all races. Thompson tweeted, "#BlackGirlsAreMagic" and since then it has been shorted to the popular, "#BlackGirlMagic" (Halliday et al., 2018; Walton et al., 2017). This hashtag would go on to be a rallying cry to celebrate the achievements of Black women. The phrase is an

embrace to Black women and implies love for the experiences of Black women (Halliday, 2018). Thompson created this movement to promote positive representations of Black girlhood (Toliver, 2019) with #BlackGirlMagic celebrating the beauty, perseverance, and strength of Black women. The hashtag was used to highlight the overall awesomeness of Black women and girls as well as shine a light on their everyday accomplishments (Walton et al., 2017). Themes of the #BlackGirl Magic movement include love, support, sisterhood, and positive affirmations of Black women (Walton et al., 2017).

Although started with the best of intentions, #BlackGirlMagic has gotten some push back from critics claiming that it is an extension of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) archetype (Walton et al, 2017). Asserting that Black Girl Magic has the same potential to overemphasize the strength of Black women, critics maintain that the movement depicts an unreachable, but expected, level of womanhood which like the SBW archetype denies Black women the ability to be human (Toliver, 2019; Walton et al., 2017). Critics conclude that this dehumanization of Black girls continues to promote this notion of superhuman resiliency (Toliver, 2019). Some critics also call out the #BlackGirlMagic movement as they believe that it plays on respectability politics and success, while simultaneously marginalizing those who do not fit into these narrow categories (Toliver, 2019). It calls into question who gets to be celebrated for their “magic”.

In response to these criticisms, Thompson warranted that all Black girls were celebrated in this movement. She stated that #BlackGirlMagic was for, “... every Black woman - the ratchet girls, the hood girls, the trans girls, the differently abled girls. Black Girl Magic is for all of us,” (Flake, 2017). She implies that resilience doesn’t require one

to be superhuman, but instead highlights the women who continue to survive and thrive in a world that was created for them to fail (Toliver, 2019). Other supporters of #BlackGirlMagic suggest that the movement transcends the SBW archetype and offers a multidimensional lens to view Black womanhood (Walton et. al., 2017). Supporters state that Black Girl Magic helps to celebrate Black women in their entirety - their pain, their strength, their triumph, and their vulnerability (Walton et al., 2017). #BlackGirlMagic helps Black women live empowered and affirmed in a world where they are stereotyped and devalued.

The Black Family

Enslavement & The Black Family

One of the aspects of slavery, where one can still see clear, lasting, effects today, is the breakup of the Black family. While the physical assaults were torturous, the breakdown of the Black family was a key contributor to enslaved people's submission to the enslaver. Mothers, fathers, and children were often sold off and separated by their owners. Families were made matriarchal as fathers were sold off or "broken in". Black men were seen to be dangerous, needing to be controlled. Matriarchy in families was created due to the ongoing oppression the enslaved faced (Wilkins et al., 2013). In many cases, enslavement robbed Black men of the typical supremacy seen in White families because Black women were not treated as the weaker sex as workers or as housewives (Davis, 1983). Black men could not be the head of the family or family provider as men, women, and children were all providers to their enslavers (Davis, 1983).

The Willie Lynch letter delivered by Willie Lynch, a slave owner in the West Indies, on the banks of the James River in 1712, details the making of a slave. Lynch

specified principles, which if followed by the slave owners in the colonies, would ensure them to be able to control their slaves for three hundred years. His tactics included fear, distrust, and envy for control. The means included breaking down the Black man and controlling and instilling fear in the Black woman and offspring. In his speech, he detailed the importance of breaking the enslaved males to psychologically impair the enslaved females. This, in his mind, was the key to submission. He stated:

> [In her] natural uncivilized state she would have a strong dependency on the uncivilized nigger male… We reversed nature by burning and pulling a civilized nigger male apart and bullwhipping the others to the point of death, all in her presence. By her being left alone, unprotected, with the male image destroyed… [she] has moved from a psychological dependent state to a frozen independent state. In this frozen psychological state, she will raise her male and female offspring in reverse roles.
>
> For fear of the young male's life, she will psychologically train him to be mentally weak and dependent, but physically strong… she will train her female offspring to be psychologically independent. [Now] you've got the nigger women out front and the nigger man behind and scared. (Lynch, 2014. pp.17-18)

While historians have found copious evidence that suggests that both the letter and Willy Lynch himself are fictitious, the experiences of enslaved people detailed within were very real. Scholars argue that the speech was never delivered, however, the psychological and physical trauma that it depicts was accurate. These writings can be utilized to demonstrate how the breaking of the Black male, his perceived helplessness and emasculation, as well as the psychological trauma that it produces still has remnants

in Black families today. Not only does it showcase the breakdown of the Black family, but also how enslavement gave way to Jim Crow, and how that paved the way for The War on Drugs and Mass Incarceration.

Mass Incarceration

The surge in the growth of prison systems has changed urban policy and poverty. African American males are incarcerated at exponential rates which also affects the families of these men profoundly. Mass incarceration due to harsh sentencing and punitive drug laws was shifted in the mid-1960s when "law and order" became a campaign slogan to combat crime and disorder, which Republicans warned against (Western & Wildeman, 2009). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s employment in the manufacturing industry declined in the Midwest and Northeast along with the exit of the middle class and working-class Black families from inner cities. This trend caused pockets of severe underemployment in poor urban communities (Western et al., 2009). Both crime and policy have played a major role in mass incarceration with poor men from minority neighborhoods, continuing to supply a large share of inmates.

The penal system is measured by the incarceration rate; the number of people in prison or jail per 100,000 of the population (Western et al, 2009). In 2007 the Western European penal system locked up 100 per 100,000 people whereas the United States incarcerated seven times that with over 700 per 100,000 (Western et al, 2009). Ninety percent of all prison and jail inmates are male and about two-thirds are above the age of 18, but under 35. Black and Hispanic men make up about two-thirds of state prison populations and are incarcerated at higher rates than White males (Western et al, 2009). By the end of the 1990s Black males being separated from wives, girlfriends, and

children had become common. As a result, childrearing was placed on the shoulders of many Black women.

Urban communities now deal with and are made to cope with husbands and fathers being lost to incarceration. Just as many Black fathers are incarcerated as those not incarcerated. Seventy percent of Black male prisoners have had children by their late 30's as compared to 73% of non-institutionalized Black males (Western et al, 2009). This means that there are more than one million Black children who have had a father involved in the penal system by 2000 (Western et al.). That's about 1 in 11 children.

While the physical loss of a family member to imprisonment is difficult, the stigma of incarceration becomes a strain on relationships as well. While hard on inmates this stigma can be even more severe for family members. Particularly wives, partners, and children who must participate in outside life and are exposed to community and neighborhood criticism with lacking support.

The systemic racism involved in the justice and penal systems has contributed to the breakup of the Black family. Since Black men are incarcerated at higher rates than White men, there are more Black fathers, husbands, and partners incarcerated which leaves Black women and mothers to be the primary care provider for many children. Incarceration affects the Black family in that it contributes to family breakup. For families whose fathers were highly involved in the childcare, supervision, and socialization of the children, the loss of this individual can have a huge effect on the children's self-worth (Western et al, 2009). However, if fathers were not highly involved prior to incarceration there is little effect on family operation. The emergence of mass imprisonment and the prison boom has been transformative for America's Black family.

Mass incarceration creates inequities economically for Black families that often get passed from one generation to the next. Mass incarceration has been corrosive, undermined family life, and disrupted the developmental milestones of children.

Resiliency

While many narratives surrounding the Black community are based on trauma and the adversities which they are made to overcome, it is equally as important to understand the protective factors within the Black community and how they enable individuals to overcome these unique difficulties which they face. Historically, African American families have had to find their own social supports (Brown et al., 2008). This comes not only from those who are part of their nuclear family but also those outside of the nuclear family who may play a huge part in their support system. This includes extended family, fictive kin, and the community as a whole. This social network can help individuals within this community overcome adversity.

Racial socialization in Black social support networks seems to be a prominent factor in resilience within the Black community (Brown et al., 2008). Racial socialization can be defined as the "tasks Black parents share with all parents - providing for and raising children... but include the responsibility for raising physically and emotionally healthy children who are Black in a society in which being Black has negative connotations" (Peterson & Peters, 1985, pp. 161). Racial socialization happens in interactions between parents and children which often includes behaviors and communications that inform how African Americans ought to feel about their culture as well as how to respond to the racial hostility in America (Stevenson et al., 2002). Racial socialization includes modeling, exposure to cultural objects and environments, and

specific messages that help to shape Black children's perception of their race (Stevenson et al.). Resiliency is promoted in the Black community through cultural pride messages and messages which relate to teaching cultural history. Such messages have been associated with improved academic achievement, racial identity development, as well as cognitive and social-emotional outcomes (Brown et al., 2008).

Motherhood

Dominant Culture's Beliefs on Motherhood

In a social context, the roles of women, and often women themselves, are devalued and underrecognized. The role of the mother is no different. Motherhood has evolved throughout American history. For example, Puritans viewed fathers as the head of the household and mothers as only necessary for helping children to become independent (Vandenberg-Daves, 2014). The Revolution helped to designate women as being responsible to raise future generations as the men were off at war. With the start of the Industrial Revolution mothers became more important than fathers in regard to child-rearing. This trend caused the shift in the culture of the man, or father, as the breadwinner, and the woman, or mother, as the homemaker.

Motherhood is simultaneously diminished and adored (Greene, 1990), which is problematic on multiple fronts. This paradoxical position often creates a double bind for the women who occupy these roles who are being sent mixed messages about their societal position. This phenomenon demeans the realistic trials of motherhood and belittles the complexities and hardships of this role. It is believed by the dominant culture that women naturally want to have children and that they are biologically equipped with

the tools to assume this role (Greene, 1990). Again, this sentiment not only lessens the role but also implies that there is no skill or tact needed to perform the duties of a mother.

More pressingly, White culture has heavily influenced the ideals of motherhood, often pressuring Black women to fall in line. The long-ingrained narrative from White culture tells women that motherhood is one's true calling (Collins, 1987). This narrative perpetuates the belief that the woman's job is to not only take care of her children but also to please her husband and take care of the household (Collins, 1987). This Eurocentric idea of both womanhood, and motherhood particularly, is a central culprit in maintaining gender inequality (Collins, 1987). The dominant culture views the traditional family unit as including the father, mother, and children (Greene, 1990). While many White families do not fit into this patriarchal familial box, the narrative becomes that Black families specifically do not ascribe to this mold, and they are often pathologized for it. Not only does this narrow view erase the Black family from the conversation, but it also leaves many women on the margins of motherhood. Lesbian mothers, single mothers, and adolescent mothers are often left out of conversations on motherhood and are regularly depicted as unfit mothers by the dominant culture.

Feminism is called to address the effects that discrimination has on the lives of women, not just the women from the dominant culture (Greene, 1990). Feminism, as a construct, is based on Whiteness and Black feminism emerged as a theoretical approach that made Black women's unique status in America visible (Taylor, 1998). Black feminism centers on race, class, and gender and considers how they blend. There is a need to develop an Afrocentric feminist concept of motherhood (Wiedmer et al., 2006) as the Eurocentric ideology of motherhood forces Black women into a double bind (Collins,

1987). Motherhood is critical and of central importance to people of the African Diaspora and there needs to be a feminist analysis of Black motherhood that criticizes the image of the “happy slave” (Wiedmer et al., 2006) and addresses the trauma of Black motherhood throughout American history. Without this ideology, Black mothers continually strive to adhere to White perspectives of motherhood which endanger them for lowered self-esteem or internalized oppression (Collins, 1987). If these effects are passed down from mother to daughter intergenerationally it can prove to be a powerful tool in controlling Black communities (Wiedmer et al., 2006). It is important to understand how race, racism, oppression, and sexism have affected Black women’s lives and their potential to impact these women’s parenting.

When looking at theoretical orientations, the psychoanalytic theory focuses on how daughters internalize the values of their mothers and the meaning of those values (Boyd, 1989). In comparison, social learning theorists emphasize modeling, meaning that daughters are positively reinforced when they imitate their mothers. Due to the primary role of mothers as caregivers, Chodorow’s object-relations approach (1978) asserts that girls identify with their moms throughout life, even while establishing their own identities. Mothers are typically their children's first love object. Because of this, girls frequently model themselves after their mothers and are more likely to perceive themselves to be more like their mothers than boys tend to view themselves like their fathers. Because boys must turn against their mothers to accept their masculinity and to socially learn from dad, as opposed to girls who can keep their primary love object and model their femininity from their mother, girls more closely relate themselves to their mothers than boys perceive themselves to be like their fathers.

Boyd (1984) states that it is not just daughters who identify with mothers, but also mothers who identify with their daughters. This typically happens in three steps. First, the mother identifies with the daughter because they share gender, and the mother has reproduced herself. Second, the mother projects feelings she has about herself, possibly failing to differentiate herself from her daughter. Third, unconsciously, the mother behaves toward her daughter as she internally acts toward the daughter part of herself. Essentially, through her daughter, the mother lives both her own childhood and her own mother's identity (Hammer, 1976). The mother becomes both her own child and her own mother by identifying with her daughter.

Black Motherhood

Motherhood has always been an important role for Black women (Green, 1990). Historically, Black motherhood has been predicated on ideas and theories formulated by men, both Black and White, and these theories about Black mothers have prevailed (Wiedmer et al., 2006). While White women have been successful in challenging patriarchal, especially White male, analyses of their own motherhood experiences, very little has been done regarding the motherhood of Black women (Wiedmer et al., 2006). The Eurocentric images of Black women, such as mammy, sapphire, jezebel, and the welfare queen; the lazy Black woman who is content with living off the state while having multiple children (Woodard & Mastin, 2005), are still being promoted and reinforced (Wiedmer et al.). These stereotypes not only affect Black women's lives but are problematic to Black motherhood.

Black mothers have been accused of emasculating their sons and defeminizing their daughters (Wiedmer et al., 2006). These notions have been utilized by the dominant

cultures as judgments against them. Although quick to sentence these mothers as deviants of the archetype; very little has been done to look at the historical trauma that exists in the child-rearing process or how past incidences affect present responses (Wiedmer et al., 2006). Recalling the instructions on making a slave, Willie Lynch states the goal was to have a psychologically independent female and to essentially ensure male powerlessness. Without this historical context, it is easy to condemn this as "emasculating" male children, or "defeminizing" female children. However, it is important to look past the immediate, and the tendency to label, and recognize the intergenerational trauma that is present in this narrative.

Eurocentric views of Black motherhood undoubtedly result in problematic narratives; however, it is also the concept of motherhood promoted by Black men that can lead to negative connotations as well (Wiedmer et al., 2006). However well-intentioned, Black men promote the idea of the devoted, super strong Black mother (Wiedmer et al., 2006) which reinforces the Strong Black Woman archetype. Black male scholars glorify Black women as being self-sacrificing, devoted, and displaying unconditional love, especially when much of their work within the home goes unrecognized and unappreciated (Wiedmer et al., 2006). Black male's archetype for Black motherhood creates an equally damaging image for Black women by setting the expectation that these mothers live a life of sacrifice. There is often pressure for Black women, particularly Black mothers, to be seen as both strong and nurturing. This sense of self-sacrifice often leads to Black women neglecting themselves – their own needs and development (Greene, 1990), while the very real issues and costs of Black motherhood go unaddressed (Wiedmer et al., 2006).

Greene (1990) points out that although all women face challenges in their role as mothers, Black women are faced with unique tasks that their White counterparts are not. Black women's child-rearing values and behaviors are often affected by the socio-cultural and racial environments they experience. Black mothers are consistently trying to navigate between a hostile society and the care and nurturance of their children (Greene, 1990; Smith, 2016; Turner, 2020). Often these women are living in oppressive and degrading environments that affect not only their psychological health but also their physical health. Black women are often toggling between their own emotional needs, societal environments, and the needs of their children (Greene, 1990).

Black women are also tasked with being the transmitter of culture to their children and often set the example of what it means to be a Black adult (Collins, 1987; Greene, 1990). Black women must also warn children of the dangers of racism without overwhelming them, being overly critical, or paralyzing them with fear (Collins, 1987; Greene, 1990; Turner; 2020). Teaching children how to cope with race and racism, and how or if to combat them when they arise, can be a form of racial socialization (Greene, 1990; Turner, 2020). For example, Black mothers are still raising their sons to be passive and to "fear" White institutions, such as the police (DeGruy, 2017). They teach their sons to keep their heads down and not make waves. These teachings can cause children to be afraid for their own lives and to question their control for self-preservation. The continued socialization that involves not challenging systems of oppression only furthers themes of powerlessness and loss (Wilkins et al, 2006).

The more recent and perpetual occurrence of police violence, and the trauma it causes, is reminiscent of the racial terror of lynching and the Common Killing Act of the

past (Smith, 2016; DeGruy, 2017). Police are acquitted at alarming rates for the killing of Black bodies while correcting Black individuals. Most never face any consequences. It is estimated that there are approximately one thousand police killings that happen in the United States every year (Smith, 2016). Between 1960 and 2010 approximately 42.3% of police killings were of Black men (Smith, 2016). This calls into question again, as it did when Black Americans were viewed as three-fifths a human being, what the value of Black bodies are in society, and if they are even viewed as human beings at all.

While Black women are not as largely publicized as being targets of police violence, there is evidence that suggests that the residual effects of these incidents have a high impact on the lives of Black women (Smith, 2016). The killing of Black people is a unique type of violence against Black women as it specifically targets Black bodies and leaves waves of terror and grief amongst the communities which it affects, particularly Black women. These killings are by nature the antithesis of Black mothering as they end the lives of Black individuals which is in direct opposition to the preserving and production of life that is Black mothering (Smith, 2016). Like any other mother who loses their child, particularly through violent acts, these mothers experience immense grief. This grief is compounded, however, by the fact that these killers are exempt from punishment and the residual anti-Black state terror does not dissipate (Smith, 2016).

Due to this inherent terror, an important lesson for Black children is learning to interpret the messages of the outside world especially when it comes to how the larger society will view them (Greene, 1990; Turner, 2020). They essentially must learn what their place in the world will be particularly in regard to the divide between Black and White. Black mothers must teach their children these lessons, all while shifting and

negotiating this for themselves (Greene, 1990). While teaching children the skills they will need for survival, along with cognitive and social skills, Black caregivers are also taxed with teaching children about navigating the racial tasks of society. This effort to minimize the damaging effects of racism and discrimination on their children is a major added stress for Black mothers and families that White mothers never have to think about.

Many believe the special bond between Black mothers and their children is an attribute of enslavement because during this time family was defined as only including mothers and their children. However, this special bond actually goes back to an African belief that children themselves are valuable as they are seen as the continuity of life. For this reason, in pre-colonial Africa, the role of the child-bearer was taken seriously and highly valued as mothers were the carriers of culture (Greene, 1990).

Biological parents are not the sole providers of nurturance and guidance for children in Black families. These units often rely on extended kinship (aunts, uncles, grandparents.) to help a child grow throughout developmental periods into adulthood. (Greene, 1990). Motherhood, whether blood mother, othermother, or community othermother can be a symbol of power (Collins, 1987). For example, in the Cameroons, all women of childbearing age are referred to as “mother” as their culture believes that the care of children extends beyond biological parents to a communal network (Greene, 1990).

