ABSTRACT

NASH, ASHLEY N. Removing the Armor: A Phenomenological Study Examining How Transgenerational Trauma Impacts the Way that Millennial-aged Black Women Raise Their Daughters. (Under the direction of Dr. Marshall and Dr. Ting).

Black women in America are birthed into the intersection of oppressions related to race and gender leaving them exposed to experiencing gendered racism. Consequently, as Black women experience gendered racism, they begin to internalize the feelings of being inferior simply based on their physical qualities. Furthermore, as Black women become mothers, their internalized negative feelings may impact the way that they raise their daughters. Black mothers typically deem it necessary to raise their daughters with the same understanding the mothers themselves were raised with in hopes of better protecting their daughters, but unconsciously they may be perpetuating negative stereotypes of Black women. The review of literature conducted in conjunction with the development of this study revealed a gap in understanding how experiencing gendered racism has long-term impacts on some Black women as it relates to how they parent their daughters.

This phenomenological study examines how experiencing transgenerational trauma impacts the way that a group of Millennial-aged Black women raise their Black daughters. With the use of Black Feminist Thought theory, I designed a research study that would create space for my participants to authentically represent themselves and their lived experiences. As the researcher, I interviewed seven Millennial-aged Black mothers with daughters ranging from age 4 to 15 years old. As a Black woman myself, by conducting the interview I was able to provide an additional layer of comfort for my participants. Following the interviews, the participants watched the Netflix documentary, In Our Mothers' Gardens, and completed a qualitative survey.

After obtaining the data from the completed interviews and qualitative surveys, I

analyzed the data using content analysis to discover common themes and subthemes of the participants' responses. The themes and subthemes that emerged provided evidence that although the participants' lived experiences related to Black womanhood and motherhood differed, there were commonalities in their relationships with their mothers and daughters. The results of the current study indicated that while all of the participants were raised by their mothers with forms of "tough love," they choose to have a "gentle parenting" approach with their daughters. Furthermore, the participants all shared experiencing forms of trauma throughout their childhoods but were taught to be silent about it; a silence that continued throughout their adult lives until they challenged that teaching. Through this study of transgenerational trauma and Black womanhood and motherhood, readers may obtain a deeper understanding of the ways that transgenerational trauma impacts Black women, their daughters, and ultimately the Black community.

Removing the Armor:

A Phenomenological Study Examining How Transgenerational Trauma Impacts the Way that Millennial-aged Black Women Raise Their Daughters

by

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ashley N. Nash was born in Spartanburg, SC and moved around South Carolina through her childhood. In 2010, Ashley graduated from Wade Hampton High School and began attending THE South Carolina State University (SCSU). During her time at SCSU, Ashley worked as the Editor-in-chief for the yearbook, a class senator, president of Gay Straight Alliance, and became a member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. After earning her bachelor's degree in psychology from SCSU in 2014, Ashley moved to California with one of her sorority sisters. It was in California that Ashley began her masters' program at Saybrook University. In 2018, Ashley earned her masters' degree in counseling and began her doctoral studies at North Carolina State University. During her collegiate years, Ashley also became a mental health advocate and published author. In 2013, Ashley released a Facebook video titled "Behind the smiles, beyond the letters," in which she discussed her mental health concerns. In 2013, Ashley also published her first book titled *Words for Warning*. Following the release of her first book, Ashley published 3 more books: *The Miseducation of the Privileged* (2018), *Not All Scars Heal: A diary of mental instability* (2021), and *Removing the Armor: Workbook for the Healing Black Woman* (2023).

Ashley is a licensed clinical mental health professional in North Carolina and New Mexico and a Nationally Certified Counselor. Ashley currently leads the children therapy sector at a therapy center in New Mexico. Ashley maintains a special devotion to mental health with a special attention to the mental health of Black women. Ashley aligns her personal and professional actions with the intention to "*Be the person you needed when you were younger*".

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

This study aims to examine how experiencing transgenerational/ intergenerational trauma with their own Black mothers has impacted how Black millennial-aged mothers raise their Black daughters. My earliest experience with racism was revealing on its own, however, the transgenerational aspect of how my grandmother reacted to the situation laid the foundation for how I would learn to respond to mistreatment moving forward. Therefore, I begin with a personal story that offers an insider perspective into taught reactions to racism. Following my personal story, I will provide a discussion to illustrate the correlation between my experience and the experiences of many other Black women. This chapter will also include a description of the background of the problem, purpose, theoretical framework, significance, research question, and limitations of the study.

A Personal Story

Even now, some twenty years later, I can vividly recall my grandmother telling me "Baby it ain't what they call you, it's what you answer to". This long-lasting tidbit of insight is what followed a confession by me where I admitted that the reason for my tears was because a white boy on the bus had called me a Black bitch. I was seven years old at the time and while I wasn't quite sure what the phrase meant I might never forget the way everyone else on the bus responded. I was invisible to them before that moment but in an instant, all eyes were on me. The other students seemed almost to be salivating in anticipation of my reaction. I felt uncomfortable in my flesh and contemplated crawling out of it because I wanted to be anyone but me and anywhere but there. I can now label that feeling as anxiety, a feeling that I have yet to stop experiencing as a Black woman. In addition, I now understand the intended message in my

grandmother's words. She wanted me to learn that, without prompting, people may form and share their opinions about you based simply on your appearance, but you do not have to align yourself with their opinions. You don't have to give them the power to define who you are. While this felt like an act of kindness and consolation from my grandmother, I later realized that she had other intentions as well. She was providing me with a critical life lesson. Since she had lived as a Black woman during racially violent eras- such as Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement, my grandmother had an insider perspective into how to survive as a Black woman in America. Her response to me had traveled transgenerationally within my family, and it is a response that I have since discovered is rooted in trauma along with efforts to develop defenses to withstand it. In my personal life, I have learned that many of us are taught to withstand trauma in silence.

Defining Trauma

Trauma is defined in a variety of ways. Due to the lasting impact/s of surviving trauma on a person's life, the American Psychological Association (APA) defines it as "an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives" (APA, 2022). The potential for long-term aftereffects is important to note from the APA's definition because it explains how trauma can continue through generations.

Among the other definitions offered in professional literature is the suggestion that trauma is categorized as being an experience that shatters the survivor's feelings of security and control. Generally, research surrounding trauma often examines the longevity of the impact of

the experience and how it bleeds into other aspects of the individual's life (Prince, 2015). Another interpretation of trauma is offered by Peter Loewenberg. In his essay titled, *Clinical and Historical Perspectives on the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma*, Loewenberg describes trauma as "a violent shock, a wound to the person's self-concept and stability, a sudden loss of control over external and internal reality, with consequences that affect the whole organism… the person is overwhelmed and helpless" (Loewenberg, 2018, p. 63). In terms of how individuals respond to trauma, Loewenberg stated that "responses range from apathy, paralysis, dissociation, splitting, and withdrawal, to panic, terror, annihilation anxiety, fragmentation, and disorganized behaviour" (quoted in Ogunyemi, 2021). Further still, Bina Nir indicates that trauma is "a state in which a person suffered psychological harm following a single experience or a series of experiences that are perceived as particularly grievous. The deciding factor that makes an experience traumatic is a person's ability to deal with the event emotionally" (Nir, 2018, p. 1). These experiences create an overwhelming amount of stress that outweighs the person's abilities to positively cope. Van der Kolk Bessel (2015) believed that trauma caused individuals to hide from their emotions and ultimately themselves. He described survivors of trauma as individuals that were forced to develop an expertise in numbing their emotions and gut feelings as it relates to their lives day-to-day. Also, he insinuated that this evolution was a result of the trauma survivor's body being "constantly bombarded by visceral warning signs," often times causing them to "chronically feel unsafe inside their bodies" because they feel as though "the past is alive in the form of gnawing interior discomfort" (Van der Kolk Bessel, 2015, p. 98-99). The stress of trauma can manipulate and ultimately completely modify cognitive and physiological functions in addition to the behavior in an individual.

In terms of experiences, trauma can result from quality-of-life circumstances including,

but not limited to poverty, severe health diagnoses such as AIDS, domestic violence, and imprisonment. Researchers such as DuMonthier, Childers, & Milli (2017) collaborated to complete a report titled, *The Status of Black Women in the United States.* The study provided statistical data, showing that 65% to 88% of Black women self-disclose that they have experienced trauma within their lifetime. By also providing the statistics for their counterparts, researchers provided evidence that Black women experience trauma at disproportionately high rates in comparison to white women and Black men. In comparison to Black men, Black women are 24.6% more likely to experience poverty. In comparison to white women, Black women are five times more likely to receive an AIDS diagnosis, 41.2% more likely to experience domestic violence, and two times more likely to face imprisonment (DuMonthier, Childers, & Milli, 2017). The distinction between how Black women are exposed to trauma versus, and in comparison to, their counterparts is necessary to acknowledge in order to best account for (and gains insights into) the impacts that intersecting marginalized identities can and do often have on an individual's life experiences.

It is important to inquire about how individuals who have experienced trauma define trauma themselves because their interpretations of similar experiences can differ. Based upon the available literature, trauma can be conceptually defined as an experience that shatters an individual's sense of normalcy and forces them to create anew. This study considers the history of how Black women have been viewed within society and how that experience may impact how many come to view themselves and raise their daughters. For the duration of this study, the terms intergenerational and transgenerational will be used interchangeably.

Transgenerational Trauma

What is Transgenerational Trauma?

Freud referred to trauma as the "return of the repressed" (as cited in Grant, 2009, p. 97) and similarly to his definition, C. Fred Alford (as cited in Grand et al., 2017, p. 399) described transgenerational/ intergenerational trauma as a phantom; “the past haunting the present”. Specific to African Americans, Grant (2009) believes that transgenerational trauma is transmitted from one generation to another. He proposes that it stretches back to the traumatic events of the Middle Passage and of slavery, that mark the inception of Black experience in the Americas. In alignment with Grant (2000), researchers further explain intergenerational trauma by comparing it to a phantom. “The phantom is a formulation of the unconscious that has never been conscious -- for good reason. It passes -- in a way yet to be determined -- from the parent’s unconscious to the child” (Grand et al., 2017). Grand et al. (2017) deepened their description of transgenerational trauma by referring to it as “the violence of collective wounds.” The impact of transgenerational trauma can be noted by the patterns of certain behaviors displayed by individuals of different generations within a family history.