Black Women/ Mothers in Research

Black mothers are often pathologized, which has resulted in biased research on this group. Specifically, outcomes often focus on deficits and pain and do not

acknowledge strengths or resilience. Black mothers must mitigate the internalized hatred and oppression that their children may learn from the dominant culture. It is important to recognize that due to ongoing struggles, day-to-day survival can be difficult for Black mothers and their children. Black mothers are often role models for their children and often teach them how to respond to racial pain through their own responses.

Mother-Daughter Relationship

The mother-daughter bond is an intimate and complex relationship that greatly impacts the development of daughters (Everet et al., 2016). This bond is more emotionally intense than any other dyad relationship. The intersection between gender and race, along with the historical, psychological, and social context influences the way Black mothers raise their daughters. The hardships that Black women face, both psychologically and physically, have not changed (Joseph, 1984). Daughters are often faced with the same obstacles their mothers faced, which were the same for their mothers. In Gloria Joseph's (1984) research on mothers and daughters, she showed that daughters had tremendous respect and love for their mothers and their accomplishments, especially in the face of oppression. For daughters, mothers are often seen as role models as girls identify with their mothers and learn to embrace their femaleness often through emulating their mothers (Collins, 1987). For Black girls, this socialization and identification become more complicated. Due to the distinct relationship Black mothers have with White patriarchy, they are less likely to socialize their daughters in a prescribed role and teach their daughters how to exist and cope with contradictions as they know, just as it was during slavery, that it is necessary for their physical survival (Collins, 1987). For example, in addition to physical survival, Black women also recognize that coping skills

are necessary for the psychological and mental survival of their daughters (Joseph, 1984). Without these skills, such as community building and resilience, surviving as a Black woman would not be possible.

Black mothers also recognize that there is a fine line between ensuring survival and internalizing the ideas of racist socialization (Collins, 1987). They recognize that if their daughters willingly accept the limited opportunities given to them, they will become an accomplice to their own oppression (Collins, 1987). Therefore, Black mothers encourage their daughters to challenge oppression often through the same opportunities that ensure their physical safety (i.e., education to confront oppression and inequity) (Collins, 1987). Black daughters must learn to balance conformity and resistance while also learning to survive in the intersections that exist between race, gender, and class oppression. For Black mothers, this means that they must teach emotional strength, but not at the cost of their physical survival (Collins, 1987). Throughout history, Black mothers have been actively engaged in creating a positive life not only for themselves, and their children, but for their communities as well.

Resiliency and Black Motherhood.

Maternal connection plays an important role in increasing resiliency among African Americans (Everet et al., 2016). Resilience has two dimensions, recovery, and sustainability. Recovery can be described as "the ability to bounce back or rebound from stress and to quickly regain or return to an initial state of health, or some level of equilibrium (Everet et al., pp.337). Sustainability is the "capacity to continue forward in the face of adversity while experiencing growth and enhancing functioning as a result of healthy reasons to the stressful experience", (Zautra, Hall, & Murray, 2010, pp. 4). In

thinking about the resiliency of Black mothers, it is important to recognize that motherhood for Black women often tasks them with additional levels of stress, but when done successfully offers additional levels of competence and satisfaction (Greene, 1990). Against all odds, these mothers have been able to self-define and engage in self-valuation (Toft, 2020). Black women have had to learn how to maximize their resources, even when inadequate, and encourage their children to "do better". As epigenetics points towards the possible biological traumatization of future generations, it is just as likely for epigenetics to explain intergenerational resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2014). It is important to recognize the successes of Black women, however, it is equally as important not to romanticize their struggles. One must acknowledge both the psychological and physical costs of their survival (Greene, 1990).

Racism and sexism imprint a legacy on Black women, which affects their children's lives (Greene, 1990). To better understand Black women and their development one must understand the role that racism and oppression have played in her past development as well as her current life. For women, their relationships with their own mothers largely influence their self-image as well as how they socialize their own children, more specifically their own daughters. It is important to understand how race, racism, oppression, and sexism have affected Black women's lives and their potential to impact these women's parenting.

Counseling Related Connections

Race, although a social construct, is a deep-seated ideology in American culture. Race, racism, and prejudice are systemically ingrained into almost every institution and system in the United States. The enslavement of African people beginning in 1619, the

Japanese Internment Camps from 1942 -1945 during WWII, the increased rates of police violence on Black bodies in the past decade, the ICE raids and separation of undocumented immigrant families in 2019, the disproportionate effect of COVID-19 on communities of color, and the social and civil unrest showcase the ways in which race and racism have contributed to the traumatization of people of color. Empirical literature reflects that People of Color and Indigenous Individuals' (POCI) experience racism, discrimination, and microaggressions that affect their mental and physical health (Comas-Diazet al., 2019). Racism can be defined as the idea that one is inferior due to prejudiced beliefs against his or her ethnic group, outward appearance, or asserted "biological nature" (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006, pp. 2). Race is a "socially constructed category, created to differentiate racial groups and show the superiority of dominance of one race (typically Whites) over others" (Solorzano et al., 2000, pp. 61). Race affords privilege to those who are part of the dominant group and otherizes those of the non-dominant group. Racialization has been defined by Omi and Winant (2014, pp 111) as "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified social relationship, social practice or group." Racialization can also be a process, either voluntary or involuntary, beginning when immigrants who are perceived as different and undeserving arrive in America (Gans, 2017).

Race-Based Trauma (RBT)

Racism is used to justify the harmful, unjust, and demeaning treatment of a person who is seen as inferior (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). Unlike Racism, the term prejudice can connotate positive or negative beliefs based on stereotypes of a person belonging to another racial or ethnic group (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). Racist

incidents, such as the internment camps, ICE raids, and undue police violence, are frequent and have an impact on the survivor's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social well-being (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006).

Racial incidents can be traumatizing and affect both children and adults who identify as an ethnic minority (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). Racist incidents can be ongoing and can be a major source of stress for minorities in America (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). The ongoing exposure to racism may cause some individuals to experience symptomology of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Race-Based Trauma (Evans et al., 2016). Race-based trauma is the threat of or actual "physical and emotional pain that results from racism in the forms of racial harassment, racial discrimination, or discriminatory harassment" (Carter, 2007, p. 88). It can also be defined as the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual impact an individual endures after their safety and sense of self has been threatened due to racism (Evans et al., 2016; Hardy, 2013; Paradies et al., 2015).

Symptoms

RBT is a descriptor that is given to an interpersonal and/ or institutional trauma that is motivated by the devaluing of one's race. The consequences of such incidents may elicit Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. (Bryant-Davis, 2006). The symptoms of Race-Based Trauma are similar to those of PTSD; however, a key difference is that RBT involves ongoing injuries, which can be both direct and vicarious, through exposure and re-exposure of stimuli (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). If pervasive enough, the psychological and physiological trauma can produce intergenerational effects (Comas-Diaz et al.).

As with other forms of PTSD, some of the effects of Race-Based Trauma include flashbacks, hypervigilance, suspiciousness, avoidance, nightmares, headaches, and heart palpitations (Comas-Diaz et al., 2019). In addition to these symptoms, RBT can affect survivors: cognitively, with difficulty in remembering and focusing; affectively, through depression, anger, numbness, and anxiety; somatically, through body aches and migraines; relationally, as distrust of members of particular racial groups; behaviorally, through use of drugs and self-harm; and spiritually, in questioning their faith in God, humanity, or both (Bryant-Davis, 2007). It is important to note that there are additional factors that one should keep in mind when treating Race-Based Trauma (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). First, one's way of making sense of the self and the world has been violated. Second, the trauma creates intense destabilization and fear (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). This is important to note, as the client's worldview, self-concept, and safety have been compromised after experiencing trauma due to a racial incident.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a paradigm that is used to give insight into race and racism in a contemporary context and highlights how these social constructs are more powerful and enduring than one may think (Brown, 2003). Despite the "progress" that is said to have been made in Western culture, CRT emphasizes the racial dynamics of marginalized groups and just how deeply ingrained racism truly is (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). Critical race theory argues that race is central to prominent policies and laws in the United States and challenges models that deemphasize race (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014).

While critical race theory does have a foothold in feminist theory (Brown, 2003), its true beginnings stemmed from a movement in law (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Since

this time, CRT has transcended disciplines and is now applied to highlight the ways in which racism works implicitly, explicitly, institutionally, and individually (Brown, 2003). There are five salient tenets of critical race theory which include: (1) permanence of racism, (2) Whiteness as property, (3) interest conversion, (4) counter-storytelling, and (5) the critique of liberalism.

The first tenet, permanence of racism, captures the idea that race and racism are deeply ingrained into culture legally and psychologically. This perpetuates institutional racism and creates a system of privilege (Haskins & Singh, 2015). The second tenet, Whiteness as property, posits that value is placed on Whiteness, and being White, socially, educationally, and economically (Haskins & Singh, 2015). This reinforces exclusionary practices, which disproportionately disenfranchise individuals of color. Interest convergence, the third tenet, proposes that racism benefits White people, and they will only support social justice initiatives when they benefit from the outcomes, even when the proposed change would benefit marginalized communities (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). Counter-storytelling allows individuals who have been marginalized to call into question the validity of the dominant culture's discourse (Haskins & Singh, 2015). It allows those from minority communities to name their reality and assist individuals from the dominant culture to examine their ethnocentric views. Lastly, the critique of liberalism challenges the idea of color blindness as it does not account for the role of White privilege, a history of oppression, or the permanence of racism (Haskins & Singh, 2015).

Counselor/ Counselor Educator Response

Black Americans underutilize therapeutic services and evidence suggests that they are receiving inadequate mental health care when they do (Wilkins et al., 2013). It is essential that clinicians address and acknowledge historical trauma in the therapeutic process as people of color are strongly connected to both the historical and contemporary dynamic and it is necessary to heal from the scars of the past (Wilkins et al., 2013.). This section will address and explain clinical interventions that can be utilized to help heal from the historical trauma of enslavement and discontinue the cycle of intergenerational trauma. It is important to note that therapeutic interventions must be implemented on multiple levels as racism affects people of color on multiple levels (Wilkins et al., 2013).

In 2001 the Department of Health and Human Services reported that there were no mental health differences between those who identify as Black and those who identify as White. However, there have reported differences in well-being between Blacks and Whites with lower levels being reported by Black individuals than by their White counterparts. The standard definitions of mental health status do not take into consideration race; therefore, it can be argued that it does not capture the concept of mental health status with the same efficiency across racial groups (Brown, 2003). Mental health status should be defined by a community's norms rather than by a dominant culture, as racism itself can create mental health concerns because it creates emotional distress. Because racism can be commonplace in the lives of Black Americans, support has historically been given from within their own communities and less sought out by professionals.

The help-seeking behaviors of clients are greatly affected by race and racialization and affect the differing treatment efficacy outcomes for minority clients (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). For many African American clients, help-seeking and mental health care happen within the family or other support systems (churches or close friends) due to their mistrust of White institutions. These clients believe that they receive inequitable access to healthcare and treatment in comparison to their White counterparts, which leads them to seek services less and terminate the counseling prematurely when they do (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014).

While the American Counseling Association's (ACA) code of ethics calls clinicians to be competent in multiculturalism (American Counseling Association, 2014), it can be argued that the codes themselves perpetuate the hegemonic values of the dominant culture. Though these ethical standards are set to maintain the integrity of the profession and do protect both clinician and client, they are predominantly reactive instead of proactive (Remley & Herlihy, 2010; Corey et al., 2007). Even when a clinician upholds the code of ethics, it is meaningless unless race is a major consideration in the treatment (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). It is essential to integrate both ideologies of race and ethical standards, in tandem, for optimal treatment outcomes, especially when working with clients who may have been racialized. Racial biases are so deeply rooted in Western society that they invade the very basis of our culture. Even the most well-intentioned counselor can fall victim to their own implicit biases; prejudices that are held but not consciously recognized, even when they are not intentionally attempting to be prejudiced towards clients. From a counseling perspective, the help-seeking behaviors of

clients are greatly affected by race and racialization. This, in turn, affects the differing treatment efficacy outcomes for minority clients (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014).

In mental health treatment, the therapeutic relationship between counselor and client is of paramount importance. The relationship between the therapist and the client holds a tremendous amount of therapeutic potential (Kahn, 2001). Essentially the relationship is the therapy (Kahn, 2001). When treating clients who have experienced Race-Based Trauma, it is extremely important that the therapist explores their own racial identity (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). It is equally as important that the therapist creates a safe space for the client to disclose their experiences of racial incidents/ trauma (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006; Trahan & Lemberger, 2014).

It is essential for clinicians to practice broaching with clients, especially when working with clients of color as it helps to develop a strong working alliance and improves clinician credibility (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). Broaching can be defined as the invitation of the counselor to explore the role of race, ethnicity, and other cultural factors in the therapeutic relationship (Day-Vines et al., 2007). When paired with a White clinician, minority clients, particularly Black clients, are more likely to demonstrate reservations in the initial counseling sessions. White counselors must be aware of this and be mindful of how their own racial identity can affect the relationship (Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). This can be particularly hard for some clinicians as their White privilege allows for a lack of cultural awareness.

As counselor educators, it is extremely important that diversity is an essential and central component of the curriculum one teaches in the classroom (Wilkins et al., 2013). It is also important for clinicians and counselors-in-training to manage self-of-the-

therapist issues. This can include having students explore feelings of internalized hatred, experiences of historical and race-based trauma, and working towards social justice (Wilkins et al., 2013). It is essential for White trainees and clinicians to explore feelings of White guilt and internalized superiority to lessen the difficulty they may have in understanding Black etiology (Wilkins et al., 2013). Therapists must move from acknowledging that race exists to actively challenging racial injustice (Wilkins et al., 2013). Humans learn mainly through observing others. As clinicians, one must model behaviors one wants clients to adopt (DeGruy, 2017).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and describe the research methodology that was utilized in this ethnographic qualitative research study. The following areas will be addressed: the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, methods, data collection, data analysis, and role of the researcher.

This qualitative research study utilized an ethnographic inquiry approach. The focus of ethnographic research is on human society and culture, which can be defined as "the beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behavior patterns of a specific group of people" (Merriam & Tisdell., 2017, p. 29). This study was IRB-approved and utilized purposeful, unique criterion-based sampling. The researcher utilized focus groups to gather data and answer research questions. Focus groups can be defined as "a group of people gathered together to discuss a focused issue of concern" (Liamputtong, 2011, p.31). The focus groups were semi-structured due to the nature of the study, which was based on participants' experiences.

Problem Statement

Throughout chapters 1 and 2, an argument has been made that the institution of slavery may have lasting effects on Black Americans. As trauma can be passed down intergenerationally through genes, it is hypothesized that messages, or lessons, both overt and covert, can also be passed down throughout generations. Due to the profound effects of enslavement, it is important to examine Black motherhood. Historically, Black motherhood has been predicated on ideals established by White culture (Collins, 1987). As a central component to the Black experience, it is important to explore Black

motherhood and uncover core themes and lessons that get passed down through the mothering experience, particularly in the mother-daughter relationship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to uncover what messages were sent to Black mother participants from *their* own mothers, how these messages affected participants, and how these messages impact participants' mothering their own daughters. This study aimed to explore the themes of Black motherhood that continue to get passed down generationally from mother to child, particularly from mother to daughter.

This study challenges the dominant culture's beliefs about motherhood by centralizing the intersectional lived experiences of Black women that often leave them in the margins of conversations on motherhood. This study also highlights Black mothers' resilience and their unique survival tactics. Through examining the permanence of racism, allowing participants to engage in counter-story telling, as well as examining the ways in which race and racism have affected the lives of Black mother participants, this study applied both a Critical Race Theory and Race-Based Trauma lens to explore and uncover the lessons of Black motherhood. This qualitative study, which also pulls from ethnographic inquiry, intends to examine the lived experiences of Black mothers.

Research Questions

The researcher was intentionally mindful of the population of interest in creating the research questions. The research examined the relationship between Black mother participants and their mothers, as well as their relationship with their daughters. The specific research questions of this ethnographic qualitative study were:

1. What are the covert messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?
2. What are the overt messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?
3. How do participants' relationships with their mothers influence their relationships with their daughters?
4. What are the intergenerational patterns in the messaging sent to Black mothers from *their* mothers, which they then pass to their daughters?

Methodology

Knowledge is constructed, in qualitative research, as people engage in phenomena, activities, and experiences and make meaning from them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). Qualitative research is constructivist, meaning that individuals construct reality as they engage in their social worlds. The purpose of qualitative research, and essentially the goal of the researcher, is to understand the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved in the study. Qualitative research strives to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they give to those experiences.

Qualitative research is an umbrella term for a plethora of different qualitative research approaches or strategies. Creswell (1998) describes 5 different approaches to qualitative research: (1) Phenomenology - the researcher seeks to understand the essence and structure of a given phenomenon, (2) Grounded Theory - the researcher strives to construct a theory about a particular phenomenon, (3) Narrative Analysis - the researcher contends to understand the meaning of the experiences of participants by using the

individuals' stories and analyzing them in different ways, (4) Case Study - utilized when a researcher is studying and analyzing a bonded system (ie an event, person, or program), and (5) Ethnography - the researcher strives to understand the interactions of participants with others and with the culture which they are a part of. While each these different approaches can stand alone as their own methodology, they can also overlap and be combined. For the purposes of this research inquiry, it was determined that an ethnography was the best qualitative approach to answer the research questions due to its unique focus on culture and understanding how culture influences participants' experiences.

Ethnography originated in the field of anthropology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). Anthropologists both "do" and "produce" ethnographic work, making it both a process and a product. As researchers, anthropologists "do" ethnography, and as they write up their findings, they "produce" an ethnography. Today, researchers from a plethora of different disciplines utilize this research approach in their work. Ethnography can be defined as an interpretation and description of a cultural or social group or system (Creswell, 1998). The focus of ethnographic research is on human society and culture, which can be defined as "the beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behavior patterns of a specific group of people (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017, p. 29). In ethnographic research, culture can include behaviors or what people do, language or what they say, artifacts that can include what they use and make, or tension between what they do and should do (Creswell, 2000). One main tenet of ethnographic inquiry is the immersion of the researcher into the population being studied. Ethnography believes that to truly

understand a culture, one must spend time within that culture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). In other words, the researcher must equip themselves with an insider's point of view.

Ethnography strives to eliminate the distance of outsider interpretation or etic vantage point, and the real meaning of the participants' lived experiences or emic perspective. This approach to research attempts to unveil patterns and cultural themes by observing individuals' interactions with one another (Creswell, 1998). While motherhood is a phenomenon that can be studied in women generally, the specific experiences of Black mothers and the unique challenges which they face are deeply rooted in a cultural context. To understand the phenomenon within this particular population, one must understand, explore, and apply a cultural lens. For this reason, an ethnographic approach was utilized.

Virtual Ethnography

The methodological approach of virtual ethnography includes a broad range of approaches (Dominguez et al.,2007). With the growth in online socialization and communities, it is important to examine these practices (Hine, 2008). Virtual ethnographies draw attention to the richness of these interactions and their social patterns. Communities that are enabled by the internet defy physical space and are quite complex (Dominguez et al., 2007; Hine, 2008). Virtual ethnography recognizes these complexities and emphasizes the social reality of the internet. There has previously been much debate about the validity of virtual ethnography, as ethnographies typically require physical immersion into a culture and the virtual or digital aspect of this approach calls into question the value of the researcher's field experience (Dominguez et al., 2007; Hine, 2008).

In March 2020, many of the world's happenings came to a halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the two years since people around the world have been forced to maintain connections with friends, family, co-workers, clients, etc. all via the internet and it has become evident just how socially meaningful internet connections and communities can be for people.

Due to the aforementioned COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher utilized a virtual ethnography for the purposes of this study. The women who participated in this study were all members of an online community that was already established, keeping in line with the intact homogenous group sampling requirement of this study. The researcher argues that although virtual, the key ethnographic principles of understanding through participation were still there.

Method

Sample

This study was IRB-approved (Appendix A) and utilized purposeful, unique criterion-based sampling as well as snowball sampling. The researcher applied purposeful sampling due to the desire to discover, understand, and gain insight into Black motherhood. Due to convenience, the participants in this study were an intact, homogenous group of Black women located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The researcher recruited participants from an already intact group that was recommended to her through snowball sampling. Participants in this study were part of an online community group that focused on Black motherhood. All participants in this study identified as American females who concurrently identified as Black/ African American. All participants had family lineage in the United States and are descendants of

enslaved peoples. Participants identified as mothers of daughters (adoptive or biological), were assigned female sex at birth, and currently identify as cis-gender. Participants were sampled utilizing the researcher's connections within the community.

The researcher utilized email (Appendix B) and social media postings (Appendix C) to contact participants for the recruitment of this study. In the initial contact with participants, the researcher included important information including the purpose of the study as well as confidentiality and protecting participants' identity. Participant information was stored on a password-protected computer on a password-protected drive to ensure confidentiality. Participants signed an informed consent (Appendix E) provided by the researcher which detailed all pertinent information related to the study.

Procedure: Screening Survey

Potential participants for the study were identified by their participation in and completion of a screening survey (Appendix E). Potential participants were provided a link to a screening survey via QuestionPro in the recruitment email or social media posting to ensure they met the criteria for the study. In addition to screening, this survey also collected demographic information from each individual participant. The following demographic questions were asked:

1. How old are you?
2. How do you identify racially?
3. What is your sex?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your highest level of education?
6. What is your current employment?

7. What is your current relationship/marital status?
8. Do you have any daughters?
    a. Are they adoptive or biological?
    b. How many?
    c. How old?
9. Do you have a family lineage of enslaved peoples?
10. Can you describe where you grew up?
11. Can you describe where you live now?

Procedure: Qualitative Focus Groups

Once screened for eligibility, individuals in the study were invited to participate in three, one-hour, focus groups which were conducted via the online video conferencing platform, Zoom. The researcher utilized her private Zoom account which required Duo authentication, permission from the researcher to be let into the room and was locked upon the entry of all participants. Participants were not required to be present in all three of the focus groups. The researcher utilized three focus groups due to the highly personal nature of the information being discussed. Since motherhood is a sacred role within the Black community, which individuals are often protective of, it was hoped that utilizing multiple focus groups would allow participants the opportunity to become comfortable with not only sharing with the researcher but with the group as a whole. A three-group format would allow participants to build rapport with the researcher, explore the research questions, and effectively terminate the group experience.

With consent from each of the focus group members, all group meetings were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. All recordings were stored on a password-protected hard drive. Once the audio was transcribed and checked for quality, the audio files were deleted and purged from that drive. Transcripts are stored on a password-protected drive on a password-protected computer until the completion of the study and the results have been published. The names of participants were redacted from the transcripts and all participants either self-selected or were given pseudonyms at the beginning of the study.

The researcher utilized focus groups to gather data and answer research questions. Focus groups can be defined as "a group of people gathered together to discuss a focused issue of concern" (Liamputtong, 2011. p.31). The focus groups were semi-structured due to the nature of the study, which was based on participants' experiences. Semi-structured focus groups allowed for the flexibility of spontaneity and to allow new themes to emerge while also providing structure and focus for the group.

Within focus groups, the interaction between members is of paramount importance as the interaction produces data and insight that would be difficult to obtain without the group interaction (Morgan, 1997). The moderator also plays an important role in group interaction; helping members explore differing perspectives and underlying ideas. Researchers benefit from focus groups as they often gain understanding as they listen to the discussions and challenges that take place in the group setting (Liamputtong, 2011).

The focus groups for this study were homogeneous, as it has been shown that social and cultural homogeneity allows for more free-flowing conversation amongst the

participants and allows for the development of a productive conversational dynamic (Morgan, 1997). The women who were participants in this study were also part of a pre-existing online group/ community. While there is evidence that participants may be more likely to express their views honestly in a constructed group (a group of strangers), pre-existing groups (groups made of individuals who have some relationship to one another) become beneficial when researchers are examining interactions among family, peer groups, or dynamics in organizational settings (Liamputtong, 2011). Pre-existing focus groups help participants share their experiences, disclose personal information, and allow for deeper levels of self-disclosure (Morgan, 1997). Group norms and rules were discussed at the onset of the first focus group.

Data Collection

The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview protocol to collect the data for this research study. The researcher conducted three one-hour focus group meetings via Zoom with participants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person focus group meetings were not possible and were deemed a risk to personal safety. The focus groups were conducted in the home of the researcher, utilizing headphones to ensure privacy and confidentiality. The researcher recorded all interviews using a password-protected Apple MacBook Air as well as a duo-authenticated Zoom account. The researcher transcribed each focus group meeting on the same password-protected Apple MacBook Air and stored the audio recordings as well as the transcriptions on a password-protected hard drive. Audio files were deleted and purged once the transcripts were rendered and reviewed for quality. The names of participants were redacted from the transcripts and all participants either self-selected or were given pseudonyms at the beginning of the study.

Participants were first recruited utilizing both purposeful, unique criterion-based sampling and snowball sampling utilizing the researcher's personal connections within the community. The researcher conducted the first round of recruiting participants utilizing the recruitment email and flyer outlined in Appendix B and C. Due to attrition, and the stipulations of the study utilizing an intact-homogenous group, that sample group had to be aborted. The attrition happened before any focus group meetings had occurred. The researcher purged the demographic information of that group of women.

The researcher conducted a second round of recruitment again utilizing both purposeful, unique criterion-based sampling and snowball sampling. The researcher recruited participants by allowing personal contacts to share the call for participants with their acquaintances and network. The researcher then recruited participants from an already intact group that was recommended to her through snowball sampling. The researcher again utilized the recruitment email and flyer outlined in Appendix B and C. Potential participants were identified by their participation in and completion of the outlined screening survey (Appendix E). This survey not only collected demographic information but also ensured that each potential participant met the requirements of the study. After completing the screening survey, potential participants were contacted by the researcher via email for the purposes of focus group scheduling as well as providing potential participants with an Informed Consent sheet (Appendix D) as well as a positionality statement (Appendix F)

During the initial focus group meeting, the researcher reviewed the Informed Consent sheet, explained confidentiality in a group setting, and outlined participants' right to discontinue participation at any time. Also, during the initial focus group

meeting, the researcher reviewed that each focus group would be audio-recorded and transcribed. Participants were made aware of their right to request and review the transcripts should they like. Each participant confirmed their understanding and consented to participate in the research study. At the end of the focus group meetings, the researcher provided the participants the opportunity to address any concerns or additional thoughts that they felt were important for the purposes of the research study. The Focus group protocol can be found in Appendix G.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the way researchers make sense of the data. It is the consolidation, reduction, and interpretation of what has been said and seen and is a way of making meaning out of the data. Data analysis involves identifying recurring patterns that emerge in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). The researcher pulled themes from both the focus group transcriptions as well as the field notes that were recorded during each session. Each focus group session was transcribed and coded. The researcher took field notes prior to the data collection process, after each focus group session, and at the culmination of the data collection process.

The researcher utilized Charmaz's grounded theory coding. Coding is making analytical interpretations of the data by assigning segments of data with a label that categorizes and summarizes that piece of data (Charmaz, 2006). Coding is the frame from which a researcher builds their analysis. Charmaz's grounded theory coding includes two phases of coding: initial and focused coding. Initial coding usually consists of "in vivo" codes or codes that utilize participants' own language as it helps to preserve participants' meanings (Charmaz, 2006). In vivo codes help the researcher to assess if they have

grasped what is significant in the data. It is important for the researcher to remain open to all possible theoretical directions during initial coding and that they stick closely to the data (Charmaz, 2006). It is important for codes during this initial phase to be grounded in the data. This initial coding phase is typically done line-by-line. The researcher engaged in line-by-line open coding which helped identify critical pieces of information and patterns that emerged. The researcher utilized in vivo coding to ensure that codes were consistent with the data.

The focused coding phase is utilized to synthesize and explain larger portions of data (Charmaz, 2006). The codes in this phase are more direct, conceptual, and selective. Typically, the most frequent and significant codes from the initial phase determine which codes get utilized during the focused coding phase. This type of coding requires active involvement from the researcher requiring them to act upon it instead of passively reading through it (Charmaz, 2006). In this phase, many of the codes were combined or eliminated based on the analysis of the data.

After completing both the initial and focused coding phases, the researcher utilized Axial coding with the purpose of organizing and synthesizing large amounts of data and reassembling them after open coding (Creswell, 1998). Once the researcher had codes, they then utilized axial coding to help construct categories from the data. Categories were constructed by finding connections in the previously assigned codes and creating larger, more generalized categories. Axial coding helps to organize the codes that were previously created (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Axial coding helps relate larger categories to smaller subcategories and asks how they are related (Strauss, 1987). Where initial coding fractures and breaks apart data, axial coding brings the data back together

and makes it coherent. Coding is an emergent process and requires that the researcher compare codes and data with each other at each level (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Analyzing data requires the converting of text or single data points into concepts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). The researcher utilized thematic analysis which looks at patterns of meaning within a data set. Thematic analysis takes bodies of data and groups them together according to their similarities. These become the themes. Themes help researchers understand the context of the data and make meaning from it. Thematic analysis is an exploratory process and is useful in understanding individuals' experiences, perspectives, and opinions.

Thematic analysis occurred in this study by utilizing six steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The first two steps, which were previously described in this section, included the researcher (1) familiarizing herself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by transcribing the focus group sessions and reading and re-reading the transcripts and (2) generating initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by engaging in line-by-line open coding as well as consensus coding. The researcher then (3) searched for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After utilizing axial coding to create categories, the researcher collated those categories into potential themes. It should be noted that from the 125 focused codes identified by the researcher, axial coding was used to produce 35 categories. By utilizing constant comparative analysis, the researcher then organized those categories into 6 themes. The researcher delineated themes and subthemes by the occurrence across groups. Topics that spanned the three focus group meetings were turned into themes. Topics that only got addressed in one or two focus group meetings became subthemes. After identifying the themes, the researcher (4) reviewed the themes to ensure they

worked with the initial and focused codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher then (5) defined and named themes, continuing to refine the details of each, and (6) produced the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Throughout the data analysis phase, the researcher utilized constant comparative analysis (CCA). CCA helps the researcher generate an integrative theory that is consistent, plausible, and close to the data (Glaser, 1965). Because CCA is dependent on the researcher's own skills and sensitivities, it is not designed to guarantee that two independent researchers, working with the same data, will arrive at the same results (Glaser, 1965). Constant comparative analysis establishes analytical distinctions and makes comparisons at each level of analytical work (Charmaz, 2006, Glaser & Strauss, 1967). CCA compares data to data to find both similarities and differences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During the initial coding phase, the researcher utilized line-by-line coding which broke the data up into pieces. These pieces were compared with one another to create codes. After finding codes, the researcher created categories by comparing codes with codes. To create the themes, or core categories, the researcher compared categories to categories in order to connect them. Constant comparative analysis can be reflective of the aims of thematic analysis as it assesses commonality, assesses differences, and assesses relationships.

Consensus coding refers to the process of multiple coders independently coding the same set of data to ensure reliability in the coding (Chinh et al, 2019). Researchers engage in consensus coding to ensure there is an accurate interpretation of the data, to combat the subjectivity of coding qualitative data, and to promote the reliability of the coding due to the agreement of codes by independent coders. The researcher engaged in

consensus coding with two faculty members from the Graduate Psychology Department who hold an etic perspective on the data. One faculty member, a White female, has research interests which include brain injury survivor advocacy, research methodology, and higher education, particularly pedagogy and change. This faculty member co-founded the Brain Injury Research Team (BIRT), and currently serves on the Virginia Brain Injury Council. They also focus on topics of positionality in research and decolonizing methodologies. This faculty member has presented and authored on topics such as pedagogy, leadership development, service-learning, and organizational change. They are an expert on qualitative methodologies and served as the methodologist for this study. The second faculty member, a White female, serves as the Director of School Counseling with research interests that include counseling and mindfulness, diverse expressions of spirituality, child well-being, and integrative wellness. This faculty member also holds a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential, a Licensed School Counselor credential, and holds an identity as a Mindfulness Consultant and Facilitator for Schools and Organizations. This faculty member was less familiar with qualitative research and more experienced with quantitative inquiry.

The researcher and two faculty members engaged in consensus coding twice throughout this study. The first consensus coding was done after the initial focus group meeting. The researcher transcribed the recorded audio from the group session and sent it to each faculty member. The researcher and each faculty member then coded the data independently. The team then gathered to discuss emerging codes in the data. When disagreements in the coding arose, the team triangulated the researcher's field notes, the raw data, and their own understanding or interpretations of the data to promote reliability

in the coding process. Triangulation helps to ensure validity in qualitative research by using multiple methods or different sources of data to help develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014).

The second consensus coding happened at the culmination of the data collection process, during the initial phase of coding. After transcribing all the focus group meetings, the researcher sensitized herself to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2008; Krefting, 1991) reading through each transcript, then re-reading and highlighting meaningful portions of each. The researcher sent these highlighted transcripts to each faculty member who again, coded the transcripts independently, paying particular attention to the highlighted portions. During their independent coding period, the faculty members also highlighted pieces of the transcript that they found interesting and critical. After engaging in independent coding, the team met again to discuss their independent emergent codes as well as critical pieces of the data. As in the initial consensus coding meeting, when disagreements in the coding arose, the team triangulated the field notes, the raw data, and their own understanding or interpretations of the data to promote reliability in the coding process.

While this coding scheme is common in grounded theory research, it was utilized in this study which pulls from ethnographic inquiry due to the researcher's desire to conduct exploratory research where new concepts and ideas could be generated (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The researcher was also intentional about not allowing previous and preconceived theories to determine the outcome of the current research (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

As “thick description” is part of an ethnographic inquiry (Geertz, 1973), the researcher combined descriptive analysis; what was going on and/or what the researcher observed, with interpretive data; uncovering and creating meaning, within the data analysis.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is dependent on the researcher’s ethics and credibility regarding how the study was conducted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). Guba’s model (1981) states that there are four aspects of trustworthiness in qualitative research. Trustworthiness is accomplished through (1) credibility; or how the findings reflect participants' realities, (2) transferability; how or if the findings can be used to inform another issue, (3) dependability; can the findings be replicated, and (4) confirmability; how the results can be corroborated by other researchers. To maintain trustworthiness throughout the study, the researcher engaged in ethnographic and humanistic interviewing via focus groups, provided a statement of positionality to participants, utilized consensus coding, utilized memo-writing, and engaged in bracketing.

In addition to the focus group interviews, observations and field notes were utilized by the researcher to ensure that they corroborate with one another. During the coding and analysis process, the researcher continually utilized field notes to mitigate personal bias or judgments on the data. As a further demonstration of reliability, quotes from participants will be included in the presentation of this study.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was to serve as the instrument to conduct a study on the lived experiences of Black women who are mothers to daughters. In qualitative research,

the researcher acts as a primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017). As the primary tool for making meaning from the interactions of the participants with one another and with the culture in which they live, the researcher had to constantly reflect on her own positionality.

In qualitative research, it is important for there to be a close and trusting relationship between the researcher and participants, however, there should be some distance maintained on the part of the researcher as to not become enmeshed (Krefting, 1991). The researcher used reflexivity and memo-writing to ensure a healthy and appropriate distance was maintained throughout both the data collection and data analysis process. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's assessment and acknowledgment of their own perceptions, background, and interests on the research process (Krefting, 1991). As the researcher was part of the research, and not separate from it, their own background informed the way the researcher, studied, organized, and analyzed the findings (Krefting, 1991), it was important that they were constantly aware of their multiple roles and continually analyzed themselves in the context of the research. This was both a prospective and retrospective process in which the researcher reflected on the ways which they affected the study as well as the ways the study affected the researcher.

This reflexivity also acted as a form of bracketing. According to Moustakas (1994), bracketing is a means by which the researcher suspends their own judgment by staying away from the commonplace or everyday way of seeing things. Bracketing is the way in which the researcher separates their own lived experiences from what they are studying (Creswell, 2003). Bracketing helps to mitigate the researcher’s bias. This was done via reflections made by the researcher following each focus group meeting.

Bracketing can also include being intentional about being immersed in the data and critical of the language used to present findings (Fischer, 2009). The researcher was continually engaging with the data through the coding process which included constant comparative analysis. The researcher was also intentional about using "in vivo" coding to ensure that the themes and findings stayed close to the data and the participants own language. Bracketing by the researcher increases the study's rigor and leads to a more trustworthy analysis (Ahern, 1999).

The researcher also utilized memo-writing, or the act of taking notes that reflected what the researcher was learning from the data, during the analysis process. Memos add to the trustworthiness and credibility of the research as they record hypotheses, properties, relationships, and meaning between categories and the data (Given, 2008). Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher kept memos which evolved as the process evolved. Memos capture ideas, observations, and insights which keep the researcher embedded in the "reality" of the study (Given, 2008).

Positionality

Personally, I identify as a Black, college-educated, heterosexual, cisgender, Christian, non-mother, woman. Growing up in a metropolitan area in the northeast I identify as having progressive views which impact my perception of the world and the way I interact with it. I was raised in a family with roots in both the south and deep south and have inherited a specific understanding of that experience. For the past three years, I have lived in the southern region of the United States which has allowed me to gain my own understanding of what it is like to live in the south as a Black American, particularly a Black woman.

My interest in this study spawned from my own recognition and identification of the ways that historical, intergenerational, and Race-Based Trauma have affected my lived experiences as a Black woman. My experiences with my own othermothers, as well as my relationship with my own mother inspired me to be curious about the ways the past continues to influence the present. I was curious as I noticed that the other Black women I surrounded myself with were all sent very similar messages about what it meant to be both Black and a woman regardless of our kinship. I wanted to further understand the cultural motives behind these messages and what the implications of these messages were for future generations.

I recognize that neither my Black nor woman experience is monolithic and although I hold identities similar to the participants in my study there are vast differences between us. While I have experience as an othermother in some respects, I do lack the understanding of what it means to be a mother. Throughout the study, I, as a researcher, was committed to continuing to be curious about the lived experiences of all the participants in this group and not make assumptions based on personal experiences.

As a researcher, I hold a philosophical position that is both Constructivist and Advocacy-Participatory. I believe that entities can exist independent of perception or theory. However, my subjectivist epistemology; the idea that meaning is rooted in culture and social interaction, leads me to believe that meaning heavily influences one's reality which is constructed as one engages with the world. I believe that research should be actionable, outcome-driven, and should lead to change. I see myself as the researcher doing research *with* participants and like to view this process as collaborative.