The unique feature of transgenerational trauma is that it perpetuates the emotions attached to a traumatic event to other family members that may not have directly experienced a traumatic stressor. Graff (2014) believed that transgenerational trauma in African Americans was specifically displayed as “haunting legacies” that developed into the transmission of shame, poor parenting, insecure parents, and the continuation of single-parent homes, a dynamic that was initially instilled during slavery. Numerous events have taken place for hundreds of years beyond their enslavement and undoubtedly, they are haunting African Americans. All could easily serve as the subject of study about transgenerational trauma, however, in academic literature, the

impact of transgenerational trauma is often examined from the perspective of Holocaust survivors and their offspring. In other words, the impact of transgenerational trauma from the perspective of Black survivors of slavery, Jim Crow laws, the Civil Rights Movement, and so on, and their offspring is far less studied. Although over the past two decades researchers have extended their studies to include various social trauma and genocides, the initial exploration of the impact of transgenerational trauma began with researching the aftermath of the Holocaust (Salberg & Grand, 2017).

Transgenerational Trauma in the Families of Holocaust Survivors

The Holocaust describes the genocide of over 11 million people, between 1941 and 1945 in Nazi Germany, 6 million of the victims were Jews. Bender (2004) investigated her own history to examine the impacts of the Holocaust on three generations of her Jewish and Jewish-American family. Bender did not blatantly state this but alluded to the idea that parenting styles of Jewish-Americans have been heavily influenced by the treatment of Jewish people during the Holocaust. Fossion, et al. (2015) approached transgenerational trauma in a more generalized manner when working with Jewish and Jewish-American families. They discussed the impact that the experiences of Former Hidden Children (FHC) have on modern Jewish-American family dynamics. FHC are "Jewish youth that spent World War II in various hideaway shelters across Nazi-occupied Europe" (Fossion, et.al 2015). Fossion, et. al (2015) provided research to support their hypothesis that first generation trauma will increase the likelihood of future generations to engage in extreme family functioning. Prince (2015) stated that the "greatest cruelties" of the Holocaust were the impacts that it had on the parenting culture and overall family dynamic within Jewish families. Prince (2015) believes that the Holocaust may have impacted the Jewish family in various ways such as parenting being completely devoted to children, parents being

overly protective, or obstacles in how parents connect with their children. He also discussed how dependency was reversed as the children of Holocaust survivors became the linguistic experts for the countries that they immigrated to following the end of the Holocaust. Prince (2015) continued his study by examining the adjustment period for Jewish immigrants in America. Within Prince's research, he conveyed that Jewish immigrants were awarded opportunities and compassion to transform their image from shameful, victimized refugees to heroic survivors within society. Jewish immigrants in America became revered as "possessors of privileged knowledge that conferred special authority, their position transformed, in Minz's (2001) words, from silence to salience" (Prince, 2015, p. 273).

Throughout the current study, I will provide evidence that there was an extreme difference in how America responded to Jewish immigrants fleeing the Holocaust and how America responded to African natives that were threatened, kidnapped, and abused as part of their passage to America. Dissimilarities in the amount of professional literature available is illustrative. In comparison to the 1067 articles that populated when I used the phrase, "Holocaust transgenerational trauma," only 41 articles populated when I used the phrase "Black transgenerational trauma". Amongst the 41 articles, a great many of them contained research related to other minority populations and transgenerational trauma. Graff (2014) was amongst one of the few articles directly related to African Americans and transgenerational trauma.

Transgenerational Trauma in Black Families

Due to the variety and longevity of traumatic events experienced by Black people it is a difficult (if not impossible) task to accurately acknowledge and display the full impact on their family systems. In order to withstand the impact of trauma, Black families were forced to adapt and for many this resulted in the normalization, expectation, and even acceptance of trauma.

Prince (2015) explained this phenomenon when discussing transgenerational trauma by declaring that "past events are only understood by current conditions. History is always in the present" (Prince, 2015, p. 268). With consideration to Prince's belief, one can conclude that the impact of slavery can still be seen within modern Black families.

In her article discussing the correlation between transgenerational trauma and slavery, Gilda Graff stated that "the master-slave relationship, as a template for all human relationships, whether within a marriage, between parent and child, or between employer and employee," clearly results in poor parenting" (Graff, 2014, p.191). Graff specified that the lack of empathy has been passed down through Black families. Even when they assumed the role of sire, slavers did not care about the feelings of those they enslaved for they saw them as merely property. Graff shared that "such unempathic parenting reminds me of my own mother, who would say: "You better stop crying, or I'll give you something to cry about." (Graff, 2014, p. 190).

The Case of Post Traumatic Slavery Disorder

Several scholars offer that to appreciate the depth and enduring nature of trauma experienced by the collective Black population, and black women in particular, requires tapping into the norms, behaviors, and acculturation and enculturation experiences that grew out of the enslavement of Black people. One such framework for understanding this is known as "post traumatic slavery disorder," which describes the long-lasting impacts of the mistreatment of Black people in America. Sociologist Joy DeGruy developed Post Traumatic Slavery Disorder (PTSD) and explained it as, "trans-generational adaptations associated with the traumas of slavery and ongoing oppression (DeGruy, 2005, p. 68). Professor of Women's Leadership, public health scientist, and community health psychologist Dr. Jameta Nicole Barlow also offered a definition for Post Traumatic Slavery Disorder. Barlow (2018) described it [PTSD] as

"African Americans' mental health status as a state that includes the residual impacts of slavery" (Barlow, 2018, p. 902). Anderson (1995) stated that the enslavement of free Africans was global, and its origin precedes 1619. Sekou Mims, co-author of *Post Traumatic Slavery Disorder*; offered a narrative story into the traumas specific to Black women, writing that:

> …slave enforcers (overseers) would gather all the pregnant Africans, bunch them together and randomly pick between 2 to 10 women and hang them by their feet. One at a time an overseer would take a machete and slice open the hanging women's abdomen. They forced the pregnant women to watch the unborn child fall out of the sliced women's stomach. The pregnant women that were forced to watch were re-traumatized. (Reid, et. al, 2005).

The action described above was used as a tactic to instill fear in the living Black women that were forced to watch. Although African bodies were viewed as property and therefore currency, as noted in such laws like the 3/5ths Compromise, the overseers deemed it more important to traumatize and dehumanize the Black women to further control them (Mims, 2005). To be Black was once seen as being property which then developed into being less than a whole person with the 3/5ths Compromise, where each slave [was deemed] as three-fifths of a person for purposes of determining representation in the House." (Uradnik et.al, 2011). To identify as Black in a country that has a history of casually slaughtering those who do can prove to be a traumatic burden. While all African Americans are subject to the possibility of experiencing Post Traumatic Slavery Disorder, some of the residual impacts of transgenerational trauma are specific to Black women.

Transgenerational Trauma Among Black Women

Barlow's (2018) research aligns with my current study due to their exploration into a specific impact of slavery that was confined to Black women and characterized as "Black Women's Post-Slavery Silence Syndrome" (BWPSS). The phenomenon is defined as "how collective traumatic events resulted in a culture of silence for Black women, in which Black women experience trauma yet remain silent about their experiences with sexual abuse, assault, and rape" (Barlow, 2018, p. 902-903). Henry (2020) applied Barlow's definition of Black Women's Post-Slavery Silence Syndrome to his study pertaining to Black collegiate women's obstacles in disclosing and getting justice for their abuse, stating that:

> Black women [have] continued to suffer from physical and sexual violence at the hands of White and Black men during this period and throughout Jim Crow (Broussard, 2013; Slatton, 2009). In fact, "during legal segregation, institutionalized rape was a mechanism of social control to subordinate Black women, as they were all susceptible to rape by White men" (Slatton, 2009, p. 80). Black women's 'veil of silence during slavery and the Jim Crow era, was said to be a survival tactic as they were victims of sexual assault. (Henry, 2020, p. 20).

Various writers have described trauma experienced by Black women that easily aligns with the phenomenon of Black Women's Post-Slavery Syndrome. For example, award-winning law professor, author, and speaker Patricia A. Broussard offered evidence into BWPSS by providing a personal account of the silence and compliance expected from Black women. Broussard (2013) shared that her mother was raped at gunpoint by her brother-in-law and when she disclosed this to her mother, her mother stated that she should just forget what happened and not tell anyone else about what he did. As a professor of women's studies and a survivor of rape

herself, Charlotte Pierce-Baker has directly experienced and studied elements of BWPSS. Similarly, to Barlow and Broussard, Pierce-Baker (2000) describes experiences related to Black Women's Post-Slavery Syndrome by sharing personal stories of how silence is instilled in Black women. "There is an uncanny silence surrounding the trauma of black rape. I believe I understand the silence of Black women who survive. I am a Black woman wounded…because I kept silent for so long" (Pierce-Baker, 2000, p. 18).

In short, Black women have been conditioned to be seen and not heard, and this forced way of being in the world can be traced to how they experienced life during slavery. Finding its roots in demands made of Black women during slavery, Black Women's Post-Slavery Silence Syndrome gives insight into how silence has been forced upon Black women and, ironically, how it has often served to ensure their safety. Often during times of slavery, when a Black woman would attempt to advocate for herself or her loved ones it was met with a violent response (Broussard, 2013). A modern example of the continued perpetuation of Black Women's Post-Slavery Silence Syndrome and how it cultivates a sense of invisibility amongst Black women is the lack of justice surrounding violent crimes against Black women.

The Black and Missing Foundation, a non-profit organization founded as a resource for missing Black Americans, reports that some of the possible reasons for the racial disparities in violent crimes against Black women and white women are because when minority adults go missing it is often assumed that they have ties with criminal and risky activity. This suggests that crime is normalized within high minority populated impoverished communities (Missing persons statistics, 2021). Although the murders of Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor gained mass media attention (Winters, 2020), violent crimes against Black women too often go unreported and/or misrepresented.

> Despite the fact that Black females are 2.4 times more likely than white females to be victims of homicide, their deaths are not frequently reported in the press. In some cases, when the murder of inner-city women of color does get media attention, many reporters provide negative background details about the victim, implying that she was somehow cuplable, particulary if there was a history of substance abuse, prostitution, or sexual promiscuity. (Neely, 2015, p. 11).