Research, and the results of research studies, are dependent on both participants and the researcher. Just as it is important for me to understand how participants may impact the research process, I believe it is just as important for them to understand how I may impact the process. For that reason, it was important that I share my positionality with them prior to beginning the study. The researcher provided participants with the outlined positionality statement in Appendix F.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the implicit and explicit messages that are sent from Black mother participants from *their* own mothers, how these messages affected participants, and how these messages impact participants' mothering to their own daughters in an attempt to better understand the cultural components of the mothering experience. The researcher utilized an ethnographic approach to help understand these cultural components of mothering as well as the challenges of motherhood as they relate to Black culture. The researcher's goal was to allow participants the opportunity to discuss their roles and experiences as mothers. The research aimed to understand and give meaning to the participants' experiences to better understand the lived experiences of Black mothers, the intergenerational trauma that may exist within this population, as well as Black mothers' relationship to the mental health field. The data for this study was attained by conducting three one-hour long focus group meetings. The following research questions were utilized and guided the study:

1. What are the covert messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?
2. What are the overt messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?
3. How do participants' relationships with their mothers influence their relationships with their daughters?
4. What are the intergenerational patterns in the messaging sent to Black mothers from *their* mothers, which they then pass to their daughters?

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the research study. The data were coded and then analyzed utilizing thematic analysis where themes and subthemes emerged and were identified. This chapter is organized into the following: description of participants, findings, and summary.

Description of Participants

The sample of the research study consisted of six Black women who lived in the Southeast Region of the United States. The names of participants have been redacted from the record and all participants either self-selected or were given pseudonyms at the beginning of the study. These women were part of a homogenous group as they all participated in an online community for Black mothers residing in and around the Southern city in which they live. These women were not always simultaneously present in each focus group. Danielle, Tesha, and Keisha attended all group meetings, Brandy attended only the first group meeting, Nicole attended the second and final group meetings, and Gabrielle attended the first and the second group meetings. As shown in Table 1, the researcher gathered demographic data such as age, racial identity, gender, their highest level of education, occupation, relationship status, and number and gender of children. Descriptions of each participant are also presented below.

Participant 1

Gabrielle is a thirty-six-year-old African American cis-gender female. She currently is in a relationship and has two biological daughters ages four and seven. Gabrielle reports growing up in a suburb of a college town in the Midwest and spending most of her life there. Gabrielle currently lives in a southern city that has a suburban feel.

She has earned a graduate degree and reports her occupational background to be education and her current occupation as a school principal. Gabrielle's current relationship status is "in a relationship". Gabrielle stated that she volunteered for the group as both community and motherhood are very important to her. At the onset of the group meetings, Gabrielle reported being excited to be in a space with other Black women and mothers where she can share stories and learn from one another.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

Name	Age	Race	Sex	Highest Level of Education	Occupation	Relationship Status	Daughter(s) age	Biological or Adopted
Gabrielle	36	Black	female	Graduate Degree	Principal	In a relationship	4 & 7	Biological
Danielle	37	Black	female	Undergraduate Degree	Stay-at-home Mom	Married	8 & 6	Biological
Tesha	30	Black	female	Graduate Degree	Program Manager	Married	2	Biological
Keisha	46	Black	female	Graduate Degree	Contractual work	Married	7	Biological
Nicole	37	Black	female	Graduate Degree	Corporate work	Married	2 & 2	Biological
Brandy	33	Black	female	Graduate Degree	Self Employed	Married	8,6,2	Biological

Participant 2

Danielle is a thirty-seven-year-old stay-at-home mom. She identifies as an African American cis-gender female. Danielle is married with three children. She has two biological daughters ages six and eight. She studied sociology in her undergraduate career and earned her bachelor's degree. Danielle was born and raised around a southern

city. She describes her community growing up as close-knit. She currently resides in the suburbs of the same southern city. Although she has never attended therapy personally, she reports familial involvement with a therapist. Danielle stated that her reason for joining the group was her passion for Black motherhood. At the onset of the focus group meetings, Danielle reported excitement regarding her participation.

Participant 3

Tesha is thirty years old and identifies as a cis-gender Black/ African American female. She currently works as a program manager and has earned a graduate degree. Tesha is married with one biological daughter age two. She reports growing up in a larger, northern urban city with a close-knit matriarchal family. Tesha recently moved to a small suburb outside of a southern city. Throughout the focus group meetings, Tesha discloses her current involvement with therapy. Tesha reported her reasoning for joining the study as being passionate about breaking generational curses as well as learning on her journey of motherhood.

Participant 4

Keisha is forty-six years old and married. She identifies as a cis-gender female who does contractual work from home. Keisha reports having an occupational background working with survivors of domestic violence and trauma-informed training. Keisha also has a graduate degree. Keisha has one biological daughter age seven and a stepson. She reports originally being from a city in the southeast but spending most of her adult life in a large city in the deep south. Keisha disclosed at the onset of the focus group meetings that while she identifies as Black, she is bi-racial. Throughout the group meetings, Keisha references her involvement with therapy. She reported wanting to be a

part of the study due to her recognition of her own challenges in motherhood and wanting to contribute to the research.

Participant 5

Nicole is thirty-seven years old, married, with triplets. She has two biological daughters ages two. Nicole has a graduate degree and currently works in corporate communications. Nicole identifies as a cis-gender Black/ African American woman. Nicole reports growing up in a suburb of a northern city with family lineage from the rural deep south. Nicole currently lives in a southeastern city. Nicole stated that her passion for Black motherhood, as well as her recognition of the unique issues that Black mothers face, motivated her to join the study. Nicole reported being happy to be in the space as well as contribute to the research and conversation.

Participant 6

Brandy is a thirty-three-year-old married mother of three biological daughters ages two, six, and eight. Brandy identifies as a cis-gender African American female. Brandy reported having an undergraduate background in psychology and has earned a graduate degree. She is currently self-employed. Brandy states that she grew up in a small town in a close-knit community in the southeast. She currently lives in the suburbs of a southeastern city. Brandy stated that her passion for Black motherhood influenced her participation in the study. At the onset of the focus groups, she reported excitement to contribute and be a part of the study.

Findings

The purpose of the study was to examine the intergenerational messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters. The researcher was also interested in

examining the unique experiences of Black motherhood, how participants' relationship with their own mothers influenced their relationship with their daughters, as well as the intergenerational patterns in the messages sent from Black mothers to their daughters. The researcher utilized ethnographic inquiry to better understand the cultural elements of the lived experiences of the women participants in the study as well as to provide meaning to their stories. To code the data, the researcher utilized Charmaz's grounded theory coding framework. This coding scheme includes two phases of coding: initial and focused coding. While this coding scheme is common in grounded theory research, it was utilized in this study which pulls from ethnographic inquiry due to the researcher's desire to conduct exploratory research where new concepts and ideas could be generated (Corbin et al., 1990). During the coding process, the researcher utilized consensus coding to increase the trustworthiness of the study.

Consensus coding refers to the process of multiple coders independently coding the same set of data to ensure reliability in the coding (Chinh et al, 2019). Researchers engage in consensus coding to ensure there is an accurate interpretation of the data, to combat the subjectivity of coding qualitative data, and to promote the reliability of the coding due to the agreement of codes by independent coders. The researcher engaged in consensus coding with two faculty members from the Graduate Psychology Department who hold an etic perspective on the data. The researcher and two faculty members engaged in consensus coding twice throughout this study. The first consensus coding was done after the initial focus group meeting and the second consensus coding happened at the culmination of the data collection process

To analyze the data, the researcher utilized thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is an exploratory process and is useful in understanding individuals' experiences, perspectives, and opinions. Below are the themes that emerged as a result of the focus group meetings. A short description is provided for each theme along with responses from participants.

The researcher found six main themes and thirteen subthemes that were prevalent throughout the focus group meetings. The researcher delineated themes and subthemes by the occurrence across groups. Topics that spanned the three focus group meetings were turned into themes. Topics that only got addressed in one or two focus group meetings became subthemes. The six main themes include: *(1) Utilizing Upbringing and Messages from Childhood in Mothering, (2) Challenges of Black Motherhood, (3) Lack of Nurturance from Mother, (4) Generational Parenting Differences, (5) Breaking Generational Curses, and (6) Motherhood Shifting Perspective of Their Own Mothers.* The subthemes, themes that were less prevalent but worth noting due to the participants' emphasis on them, include: **desiring to be better**, **be a good girl**, **mom guilt**, **empowerment**, **survival mode**, **nurturance from othermothers**, **positive representation**, **physical punishment**, **recognition of trauma**, **importance of community**, **intergenerational trends**, **extending grace**, **mother as grandmother**, and **emotional attunement as a privilege.** Table 2 lists the themes and their reflected subtheme.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes Reflected
Utilizing Upbringing and Messages from Childhood in Mothering	Desiring to be Better
Challenges of Black Motherhood	Be a Good Girl Mom Guilt Empowerment
Lack of Nurturance from Mother	Survival Mode Nurturance from Othermother
Generational Parenting Differences	Positive Representation Physical Punishment
Breaking Generational Curses	Recognition of Trauma Importance of Community Intergenerational Trends
Motherhood Shifting Perspective of Their own Mothers	Extending Grace Mother as Grandmother Emotional Attunement as a Privilege

Theme 1: Utilizing Upbringing and Messages from Childhood in Mothering

Utilizing upbringing and messages from childhood in mothering was the first identified theme from the data. This theme emerged in response to research question 1: *What are the covert messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?* This theme was identified by the researcher through the participants' descriptions of their own upbringing and the messages, both verbal and non-verbal, that they were sent. There was one subtheme that emerged in the data under this main theme which was **desiring to be better**. Although participants did name the non-verbal messages they received from their mothers, such as independence, sacrifice, and “doing what you have to do”, these messages did not emerge as themes in the data. Further, participants discussed their desire to do away with many of these messages in raising their daughters. Instead,

participants explored the ways they are utilizing both the negative and positive messages they were sent in childhood in their mothing to their own daughters.

Utilizing upbringing and messages from childhood in mothering seems to relate to *lack of nurturance from mother* as that lack fuels participants' desire to be emotionally attuned mothers. It also relates to *generational parenting differences* and *breaking generational curses* as participants are using what was modeled for them to mother their daughters differently than they were mothered and also recognize the lack of social-emotional attunement and emotional expression as a generational curse. Tesha illustrates that experience by stating:

> All the lessons that I got, good and bad, more so bad, growing up are aiding me and how I am as a person, and how I am as a mother. I'm just super vulnerable with my circle, with my daughter, very emotionally available, and trying to be empathetic towards people. There wasn't a lot of empathy that I experienced growing up. I think my upbringing is aiding me and my emotional space…

Although Tesha acknowledges that she received negative messages and lessons growing up, she discusses utilizing these messages as demonstrations of what not to do. Although she does not want to recreate them, she is utilizing them to be more empathetic and emotionally attune to her daughter and close others.

Participants also examine this parallel process of learning, and unlearning, as they teach their own children. Keisha describes her experiences below:

> I've really struggled with that [emotional expression] as an adult and realized a lot of that has come from childhood and so I feel like I'm learning that now as I'm teaching my daughter those things.

Keisha continually narrates her desire to promote emotional expression in her daughter, while simultaneously unlearning the messages of emotional silencing from her family of origin. Kiesha struggles in her relationship with her daughter as she describes her as "spirited", which is something that Keisha has had to learn to accept. As Keisha explores, implements, and accepts the emotional expression of her daughter, it seems that she is simultaneously doing the same for herself.

Danielle also explores the ways in which she utilizes her upbringing in her mothering. Danielle talks frequently in the focus group sessions about the ways in which her messages from childhood (i.e., Be a Good Girl) unintentionally show up in her mothering. Danielle also discloses the intentional ways she utilizes her upbringing in her mothering. Danielle stated:

> There were no expectations. I'm glad you actually asked that question. It's so important because now I can set expectations for my children in my house.

In this excerpt, Danielle is recalling that there were never any explicit or covert expectations for her growing up. She states that she had never really thought of it before, but upon being questioned about it she recognizes that her mother never had any expectations of her outside of being a good girl. Danielle acknowledges that expectations are important and strives to set expectations for her children. She continually reflects on the importance of expectations throughout the group meetings.

Desiring to be Better. Participants in the study talk about their desire to "be better" than their own mothers, particularly regarding the social-emotional aspects of mothering. Due to their own experiences of feeling a lack of nurturance or emotional attunement from their own mothers, and the ramifications of that missing piece of

motherhood, the participants in this study explicitly vocalized their intention of providing that nurturance and social-emotional modeling for their own daughters. While participants talked about the idea of "being better" Tesha directly addresses this topic. She states:

> I don't have any messages that were important in a positive way. I have messages that are negative, that I'm using to shape how I want to be as a mother that don't look like the type of care that I received. The 'stay in a child's place,' 'do as I say,' 'I'm the adult here,' all of those messages are what stick in my head, and I'm trying to stay as far away from them as possible when it comes to raising my daughter and my future children to come.

Tesha describes these messages that are prominent in child-rearing, particularly in the Black community where it is important for children to know their place and stay within the boundaries of their role of "child". Tesha goes on to say:

> I have expectations to be better in the areas that I feel my mom wasn't good in…but in that same regard, I'm scared that I'm going to overcompensate.

While recognizing that there were aspects of her life that her mother wasn't always attentive to, and wanting to be better in those regards, Tesha also grapples with the possibility of overcompensating for her mother's oversights with her own daughter. This mirrors the experiences of other participants as they wrestle with wanting to give their daughters autonomy while also instilling respect. This ties into theme 4, *generational parenting differences*, and will be further discussed then.

Theme 2: Challenges of Black Motherhood

The second identified theme from the data was the challenges that Black mothers encounter and endure. The researcher identified this theme through the participants' descriptions of their relationships with their daughters, their personal concerns regarding motherhood, the pressure they feel as mothers, as well as the expectations of them as moms both from outside others and from themselves. This theme emerged in response to research question 2: W*hat are the overt messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?* There were three subthemes that emerged in the data under this main theme which were **mom guilt**, **be a good girl**, and **empowerment**. As with the previous research question, participants described the verbal messages they received from their own mothers such as “stay in a child’s place”, their mom not being their friend, and “be a good girl”. While most of these messages were perceived as negative messages that participants did not want to pass on to their own daughters, “be a good girl”, was the one message that endured. The Black mother participants in this study instead wanted to replace these negative messages with messages of cultural pride, autonomy, acceptance, and expression of emotion.

When talking about the messages they were sent and hope to send to their daughters, the unique challenges that Black mothers face in raising daughters emerged. *Challenges of Black motherhood* seems to connect to *generational parenting differences*, as some of their challenges in motherhood directly correlate to them wanting to mother differently than they were mothered, and breaking *generational curses*, as some of their challenges also stem from wanting to break the recycling of trauma. Keisha describes some of her difficulties in relating to her daughter and accepting her as she is due to

personality differences which have presented themselves as a challenge at times. She states:

> Mine has been tough. She just turned seven and when she was younger like 1,2, 3 it was just more easy-going… she is definitely one of those spirited, self-determined, just very strong-willed children and it's so different from my personality that that's been really hard for me to come to grips with because that's just not me. It's been strange for me because people know my personality and then they see her and they're like, are you sure this is your child. You know, so it honestly has taken me a while to really learn how to accept her as she is.

Due to the personality differences between herself and her daughter, Keisha found some struggle in relating to her, however, has come to accept her daughter for who she is. She goes on to state that this acceptance is due to her trying to parent differently than she was parented or raised.

Danielle describes similar struggles as Keisha as she describes her own relationship with her two girls. Due to personality differences, as well as the different parenting circumstances and tactics in raising her two girls, Danielle describes some of her own challenges of motherhood.

> There's so much to say… So with my eight-year-old, the relationship is very - it has a lot of moving parts. My oldest also was a preemie…and I literally dropped my whole life to …be with her every single day. And because of that, I think that I have created an emotional burden, or maybe not emotional burden, like an emotional dependency for her and I both. And now, it's very straining on me, like extremely burdensome, because she always wants and needs and it's hard. It's

> really, really hard… I don't even know how to explain it but when I say she's always on me, she's always needing me. It's such a burden… I created a monster I guess you could say because, again, I'm a perfectionist. She's top of her class, she makes her bed every day, she's a really good girl… I'm trying to give her her own space to kind of grow…
>
> The six-year-old. Totally opposite…. I let her do her, and she's just kind of like a free-flowing butterfly so the relationship is a lot healthier with the six-year-old versus… with the eight-year-old. I kind of let go of the reins a little bit more with her. And as a result, the girl don't make up her bed, she don't do nothing, you know. She's not an initiative taker… I am a stay-at-home mom. Like when I dropped my job to go to be with her [eldest daughter] in the NICU I never went back, and my goal was to make sure that I was able to give them everything that I had. And I'm kind of paying for that now.

While Danielle acknowledges her own contribution to both circumstances with her girls, one being emotionally burdensome and the other lacking initiative, she seemingly struggles with her previous decision to "give them everything [she] had" and the consequences of that decision. This connects with another concern that Keisha had regarding decision-making when it comes to her daughter and the pressure she feels to "be perfect" and make all the right decisions.

> You feel like…one decision can ruin your kid's life forever because there's this constant need to be perfect and make sure you make all the best decisions.

This pressure to "be perfect" aligns with some of the challenges that Nicole experiences as a mother. She stated:

> I think I feel like I have this expectation that I have to be a perfect mother. That you just have to always be on, always be there for them, make sure that they're hitting all their developmental milestones…making sure that they have everything that they need, and more. Yeah, just like perfection, making sure that they're eating healthy, that they're getting exercise, that you're just like the perfect mom. And then when you talk to other moms, you're just supposed to seem like you have it together all the time too. Then, for me, sometimes I feel like, because I have triplets, other moms think that I have all the answers. I'm like, 'hell no. I'm winging it on a hope and a prayer and just trying to keep these kids alive'… And every day I feel like I'm failing my kids but trying the best I can.

Nicole's feeling of needing to be perfect and have it all together coupled with this pressure from other moms is leading to her feeling of "failing her kids". This directly relates to the subtheme of **mom guilt**.

Mom Guilt. Participants discussed at length the guilty feelings they experience as a mother. Sometimes this guilt is brought on by outside others and other times it is fueled by their own expectations of who and how they should be as a mother. In relation to her feelings of needing to be perfect as listed above, Nicole goes on to disclose the mom guilt she experiences as a working mother. She stated:

> Sometimes I do have mom guilt because I do work and some days, I'm like, 'maybe I should be a stay-at-home mom', but then I'm like, 'who's going to pay these bills?' So that becomes the issue because I am the breadwinner in our family. But some days I wish I can spend more time with them and love on them more and help them grow more and develop more.

As a working mother, Nicole struggles with the responsibility of being the primary provider for the household and her desire to spend more time with her children. This is an experience that many Black mothers can identify with as they often work outside the home and have the responsibility as either the sole provider, as a single mother, or primary provider, as the breadwinner. Nicole's challenges in motherhood, this pressure to be "perfect", and her mom guilt seem to be cyclical and contribute to one another. Nicole's mom guilt is fueled by her wanted to "love on" her children more and provide care for them. This supports Tesha's experience of Mom guilt.

Tesha describes experiencing mom guilt in her "own home". She states that she experiences mom guilt when there are limitations around how she can show up as a mother and the ways she is and isn't willing to "stretch" herself as a mom.

> It's weird because I have mom guilt within my own home. I am not a morning person and I struggle with getting up. My daughter's up at 6 am and my husband requires very minimal sleep. He gets up as soon as he hears her and he goes to get her ready in the morning and I'm just in the bed still like, 'how is this even a thing?' I feel so bad because you know society would tell you, 'Oh you're the mother. You should be the first one up to go get her.'