The reaction to violent crimes against Black women is typically opposite the reaction to violent crimes against white women, and this is made evident in the phenomenon referred to as Missing White Woman Syndrome. “Missing white woman syndrome is a term that has been accepted to describe the phenomenon surrounding excessive coverage of missing person’s cases that involve young, attractive, middle- to upper-class white women” (Conlin & Davie, 2015, p. 37). This phenomenon continues to perpetuate the ideology that white women are to be protected and Black women are to be expected to learn how to protect themselves. In response to the demand that they protect themselves, Black women have developed methods in which to do so. Moreover, hashtags such as #BringBackOurGirls (Harrison et al., 2021) and #SayHerName (Lindsey, 2018) and sites like OurBlackGirls (OBG, 2020) work to combat the silence surrounding violent crimes against Black women who did not have the opportunity to protect themselves.

Erika Marie, founder of OurBlackGirls, has composed an inventory of Black women that have been victims of violent crimes yet have not received the justice and/or closure that they are due. Marie has collected and reported the stories of thousands of Black women, dating back to the 1910s, whose deaths are rooted in the invisibility and silence that Black women remain subjected to by others. Experiencing the constant threat of becoming an invisible victim of a

violent crime, coupled with the inherited obligation to be silent about it is representative of a trauma that far too many Black women are subjected to. It is a trauma that, when experienced, is often evident through generations (Bryant-Davis et al., 2010). Furthermore, it is this very complex phenomenon, *passing down of trauma among generations*, that is the focus of the present study.

Background of the Problem

Black women encounter a unique form of devaluation that has been categorized as gendered racism (intersection of sexism and racism) and the impacts of this phenomenon are often unwittingly passed down from mothers (and other female caretakers) to female offspring and children in the form of transgenerational trauma. Although attention to and study of transgenerational trauma has recently become more prevalent in research, focus on adult Black mother/daughter relationships and the effects of transgenerational trauma have received less attention and is therefore underrepresented in the professional literature (Everet et. al, 2016). This current study explored transgenerational trauma in Black mother/daughter relationships with an additional inquiry into how it impacts how millennial-aged women raise their daughters.

Gendered Racism of Black Women

Black women are birthed into a position that immediately casts burdens upon them. Spates et. al (2019) showcased this:

> Black women in the United States have historically overcome extreme hardships and continue to do so. They have survived unthinkable bouts of trauma due to their subordinate racial and gender statuses. Black women's attempts to navigate these circumstances present them with a distinct set of dilemmas (Spates et.al. 2019, p.1).

Spates described the nature of racism and sexism that Black women are subjected to in their day-to-day lives as “relentless”. For many of these women, the burdens of their ancestors’ traumas have manifested into transgenerational trauma and created a constant exposure to modern impacts including poverty, oversexualization, abuse, incarceration, etc.

American society has typically favored men over women and white people over minority people which leaves Black women in the crosshairs of experiencing inferior treatment rooted in racism and sexism (Lewis, et. al, 2017). Evident in State of Missouri v. Celia, a court case involving a Black teenage slave, Black women were not granted ownership even of their own bodies. After being sold to her slave owner at the age of 14, Celia was continuously raped by him and, in result, birthed multiple of his children. Celia ultimately murdered her master when he attempted to rape her yet again and although Celia had informed others about the abuse and attempted to distance herself, once her Black lover informed authorities of what Celia had done, she was murdered. Acknowledging that Celia had any right to protect her own body meant that her humanity as a Black woman had to be recognized as well, a declaration that is counterproductive to the goal of exploiting them as property. Celia’s experience is similar to many other Black girls and women who oftentimes are deemed worthy based only on their skills for manual labor and to appease the sexual fetish of white men. Celia was further considered to be an archetype for Black women during slavery and their overall womanhood (Byrd, 2016). An example of the treatment that Black women often face, one that may impact how they see themselves, is the development and continued perpetuation of negative stereotypes within society.

Negative Depiction of Black Women

During slavery, "… a number of stereotypes emanated, one of which depicted Black women as the Jezebel, an insatiable sexual being unable to control her sexuality" (Littlefield, 2008, p. 678-679). Littlefield (2008) argued that the stereotypes and negative labels surrounding Black women were used as a means to justify mistreating and abusing them. Contemporary scholars offer that the labels are a way of robbing Black women of their womanhood by defining their sexuality for them and ultimately justifying the oftentimes violent assault and robbery of their identity (Littlefield, 2008). In their book *Double Burden: Black Women and Everyday Racism* (2015) St. Jean and Feagin offer insight into the long-lasting negative depiction of African America women as well. St. Jean & Feagin (2015) stated that white overseers lusted after enslaved Black women, often referring to Black women as the "mythological jungle bunny". The authors provided more insight into the length of this damaging phenomenon and its modern representation in stating that "an example of the jezebel image can be seen in the comment of one male writer about the inclusion of Black women in men's magazines: so Black women have elevated from the status of whore to playmate" (St. Jean & Feagin, 2015, p. 9). St. Jean and Feagin argued that this transition was labeled as an "elevation" because it assumed that Black women have gained more control over their bodies.

Another representation of the long-lasting negative depiction of Black women can be seen in Marquita Marie Gammage's book titled *Representations of Black Women in the Media: The Damnation of Black Womanhood* (2015) and Lori Latrice Martin's article titled *Double Fault: Serena Williams and Tennis at the Intersection of Race and Gender* (2018). Within their respective works, Gammage (2015) and Martin (2018) provided research that exposes the boxes into which society has placed Black women. Throughout the history of America, Black women

have been deemed suitable to have only a few identities: a Mammy, Black woman more interested in caring for white families than her biological family; a Jezebel, overly sexualized Black woman with the intentions to seduce white men; or a Sapphire, a career driven Black woman who is therefore an inadequate wife and mother (Gammage, 2015; Martin, 2018). Martin (2018) also spoke to how with each societal shift, Black women's initial optimism would be replaced with disappointment because with each "improvement" for Black people, a new way to continue the justification of discrimination and abuse on Black women was born.

> The reliance on controlling black women's bodies became even more important after the ban on the importation of slaves to the United States. Beginning in 1808, slave owners could no longer rely of bringing in slaves from other parts of the world to increase the overall slave population, so they relied more heavily on (un)natural increase, which often included an intense focus on slave breeding and the control of black women's reproductive freedom. (Martin, 2018, p. 89).

Whilst the labels attached to negative imagery and used to justify the mistreatment of Black women have changed, the basis of the devaluation remains intact. Littlefield and researchers like her note that the objectification of Black women has been continuously perpetuated through modern displays of Black culture that can be seen in mainstream media. Research by Brown, et. al (2013) aligned with the research conducted by Littlefield. Brown, et. al (2013) described the Jezebel as being a Black woman who was subjected to being overly sexualized while simultaneously experiencing physical sexual abuse. "While the Jezebel was painted as a woman focused on pleasing men, especially slave masters, the reality was that many African female slaves were sexually abused, raped and exploited by these men, many of whom faced no legal ramifications for their abuse" (Brown, et. al, 2013, p. 526).

The modern depiction of the Jezebel stereotype is perpetuated through the growing forms of media and the modern negative stereotypes of Black women are rooted in the history of Black women in America. For example, imagery that promotes the Jezebel stereotype can be seen in television shows, music videos, and movies. Labels have shifted from Jezebel to video girl, diva, or gold digger, yet the negativity attached to them remains. Contemporary Black women are depicted as using their sexuality to obtain success in their careers or for general materialistic things. Those labels help shape the biases these women encounter during their day-to-day lives (Brown, 2013). The impact these deeply entrenched stereotypes, experienced as gendered racism, may be a driving force in the development and perpetuation of transgenerational trauma within Black mother/daughter relationships.

Transgenerational Trauma in Black Mother/Daughter Relationships

The majority of the current research involving Black mother/daughter relationships focuses on the benefits of a more "traditional" dynamic between the two (Everet, et-al, 2016, Fix, 2022; Hifini, 2017; Thomas & King, 2007; Townsend, 2008; etc.). One may hypothesize that this is a reflection of ideas within the Black community related to the matriarchal structure of family units. Black mothers are held in high regard and therefore, the discussion of experiences that run counter to this perception can be deemed taboo and controversial. (Sudarkasa, 1996). This belief may be a core reason for the lack of current research related to transgenerational trauma within Black mother/daughter relationships. Due to the minuscule amount of research that has explored the less-than-ideal depiction of Black mother/daughter relationships, I questioned if transgenerational trauma in Black mother/daughter relationships is less widely experienced than I originally assumed.

In response to this concern, I posed a question on my personal Facebook page to try to gauge the extent of the impact of transgenerational trauma in Black mother/daughter relationships. The question was, “As an African American woman, how have your experiences in American society impacted how you raise your African American daughter?”. The responses were both revealing and stunning in their candor. One of the responses was, “I hated my daughter before I had her because it’s a preconceived notion and myth that she being a girl would make my life “hard” on purpose as if I wasn’t already facing issues. I struggled with being happy throughout the pregnancy because I was birthing something of me that would not protect me and [would] go against me and overall take over.”

Another response was, “I’m unlearning a lot of things when it comes to raising my daughter. She’s still a baby and I’m working on healing myself. But I am determined not to pass on my trauma to her, like my mom passed on hers to my sister and I”. Still another response was “For me, having a daughter has opened my eyes to see that I possess some of the same toxic traits that have sometimes put a strain on my mother’s and I relationship. Traits that I know I don’t want to pass on to my daughter. I do my best to know better and do better. Utilizing active awareness and conscious actions”. In short, my single-question informal survey generated useful and thought-provoking information that offers an amount of support for my initial speculations. Specifically, responses from the mothers pertained directly to experiencing transgenerational trauma with their mothers. Many sought to use the experience as motivation to change within themselves and not continue the cycle with their daughters.

Black women and their lived experiences with transgenerational trauma are studied at a disproportionately lower rate in comparison to populations not burdened with gendered racism and this may account for the lack of research devoted to how transgenerational trauma impacts

Black mother/daughter relationships. There are a number of studies (Alinia, 2015; Donenberg, et al., 2011; Hall, 2018; Spates et al, 2019; Szymanski, et-al, 2016; etc.) that examine how Black women cope with gendered racism by developing support systems, an element of Black Feminist Thought. Also, there are articles that discuss the impact of transgenerational trauma (Heldreth, et. al, 2016; Lewis, et. al, 2017; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). But there is a shortage of research on how the two intersect and impact the lives of Black women. The present study employed Black Feminist Thought as a framework to examine how racism and sexism intersect and impact the way that Black mothers raise their Black daughters.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that transgenerational trauma has on the way that Black Millennial mothers raise their Black daughters. It was also the intent of this study to illuminate the mistreatment of Black women in society and detail how it impacts the way that some Black women see themselves.