The societal pressure of what it means to be a mother, and how a mother should act and respond to their children, leads to the guilty feelings Tesha experiences in her home, even though she acknowledges that "it is [her husband's] child too".

Kiesha's mom guilt is rooted in her daughter's behavior and her response to her daughter's behavior. Like Nicole, Kiesha's challenges of motherhood seem to be cyclical and contribute to the mom guilt she experiences. Keisha describes her experience as:

> I have more mom guilt around the behavior type things and trying to know if I'm responding to her in an appropriate way or if I respond this way, what is this going to cause for her in the future? Is she going to have to be in therapy for you know so many years? Or if I respond this way, parenting-wise, does that mean she's just going to get over on me?

Keisha contemplates her responses to her daughter's behavior and the future implications they can have on her daughter's life. This directly corresponds to the pressure she feels to make "all the best decisions" for her daughter.

Be a Good Girl. For all participants, the desire to have well-behaved children was a recurring theme. Participants described bad behavior as "not tolerated". They discussed the ways that they were "not allowed to be an out-of-control daughter" which fueled the message that they were "not allowed to have out-of-control children". In this sense, the messages they were sent and learned in their childhood are influencing their expectations for good behavior in their own children. This theme was particularly prominent for Danielle. She talked at length about the ways this message showed up for her in childhood.

> Something I noticed that she [mom] always used to tell me, and I realized it now because I always tell my daughter, is to be a good girl. And I know it's just like really simple, but she always told me to be a good girl. Be a good girl. And I think, I mean I haven't been to therapy, I probably should go, but I can see how that "be a good girl" has kind of shown up in my life. And I've pushed it off to my daughter to the point where she thinks she has to be a perfectionist.

Danielle not only recognizes this as a verbal message that was sent from her mother to her in childhood, but she also acknowledges the way she has in turn passed this same message to her own daughter. Throughout the three focus group meetings, this was a continued theme for Danielle.

Kiesha describes her experience as feeling "pressure" to have a "good" child. She is influenced by the expectations and beliefs of her parents and in-laws regarding the way children are supposed to behave. Kiesha stated:

> I do worry about her behavior when we go out and that as a Black mom, you're supposed to have this look and you're supposed to be able to just tell your child to stop doing something and they should stop doing it, you know. And that doesn't work.

In discussing her concern for her daughter's behavior, Kiesha also touches on a cultural trope. She explores feeling as though she is supposed to have "this look" that keeps her child in line. In Black culture, "the look" is a glare or serious face that Black mothers give to their children when they are misbehaving in a public setting. "The look" serves as a warning to children that they are out of line. Typically, this simple glare is all children need to turn their actions around and they "magically" are behaved.

Empowerment. Wanting to instill pride and self-esteem into their daughters was another prominent theme for the participants of this study. Across all three of the focus group meetings, the desire to promote confidence and empowerment in their daughters was talked about. All participants found it extremely important to racially socialize their daughters with the goal of instilling self-worth, resilience, and racial pride. Nicole shares:

> I feel like I'm expected to shield and protect my daughters from the world and racism which I know sounds really weird. And two, [I am] expecting to empower, instill in them, self-esteem and beauty, and Black is beautiful.

Nicole talks about not only wanting to racially socialize her daughters but also wanting to protect them “from the world and racism”. This aligns with the literature on Black motherhood. Black mothers are not only the transmitter of culture but also have the overwhelming task of warning their children of the dangers of racism without overwhelming them (Collins, 1987; Green, 1990).

Danielle also talks about her desire to implement racial pride in her daughters. She reflects on her own experiences growing up and how that influences her inclination to encourage her daughters to be who they are.

> When I was growing up, if we're looking through books or magazines or watching a movie, you're not seeing people who look like us - full lips, big hair, you know, big curves…in other words, we're shown what we're supposed to be like. And so, when we kinda feed or eat all of those things we're internalizing it and believe in that. Well, we have to shrink, because that's not us. And we have to shrink because that will never be us. And we have to fit into this mold… So, when I want to encourage my children to be themselves… it’s to combat those things that society and basically everybody else is pushing on them to say this is the beauty standard… But I want to make sure that I am offering my children something that reflects who they are, so they can learn how to be okay with who they are on the outside, and they'll feel more comfortable with who they are on the inside as well.

> Like they don't have to try to change who they are on the inside to meet what everybody keeps pushing on them.

Danielle recalls her experience of having to shrink herself due to the lack of representation she saw in media and other outlets. She reflects on the pressure she felt to "fit the mold" but also her understanding that she could never fit the mold because that "will never be" her. Danielle's desire to empower and implant self-worth and self-esteem into her daughter is because she understands the ways in which mainstream culture can demean and belittle the beauty of Black girls and she is proactively working against that.

The researcher remained curious throughout the study and questioned what was underneath participants' aspirations for their daughters to not shrink themselves. The researcher was curious as to if it was a gendered experience or a cultural experience. Kiesha stated:

> …it illustrates the concept of intersectionality. We can't just do one or the other, because we don't live in that one or the other world and our girls aren't going to live in that one or the other world. And so there's that intersection of being a Black woman - being Black and being a woman, and you can't separate those two and those two things have an impact on us and on our children in ways that are different from if you identify as just a woman.

Intersectionality is a term that was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe the ways in which race, class, gender, and other characteristics "intersect" and overlap (Coaston, 2019). Intersectionality also encourages curiosity about power and privilege and where it lies in any given situation. Black women live at the intersection of race and gender and have been termed as being a "double minority". They not only have to

consider the ways in which their gender influences how they are perceived, and received, but also the influence of their race. Keisha illustrates this concept as she discloses her aspiration for her daughter not to shrink herself.

Theme 3: Lack of Nurturance from Mother

The third identified theme in the research study was the lack of emotional nurturance participants experienced from their mothers. This theme emerged in response to research question 3: *How do participants' relationships with their mothers influence their relationships with their daughters?* The researcher identified this theme through the participants' descriptions of their mothers and their relationship with their mothers. There were two subthemes that emerged in the data under this main theme which were **survival mode,** and **nurturance from othermothers**. As participants talked through their relationships with their own mothers, the theme of lack of nurturance emerged. At the same time, participants discussed how their relationships with their mom, and the lack of nurturance they received from those relationships, have influenced their desire to instill social-emotional learning, empathy, and emotional attunement in their relationships with their own daughters. This theme is related to *utilizing upbringing and messages from childhood in mothering,* as mothers are using their relationships with their own mothers and their lack of nurturance to inform their relationships with their daughters, and *motherhood shifting perspective of their own mother* as participants were able to extend grace to their own lack of nurturance from their mothers once they became mothers themselves. When asked to describe their mothers most participants used descriptors such as "cut and dry", "to the point", "stern", or "running a tight ship". For example, Tesha described her mother as:

> She's like, cut and dry. Straight the point. I'm like big on emotions. I'm super affectionate. I can be very sensitive and so it was hard for her to connect with me and mother me in the way that I needed to because she didn't receive that growing up.

Tesha's description of her mother seemed to resonate with Kiesha who went on to not only describe her mother, but her family of origin, stating:

> …so, my mom is very just, kind of like you were saying, cut and dry. It's just to the point just, 'this is what it is.' We were never an emotional family. It was never expressing your feelings or knowing how you felt or even acknowledging how you felt…

Aligning with the experiences of both Tesha and Kiesha, Danielle went on to describe her mother as the "Strong Black Woman". Danielle stated:

> I would say my mom is the same as you guys as well. Very cut and dry. Very, very blunt. Very to the point … I think I would say she's, you know, unfortunately, the strong Black woman, kind of cliché.

Although most participants describe a lack of emotional attunement from their mothers, one participant, Brandy, described her mother as being nurturing. Brandy's mother was a teen mom and had Brandy while she was still in high school. She describes her experience as:

> I would consider her [mom] nurturing with my story. My mom was a young mom, so she had me while she was still in high school…But the thing with my mom she did have a lot of family support her being the baby herself, you know, having a baby. She probably, you know, had a slightly different experience than a lot of

> teen moms. I think where I noticed the difference was probably when I became a teenager and my grandma had already passed on and you know my aunts and uncles had their own things going on and she had less support. I started to see where you know… she was frustrated a lot during that time period. And that kind of put a strain on our relationship.

Brandy discusses noticing a shift in her mother during her teenage years. Brandy describes her mother as seeming more "frustrated" after she experienced a shift in her support system. When Brandy's mother had less support from her family, Brandy experienced a change in her temperament from nurturing to frustrated. This speaks to one of the subthemes that emerged, **survival mode**.

Survival Mode. Participants also described their mothers as being in "Survival Mode" and how that contributed to the lack of nurturance and emotional attunement they experienced from them. Participants described Survival Mode as their mothers "doing what they had to" to get by or make ends meet. Because their mothers were providing much of their care, regardless of their status as single mothers or not, they did not have the space or opportunity to attune emotionally with their daughters as they were focused on ensuring their physical and tangible needs were met. Keisha describes it as:

> They [the women's mothers] were in survival mode, you know? Like it was her just doing what she had to do to survive, and we don't have time for all this extra stuff.

Tesha reinforced the ways in which survival mode was emphasized not only by her mother but by the other women she grew up surrounded by. Tesha stated:

> …it was very survival mode. It got to a point where it was like 10 to 12 of us living in a two-bedroom apartment at one time. So, everybody was, you know, the adults are all doing this, children are here doing that and so it was, not a hierarchy thing, but more so like kids stay in their place while the adults are busy trying to make do for everyone. So, there wasn't room to nurture…

While she doesn't describe her mother as being in "Survival Mode", Gabrielle illudes to this by stating that her mom "did the best she could". Gabrielle said:

> I think the two things that my mom says to this day, that really sticks with me is, number one, I did the best I could. So, my sister and I bring back any old issues, that's her standard bumper sticker, "I did the best I could".

Later in the focus group meetings, Gabrielle discusses how her mother, as a single mother with two daughters, didn't have the luxury of being emotionally attuned as she had "real life" to worry about and "stress" to manage. This aligns with participants' realization and observation that emotional attunement is a privilege and a luxury that mothers don't have when they are operating in "survival mode".

Nurturance from Othermothers. While participants acknowledge that there was a lack of nurturance, particularly emotional nurturance, from their mothers due to them being in Survival Mode, they all recognize and show appreciation for the other women in their lives, their othermothers, whom they were able to emotionally attach to. Nicole described her othermother as:

> My aunt [mom's sister] has kind of stepped in as that role a little bit for me…I have a set of two-year-old triplets; two girls and one boy. And when they were born, she came and stayed with us for the first…almost month and a half, that

> they were born to help out… my aunt is kind of like the family aunt in general…. So she's always kind of had this mothering role in the absence of having her own children, but also filling in the gaps for the rest of the family when we needed support in other ways too. And so she's always kind of been there. Didn't necessarily have to seek out that relationship.

Danielle describes her othermother as showing her another side of Black womanhood. She stated:

> So, I had my oldest brother… his girlfriend… she was the first, like, nurturer outside of my mother. And my mom got on drugs for a while, she literally took me, and I lived with her. She sent me off to college. So, that relationship for me was like the first, 'you can do it,' kind of like a big sister kind of mentor kind of thing I guess you could say. Someone who I saw, who I'd say had it together to the point where they went to college, they had a good job, they were doing decent with their lives. The relationship showed me that, 'oh ok so this is another aspect of a Black woman', like you can handle your business, but you can also be nurturing to people who aren't even - I don't want it to sound weird, but people who aren't even yours… I think that relationship with her definitely showed me that there was more to being a Black woman, I guess you can say.

Keisha described having multiple othermother relationships. She first described her paternal grandmother as a nurturing relationship. While she described her grandmother as, "making her feel special" she simultaneously described her as the "Strong Black Woman". Keisha then identified her aunt as another nurturing othermother. Keisha stated:

> And then I had my youngest aunt, she's only 15 years older than I am. And so just seeing her. She had her stuff together. She had gone away for school, but always came back and she was just very nurturing. Very, very affirming always.

Tesha's experience with her othermother was slightly different from the other participants in the group. Tesha stated that her othermother relationship didn't emerge until she was a little older due to her family being matriarchal, and most of the women in her life being in Survival Mode. Tesha said:

> But as I got older, my mom's sister… became the nurturer for me as I got off to college. So there was room for growth as far as the nurturing goals. So now she is the one who nurtures me. And it's even to a point like my mom was jealous of our relationship because she could give me the kind of nurturing that I was looking for and my mom still can't

For participants, these othermother relationships were salient relationships where participants were able to receive the emotional attunement and nurturance that were lacking from their relationships with their mothers.

Theme 4: Generational Parenting Differences

Generational Parenting Differences is the fourth theme that emerged from the data. This theme emerged in response to research question 4: *What are the intergenerational patterns in the messaging sent to Black mothers from their mothers, which they then pass to their daughters?* This theme was identified by the researcher through the participants' acknowledgments of their intentions to raise their daughters differently than how they were raised, observations of the resources available to them as mothers, as well as their reflections on discipline and the utilization of physical

punishment with children. The two subthemes that emerged under this main theme were **positive representation** and **physical punishment**. Participants talk through the generational trends that they observed in their own families such as the use of physical punishment as discipline as well as the lack of agency given to children. As with previous themes, participants don't see themselves aligning with these generational parenting methods and utilize them to help inform a different method for parenting their own children. For those reasons this theme can be connected to *challenges of Black motherhood, lack of nurturance from mother, breaking generational curses,* and *motherhood shifting perspective of their own mothers*.

Many of the generational differences emerge through the two subthemes, however, Keisha explains the general differences she sees from one generation to the next as she comments:

> Part of it is just generational and we are more in a space now where social-emotional learning and all that stuff is more common and it's more readily available and it's taught at schools… Whereas that wasn't the case when we were coming up or when our parents were coming up.

As she talks about wanting to nurture her daughter and incorporate social-emotional learning, Keisha also reflects on another possible reason why there could have been that lack from her own mother as it relates to emotional attunement, which relates to *motherhood shifting perspective of their own mothers*, **extending grace**, and **emotional attunement as a privilege**. Keisha recognizes that there wasn't a model for her parents growing up on how to incorporate those aspects of parenting into the relationship they

had with her. She recognizes her own privilege in the fact that it is not only available to her, but also to her daughter through her formal education.

Keisha goes on to describe her own struggle as a mother with doing things differently than her parents and grandparents. One of her *challenges of motherhood* was this struggle between autonomy and respect; wanting her daughter to have the autonomy to speak her mind and the ability to verbalize what she feels but do so in a respectful manner. Keisha shares:

> I'm doing things differently from the way my parents and grandparents did it and so giving her that space and trying to help her find that voice is hard. Helping her to understand she can speak her mind and say what she wants to say, at the same time we're trying to balance that with respect like you just can't talk to people any old kind of way, including me.

Keisha puts voice to the realization that while her intentions to veer from what was modeled for her were in an effort to shield her daughter from having some of the difficulties growing up that she experienced, her deviation from that parenting style presents its own set of issues that require nuanced navigation.

Positive Representation. Participants conversed about their desire to provide their daughters with positive representations of Black girls, Black culture, and Black beauty. As they explored this aspiration, it was stated time and time again that this was in response to their own experiences and lack of receiving images in childhood that instilled pride in them as young Black girls. This subtheme relates to *challenges of motherhood*, more specifically the subtheme of empowerment. Nicole communicates her experiences as a young girl growing up in a white community and how she struggled with her own

self-esteem, especially due to the lack of representation in her community and not seeing anyone that “looked like her”. She states:

> I grew up in a very White area and I always think about how that made me feel from a self-esteem standpoint. Not seeing anyone who looked like me or just not feeling beautiful or not feeling valued, I guess, just because, you know, we all know how society views Black women.

Nicole points out the way “society views Black women” in reference to the devaluing of Black women, especially when it comes to beauty standards. European standards of beauty emphasize skin colors, hair types, and other phenotypical characteristics that historically have excluded many Black women, making Black women particularly vulnerable to the effects of these standards (Bryant, 2013). These Eurocentric beauty standards are frequently promoted by the media and society at large. As Nicole points out in her excerpt above, when internalized by Black women, these Eurocentric standards of beauty have damaging effects on Black women and their self-perception (Bryant, 2013).

Nicole goes on to share her struggles as a Black mother to provide positive representations to her daughters, especially when it comes to beauty standards, so they don’t have to depend on the media and other outlets to understand what is “beautiful”. Nicole shares:

> I think there are more campaigns that do a better job of doing that now than of course before. You know, when I was growing up, it was always like skinny blonde Barbie on the cover of every magazine, and of course, that's changed over time.

Here, Nicole acknowledges that the amount of representation that young Black girls receive has changed throughout the generation. She recognizes that it is more common for young Black girls to see themselves in the shows and movies they watch, but she still feels this inherent need to protect them from the racist socialization that they may receive from society at large.

Keisha shares very similar sentiments as Nicole. She tussles with the idea that she may be going overboard with the racial socialization she is providing her daughter. She discloses:

> I've noticed I also do it in the aspect of like the Black Girl Magic thing because I didn't get that as much. Just that pride in being Black…I have to realize that we're in a different space. They are seeing Black characters and Black images more often than we did growing up and so it's not as foreign to them, but I'm coming at it from that lens like I didn't see this growing up so you're going to get it all…

Kiesha also recognizes that her daughter is receiving more positive representations of Black culture, Black girls, and Black womanhood than she did as a child, but still operates with this instinct to continue to provide positive representations to her.

Physical Punishment. The subtheme of Physical Punishment could have been its own theme due to the participants' rich dialogue surrounding it. Since it did not come up across focus group meetings and was confined to the third and final group meeting, the researcher labeled it a subtheme. This subtheme relates to theme two, *challenges of motherhood*, more specifically to the subtheme of **be a good girl**, and the overall desire to have well-behaved children.

Participants discussed at great length not only their desire to have well-behaved children but also their confusion regarding the purpose of physical punishment or "whuppin's" and their rejection of utilizing it with their own children. Nicole was the first participant to initiate the topic of physical punishment because of the researcher's curiosity about what underlies the desire to have well-behaved children. She shared:

> It was kind of instilled, especially when you went to grandma's house, and if you didn't act right there was a switch outside waiting for you. So I kind of think that notion of a well-behaved kid, or else. That's what I think of. I think of me going out and getting a switch for not being a well-behaved kid. Not that I… I don't hit my children. I don't plan on hitting my children, but I think just that notion of you're not allowed to have out-of-control children, right?

Nicole recalls her own experience of having to be "good" and the result of her misbehavior being a switch. A switch, in Black culture, refers to a flimsy branch from a tree or bush used to discipline children. This term is most commonly used in the phrase "pick a switch", where the adult or parent doing the disciplining would have the child who is about to be disciplined go outside and pick the switch that would be used for their whuppin'. Although Nicole states that she does not plan on hitting her children, these messages from childhood of "behave or else" stick with her in her mothering of her own daughters.

Tesha's experience supports Nicole's in that her desire for good behavior from her daughter is fueled by messages she was sent from elders in her family that misbehavior was not "tolerated". She said:

> The desire to have a well-behaved child, in the older years, is because it's opposite of what I was, but in the younger years, like Nicole said, it's not Tolerated. You know the grandparents and the aunties will look at you like ‘what are you doing? You need to get your child.’ So, it's just something that we don't do.

Tesha makes a distinction between what underlies wanting well-behaved older children and younger children. She states that she would want her child to be well-behaved in their “older years” because it is the opposite of what she was, but in their “younger years” it’s because it is not tolerated. As touched upon when discussing theme two, it is expected, in Black culture, for children to know their place and stay in a child’s place. Children who overstep their bounds are typically punished and Tesha speaks to that intolerance in her response. She also vocalizes the pressure she feels from the matriarchs and elders in the family to “get [her] child”, seemingly meaning put her in her place.

Danielle also explores her experiences with whuppin’s. She questions the effectiveness of physical punishment as she reflects on her own whuppin’s as a child. She discloses:

> when I really think back to all of those whuppin’s I got, I can really put myself back in that place, and thinking to myself, ‘if she would have just talked to me.’ I think I probably would have turned out the same. I don't think a whuppin is going to be the difference-maker.

Danielle reflects on being on the receiving end of physical punishment as a child and believing that a conversation would have been just as, if not more, effective.

Tesha also questions the effectiveness and purpose of whuppin’s. While Tesha did not get whuppin’s as a child and does not plan on utilizing physical punishment with her

own daughter, she recalls watching her cousins receive whuppin's for their behavior. She shared:

> …I look at my cousins who got whupped really bad and there's no difference between us as far as behavior or character. Not to put myself above anybody else but I'm like, what were you hoping to accomplish? To get respect or to make them a better person? To make them more successful? Because I'm more accomplished than they are, so it's not making them more successful. We have the same morals, if you will, it's not, strengthening that, you know. I don't understand what they're looking to accomplish…

Tesha questions the goal of whuppin's as she compares herself to her family that received physical punishment. Not able to see any clear benefits on the child's end, Tesha is forced to question if this type of discipline is more beneficial for the parent and receiving respect than it is for the child.

Theme 5: Breaking Generational Curses

The fifth theme that emerged from the data was *breaking generational curses*. This theme emerged in response to research question 4: *What are the intergenerational patterns in the messaging sent to Black mothers from their mothers, which they then pass to their daughters?* This theme was identified by the researcher through the participants' acknowledgments of cultural and racial trauma, their openness to and engagement with therapy, as well as their intentionality to mother differently than they were mothered. There were three subthemes that emerged under this main theme which were **recognition of trauma**, **importance of community**, and **intergenerational trends**. Participants acknowledge not only the intergenerational trends they see in their own families, as

addressed in the previous theme but also the intergenerational trauma and recycling of that trauma in the mothering experiences in their family. From this recognition, participants discuss their desire to break these cycles of trauma and talk about their active engagement in therapy. This theme relates to theme one, *Utilizing Upbringing and Messages from Childhood in Mothering,* as participants utilize their own experiences, particularly from childhood, to inspire them to break cycles that have been present in their own families for generations. Tesha speaks to this at the onset of the focus group meetings. She shared:

> I'm very big on breaking generational curses. So wherever I can be of help. It's my pleasure to do so. And just, I'm undoing everything that I learned growing up, so you know, what my mother and my aunts did. So really just trying to be that change. And so that's why I wanted to join this study and also learn, wherever I can, on my journey of motherhood.

Throughout the focus group meetings, Tesha explicitly names her aspirations of "being better" and doing things differently, specifically as a mother, than what was modeled for her.

Keisha also talks through her own desire to refine what motherhood looks like for her own daughter. While she acknowledges that changes are necessary, she also reflects on the respect and appreciation she has for the previous generations. She said:

> If we're choosing to parent differently from the way we were parented, or grandparents parent, it's not to throw shade at them. It's actually honoring what those generations had to do to survive. They were doing the best they could to keep us safe in the world as it was at that time. I think a lot of that has carried over

> into these generations because we still find ourselves doing some of those things. I think it's starting to shift, but there still are moments where I'm like, 'okay, well my child has to act a certain way because they're viewed differently in this world from other children,' and it is a sense of, you know, a means for survival sometimes.

Kiesha's statement is an homage to the perseverance and resilience of the elders and generations that came before. It addresses and salutes what the previous generations had to do to survive. In this way, it correlates to *lack of nurturance from mother* and the "survivor mode" participants examined in their mothers. This "survivor mode" dates back generations to enslavement, as Keisha illudes to. Previous generations of parents, particularly mothers, had to navigate very dangerous social climates and keep their children safe. They did not have the "luxury", as participants said, to worry about the emotional attunement they had with their children when they were preoccupied with keeping them alive. Keisha not only recognizes this "survivor mode" but also acknowledges the racial trauma that is getting passed down and inherited intergenerationally.

Recognition of Trauma. Repeatedly throughout the study, participants comment on the different ways that trauma shows up in their lives. Some participants talk about individual experiences that have lasting effects on them, others discussed race-based trauma, and yet others seem to land on historical traumas that, due to their intergenerational transmission, have lasting effects within the culture and community. Danielle considers one facet of this historical trauma as she discusses whuppin's and physical punishment. She states:

> You can kind of like, go down a rabbit hole when you talk about waiting for a switch outside because I think a lot of times if you really just think about how over-policing our children now is a result of - my mind always goes back to *The Color Purple* - if you think about how Black folks or slaves were intended to know their place and be where they're supposed to be, how they're supposed to be, quiet, seen not heard, all of these things, I think it transcends to modern. My mom's desire to want me to just be a good girl. Just don't get in any trouble. I think it's like an anxiety of your child being seen and demonized by others. When we should just let our children be children. Not just as Black mothers but all people who lay their eyes on a child. But when you see a child with darker skin, you automatically are already demonizing them because Black children might be seen, or Black people might be seen, as criminals or bad people. So you don't want to like play up into that stereotype by not having children who act right.

In this quote, Danielle speaks to the very essence of this study. She discerns that her mother's message of "be a good girl" was less about her perceiving her daughter as "bad", and more so about wanting to protect her from the dangers that could occur should a person outside their culture or racial group perceive her as "bad". This intergenerational trauma, which is both historical and race-based, has lived in the Black community for hundreds of years. It gets recycled as Black moms watch young Black men and women fall victim to police violence, hate crimes, and other forms of violence without repercussions to the enactor. Danielle goes on to share:

> I really think that there's a direct link from slavery as far as like whuppin' your kids… and being good, and all of that stuff. I really think there's a direct correlation

This directly connects to *generational parenting differences*, particularly the subtheme of **physical punishment** and *lack of nurturance from mother* and the subtheme of **survivor mode**. Again, because Black mothers have historically been in "survivor mode," they have not had the "luxury" to emotionally attune and verbally explain their children's wrongdoings to them. They were forced to find a quick and effective solution to keep their children in line and "in their place" to ensure their safety and survival.

In discussing healing and overcoming the historical, intergenerational, and race-based trauma experienced in their personal lives and within the Black community, all participants described an openness to, if not active engagement in therapy. Tesha shares:

> Therapy has truly helped me reshape my perspective. In conversations like this it may sound like I'm bitter about it, but it's just like my truth, and I'm comfortable with talking about it, and I'm in a much better space now. And even though it wasn't what I would have preferred I'm still thankful for my upbringing because it's shaped me to be who I am now, and I like who I am.

Tesha describes the benefits counseling has had on her personally. She recalls how it has helped to shift her perspectives and gain acceptance and appreciation for her upbringing and experiences. She discloses that she is not the only one in her social circle that engages with counseling, but that her peers engage and benefit from therapy as well. She goes on to share:

> I'm 30, and my peers, I wouldn't say thrive off of it, but we like thoroughly enjoy therapy because we know how much trauma or just bad things that were instilled in us that we're trying to undo all of that. So, it's very much an open topic like literally trying to get our parents and other family to do it. I see a lot of advocacy for therapy in my circle and my age group because we know that there is a lot of trauma with our people. And, you know, for so long the, 'what goes on in this house, stays in our house,' has really ruled the mind of older generations and we have seen that it didn't really get you anywhere. So, you know, what new can we do? What different can we do? And kind of, unlock this magical piece of therapy. And just, you know, just reprogramming our brains in a positive way so we can be better for future generations to come.

Tesha voices the importance of therapy, especially within the Black community as there has been "a lot of trauma with our people". She touches on the culture of silence within the Black community and the message that "what happens in our house/ family, stay in our house/family". Tesha recognizes the importance of therapy and the positive implications it can have on future generations, but also acknowledges that the change has to start now.

Keisha's experiences support Tesha's as she describes much of her social circle being engaged in therapy. She discloses:

> I'm older than you ladies, I'm 46, and it's the norm in my social circle, like, all of my friends are in therapy and are proud of it…your mental health is just as important as your physical health. We wouldn't be ashamed to go to the doctor if our leg was broken, like, why is there shame around it? Not saying that your brain

> is broken but that if there are things going on with you mentally and emotionally that you need to process… But yeah, all of my friends are in therapy and proud...

In keeping with Tesha's experience, Keisha talks about the pride she and her friends have in utilizing therapy. Keisha likens one's mental health to their physical health in an effort to decrease the shame one may feel due to any stigmas that may still exist around seeking mental health care.

Danielle continues the trend as she shares that her social circle is also active in therapy. She said:

> as a 37-year-old, most of my social circle, and what I see in my echo chamber, therapy is definitely something that's sought after - that's utilized, and I think that will change future generations enormously.

Like Tesha, Danielle believes that engagement in therapy will not only help those actively engaged in it now, but the ripple effect will impact future generations as well.

Importance of Community. Participants discussed the importance of community throughout their mothering journey. In addition to mental health services, participants describe having a community as one of the biggest supports as they grow and learn in their roles as mothers. As she contemplates the ways that she extends grace to herself, Keisha shares:

> I think it probably came through therapy and just through - I have a lot of friends that are very affirming and a lot of friends that kind of gave me permission to let go of some of those things based on their experiences. And so I think getting - even though we shouldn't need that permission from other people, just having that permission from other moms who have been through it…

Keisha discloses that her community of mom friends has helped her to extend graces to herself and let go of some of the mom guilt that she has felt. While she recognizes that she shouldn't need "permission" it is comforting and has been important for her to have support from other mothers who have been through similar experiences.

Danielle also shares the ways in which community has been helpful to her, particularly by making her feel less isolated and alone on her mothering journey. She discloses:

> Community helped when my girls were young. I had a really good group of mom friends, and just having those conversations with them and, 'girl, my house is the same way,' you know. Just knowing that I'm not the only one; that helped me get past mom guilt a lot.

Like Kiesha, Danielle seemed to appreciate this "permission" from her mom friends to not have to have it all together. To have a messy house and that to be okay.

In regard to the community that was built through the focus group meetings, by the end of the third and final group, participants expressed feeling appreciative of the space and their experience within the group. Tesha shared:

> It's been refreshing and it's helping to fuel my efforts in giving my mom grace. Just hearing where other moms have also fallen short. I feel like, for a long time, this is actually what got me into therapy, I blamed everything on my mother. Like, 'you did this wrong. This is your fault,' and stuff. So just like, stop being so hard on her, you know. I didn't have any idea what it was like. So, just trying to put myself in her shoes and just hearing other people's stories. Helping me to be more kind to how she was with me.

Tesha shares that the community and support she received through the focus group meetings are fueling her personal goals of forgiveness as it relates to her mother. The opportunity to share, relate, and reflect on her lived experiences through the focus groups was supportive of the growth she aspires to.

Keisha shares a similar experience in the focus group meeting. She describes how her participation in the study has been affirming for her. She said:

> Yeah, for me it's been amazing. I'm really glad that I signed up to do it. It's been really affirming to be in this space with other Black women who are raising Black girls. Just to know that they're having similar experiences and that I'm not alone in some of the things that I think or that I'm processing or going through.

Keisha shares that for her, not only was it being in a group with other mothers but other Black mothers who are raising Black daughters, who have similar experiences as her that make her feel seen and validated. She valued this experience because it was one where she felt understood and valued.

Intergenerational Trends. At the end of the three weeks of meeting for the focus groups, participants were asked to reflect on and share the trends that they noticed in the women in their own families that spanned the three meetings. The participants then reported to the researcher. Danielle shared:

> The trend I see is sacrifice for your children. Like lots of sacrificing. And just kind of like being strong. In other words, being emotionally guarded. You know some things I want to share with my children because I heard that it was good to say, ‘well when I was your age,’ but I'm still very, you know, I guess, emotionally guarded to the point where my daughter needs to see me as a strong mother… So,

> I think those two things are the two things that transcend generations. Like you gon' to respect your mother, but she's going to sacrifice and she's going to do everything she can.

Danielle not only reflects on the trends that she notices throughout the generation, but she also owns this internal struggle she experiences within herself around "being strong". On one hand, she shares wanting to be vulnerable with her daughters as a model for emotional expression. However, she shares that she continues to be emotionally guarded due to her own perception of her daughter "needing to see her as a strong mother'. As previously addressed, this Strong Black Woman archetype transcends generations. It is one of the only stereotypes that is accepted by Black women as it has been a pillar of resilience and overcoming within the Black community.

Tesha shares the trends she notices in her own family. For Tesha, her relationship with her mother, and her observations of her mother as grandmother have been particularly salient throughout the group meetings. She stated:

> a pattern that I've seen in my family and from these meetings is the more a mother has to be in survival mode and sacrifice, the less room they have to be a nurturing mother to their child. And I think that is exactly why we see the shift in grandmothers. I was like, 'why do kids love their grandmothers so much?' It's because grandmothers are retired, and they don't have nothing else to do. They have nothing but time to love on the kids… And so, when we're in the grit of it, it's just like, 'ughhh, girl..' You're throwing out frustration, time is limited, I'm thinking about work, and pondering cooking, and my husband's here, kids actin' crazy. My mind is everywhere and so we may become anxious, and we take it out

> on the kids and may not have room to be what we need to be. And so, when we get older and get into the rhythm of things and things come off our plate, then that increases our capacity to be that nurturing person that we may have always wanted to be but couldn't necessarily be.

Throughout the group process, Tesha increasingly comes to terms with the idea that her mom's "survival mode" unfortunately overshadowed any desire she may have had to connect with Tesha in childhood. She continually reflects on the fact that her mother didn't have the "luxury" to show up in the way she needed. At the end of the group, and in the statement above, there seems to be some reconciliation for the relationship she and her mother had in childhood.

Throughout the focus group meetings, Keisha continually shares the ways in which she is recognizing the strength and resilience of her mother, particularly as she advances in her own mothering journey. Keisha said:

> For me, it would be that strength and that resilience. I'm still learning more about what a strong person she must have been, and still is, to have gone through a lot of the stuff that she went through when we were younger and I'm just like, wow.

Keisha is seemingly in awe of all the responsibilities and burdens her mother was able to shoulder. She recalls time and time again the ways her mother, although not technically a single mom, had the responsibilities of one. Now with her own experiences of being a mother, she can truly bow to her mother for all she has done.

Theme 6: Motherhood Shifting Perspective of Their Own Mothers

The sixth and final identified theme from the data was participants' own experiences of motherhood shifting their perspective of their mothers. This theme was

not tethered to a research question and emerged through the conversation that emerged through organic conversation in the focus group meetings. This theme was identified by the researcher through the participants' descriptions of their own illumination of the difficulties of motherhood, their acknowledgment of the stress and responsibility of the role, as well as their observations of their own mothers as grandmothers. Three subthemes emerged in the data under this main theme which were **extending grace**, **mother as grandmother,** and **emotional attunement as a privilege**. This theme can be related to *lack of nurturance from mother* as participants' acknowledgment of their mother's circumstances and their mothers being in "survivor mode" often lead them to extend grace to their mothers.

During the study, participants discussed the evolution of their relationship with their mothers and how it has significantly changed as they have matured, more specifically how they have gained a greater appreciation for their own mothers due to them becoming a mother themselves. Keisha describes her own experience with this by stating:

> I actually didn't see my mom as a source of strength until more recently. Until I had my daughter and I'm like, 'this stuff is hard, how did you do this?' So, it really made me appreciate her more and made me appreciate all that she went through.

Keisha's own mothering journey and challenges with motherhood gave her a realization about just how much her mother took on during her childhood as a mother. She goes on to say:

> I've really reflected a lot more on that, you know, since having a child. And have definitely gained a better appreciation for her and all that she did for us because I just, I don't know. I just can't even imagine what it was like.

Keisha's experience mirrors the experiences of other participants as well. Although discussing her appreciation for her mother in a different way, Gabrielle also reflects on her appreciation of her upbringing as she reflects on it in adulthood and as a mother:

> My mom made sure that we had a Southern Baptist upbringing. And so, a lot of the lessons that were preached in church, were reinforced at home and vice versa. So, we had a very strict household. I'm very grateful for that to this day... She kept a very tight ship, which, of course, as you get older, you know better, but I do definitely appreciate that particular upbringing.

Gabrielle's description of the "tight ship" that her mother ran insinuates that there was a point in time, particularly during her youth and childhood, when she was not as appreciative or grateful for this type of upbringing. She states, "as you get older, you know better," implying that with age and experience she has been able to understand why her mother raised her the way she did. This ties into the first subtheme that emerged, Extending Grace.

Extending Grace. In keeping with the notion that motherhood has allowed a shift in participants' perceptions of their mothers, it has also allowed them to extend grace to their mothers and reconcile negative experiences. Danielle shares:

> She was single, and with four kids... And so now, being a mother reflecting on just having my little tribe, I can see why she was the way she was in so many

> aspects - from discipline to being cut and dry, let's get it done, and sit down, you know...

Danielle's experience with her "little tribe" has helped to bring empathy into her relationship with her own mother. She can now as a mother understand both conceptually and emotionally what her mother could have been going through which has helped her to reconcile her own experiences with her mother.

When talking about her mother's relationship with her daughter, Tesha also discloses the ways in which she has learned to extend grace to her mother. She said:

> I was frustrated in a weird way because I see her like that with my daughter and I didn't always see that same treatment, but like Gabrielle said, she probably didn't have room to be that way. So, as time goes on, it's allowing me to extend grace to her, and also be hopeful that my daughter can do the same with me if she ever had any issues with how I am with her, and then it's my turn to be a grandmother.

Tesha touches on a few themes already discussed in this study as she also discloses her efforts to extend grace to her mother. She has the recognition that her mom may not have had "space" to emotionally attune to her in childhood as she was in "survivor mode". She also considers the fact that she may not be doing "everything right" or making "the best decisions". This is a major challenge of Black motherhood as well as a source of mom guilt. Tesha acknowledges that there may be a day when her daughter may need to extend grace to her, which is influencing her extension of grace to her own mother. This leads to the next subtheme that emerged, Mother as Grandmother.

Mother as Grandmother. Participants talk through their experiences of seeing their mothers as grandmothers and how "foreign" and "different" it is for them.

Participants notice a shift in their mothers as grandmothers where they are exhibiting the emotional attunement and nurturance that was lacking in their own relationships with their mothers. This shift causes participants to question, “who is this woman?” Keisha explores this by sharing:

> She is so different with my daughter. I'm just like, ‘who is this woman,’ like giving her hugs and kisses and ‘I love you’ and all this and I'm just like, yeah… it was really foreign to me to see that.

When asked what it was like for Keisha to see her mother being affectionate and nurturing to her daughter in this way, she stated:

> I would say for me it was definitely a layered experience. On one hand, I am very appreciative of their relationship and the fact that she's able to emotionally kind of be there with my daughter in terms of more specifically showing affection. Giving hugs and kisses or telling her that she loves her are the main things that kind of stick out to me. So, I definitely have an appreciation for that. And at the same time, it was just weird for me to see my mom in that way because she wasn’t that and still isn’t that way, with me so it's kind of… it's just kind of layered I guess would be the word.