Theoretical Framework

From a theoretical framework standpoint, "the most prominent lenses created to examine the lives of Black women are Black Feminist Thought, Intersectionality, Womanism, and Critical Race Feminism" (Waters, 2016, p.13). The theoretical framework utilized in this study is Black Feminist Thought (BFT) theory. It (BFT) was developed by a Black woman, sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, and it is important to note that my use of the theory is not accidental. "Black Feminist Thought is a standpoint that reflects Black women's reality, honors their identity, and privileges their voice" (Everet et. al, 2016, p.335). By applying Black Feminist Thought theory to the current study and the analysis of the findings, I intended to provide a stage for the

participants to represent themselves; an opportunity that is not always freely granted to Black women. As the researcher, I wanted to provide the most insider of insider's perspective on the lives and experiences of Black women. Malebo (Lioness) Sephodi, the founder of Lady Leader, stated that "The voice of a Black woman should always be HERSELF ...No edits - no erasure - no pressure - no expectations - no additions - no intruders " (quoted in Telfer, 2018, p. 1).

As "fascinating" as black women are, there are as many unexplored questions about black women's lives as there are people to ask them. Less is known about this group, whose identity encompasses membership in two oppressed castes, than is known about either of these castes separately" (Smith, 1976, p. 4). Black Feminist Thought theory may still seem new to some in academia; however, Black women have been sharing their experiences through a multitude of mediums for centuries.

Black Feminist Thought as a Theory

In order to accurately explain Black Feminist Thought as a theory, it is paramount to start with a discussion of the pioneering work of Kimberle Crenshaw. In 1989, Crenshaw introduced the theory of Intersectionality in academic research and described it as the phenomenon of how an individual's varying social identities are seen as a collective representation of the individual and not viewed as separate identities. Crenshaw further explained how Intersectionality, specifically when discussing Black women, creates negative biases and perpetuates the mistreatment of Black women; drawing justification from the stereotypes widely accepted about Black people and women. (Crenshaw, 1991). More recently, Hall (2018) utilized Intersectionality in her research into how Black women cope and teach young Black girls how to cope, stating that "The theory of intersectionality is based on the concept that oppressive institutions within a society, such as racism, ageism, sexism, and homophobia, do not act

independently, but are instead interrelated and continuously shaped by one another" (Hall, 2018). Intersectionality theory was imperative to the development of Black Feminist Thought because it showcased how feminist theories and race theories failed to represent the difficulties of living with two or more oppressed identities. By drawing attention to this void, Crenshaw was one of the many Black feminists that assisted Collins in creating a theory that filled the void of representation of the lived experiences of Black women in academic literature.

Another Black feminist that is necessary to discuss in conversations surrounding Black Feminist Thought is bell hooks. Born Gloria Jean Watkins, the choice of the pseudonym bell hooks' was a decision rooted in the acknowledgment of amazing Black women and the understanding that society would not often see her beyond her identity. The name bell hooks derived from her mother and great-grandmother and her decision to lowercase her name was in hopes for the focus to shift from her identity to her ideas (Upp, 2021). bell hooks is best known for the ideas that she represented in her book titled, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism.* Within Ain't I a Woman, bell hooks presented a societal hierarchy that has continued for centuries; one that places Black women as last in terms of acknowledgement, respect, and protection. bell hooks stated that:

> As far back as slavery, white people established a social hierarchy based on race and sex that ranked white men first, white women second, though sometimes equal to black men, who are ranked third, and black women last. What this means in terms of the sexual politics of rape is that if one white woman is raped by a black man, it is seen as more important, more significant than if thousands of black women are raped by one white man. Most Americans, and that includes black people, acknowledge and accept this hierarchy; they have internalized it

> either consciously or unconsciously. And for this reason, all through American history, black male rape of white women has attracted much more attention and is seen as much more significant than rape of black women by either white or black men. (hooks, 1981).

bell hooks knew that the feminist movement would require the assistance of all American women, however, she believed that for it to be continuously successful the feminist movement had to be centered around the needs of Black women because of their experience in the intersection of two marginalized populations. hooks often referred to America's history as evidence that while white men and Black men can be united by patriarchal sexism and white men and white women can be united by racism; there is nothing that completely unites the Black woman to either majority group. hooks spoke of how Black women are the only group that is demanded and expected to choose between their identities (hooks, 1981). Within her book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism,* hooks questioned the idea that solely white women can represent "true womanhood" and that if women are soft and deserving of protection…why does the same logic not apply to Black women. The battle to combat the systematic mistreatment and erasure of Black women and their accomplishments proves to remain uphill but Black Feminist Thought as a theory is often used as a weapon to assist with the battle.

Black Feminist Thought theory is an important reference for this study because it crafted a formal space within academia for Black women to speak for themselves and tell their own stories. Black Feminist Thought allows Black women to share their insider experiences with outsiders in a manner that is deemed believable and accepted as realistic experiences. My decision to use Black Feminist Thought aligns with Barbara Christian's belief that, "If Black women do not speak for themselves, other people will do it for us badly" (Waters, 2016, p. 17).

Theories are often confronted with criticism when they are applied to real life situations. For Black Feminist Thought, the criticism developed early on and derived from questions related to its necessity. Consistent criticism of Black Feminist Thought is typically rooted in the belief that Black women and their experiences have already been addressed which can make Black Feminist Thought feel redundant (Collins, 2000). Feminist theories can be traced back to 1792 when Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. It is important to note that a clear response to combat the criticism was the construction and publication of the first comprehensive collection of black feminist scholarship titled, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (1982). To be both Black and a woman is to hold a unique position within society and requires dual consideration for the impact of living a life within, at minimum, two marginalized populations (Smith, 1976). Black women are often celebrated for maintaining their strength while their white women counterparts are celebrated for being the epitome of "true womanhood" (Perkins, 1983). A collective goal of Black feminists is to offer insight and research into how Black women survive and thrive in spite of the continued mistreatment.

Major Contributors to Black Feminist Thought

The seemingly rebellious act of Black women publicly sharing their experiences is not a new phenomenon. The development of Black feminist thought as a critical theory began with the intent for Black women to claim their subjugated knowledge which called for the rediscovery of the voices of Black women. Hull, et. al, (1982) stated that:

> Because of white women's racism and Black men's sexism, there was no room in either area for a serious consideration of the lives of Black women. And even when they have considered Black women, white women usually have not had the capacity to analyze

> racial politics and Black culture, Black men have remained blind or resistant to the implications of sexual politics in Black women's lives. (p. xxi)

Patricia Hill Collins, founder of Black Feminist Thought (1990), refers to Black women as being the "outsiders within," because although Black women are a part of both the Black population and the women populations, they are oftentimes assumed to be inferior within both of them. Collins has often referenced works created by other Black women including Anna Julia Cooper and bell hooks that were foundational to establishing the theory.

Within their respective works, Anna Julia Cooper and bell hooks both relay the experiences of many Black women. Anna Julia Cooper initially published her work *A Voice from the South* in 1892 and the impact that societal shifts have had on Black women's experiences can be noted in bell hooks' work *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, published in 1982. It is important to reference both of their works as a means to investigate the shifts (as well as the consistencies) in experiences throughout the years since this current study has an emphasis on a generational component as it relates to the treatment of Black women within society.

bell hooks fought for the mistreatment of Black women in America to first be acknowledged followed by a demand that it be improved upon. Both hooks and Cooper also believed that due to the unique standpoint of being both Black and a woman in America, only Black women could properly and authentically represent life within the intersection of race and gender. bell hooks' unfiltered depiction of the mistreatment of Black women and her relentless dedication to the betterment of Black women became inescapable to all as evident when Time magazine declared her as one of the most influential women of the past century (Upp, 2021).

Anna Julia Cooper is often referred to as the "Mother of Black Feminism" (Upp, 2020). Cooper was born into slavery in 1858, however, by her death in 1964 Cooper had become one of

the first Black women to earn a PhD. Cooper's pursuit of higher education included learning the pros and cons of a Black woman invested in education. Cooper shared that she was often negatively labeled by Black men and White women due to being outspoken about her beliefs. "Some Black male contemporaries, including colleagues like W.E.B. Du Bois, were dismissive toward Cooper, even as they appropriated her ideas" (May, 2017, p. 36). In terms of assistance for rights as a woman, Dr. Cooper believed that white feminists were still aligned with white supremacy therefore, making their assistance in Black women obtaining rights nonexistent. One of the main beliefs that Dr. Cooper is known for is that educated Black women were the key to uplifting the race because Black women have a unique standpoint to observe society making them the perfect group to influence and contribute to bettering conditions (Cooper, 1892).

A modern Black Feminist that has been unapologetic about her beliefs is Brittney Cooper. Author and professor Brittney Cooper has often referenced the works of Anna Julia Cooper, Patricia Hill Collins, and bell hooks when relaying her view of the Black woman in America Cooper has stated that Black women should represent themselves. In her book titled *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women*, B. Cooper has challenged others to believe Black women when they do represent themselves decreeing, "most academics have been trained to *trust* that white males of all varieties are capable of *deep thoughts*. *Beyond Respectability* requires that we approach Black women's long history of knowledge production with the same kind of trust" (Cooper, 2017, p. 12).

Brittney Cooper considered the deep-rooted disbelief of Black women's stories as being part of a "culture of justification". Cooper defines the "culture of justification" as the burden that Black women are "always asked to prove that the study of Black women's lives, histories, literature, cultural production and theory is sufficiently academic, and sufficiently "rigorous" to

merit academic resources" (Cooper, 2015, p. 7). Cooper has continuously fought against the notion that Black women have to prove their truth by "white-male centered Western philosophy" standards, the same standards that have justified their mistreatment for centuries, through her lectures and books. Cooper often references other Black women like Barbara Christian who believed that Black women's history was already theorized in narrative forms and that it was necessary to better arm Black girls to survive as Black women and Ann DuCille (1994) who stated that "we can be, but others get to tell us what we mean" (quoted in Cooper 2015, p. 7). In an almost battle cry presentation, Brittney Cooper is actively challenging Black women to speak for themselves even in situations that attempt to silence them. "Black women have a right to be mad as hell," (Cooper, 2018, p. 4), and Black Feminists like Cooper are working to bring the acknowledgement of the mistreatment of Black woman and acceptance that our stories matter and are truthful, regardless of if it makes the audience uncomfortable.