Keisha describes herself as being conflicted by the relationship her mother has with her daughter. While she is happy for her daughter and appreciative that her mother can attune to her daughter in that way, she does have some residual feelings about not having that emotional attunement from her mother growing up, and still feeling that lack that in their relationship in the present.

Tesha discloses a similar situation between her mother, her daughter, and herself. She shares:

> …and my mom still can't [emotionally attune]. It's weird though because I know my mom is capable of it, and this is something that like I'm struggling with right now. I see how she is with my daughter, and she's very affectionate with her and it's like, 'oh my gosh, I love you.' 'Come here my baby.' 'You're so smart.' And I'm just like, 'where was this when I was growing up?' It's like why, even now, like why don't I get this, and it's always been 'Oh, Tesha, you're so dramatic. Cut it out. I did do this.'... You really don't… to me.

Tesha seemingly shares in Keisha's feeling of being conflicted and even describes her own experience enough to state that she's "struggling" with it. Tesha and Keisha both recognize that their mothers have the capability to attune to them and question why their mothers didn't, and still do not. Tesha goes on to even describe an instance where she brings the differences to her mother's attention, and it is seemingly minimized. Tesha goes on to state that she's, "just really trying to take [herself] out of this situation and learn to be happy for [her] daughter." Tesha would rather focus on her appreciation of the fact that her daughter can have a nurturing relationship with her grandmother than focus on her own experience of lack.

Emotional Attunement as a Privilege. Participants often referred to emotional attunement as a privilege or luxury. As a response to their own mother experiences, participants had this realization and observed that emotional attunement is a privilege and a luxury that mothers don't have when they are operating in "survival mode". As

Gabrielle discussed her experience of watching her mother as a grandmother this subtheme is exemplified. Gabrielle disclosed:

> I think, for me, seeing my mom as grandma has been a really beautiful experience because I feel like she can do all the things with her grandchildren that real life and reality of stress and being a single-parent household, she just didn't have the luxury to do with my sister and I growing up. So, it's just nice to see kind of the real essence of her mothering peek through with the care of the grandchildren.

In alignment with this theme, Gabrielle recognizes that her mother didn't have the luxury of being emotionally attuned due to her being in "survivor mode". Gabrielle believes and can see through the relationship her mother has with her daughters, that her mother wasn't able to be the mother she wanted to be and is now able to exhibit her "real essence" of mothering as a grandmother. Danielle describes this as she reflects on her own privilege as a stay-at-home-mom and compares it to her mother's experience.

> I'm in a much better place than my mom was when she was my age. I'm a stay-at-home mom so I have the privilege and the opportunity to be emotionally present and connected. So, a lot of it has to do with this socio-economic status of what you can give your child with what you got.

Danielle references her socio-economic status as part of the reason why she has the luxury of being emotionally attuned to her daughters. The fact that she and her husband can afford to have her stay at home full-time is a privilege on its own and allows her to be more present for her children. Emotional attunement as a privilege relates to *lack of nurturance from mother, generational parenting differences,* as well as *breaking generational curses*; more specifically **intergenerational trends**.

Summary

In conclusion, there were six main themes that emerged from the data in this study which were: *(1) Utilizing Upbringing and Messages from Childhood in Mothering*, *(2) Challenges of Black Motherhood*, *(3) Lack of Nurturance from Mother*, *(4) Generational Parenting Differences*, *(5) Breaking Generational Curses*, and *(6) Motherhood Shifting Perspective of Their own Mothers*. The researcher also identified thirteen subthemes which were: **desiring to be better**, **be a good girl**, **mom guilt**, **empowerment**, **survival mode**, **nurturance from othermothers**, **positive representation**, **physical punishment**, **recognition of trauma**, **importance of community**, **intergenerational trends**, **extending grace**, **mother as grandmother**, and **emotional attunement as a privilege**. These themes and subthemes helped guide the researcher in answering the research questions that were in place for the study:

1. What are the covert messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?
2. What are the overt messages that are sent from Black mothers to their daughters?
3. How do participants' relationships with their mothers influence their relationships with their daughters?
4. What are the intergenerational patterns in the messaging sent to Black mothers from *their* mothers, which they then pass to their daughters?

While participants' answers had both similarities and differences, the insight they provided about their experiences as Black mothers raising Black daughters was invaluable for the researcher as she attempted to better understand the intergenerational

messaging sent from Black mothers to their daughters. Participants discussed their views on historical, intergeneration, and race-based trauma, the ways their childhood and upbringing impact their mothering, as well as the ways their relationships with their own mothers impact their relationships with their daughters, and how these all collide to impact the messaging that gets passed down through generations. Chapter 5 discusses the finding of the study and connects the themes to the research questions that guided this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter Overview

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to provide a brief summary of the results of the research study. This qualitative research study utilized an ethnographic inquiry approach to look at the lived experiences of Black mothers and the messaging that is sent intergenerationally from Black mothers to their Black daughters. This study consisted of six Black/ African American women living in the Southeast region of the United States who discussed their experiences growing up as Black girls as well as their current experience as Black mothers. This study allowed the researcher to conduct three focus group interviews to learn about how culture influences participants' experiences as mothers as well as explore their narratives as it relates to the research questions that guided this study. This chapter is organized as follows: Summary of results, discussion of findings, implications, limitations, recommendations for future research, and conclusion.

Summary of the Results

The purpose of this study was to understand the implicit and explicit messages that are sent from Black mother participants from *their* own mothers, how these messages affected participants, and how these messages impact participants' mothering to their own daughters in an attempt to better understand the cultural components of the mothering experience. The researcher wanted to understand the implicit and/or explicit messages that are intergenerationally passed down from Black mother participants to their daughters and possible reasons that underlie those messages. Through examining the permanence of racism, allowing participants to engage in counter-story telling, as well as examining the ways in which race and racism have affected the lives of Black mother

participants, the researcher also utilized Critical Race Theory and Race-Based Trauma lenses to help understand the cultural implications on motherhood. Applying these theoretical lenses was important to the study as the literature suggests that Black women experience unique challenges as mothers, which are influenced by the socio-cultural and racial environments that they experience (Greene, 1990). Additionally, the use of both Critical Race Theory and Race-Based Trauma lenses allowed the researcher to critically examine the ways in which the larger social culture, and institutions and systems within, may impact the experiences of Black mothers.

Based on the results of the study, the researcher found four key findings that emerged from the data: (1) Black mother participants are utilizing their own experiences to be more intentional about the messages they send to their daughters; (2) Black mother participants are beginning to implement alternative methods of parenting; (3) the relationships that Black mother participants have with *their* mothers influence their relationships with their daughters; (4) Black mother participants recognize the intergenerational trauma that exists within the Black culture and are actively trying to break harmful generational cycles. The Black mother participants repeatedly described the ways in which they utilize their own experiences from childhood to influence the messages they send to their daughters. Participants in the study describe lacking emotional nurturance and messages of racial pride and receiving negatives messages, both overtly and covertly. Due to this, these mothers are intentional about the messages that they send to their own daughters; replacing these negative messages they received in childhood with more positive ones.

The second finding that resulted from this study is that Black mother participants are beginning to implement alternative methods of parenting. Participants are realizing that, in a current context, some of the parenting methods that have been utilized in the past for the safety and survival of previous generations are now more harmful than helpful when raising children. Black mother participants are encouraging their daughters to express emotion, affection, and vulnerability. They are also decreasing their utilization of physical punishment as they recognize the historical and intergenerational trauma that exists within these practices.

The third finding that resulted from the study is the relationships that Black mother participants have with *their* mothers influence their relationships with their daughters. The mother-daughter relationship is an intimate relationship that greatly impacts the development of daughters (Everet et al, 2016). In their relationships with their own mothers, the participants experienced a lack of emotional nurturance which impacted their development in different ways. For some women, they started to act out and rebel; for others this lack of nurturance made them strive for perfection. Regardless of the specific outcome, this lack of nurturance that they experienced in childhood highlighted the importance of social-emotional learning for participants. Now, in their own mothering journeys, they are deliberate about being emotionally attuned to their daughters and their emotional needs.

The fourth and final finding that resulted from the study is that Black mother participants recognize the intergenerational trauma that exists within Black culture and are actively trying to break harmful generational cycles. Although participants in the study never specifically utilize terms such as “intergenerational” or “generational”, they

instead described “traumas in the community” or the ways particular topics “directly relate to slavery”. The women in this study discuss not only their active involvement in therapy to heal and be better for their own daughters, but their belief in the ways therapy and healing can benefit the “future generations to come”.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study support the current research, while also adding to the current literature about the experiences of Black motherhood. While all mothers experience challenges, Black mothers experience unique tasks that their non-Black counterparts do not (Greene, 1990). Participants' explanations of why they decided to join this study confirmed the need for spaces where mothers can discuss the intersection of race and gender as they raise their daughters. The specific focus of the study on Black mothers raising Black daughters was significant for the research participants as they were looking for a space where they could be validated in their experiences as well as provide support to others.

Black mother participants were explicit about their desire to instill empowerment and cultural pride in their daughters. Participants discussed at length how the lack of positive representations of Black girls and women affected their self-esteem and their navigation of the world. These mothers are intentional about instilling and cultivating racial pride in their daughters so that they can more confidently navigate their social world. This installation of pride supports the literature as Brown (2008) states that racial socialization increases academic achievement, racial identity development, and cognitive and social-emotional outcomes. Black mother participants wanted to ensure that their daughters were able to see themselves in the art, books, television shows, and movies that

their Black daughters consume. Black mother participants are intentional about talking to their daughters about the beauty in their melanated skin and their hair texture. Aligning with the literature on #BlackGirlMagic, young Black girls and Black women need this type of racial socialization that acknowledges and celebrates them as they are often invisible to those within the majority (Walton & Oyewuwo-Gassikia, 2017).

Some participants discussed having age-appropriate conversations with their daughters about hard topics like enslavement and segregation. Black mothers are often the transmitters of culture (Collins, 1987; Greene 1990; Turner, 2020), which supports participants' desire to racially socialize their daughters. Due to the participants' own experiences with race and racism, they talk through their desires to shield their daughters from racism, sexism, and discrimination which also aligns with the literature as Black mothers' childrearing values and behaviors are often influenced by the environments, both socio-cultural and racial, in which they are a part (Greene, 1990). Black women are constantly navigating a society that is hostile to them while also trying to provide nurturance and care to their children, which is part of the unique challenges of Black motherhood (Smith, 2016; Turner, 2020).

Participants also discuss at length their desire to have well-behaved children. This lesson is one of the only intergenerational messages that participants themselves received that they also wanted to pass on to their daughters. Although participants recognize that this desire for well-behaved children is rooted in the idea that good behavior equates to safety and survival, particularly during a time in history where it was important for Black folks to know their place, it is seemingly ingrained into the Black culture. Black mother participants understand the over-policing of Black children and the ways that Black

children have been, both historically and currently, demonized, seen as criminals, and treated more harshly than their White counterparts. This makes it extremely important for Black children to learn and know their place in the world as it relates to navigating the divide between Black and White (Greene, 1990; Turner, 2020) and fuels participants' desire for good behavior.

Physical punishment was a topic that resonated with all participants. If they had not been on the receiving end of physical punishment, or a “whuppin”, they saw family members either utilize, condone, or be on the receiving end of it. Physical punishment as a method for discipline is often seen as socially acceptable within Black culture. For centuries, obedience was a necessity in response to white authority figures and the abhorrence of enslavement (Adams, 2020). Literature suggests that prior to enslavement, children were seen as sacred; purer than adults, and physical punishment was not practiced (Patton, 2017). It is rather a historical trauma; a legacy of white supremacy, that gets passed down intergenerationally. Enslaved individuals who endured these beatings inherited this violence from the oppressor in a paradoxical effort to protect their children from the same hostile environments which they endured (Patton, 2017). Today, Black parents are still utilizing this physical punishment as a tool to reduce the likelihood of their children encountering a racist, predatory, or disciplinary organization; particularly the police (Adams, 2020). Participants in the study talk about their own perceptions of the connections between physical punishment and enslavement and cite these connections as a reason why they are choosing to parent differently than previous generations. Participants talked through the historical and intergenerational trauma that exists within the Black community and cited physical punishment as a direct legacy of enslavement

and the trauma that endured at that time. Participants cite positive parenting; a parenting strategy that centralizes the continual relationship of a parent(s) and child or children that includes caring, teaching, leading communicating and providing for the needs of a child consistently and unconditionally (Lonczak, 2022), as an alternative way of parenting which they are embracing to raise their own children. Participants strive to center communication, emotional vulnerability, and emotional expression, in their relationships with their own daughters. In this way, the research study adds to the current literature as Black motherhood has historically been described as "tough love". The participants have received that type of mothering and are making efforts to change the narrative around Black motherhood.

The Black mother participants in this study described the influence of their relationships with *their* mothers on the relationship they have with their daughters. This aligns with the literature as it states that women's relationships with their own mothers largely influence the ways they socialize with their own children, more specifically their own daughters (Greene, 1990). Participants describe their own experiences with their mother as lacking emotional nurturance and attunement which heavily influences their desire to provide that to their own daughters. Interestingly, although participants view their own mother-daughter relationship to be lacking emotional attunement in childhood, they have sincere and deep respect and admiration for their mothers particularly in adulthood, as a result of their own mothering experiences. Through their own experiences with mothering, participants have been allowed to recognize the strength, resiliency, and determination of their mothers to provide and overcome in the face of great difficulty. This supports the literature that states that Black daughters have tremendous respect and

love for their mother and their accomplishments, especially in the face of oppression (Joseph, 1981). While participants wanted to acknowledge the ways in which their own relationship with their mothers was lacking, and how that has a profound effect on their mothering to their own daughters, they also made it clear that they love, respect, and appreciate their own mothers for all they have provided and done for them.

As presented throughout this study, the effects of enslavement are perverse and enduring. The legacy of enslavement permeates systems and institutions and affects the way that Black Americans experience and move through the world (Wilkins et al., 2013). The traumas of enslavement have been renewed through the generations and have been transmitted intergenerationally. While initially continued for the survival of communities, many of these behaviors are now more of a hindrance to success (DeGruy, 2017). In keeping with the literature, participants in this study address the ways that enslavement underscores the experiences of Black women, particularly as mothers. These women highlight the trauma within the community and discuss their active involvement in breaking the generational patterns that are rooted in both historical and intergenerational trauma. This study adds to the literature as it insinuates that Black women are actively seeking outlets for healing and growth. The women in this study are not reliant on the models that were provided to them and are actively working against outdated parenting models that keep the legacy of white supremacy and enslavement recycling through generations. The women in this study acknowledge an alternative to parenting that is based on communication, respect, and empathy; and also gives their children agency.

In summary, this research study had four key findings that emerged from the analysis of the data from the three focus group meetings: (1) Black mother participants

are utilizing their own experiences to be more intentional about the messages they send to their daughters; (2) Black mother participants are beginning to implement alternative methods of parenting; (3) the relationships that Black mother participants have with *their* mothers influence their relationships with their daughters; (4) Black mother participants recognize the intergenerational trauma that exists within Black culture and are actively trying to break harmful generational cycles. In many ways, this study supported the current research and literature that already exists regarding Black motherhood. However, this study is important as it examines Black motherhood, and its trends, within a current context as much of the literature is outdated. This study fills in a gap in the literature as it explores not only Black motherhood but specifically the messaging that is sent from Black mothers to their Black daughters. Practicing counselors and counselor educators can use the information learned from the results of this study to provide support through a multiculturally sensitive lens. Clinicians need to recognize the intergenerational nature of messages, behaviors, and teachings within the Black community and apply a systems approach to treating them. By recognizing this and validating the experiences of clients the therapeutic rapport would not only seemingly improve, but also the therapeutic outcomes. Counselors and counselor educators can also utilize this study to advocate for the need of dedicated spaces for Black women to talk about their mothering experiences and journeys, especially as it relates to raising Black daughters.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to uncover what messages were sent to Black mother participants from *their* own mothers, how these messages affected participants, and how these messages impact participants' mothering their own daughters. The

findings suggest that the relationship that Black mothers have with their own mothers is highly influential on their relationship with their daughters as they use that relationship, and the messaging within it, to inform the way they parent their own daughters. Participants' relationships with their own mothers cause them to be more intentional about the messages they send to their daughters. This study also shows that Black mothers are acknowledging and implementing alternatives to parenting outside of what was modeled for them. The Black mother participants in this study were also cognizant of the trauma that exists in Black culture and within the Black community and were actively working to break generational cycles to promote healing.

The results from the research study are relevant for practicing clinicians in the field and counselor educators. The findings in this study suggest that space must be cultivated within the therapeutic relationship that allows and encourages storytelling and counter-storytelling. Clinicians must understand the ways in which storytelling can be both freeing and redemptive as it allows individuals to share their truths and process their experiences while also finding validation and empathy within those narratives. For Black clients, it is important to be understood and to have their experiences acknowledged (Adams, 2020). Clinicians need to understand how Black clients have been racialized and how the oppression this group has both historically and currently faced impacts their current presenting problems.

Additionally, the findings from this study suggest that practicing clinicians need to advocate for dedicated spaces for Black women, particularly Black mothers to process and discuss their experiences with other Black mothers. Black mothers face unique challenges that are specific to the double oppression these women face as both Black and

woman. Black mothers are often forced to toggle between their own emotional needs, a hostile social environment, and the needs of their children (Greene, 1990; Smith, 2016; Turner; 2020) which creates a very specific, and sometimes harrowing, experience for them as both women and mothers. In reviewing the recorded field notes from this study, the researcher recalls feeling the need to cultivate and create a community for the participants. Participants in this study seemed to value the community that was created through this research. Many of the participants reported feeling "affirmed" and described the focus group meetings as "amazing". Community and sisterhood are detrimental to Black women's survival and mental health. It is essential that spaces for the exploration, validation, and support of Black motherhood are cultivated.

These findings also have unique implications for Black and White clinicians individually. For clinicians of the dominant culture, the findings suggest that it is important to check implicit biases and preconceived notions of Black women and Black children. White clinicians must actively work against the stereotypes of Black women, particularly the Strong Black Woman (SBW) archetype. The SBW archetype is rooted in enslavement and was necessary for both the personal survival of Black women as well as community survival (Geyton et al., 2020, Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Although a survival tool to cope with the atrocities of enslavement, White clinicians must recognize this as a trauma response that hinders emotional expression and causes Black women to suffer in silence. It is important that White clinicians humanize Black women's experiences, particularly those of Black mothers, while also recognizing that there are unique challenges faced by Black mothers that they cannot understand.

White women clinicians must recognize that while motherhood is a phenomenon that they may, as women, generally relate to, the specific experiences of Black mothers and the unique challenges which they face are deeply rooted in a cultural context. White women clinicians, particularly those that are mothers, must be careful not to overgeneralize their experience as mothers and presume that Black women can identify with their own experience or vice versa. White women clinicians must also remember that it is the Eurocentric ideals of motherhood that place Black mothers in a bind and leave them in the margins of conversations about motherhood. This Eurocentric view of motherhood also often leads Black mothers to have the unrealistic expectation of themselves to be "perfect". White women clinicians must remain curious about the experiences of Black mothers and allow them to share their unique experiences of motherhood.

White clinicians must also understand the lasting effects of enslavement on the Black family. It is important to understand the ways in which the dominant culture has pathologized the Black family without considering the historical, intergenerational, and systemic biases and racism that the Black family has endured. It is critical that White clinicians, particularly those involved with marriage, couple, and/ or family therapy, consider the aforementioned systems of oppression and the specific challenges Black mothers and families face.