The work of Black Feminists is alive and ever evolving within scholarly reviewed articles. Black Feminists such as Harriet Jacobs, author of American classic *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861); Melissa Harris-Perry, political commentator and author of *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (2011); Robin Boylorn, *author of Sweetwater: Black Women and Narratives of Resilience* (2013); Morgan Jerkins, author of *This Will be my Undoing: Living at the Intersection of Black, Female, and Feminist in (White) America* (2018); Feminista Jones, author of *Reclaiming Our Space: How Black Feminists are Changing the World from Tweets to the Streets* (2019); and etc. have fearlessly and unapologetically armed themselves and other Black women with the tools to combat the centuries long vendetta against Black women in America. The concepts of Black Feminist Thought are tools to assist the battle against the general biases towards Black women in society.

Concepts of Black Feminist Theory

The concepts of Black Feminist Thought seemingly overlap to create a more detailed and intimate account of the lived experiences of Black women in a manner that accepts their individual accounts of their lives as standalone truth. Patricia Hill Collins stated that "Black feminist thought can create collective identity among Black women about the dimensions of a Black women's standpoint. Through the process of rearticulation, Black feminist thought can offer Black women a different view of ourselves and our worlds" (Collins, 2000, p. 32). The concepts that I will address within this current study are: outsider/within, intellectual activism, matrix of domination; intersectionality, compound discrimination, and interlocking oppressions. Descriptions of each are drawn from the works of various BFT scholars including Collins, Cooper, and Crenshaw.

When conversing about her thought process for developing the concept of "outsider within," Patricia Hill Collins stated that she needed "to find appropriate language that analyzed my own personal alienation in school and workplace settings" (Collins, 1999, p. 85). This concept explains how Black women are not fully accepted by any of their social identities because of their intersecting identities. Black women are not fully accepted or considered in Feminist theory because of their Blackness, and they are not fully accepted or considered in race theories because of their femaleness. As overall theories, Feminist theory assumes whiteness and race theories assume maleness (Collins, 2000). Collins notes how the lack of inclusion of Black women in theories impacts the way that Black women are treated within various settings and society as a whole.

Intellectual activism is the concept that was developed with the intention to demand spaces for Black women to represent their own experiences in an accepted, academic manner.

"Black women are empowered with the right to interpret our reality and define our objectives continually establish and reestablish our own practices" (King, 1986 in Cooper, 2015). Collins (2000) expressed gratitude to Black women like Sojourner Truth, Toni Morrison, Anna Julia Cooper, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, and countless others for their unwavering dedication to produce intellectual work in spite of the constant suppression by other populations.

Matrix of Domination is a concept that considers the societal systems in place that allow for the continuation of a separation of power based on social identities such as race and gender. "The matrix of domination refers to how intersecting oppressions are actually organized. Regardless of the particular intersections involved, structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression" (Collins, 1998, p. 18). Within these societal systems of power, there are hierarchies established that place African Americans and women at the bottom of their individual hierarchies. By Black women being part of both of the lower-level identity groups, they fall into an intersection of devaluation that is "justified" by their placement.

The concept of intersectionality was originated from Kimberele Crenshaw in her article titled, Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. While Crenshaw was the first to utilize the term intersectionality in scholarly writing, the ideas represented by the concept date back to the 1800s. Collins et. al (2020) restated a decree that Collins made in 2000 which is that starting the 1970s, "Black women understood that addressing oppression they faced could not be solved by race-only, or class-only, or gender-only, or sexuality-only frameworks". Intersectionality speaks to how intersecting social identities impact the way that individuals are treated within society.

Compound Discrimination is a concept that explains how when an individual is part of multiple oppressed populations, the amount of discrimination that the individual faces is increased as their oppressed identities build upon each other. Compound discrimination describes how an individual's suffering is elevated as their social identities such as race, gender, and social economic class considered (Shoben, 1981). The last concept is interlocking oppressions and it can be confused with compound discrimination and intersectionality; however, they do differ. Interlocking oppressions explains how individuals can be oppressed because of more than one of their social identities. The interlocking aspect of this concept explains how Black women are never seen as one of the other (Black or a woman) and because of this, their oppressed identities are not viewed separately (Lewis et. al, 2017; Szymanski and Lewis, 2016).

Overall, Black Feminist Thought assists to demolish the notion that there are outsiders that can better depict the lived experiences of Black women better than Black women themselves. Black women have been expected to be silent even when the topic of discussion is themselves. Black Feminist Thought was crafted as a theory that could be academically accepted by other scholars to validate the lived experiences of Black women and allow for a platform for the collective Black women's' experiences to be deemed trustworthy from an outsider perspective (Harris, 2007). For centuries the depiction of Black women within academia has been led by an outsider perspective as the trusted source but the radical action of Black women choosing to represent themselves is not new and begin occurring prior to the development of Black Feminist Thought as a theory.

Representation Prior to the Development of Black Feminist Thought

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) expressed that the development of Black feminist thought was not merely assisted by Black women who were scholarly intellectuals, but also by women

who were not considered to be highly educated. Collins (2000) noted that to fully experience the culture of Black women, researchers must rely on resources outside of academia. The culture of Black women can be found in poetry, books, organizations, music, fashion, film, etc.

Collins recalls the words of Sojourner Truth who presented speeches and poetry that gave insider insight as to what it meant to be a Black woman. Truth was a formerly illiterate and enslaved Black woman who became a revered abolitionist and activist following her escape from slavery in 1826. Truth's first appearance in the courtroom followed soon after her escape when she became the first Black woman to win a case against a white man for custody of her son in 1828.

In addition to Sojourner Truth, other Black women emerged to outwardly share their experiences; amongst them was Maria Stewart. Stewart is referenced as America's first Black woman political writer and during a presentation in 1831 she posed the question, "How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?" (Collins, 2000). Stewart presented a challenge to her fellow Black women to step out of the negative light cast upon them by the majority of society. Stewart used her speech in 1833 to identify the elements that she felt contributed to the oppression of Black women in which she decreed a powerful statement, "We have pursued the shadow, they have obtained the substance; we have performed the labor, they have received the profits; we have planted the vines, they have eaten the fruits of them" (Collins, 2000). Stewart urged Black women to stand and fight for their equality because it would never freely be granted to them. Mary Stewart is one of the first U.S. Black women to be considered a Black feminist with the intent to make room for the voices of Black women and to demand their fair treatment, an ideal represented in what is now classified as Black feminist thought. Collins (2000) noted that the

voices of Stewart and Black women like her during that time were “suppressed by pots and kettles symbolic of Black women’s subordination”.

Another precursor of the concepts of Black Feminist Thought, prior to its formal emergence as a theory of scholarship, occurred with the development of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs. The National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs was a merger of the National Federation of Afro-American Women, the Women’s Era Club of Boston, and the Colored Women’s League of Washington, DC. “The organization's founders included some of the most renowned African-American women educators, community leaders, and civil-rights activists in America, including: Harriet Tubman, Frances E.W. Harper, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Margaret Murray Washington, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell” (Wormser, 2002). The National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs thrived under the motto, “Lifting as we climb”. When questioned about what the organization meant to her, Josephine St. Pierre, one of the founding members, stated that for "too long have we been silent under unjust and unholy charges; we cannot expect to have them removed until we disprove them through ourselves”. The organization worked to assist African Americans in “job training, wage equity, and child-care. The NACW also called public attention to issues such as lynching, peonage, prison conditions, and segregated transportation” (Wormser, 2002).

Fannie Barrier Williams was an activist, educator, and advocate. In 1905, Williams declared that “The colored girl . . . is not known and hence not believed in; she belongs to a race that is best designated by the term ‘problem,’ and she lives beneath the shadow of that problem which envelops and obscures her,” which further revealed the unique position of Black women. The position of the Black woman was/is either seen as being suppressed or not seen at all as the experiences of Black women has been/is rendered invisible within society. The necessity of the

development of Black feminist thought is seen in the suppression and oppression of Black women.

In the novel, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, author Harriet Jacobs (1861) shares the lived experiences of herself and those around her. In one of the recollections, Jacobs (1861) shared her emotions as they related to being the mother of a young Black daughter. “I worked day and night, with wretchedness before me. When I lay beside my child, I felt how much easier it would be to see her die than to see her master bear her about, as I daily saw him beat other little ones. The spirit of the mothers was so crushed by the lash, that they stood by without courage to remonstrate. How much more must I suffer, before I should be “broke in” to that degree?” (Jacobs, 1861). This recollection was a depiction of the lesser evils that Black women faced and how it began at early ages. Jacobs (1861) shared how Black women were often raped by their white masters and envied by their white mistresses because of their husbands’ interest in Black women. Jacobs (1861) also spoke of the lack of the ability for Black men to protect Black women due to the fear of being whipped, sold, hung, or otherwise violently disciplined.

In the novel, *A Voice from the South*, Anna Julia Cooper (1892) recalled similar tales of her experience with being a Black woman in America during slavery in stating:

> The desire for quick returns and large profits tempt capital ofttimes into unsanitary, well nigh inhuman investments, -- tenement tinder boxes, stifling, stunting, sickening alleys and pestiferous slums; regular rents, no waiting… Men and women herded together like cattle, breathing in malaria and typhus from an atmosphere seething with moral as well as physical impurity… binding hand and foot, body and soul, till the proper image of God is transformed into a fit associate for demons. (Cooper, 1892, p. 130).

Cooper (1892) continued to depict the overall treatment of Black people during slavery yet specified that to be a Black woman in America was unique in its treatment by declaring:

> The colored woman of to-day occupies, one may say, a unique position in this country. In a period of itself transitional and unsettled, her status seems one of the least ascertainable and definitive of all of the forces which make for our civilization. She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem and is as yet unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both. (Cooper, 1892, p. 134).

Black women are often subjected to scrutiny for being both Black and a woman, two populations that have been deemed inferior to their counterparts. Black Women's Literature instructor and lecturer Lorraine Bethel (2018) stated that "The codification of Blackness and femaleness by whites and males is seen in the terms of "thinking like a woman" and "acting like a nigger" which are based on the premise that there are stereotypically Black and female ways of acting and thinking" (Bethel, 2018, p. 11). Slurs such as "nigger bitch" have derived from such mentalities and continue to be utilized in modern society. Although Black women are disproportionately exposed to trauma-provoking experiences, all Black women do not experience trauma nor do all Black women have the same reactions to their treatment within society.

When Black women are acknowledged in a more positive light they have often been deemed "superwomen" as an attempt to rebrand the necessity of the strength required to endure the oppressive treatment. To be considered a Superwoman has been revered as a badge of honor within the Black community, often without consideration for how Black women feel about the title. From an outsider's perspective, the shift from labels such as Jezebel, Mammy, and Welfare Queen to Superwoman was a positive one. The Superwoman label has been considered a way to uplift and celebrate how Black women excel during difficult times, but it can also be used as a

tool to rob Black women of their humanity. The concept of being a Superwoman is based on the notion that no matter the trauma or negativity that a Black woman endures, she can still succeed and be of value to others. Being a Superwoman became a necessity for Black women since slavery in the United States due to Black families being forcefully separated (Woods-Giscombe, 2010).

The word necessity is defined using terms such as "involuntary" and "essential". With this definition in mind, Black women may not have desired to become "superwomen" but rather they were forced to adapt in order to combat their oppressive position in America. In her book, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, bell hooks (1981) described this necessity by stating that:

> …usually, when people talk about the "strength" of black women… they ignore the reality that to be strong in the face of oppression is not the same as overcoming oppression, that endurance is not to be confused with transformation. Frequently observers of the black female experience confuse these issues. The tendency to romanticize the black female experience that began in the feminist movement was reflected in the culture as a whole.

Black women's ability to stand against oppression and thrive does not erase the fact that they have continuously been subjected to oppression within American society. For this current study, the participants had to self-identify as survivors of trauma, however, it is important to note that this identification is not essential to experiencing life as a Black woman. Since every Black woman may not experience trauma directly it makes the use of Black Feminist Thought a necessity because the theory accounts for the wide range of experiences of Black women.

Black feminist scholars, not limited to those previously discussed, continue to work as a collective to encompass the complexity of the lived experiences of Black women. Black feminist theorists vary in their approaches and their work ranges in the specific areas covered within their research of Black women's lived experiences. With this current study, I applied Black Feminist Thought to the relationship dynamic between Black mothers and their Black daughters. While the dynamics of Black mother/daughter relationships have previously been examined, much of the research surrounding the relationships do not include a transgenerational trauma element. This study is specific to the lived experiences of millennial-aged mothers and how their exposure to transgenerational trauma has shaped the manner in which they raise their daughters.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in understanding the longevity of the impact of trauma experienced in Black families, specifically its impact on Black mother/daughter relationships. Black women experience the uniqueness of gendered racism while simultaneously experiencing the phenomenon Black Women's Post-Slavery Silence Syndrome, ultimately creating a belief that Black women should suffer in silence. The significance of this study also lies in debunking the notion that Black women should indeed suffer in silence. No more. No more will an outsider tell our story or attempt to recreate it while we suffer the internal destruction in silence that is often transferred to our daughters.

Research Question

Collins (2000) noted that Black mothers are generally tasked with prioritizing teaching their daughters survival skills which often left more traditional expectations of a mother unmet. "Black daughters raised by mothers grappling with hostile environments have to come to terms

with their feelings about the difference between the idealized version of maternal love extant in popular culture…and often troubled mothers in their lives" (Collins, 2000, p. 187-188). This current study was developed with the intention to examine the long-lasting transgenerational impact that experiencing trauma has on a Black woman and has on her parenting style with her daughter. The primary research question for this study is: How does experiencing transgenerational trauma influence the way that Black Millennial aged women raise their Black daughters?

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the method I used for reaching potential participants. I utilized convenience sampling only and asked for participants by posting on my personal social media pages. Although the post had the potential to reach thousands of individuals, the construction of my friends on social media ranges in age, gender, and race. An additional limitation is the assumption that since all of the participants are friends and/or they follow my personal social media pages, they may have other similarities such as education level and location that impact their responses.

The research and development of this study was conducted by a Black woman with a Black mother. For the sake of being more closely culturally aligned, participants of this study are, at minimum, third-generation African Americans. This requirement was a limitation in exploring the differences in how transgenerational trauma may have impacted populations such as first-generation Black women. This study was conducted virtually. While virtual interviews adhered to the various changing restrictions related to Covid, it also produced a possible limitation in terms of privacy. Participants may not have had the ability for complete privacy

during the interview and the lack of privacy may have impacted the participant's responses and overall engagement.

Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction, background of the problem, purpose of the study, theoretical framework of the study, significance of the study, the research question that drives the study, and limitations of the study. Within this chapter, I provided historical recollection of the treatment of Black women and how Black women see themselves and teach their daughters.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a synopsis of the available literature directly related to the central theme of this study, examining the impacts that transgenerational trauma has on Black mother-daughter relationships. This chapter will begin with a brief discussion of motherhood and various factors that impact a woman's approach to motherhood before providing a short review of literature related to mother-daughter relationships. Next, I will present a summary of the literature related to how minority mothers parent their daughters. Finally, I will synthesize the literature surrounding Black mother-daughter relationships with a specific focus on the ways that transgenerational trauma manifests in Black mothers' parenting styles with their daughters This chapter will conclude with a summary.

Motherhood

Regardless of one's belief system in terms of the details surrounding the initial arrival of humans to Earth, there is one concept that most can agree on; human life has been maintained because of mothers. Women have the innate responsibility to bear children in order to maintain the society to which we have become accustomed. Prior to more recent decades, it was believed that a woman's sole purpose was to give birth to children and care for them and her husband in the home. Conversely, mothers are expected to take full responsibility for the caretaker role while fathers are relished as the "fun parent" because they are more expected to assist the children in leisure activities (Updegraff, et al., 2018). As the primary caretaker, mothers must teach their children paramount life skills in socialization, self-esteem, work-life balance, etc.

(Penington, 2004). Philosopher, award-winning author, and feminist Sara Ruddick (2007) referred to a mother as "…the person principally responsible for training her children in the ways and desires of obedience. This may mean training her daughters for powerlessness, her sons for war, and both for crippling work in dehumanizing factories, businesses, and professions" (p. 104). Often-times the pressures of motherhood are minimized because traditionally, motherhood has been deemed an "obligation" for all women; one that they "willingly" accept.

The difficulties of motherhood typically begin almost a year before the baby is born. For example, since national surveillance for deaths related to pregnancy began in 1987, the pregnancy-mortality rate in America has consistently risen. Aside from pregnancy being life-threatening pregnant women are also more likely to die due to suicide, accidental overdoses, and murder (Romano, et al, 2022; Cliffe, et al., 2019). Pregnancy exposes a woman to potentially irreversible physical, mental, and emotional changes, yet women who opt out of motherhood are viewed negatively (Rich, 2007). Historically, it has been generally accepted that "…motherhood is a woman's truest vocation; that women who do not mother, whose lives may be focused more exclusively on a career, creative work, or political work are missing out, are doomed to live emotionally unfulfilled lives" (hooks, 2007, p. 147). Due to the wide acceptance of this idea as truth, women of all races, social economic classes, education levels, etc. have traditionally faced societal pressure to have children to combat the negative connotation for women who opt out of motherhood. Along with the expectation for all women to become mothers, there is an expectation of what it means to be a mother (Walkerdine, & Lucey, 2007).

A common deterrent to motherhood that women experience is the obligation to be the "perfect" mother to render productive and good adults. Women's Studies professor and sociologist Nancy Chodorow (2007) provided insight into how children's expectation of a

"perfect" mother begins in infancy. A depiction of a "perfect" mother is often presented as a "natural mother". The "natural mother" describes a woman who accepts motherhood as her sole identity. Poet and feminist Adrienne Rich (2007), commonly credited for emphasizing the oppression of women and lesbians in the poetic discourse, referred to a "natural mother" as "one who can find her chief gratification in being all day with small children, living at a pace tuned to theirs… [and being], quite literally selfless" (Rich, 2007, p. 12). One may conclude that it is instinctual to romanticize motherhood in the hope to incentivize women to become mothers, in spite of the pressures and unrealistic expectations attached to the role. In addition to societal pressure to bear children, there are also state laws to force a woman into motherhood, regardless of her desires (Chodorow, 2007; Rich, 2007).

Historically, forced motherhood has roots in American culture. During slavery, Black women were raped and forced into motherhood because Black bodies were traded as commodities (Walker, 2007). Rich (2007) provided further evidence of forced motherhood by sharing that in 1958 she was required to obtain her husband's permission to get her tubes tied as a means to prevent future pregnancies. As a licensed clinical mental health professional, I can attest to the potential long-term negative impacts on one's mental health that can manifest by robbing women of the right to make decisions about their own bodies.

With political and/or religious beliefs aside, forced motherhood is an attack on women's rights and perpetuates the notion that women can only make selective decisions without the influence of others. Due to the very real fact that motherhood is a necessity for the continuation of life, the act of minimizing women to mere incubators and selfless caretakers is justified as a "means to an end" (O'Brien, 2007). The minimization of women and their worth can be noted as combative to women's rights. Ultimately an attack on womanhood has a direct correlation to the

nature of mother-daughter relationships because it shifts how a mother prepares her daughter to be an adult woman (Walkerdine, & Lucey, 2007).

To portray motherhood solely as a life-threatening necessity would be to invalidate the joys that mothers often relay when discussing motherhood. Although some women may feel forced into motherhood, there remains an abundance of women who relish the role of motherhood arguably because of the bond that is created between mother and child during the mother's pregnancy. Researchers, such as Elaine Bell Kaplan and Dr. Gina Wong, have centered their expertise around motherhood and examining how external factors impact one's approach to it. Kaplan (1996) and Wong (2012) share the belief that although some external factors like race and family systems cause strains on motherhood, they frequently motivate mothers to work selflessly in order to provide their children with more opportunities. Furthermore, studies (Kaplan, 1996; Wong, 2012) show that mothers typically find consistent joy and feelings of accomplishment as their children grow and succeed in their personal lives. In addition to a woman's personal feelings toward raising children, the mother's family system, and race, how a woman approaches motherhood, is also heavily impacted by the gender/s of their offspring and culture.

Family Systems

Research confirms that a woman's approach to motherhood depends heavily on her family system (Battista, 2023; Freudenburg & Davidson, 2007; Wesolowski, 2020). Family systems are defined not only by who resides in the household but also include the household members' dependency on each other. In most family systems the mother is considered to be the primary caregiver for the children, however, how a woman approaches this role differs based on the other members of the household and her ability to depend on them for assistance. Studies

(Battista, 2023; Broussard, 2010; Christopher, 2012; Crosier et al, 2007; Freudenburg & Davidson, 2007; Wesolowski, 2020) show that the structure of the family system may have the most impact on the mother's decision on parenting styles, ultimately directly impacting the relationship with their children.