For Black male clinicians, it is equally as important to work against the stereotypes and tropes of Black women, particularly the Strong Black Women (SBW) archetype. However well-intentioned, Black men promote the idea of the devoted, super strong Black mother (Wiedmer et al., 2006) which reinforces the SBW archetype. As

previously stated, it is important to recognize that this resilience is both a survival tool and a trauma response. Black men must be careful not to reinforce the tropes and stereotypes of Black women.

For Black women clinicians, it is imperative to recognize the importance of community, sisterhood, and racial socialization. It is critical to the mental health of Black women that they have spaces where they can be emotionally vulnerable, honest, and not have to explain themselves or their lived experiences. It is essential that there are spaces exclusively for Black women, led by Black women, to discuss their lived experiences and promote well-being that also reflects their racial identity back to them. Participants in this study talked about their own experiences regarding the lack of representation they experienced growing up and how that negatively impacted their self-esteem. We must advocate for Black women-only spaces, such as groups, to allow Black women the opportunity to let go of their strength and resiliency. It is equally as important that we, as Black women clinicians, model what that means and what that looks like.

For Black clinicians, it is imperative to highlight our work, advocate for treatment in our communities, and showcase Black clinicians exist. Literature suggests that because most mental health professionals are White, the mental health field has become a White institution to the Black community (Taylor et al., 2018). Cultural mistrust plays a major role in Black Americans' reluctance to seek mental health treatment. It is crucial for Black Americans to see themselves reflected in mental health providers.

The findings from this study are also important for counselor educators and counseling students as it is important to train culturally competent clinicians. Black clients strive to be understood and validated in their experiences. It is essential that

counselors and counselor educators train future clinicians to actively challenge racial injustice. It is important to teach and learn about the ways historical, intergenerational, and race-based trauma affects the experiences of Black clients. It is equally as salient for clinicians and counselors-in-training to examine their own privilege, particularly those who are part of the dominant culture. As counselor educators, we must ensure that diversity and social justice are integral and essential components of the curriculum we teach.

Limitations

As with any research study, there are certain limitations that prevent this study from being generalized. As this is an ethnographic qualitative study, the results cannot be generalized across the population of Black Mothers. The first limitation is the small sample size. This study consisted of six Black women who identified as mothers. Due to the small sample size of this study, the results cannot satisfactorily encapsulate the entire population of Black mothers across the country. The second limitation in this research was the sampling method. Participants were recruited using purposeful, unique criterion-based sampling as well as snowball sampling. Due to the recruitment method, the sample utilized for this study was not randomized which limits its generalizability. The geographic location of the participants also served as a limitation. All participants in the study were located in the Southeast region of the United States. The fourth limitation to this study was the utilization of an intact homogenous group as it allowed for a particular type of participant in regard to education, socioeconomic status, geographic location, and other homogenous experiences. The final limitation of this study was the utilization of a videoconferencing platform to conduct the focus group meetings. Although necessary

due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, and while still able to see facial expressions and partial body language, it did limit the ethnographic nature of this study.

While there were clear limitations of this study that limit the generalizability of the findings, an argument can be made that generalizability is not a main facet of qualitative research, particularly ethnography where the goal is to understand lived experiences. When engaging in qualitative research, the purpose of the research is to study individuals in their natural environments with few controlling factors (Nowell et al., 2017). This is also the power of qualitative research. The goal is not to generalize to others, but to explore and describe experiences or phenomena (Nowell et al., 2017). This research study utilized ethnographic inquiry and its findings, while not generalizable to the larger demographic of Black mothers, are powerful and important to both the counseling profession and society's understanding of the unique challenges of Black motherhood.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this research study provided important information related to the experiences of Black mothers, and the impact of mothering for Black daughters, more research needs to be conducted to help contribute to the existing research. The researcher provides four recommendations to help advance the mental health field. The first recommendation is to conduct a study that has a larger sample size and a more randomized sample regarding age, geographic location, socioeconomic status, and education. In addition, it is recommended that research be focused on multiple generations - at least three (i.e., grandmother, mother, daughter) to better explore the

messaging and changes in messaging through generations. This would help to understand more specifically the shifts in generational messaging.

The second recommendation is to develop an Afrocentric feminist concept of motherhood. This concept should center on the intersectional identities of these women while also addressing the trauma of Black mothers both historically and currently. As described in this study, it is hard to separate the intersectional identities of Black women and instead needs to consider how these identities intertwine and influence their experiences. This would create a niche understanding of Black motherhood.

The third recommendation would be to conduct a study that explores the overt and covert messages sent from Black mothers to their Black sons. While this study hypothesized that there were intergenerational messages sent from Black mothers to their Black daughters, the same can be hypothesized for Black sons. From a systems perspective, it would be interesting, and necessary, to explore the ways gender may affect messaging as well as the similarities and/or differences in messaging. It is imperative to explore and understand the functioning of Black families as well as to explore the effects of historical trauma on the Black family system.

The last recommendation is to conduct research that focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on Black mothers. This study could focus on the mental health implications, the effects on mothering, as well as the impact of the lockdown on Black mothers. This study could help understand the shifting role of Black mothers during the pandemic, mental health implications, as well as the effects of social isolation on mothering. This research would not only contribute to the existing research on Black motherhood, but also explore the effects of the global pandemic.

Conclusion

Motherhood has always been an important role for Black women (Green, 1990). Although all women face challenges in their role as mothers, Black women are faced with unique tasks that their White counterparts are not. Black mothers are consistently trying to navigate between a hostile society and the care and nurturance of their children (Greene, 1990; Smith, 2016; Turner, 2020). Black women are also tasked with being the transmitter of culture to their children and often set the example of what it means to be a Black adult (Collins, 1987; Greene, 1990). Black women must warn children of the dangers of racism without overwhelming them, being overly critical, or paralyzing them with fear (Collins, 1987; Greene, 1990; Turner; 2020). This effort to minimize the damaging effects of racism and discrimination on their children is a major added stress for Black mothers and families that White mothers never have to think about.

The mother-daughter bond is an intimate and complex relationship that greatly impacts the development of daughters (Everet, Marks, & Clarke-Mitchell, 2016). For daughters, mothers are often seen as role models as girls identify with their mothers and learn to embrace their femaleness often through emulating their mothers (Collins, 1987). Racism and sexism imprint a legacy on Black women, which affects their children's lives (Greene, 1990). In order to better understand Black women and their development one must understand the role that racism and oppression have played in her past development as well as her current life. This study sought to explore the messages sent to Black mother participants from *their* own mothers, how these messages affected participants, and how these messages impact participants' mothering their own daughters. This study highlighted the cultural components involved in motherhood and how those components

affected participants mothering experiences. While current literature addresses Black motherhood, there is a scarcity of current research as it relates to the intergenerational messages of Black mothers and how those messages affect their Black daughters. The present study contributes to the mental health field by providing valuable knowledge as it relates to the importance of encouraging storytelling and counter-storytelling within the therapeutic relationship, advocating for dedicated spaces for Black mothers to process and discuss their experiences with other Black mothers, as well as the importance of training culturally competent clinicians.

Appendix A
IRB Approval

e-Protocol PROTOCOL IRB Form Protocol # 22-2879 Date Printed: 10/27/2021

Protocol Title: Black Girl Magic: The Endurance of Enslaved Mothers' Lessons
Protocol Type: IRB Form
Date Submitted: 10/07/2021
Approval Period: 10/15/2021-04/30/2022
Important Note: This Print View may not reflect all comments and contingencies for approval. Please check the comments section of the online protocol. Questions that appear to not have been answered may not have been required for this submission. Please see the system application for more details.

Prisoners
Military personnel
X Adult Volunteers
Economically/educationally disadvantaged
Individuals with impaired decision-making capacity
University students
University employees
Illiterate
Homeless
Public officials/candidates for public office
Institutionalized patients/residents
Persons incompetent to give consent (e.g., dementia, comatose, have legal guardians)
Healthy Individuals
Other (please specify):

*** Study Location ***

Study Location

Select All That Apply - NOTE: If your study location is not listed, or if you would like to list additional details about your location (e.g., specific school within a school district), please enter that information in the "Other" section.

X On JMU's Campus
X Off JMU's campus

If research will be conducted off campus, please provide the proposed study location:
Online

It is your responsibility to obtain permission from off-site location(s) prior to the start of your IRB approved research.
Other (please specify)

Has this protocol been submitted to any other Institutional Review Board not listed above?	N
Is this a multi-site project? (A multi-site study is one where different PIs at different institutions are conducting the same study or aspects of the same study.)	N
Will JMU function as the coordinating center or lead institution?	Y

Please submit an IRB approval or Letter of Permission/Support from the Study Location or other IRB if applicable.

*** General Checklist ***

General Checklist

Select All That Apply :

Page 3 of 20

Appendix B
Recruitment Email

October 22, 2021

Re: Black Girl Magic: The Endurance of Enslaved Mothers' Lessons

Dear My Fellow Black Women in Counselor Education,

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a voluntary research study about Black Motherhood. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Black women who are mothers to Black daughters. This study has been approved by the IRB (protocol # 22-2879) and is being conducted by doctoral candidate, Briana Gaines, under the supervision of Dr. Michele Kielty at James Madison University.

Participation in this study will require participation in three one-hour focus group sessions for a time commitment totaling 3 hours. Once interview data have been transcribed, you may choose to review the transcripts for accuracy by contacting the researcher. This may take 30 - 45 minutes if you choose.

You may opt-in to this study if you meet all the criteria below:

- All participants identify as North American females.
- All participants identify as Black/ African American.
- All participants have family lineage in the United States and are descendants of enslaved peoples.
- All participants identify as mothers of at least one daughter (adoptive or biological).
- All participants were assigned a female sex at birth.
- All participants currently identify as cis-gender (participants' gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth).

Please complete the following survey if you are interested in participating in this study: *https://jmu.questionpro.com/t/AUEjPZpXSy* . This survey will take approximately 5 minutes of your time.

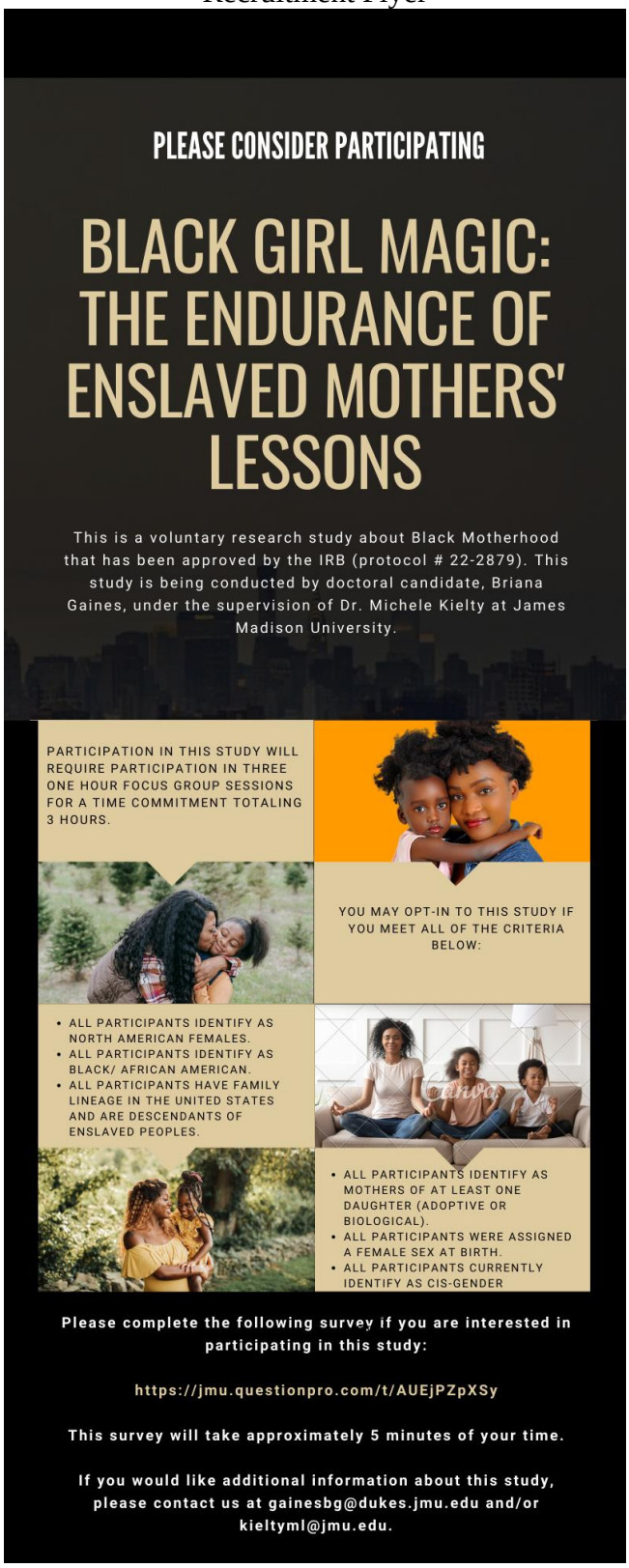
If you would like additional information about this study, please contact us at gainesbg@dukes.jmu.edu and/or kieltyml@jmu.edu .

Thank you for your consideration, and once again, please do not hesitate to contact us if you are interested in learning more about this Institutional Review Board approved project.

Briana Gaines
Principal Investigator
Doctoral Candidate
James Madison University

Appendix C

Recruitment Flyer



Appendix D
Informed Consent

Consent to Participate in Research

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by doctoral candidate, Briana Gaines, under the supervision of Dr. Michele Kielty from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Black women who are mothers to Black daughters.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of three web-based focus group meetings. Web-based interviews will be administered via an electronic conferencing tool called Zoom. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of prompts and questions related to your experience as a mother. The focus group sessions will be audio recorded. As we seek to understand the Black mothering experience, you will have the opportunity to share names of others who may be willing to participate in the group experience. This is entirely optional.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require participation in three one-hour focus group sessions for a time commitment totaling 3 hours. Once interview data have been transcribed, you may choose to review the transcripts for accuracy by contacting the researchers. This may take 30 - 45 minutes if you choose.

Risks

The investigators do not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life). Should you encounter unforeseen risks, you may opt out of the study at any point during the focus group process.

Benefits

Storytelling and community building can be both freeing and redemptive and can be a possible benefit of participation in the study. While the focus groups are not intended to have therapeutic effects, it is possible that participation within the groups may have positive effects on your mental well-being. Participation in this study may also lead to

larger, societal benefits, as results from this study may inform the development of more suitable, and culturally responsive, supports, interventions, and concepts about Black motherhood as well as the Black family for clinicians who work with this population.

Confidentiality

The results of this research may be presented at a conference and/or published as a paper. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researchers retain the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, audio recordings will be destroyed. De-identified transcripts will be retained in a password protected file to which only the researcher has access. There are exceptions to confidentiality I need to make you aware of. In certain research studies, it is my ethical responsibility to report situations of abuse or neglect of children, abuse or neglect of dependent adults or elderly persons, as well as any serious threat of harm to yourself or someone else. However, I am not seeking this type of information, nor do I wish to betray your trust in me as a researcher. You will not be asked questions about these issues.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also request to have your answers removed from the study.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researchers' Name: Briana Gaines, MA, LAC, NCC, Doctoral Candidate
Michele Kielty, Ph.D. (Graduate Psychology)
James Madison University

Email Address gainesbg@dukes.jmu.edu
kieltyml@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. Lindsey Harvell-Bowman
Chair, Institutional Review Board

James Madison University
(540) 568-2611
Harve2la@jmu.edu

This study has been approved by the IRB, protocol # 22-2879

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigators provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

☐ I give consent to be audio-recorded during my interview. (Please check the box to the left.)

_____
Name of Participant (Printed)

_____ _____
Name of Participant (Signed) Date

_____ _____
Name of Researcher (Signed) Date

Appendix E

Screening Survey

In addition to screening, this survey will also collect demographic information from each participant. Please answer the following demographic questions:

1. How old are you?
2. How do you identify racially?
3. What is your sex?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your highest level of education?
6. What is your current employment?
7. What is your current relationship/marital status?
8. Do you have any daughters?
    a) Are they adoptive or biological?
    b) How many?
    c) How old?
9. Do you have a family lineage of enslaved peoples?
10. Please describe where you grew up. (rural/ city/ suburb, small/ large, close-knit community, etc.)
11. Please describe where you live now. (rural/ city/ suburb, small/ large, close-knit community, etc.

Appendix F

Statement of Positionality

Research, and the results of research studies, is dependent on both participants and the researcher. Just as it is important for me to understand how you as participants may impact the research process, I believe it is just as important for you to understand how I may impact this process. For this reason, it is important that I share my positionality with you.

As a researcher, I hold a philosophical position that is both Constructivist and Advocacy-Participatory. I believe that entities can exist independent of perception or theory. However, my subjectivist epistemology; the idea that meaning is rooted in culture, and social interaction, leads me to believe that meaning heavily influences one's reality which is constructed as we engage with the world. I believe that research should be actionable, and out-come driven and should lead to change. I see myself as doing research with you all as participants and like to view this process as collaborative.

Personally, I identify as a Black, educated, heterosexual, cisgender, Christian, non-mother, woman. While I identify as Black, and a woman, I recognize that neither experience is monolithic. I also recognize that while I hold identities similar to many in this study, I do lack the understanding of what it means to be a mother and how that contributes to vast differences between us. I commit to continuing to be curious about the lived experiences of all the participants in this group and to not make assumptions based on personal experiences.

Appendix G
Focus Group Questions

The focus group protocol is as follows:

Focus Group 1 Questions

1. How would you describe your mother?
2. Can you tell me about your relationship with your mother?
3. When you think about your relationship with your mother, what feelings do you notice come to the surface?
4. What relationships were influential on your growing up?
5. We all learn through messages that we either receive verbally or observe nonverbally. I will first ask about verbal messages you received and then ask about nonverbal messages you received.

   In thinking about the messages that you received verbally from your mother, which were the most important?

   In thinking about the messages that you received from your mother that were observed, which were the most important?
6. What expectations did your mom have of you? How did you know?
7. Can you give me an example of how you have incorporated an above the surface or below the surface lesson from your mother?
8. Looking back on your own lessons from your mother, how have they aided in your success? How might the lessons that you learned from your mother have created hurdles for you?

Focus Group 2 Questions

9. Some might describe the Black mother-daughter relationship to be marked by "tough love', what is your reaction to that?
10. How would you describe your relationship with your daughter (s)?
11. Having reflected on the implicit and explicit lessons that your mother taught you, what was important for you to teach your daughter(s) from those lessons?
12. What lessons or ideas did you alter in raising your own daughter(s)?
13. Are there any religious or spiritual teachings that are important to you that may have influenced your mothering?
14. What expectations do you have of your daughter?
15. Are there any other influences on your mothering that are external to you?
16. What might you have taught your daughter(s) without even being aware you were teaching her/them?
17. What other relationships would you say are influential to your daughter(s)?
18. What trends might you notice throughout the generations in your own family as you reflect on mothering and motherhood?
19. Is there anything else that you would like to share that we have not touched on in the last two sessions?

Focus Group 3 Questions

20. Looking back on our last 2 meetings, what has your experience been like in this group?
21. What is something you may be taking away from this group?
22. How might your views on motherhood be changed due to this group?
23. How might participation in this group affect your mothering moving forward?

24. What has been left unsaid throughout this process that might feel important to share before we end?
25. What singular word would you use to describe this group?

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