Traditional Families

Traditional families, also known as nuclear families, are described as heterosexual married couples who share biological children with each other. Furthermore, nuclear families describe a family dynamic that follows traditional gender roles where the father is financially responsible for the household and the mother is responsible for childcare and household chores. "The moral standard of the intensive mothering mandate describes people's expectations that mothers are the most competent parent to satisfy children's needs and, therefore, they should devote all their time, energy, resources, and efforts to their children" (Battista, 2023, p. 2). The role of a mother in a traditional family system carries expectations of joyful sacrifice and is constantly devalued as work due to the assumption that since all women desire to be mothers, they are prepared and willing to make the sacrifice. While it is likely that there is an abundance of mothers of nuclear families that thoroughly enjoy their role, the assumption and expectation that this is true for all mothers is dehumanizing to women (Battista, 2023; Russo, 1976).

Recently more mothers in nuclear families have been required to enter the workforce, however, expectations for them to also be the primary caregivers for the children and maintain the household have not changed. Although the ability to work full-time jobs and maintain their role as a mother of a nuclear family is often praised, it is rarely rewarded with assistance. Rather, at times, if mothers merely request assistance they are met with disheartening reactions. Comparatively, the expectations for the father in nuclear families have not shifted; consequently,

this doubles the workload of mothers (Freudenburg & Davidson, 2007). Moreover, the expansion of demands with offers of little to no assistance has directly impacted the mother's relationship with her children (Wesolowski, 2020).

Non-traditional Families

Single mothers

More often than not, single mothers engage in balancing working full-time jobs outside of the home and being the primary caregiver for their children. This balance is frequently formed out of necessity to properly facilitate the financial well-being of their family system as well as their personal mental health. Due to the financial and social disadvantages that many single mothers experience coupled with consistent isolation, single mothers run a higher risk of being diagnosed with a mental health disorder (Crosier et al, 2007) and feel as though going to work helps to manage feelings of anxiety and depression. "Single mothers often said that employment provided breaks from children that were necessary for their emotional well-being" (Christopher, 2012, p. 86). Studies (Broussard, 2010; Christopher, 2012; Crosier et al, 2007; Mendenhall et al, 2013) show that single mothers also utilize "othermothers" more frequently than mothers in other family systems. While even more prevalent in Black families, all races of single mothers report the benefits of building strong support systems of other women willing and able to assist in childcare.

Many single mothers also express the additional necessity of acting as "gatekeepers" for the relationship between their children and their children's non-residential fathers. Furthermore, single mothers share how their beliefs in gender roles, i.e., women being the better caregiver; exaggerate their fears of "paternal incompetence," therefore elevating their anxiety while their

children are alone with their fathers (Nixon & Hadfield, 2018). Consequently, due to fears of their children's fathers' ability to properly care for their children, many single mothers confess to limiting their children's alone time with their fathers. As their children become aware of their mothers' hesitation to facilitate alone time with their fathers, many of them grow resentful towards their mothers. This ultimately has negative impacts on children's relationships with their mothers. Even more specific to this current study, Black single mothers report their family system has a direct impact on their relationships with their daughters (Mendenhall et al, 2013).

Same-sex parents

Same-sex marriages have only recently, since 2015, been made legal in all 50 U.S. States (Wootton et al, 2019). Although now legalized, lesbian couples report frequent feelings of covert and/or overt forms of discrimination especially when raising children. Moreso than gay men raising children, lesbian mothers shared receiving higher concerns about their children's well-being due to not having a parent of the opposite sex in the household (Battista et al, 2021). Lesbian mothers often relay that when they informed their mothers that they were homosexual, their mothers' first responses were worries that they would not become grandmothers in the heteronormative fashion. Furthermore, lesbian mothers share that the initial concerns related to their parenting skills came from their own mothers (Kazyak et al, 2022). Research shows that many lesbian mothers experience facing questions from their loved ones about childcare, child protection, and financial responsibilities throughout their child's life (Battista et al, 2021; Engstrom et al, 2019; Kazyak et al, 2022; Wootton et al, 2019).

Many lesbian mothers expressed that although doubts about their parenting skills originated with their mothers, concerns about their ability to parent are constant worries from various people in their lives. Studies (Battista et al, 2021; Kazyak et al, 2022; Wootton et al,

2019) show that one of the main concerns that lesbian mothers heard, especially mothers of daughters, was that they would influence their children's sexuality. Furthermore, researchers indicate that lesbian couples combat this general concern shared by outsiders by prioritizing critical thinking and self-expression in their parenting approaches (Engstrom et al, 2019; Wootton et al, 2019). Although this synopsis of the available literature pertaining to the impacts of lesbian mothers on mother-daughter relationships is not all-encompassing, the review of the literature for this current study does not indicate a negative correlation between same-sex parenting, specifically lesbian-led households, and mother-daughter relationships.

Teen mothers

For this current literature review, the characterization of teen mothers will include women who gave birth between the ages of 13 and 19. Studies (Hodgkinson et al, 2014; Wall-Wieler et al, 2019) show that teen or adolescent mothers are subjected to additional adversities in motherhood and parenting including the high probability of becoming and/or staying impoverished, finding a balance between attending school and childcare, and an increase in the likelihood of developing mental health disorders. For medical professionals that work with teens, the prioritized adversity that gets focused on is the increase in mental health diagnoses due to a combination of external and internal factors. "One study found that on average, teenage mothers had experienced [at least] 5 traumatic events, including physical attacks by a partner, neglect, abuse by a parent, incarceration, and traumatic loss" (Hodgkinson et al, 2014, p. 115). Additionally, teen mothers report struggling to balance their personal development milestones with their increasing responsibilities. Studies (Hodgkinson et al, 2014; Updegraff et al, 2018; Wall-Wieler et al, 2019) show that the struggle for this balance becomes influential in the relationship between the teen mother and her mother. Apparently, this is largely due to the teen

longing for her mother to "treat her like an adult" following giving birth while still looking for her mother's support in her own development toward independence. Analogously, studies (Aparicio et al, 2015; Barcelos & Gubrium, 2014) show that if a teen mother does not have an active relationship with her own mother, she may see her pregnancy as a way to obtain the love she longed for from her mother. These mothers find a sense of renewed purpose, responsibility, and motivation in their new role of "mother". America leads in the prevalence of teenage motherhood, a number that has grown, in part, due to the glorification of adolescent pregnancies by reality shows such as MTV's 16 and Pregnant (Kearney & Levine, 2015). In contrast to some of the images in social media that glamorize teen pregnancy, adolescent mothers share the reality that they face more harsh criticisms and negative stereotypes. Furthermore, the harshness occurs almost immediately after they have informed others of their pregnancy (Barcelos & Gubrium, 2014).

Advanced maternal-age mothers

Medically speaking, a woman is considered to be an advanced maternal-age mother if she is aged 35 or older when she conceives and gives birth to a child (Barclay & Myrskyla, 2016; Heffner, 2004). In comparison to the previously discussed roles of mothers, afflictions for both the advanced maternal-age mother and her child/ren begin at conception. Myrskyla and Fenelon (2016) report that when mothers give birth at an advanced maternal age their children "have worse outcomes with respect to mortality, self-rated health, height, obesity, and the number of diagnosed conditions than those born to mothers aged 25–34" (p. 1231). Advanced maternal-age mothers also have an elevated risk of their own mortality and general health concerns that are exaggerated by the pregnancy process. Many advanced maternal-age mothers expressed

experiencing negative external responses to their pregnancies that amplified their internal concerns (Morgan et al, 2012; Sauer, 2015).

Most of the participants utilized in the available research reviewed for this chapter were white, heterosexual, and middle-class. This observation may be representative of a correlation between social identities and access to birth control, however, this current literature review is not representative of a comprehensive analysis of the available literature pertaining to the potential interconnection. Comparatively, Black advanced maternal-age mothers share that they made the conscious decision to wait until other aspects of their lives were stabilized, such as finances and reaching their personal education/career goals. More so, many Black advanced maternal-age mothers shared that their decision to wait was also heavily influenced by recollections of witnessing the obstacles that their own mothers faced while raising them (Morgan et al, 2012; Sauer, 2015).

Western Parenting Styles

In 1966, clinical psychologist Diana Baumrind developed a three-prototype system to characterize Western parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966). Although Baumrind developed the three-prototype for Western parenting styles with all parents in mind, for this current study the discussion will focus solely on the role of the mother in the family. Baumrind believed that by creating a system to study the differences in parenting styles she could better understand the long-term inquiry of nature vs. nurture as it relates to a child's development (Faught et al, 2022; Riany et al, 2022; Rodriguez et al, 2009; Yaffe, 2023). Originally, Baumrind's system included three categories: authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian, and it provided two scales to measure the qualities attributed to each parenting style.

> Each style is determined relative to two scales— "responsiveness" and "demandingness"—where "responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents foster individuality and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's requests; it includes warmth, autonomy support, and reasoned communication." Conversely, "demandingness refers to the claims parents make on children to become integrated into society by behavior regulation, direct confrontation, and maturity demands (behavioral control) and supervision of children's activities (monitoring) (Payne, 2013, p. 3).

Authoritarian

Oppositional to the authoritative approach, the authoritarian parenting style functions as a dictatorship. A parent who adopts this parenting style will demand total control without offering explanations for the requests. "The authoritarian style is often labelled as "negative parenting" as it has been found to have implications on negative child outcomes, including emotional and behavioural development. The authoritarian parenting style is defined as the parenting style with high levels of demandingness, [and] control and may include physical punishment as a disciplinary strategy" (Riany et al, 2022, p. 2332). With an authoritarian approach, parents become hyper-focused on encouraging blind obedience over autonomy. Baumrind equates the authoritarian parenting style to guardians cemented to the idea of maintaining "positional power" (Payne, 2013), by demanding that their children learn to comply without questioning, furthermore, Baumrind stated that authoritarian parents typically receive their children's inquiries as disrespectful.

Studies (Payne, 2013; Rodriguez et al, 2009; Yaffe, 2023) show that children raised under the authoritarian parenting style struggle to make meaningful and deep connections with

their peers. Children raised by an authoritarian parent also showcased to have less self-esteem, higher rates of depression, and a lack of social competence. Current research shows that the sole, consistently positive, influence of the authoritarian parenting style is an increase in academic success compared to their counterparts (Payne, 2013). When a child is developed with the unwavering expectations of an authoritarian parent, they tend to feel pressured to always perform at their highest to avoid consequences and/or punishment for not accomplishing a goal to their parent's standard. Although this parenting style is regarded as mostly negative, it remains a standard in minority parenting as will be examined in greater detail later in this chapter (Rodriguez et al, 2009; Yaffe, 2023).

Permissive

The permissive parenting style is described as an approach that is low in demandingness and high in support. This style is also referred to as the indulgent parenting style (Yaffe, 2023), an approach where parents prioritize their children's approval over providing them with directives. "Permissive parents exhibit high warmth and low control. They are often extremely responsive to their children's needs. These parents may desire to be democratic in their parenting but lack the demandingness necessary to follow through in disciplinary tactics" (Faught et al, 2022). Permissive parents frequently provide no expectations, boundaries, and/or rules for their children. The permissive parenting style is described as having levels of autonomy and responsiveness (Rodriguez et al, 2009).

Research shows that the lack of rules and boundaries in permissive parenting influences children to be combative with authority (Riany et al, 2022; Rodriguez et al, 2009; Uji et al, 2014). Furthermore, children raised by permissive parents typically struggle with self-regulation and stabilized happiness as adults. In comparison to the authoritarian parenting style that is

mostly seen in minority families, the permissive parenting style is more of a rarity amongst minority families (Riany et al, 2022). Minority families tend to raise their children to be overly cautious when engaging with authority figures (Uji et al, 2014).

Authoritative

Within Western civilizations, studies (Faught et al, 2022; Payne, 2013; Riany et al, 2022) show that the authoritative approach is the most advantageous parenting style for raising children that develop highly positively regarded characteristics like compassion and self-confidence. "An authoritative parenting style is characterized as warm, supportive, and responsive parenting and has been much used among Western cultures…authoritative parenting styles are associated with better child outcomes in a range of areas (e.g., emotion, mental health, cognitive, and social development)" (Riany et al, 2022, p. 2332). Parents that raise their children with the authoritative parenting style desire for their children to have a balance of imaginative autonomy and disciplined conformity. Although this style has expectations of rule-following and obedience, it also accounts for mutual respect and explanations of the implementation of rules. The authoritative parenting style has been noted as the "best of both worlds" with equal parts authoritarian and permissive.

> Authoritative parents temper high expectations and demands with sensitivity and open communication. By being responsive as well as demanding, authoritative parents avoid the harmful effects of coercive kinds of behavioral control…In common with permissive parents, authoritative parents allow their children considerable leeway to make their own decisions and to speak freely. However, unlike permissive parents and in common with authoritarian parents, authoritative parents are ready to back up their directives with sanctions (Payne, 2013, p. 20-21).

Studies (Faught et al, 2022; Payne, 2013) show that children raised by a parent with an authoritative parenting style typically become adults that are happier, more successful, more confident, and overall, more capable than their counterparts. Parents that lead with an authoritative parenting style tend to prioritize communication and provide insight when asking their children to accomplish tasks.

Neglectful

Beginning with the foundation of Baumrind's typologies pertaining to parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive), psychologists Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin considered the necessity to add an additional parenting style. In 1983, Maccoby and Martin expanded on Baumrind's parenting styles ultimately adding neglectful as a fourth parenting style (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parents that adhere to a neglectful parenting style are overall disengaged and seemingly uninterested in anything pertaining to their children. The neglectful parenting style is categorized as being low in both responsiveness and demandingness resulting in children having lower self-esteem, competence, self-control, etc. compared to children raised by parents using one of the other parenting styles (Rodriguez et al, 2009). The combination of Baumrind's and Maccoby/Martin's topologies continues to be the system used to characterize Western parenting styles.

Gender of Offspring

Studies (Ahmed, 2012; Mandara et al, 2012; Morman & Whitely, 2012; Nickert, 2022; Spencer, 2020) show that mothers typically differ in their approaches to raising daughters versus raising sons. During childhood, mothers tend to develop deeper emotional bonds with their sons but as their children grow older, the dynamic shifts. From young adulthood and beyond, mothers report the desire to develop relationships with their daughters that mirror best friends. During the

same time, daughters become more critical of their mother's thoughts, behaviors, and actions as daughters begin to look to who their mothers are as foresight into whom they will become (Butler & Shalit-Naggar, 2008; Uji et al, 2014). In comparison, to daughters' typical responses to their mothers' behaviors, sons tend to develop their preferences for a romantic partner and frequently craft their preferences around their mothers' characteristics. The current study revolved around the Black mothering of daughters, however, to provide additional insights into the uniqueness of the phenomenon it is imperative to discuss how other identities and parent-child dyads differ.

Mother-Son Relationships

For the sake of displaying the correlation between the mother-son relationship and the son's approach to romantic partners, the term romantic partner/spouse will refer to heterosexual romantic partnerships for the duration of this section. Furthermore, for this literature review, it is assumed that the sons are also fathers to their own children. The relationship between a mother and son is of absolute importance to the foundation of how the son will approach romantic relationships and ultimately shape how his spouse feels and therefore parents their children.

Available research (Ahmed, 2012; Nickert, 2022; Spencer, 2020) shows that in many homes, especially those led by a single mother, the mother may view her son as a "spousal substitute" and look to him for emotional support. The lasting impact of an overbearing mother-son relationship is that the son will often feel obligated to prioritize his mother's needs over everyone else's, even his spouse. This phenomenon creates a cycle in spouses who, in response to their partner's prioritized allegiance to his mother, long for emotional support within their romantic relationship and may look to their son as a "spousal substitute" (Nickert, 2022). From a clinical mental health standpoint, this phenomenon is referred to as the Oedipus Complex.

Developed by psychologist Sigmund Freud, the Oedipus Complex states that boys aged 3-6 will have unintended and uncontrollable romantic feelings toward their mothers. The son will then grow to resent his father for his ability to cultivate the type of intimate relationship that he (the son) desires with his mother, therefore creating distance in his relationship with his father and strengthening his bond with his mother (Ahmed, 2012; Spencer, 2020). Furthermore, the mother-son relationship tends to create the standard and expectations that the son has for his spouse, looking to his spouse for the same level of sacrificial care.

While the current research regarding mother-son relationships supports the claim that mothers typically prioritize establishing an emotional bond with their sons over one with their daughters, the mother-son dyad has historically been and continues to be the least studied potential parent-child relationship (Morman & Whitely, 2012). Moreover, in this study, it is also paramount to note that most of the available research examining mother-son relationships involves white families. "European American samples show that parents differentially socialize their sons and daughters, whereas the research is still relatively new among African American families" (Mandara et al, 2012, p. 135). Black mothers reported having more academic as well as domestic expectations for their daughters. In the latter case mothers expect daughters (rather than sons) to complete housework, they emphasize independence in their daughters and are ultimately more protective of their sons (Mandara et al, 2012). In the next section, I discuss how generalized mother-daughter relationships differ from mother-son relationships.

Mother-Daughter Relationships

In terms of dyad relationships within the family system, there is an abundant amount of research that provides evidence that mother-daughter relationships are the most important dyad within the family system (Bojczyk, et. al., 2011; Boyd, 1989; Charles, et. al, 2001; Flax, 1978;

Justice-Malloy, 2016; Penington, 2004; Sholomskas & Axelrod, 1986; Updegraff et. al, 2018). "The mother-to-daughter relationship is one of the most fragile relationships that exists; one wrong move could turn into an endless cycle of domestic war and blood" (Macron, 2018). The fragility of the mother-daughter relationship is further evidence of the importance of the relationship. Due to this importance, the saintly, almost dehumanizing pedestal that mothers are placed on is held in high regard but also critiqued the most harshly by society when difficulties arise. Researchers like the award-winning professor, playwright, director, and producer Dr. Rhona Justice-Malloy, have provided evidence of such in their visual depictions of mother-child relationships. Justice-Malloy (2016) provided insight into this phenomenon when she wrote, "with regard to mother-daughter relationships, mothers are categorized in the following niches: absent, critical, drama queen, helpless, intrusive, and jealous" (p. 219).

Throughout history, the role of motherhood has been examined from a unilateral viewpoint, one that demands mothers have unconditional regard for others, ultimately becoming sacrificial of their personal dreams and feelings. Howard University Political Science professor, licensed psychotherapist, and co-founder of a women's-based counseling service in New Haven, Dr. Jane Flax believed that this image of what a mother is "supposed" to be is instilled in women in their youth and can travel transgenerationally, causing it to sometimes be triggered unconsciously.

> Some mothers consciously encourage their daughters to succeed. However, even they are likely to convey another covert message: to be a woman means to make compromises, to fail, to give up one's dreams, to settle for less than one wishes. Women who refuse to do this call into question the meaning of their mothers' lives and risk the hostility that arises from the mother's own anger at her situation (Flax, 1978, p. 181).

Unresolved emotions in their relationship with their own mothers often become the foundation that women build their parenting style upon, especially when raising daughters. This cycle then creates a series of continuing transgenerational actions and reactions (Bojczyk, et. al, 2011). In her book, "Oh, No! I've Become my Mother," author Sandra Reishus referred to this phenomenon as acquiring the "mom gene". Reishus (2005) believed that the "mom gene" comparably to the impacts of transgenerational trauma, accounted for how women develop unhealthy coping skills to manage stressful situations and traumatizing experiences. This suggests that the "mom gene" must be removed for her daughter to reach her full potential. Removing the "mom gene" can often prove to be almost impossible.

Award-winning, international nursing professor and well-versed researcher Dr. Carol J. Boyd employed her experiences with various cultures to examine how mother-daughter relationships differ among cultures. Boyd (1989) argued that, within most of the cultures that she witnessed, it seems inevitable for a daughter to mirror her mother's parenting style due to women unconsciously internalizing their mother's characteristics and reactions to life experiences. While mothers are the primary caretakers for all of their children (boys and girls), their sons will eventually begin to develop their identities based on father figures, but their daughters will continue to develop their identities based on the mother. As daughters witness how their mothers maintain the role of the primary caretaker for the household, they develop a sense that they have an obligation to do the same (Boyd, 1989). Although all mothers are subjected to the impossible expectation of perfection, research (Boyd, 1989; Esposito, 2014; Flax, 1978) shows that the way that women approach motherhood varies based on the mother's social identities like race, social economic class, family system, etc. To further align with the topic of this current study into how experiencing transgenerational trauma impacts the way Black Millennial-aged mothers raise their

daughters, I will emphasize some of the nuances specific to the Black mother-daughter relationship.

Minority Mothering of Daughters

Mother-daughter relationships have been studied, analyzed, and critiqued in both academic and popular literature by various authors who expose the complexities of various dynamics that influence these relationships (Collins, 2000; Esposito, 2014; Tan, 1989). Since most of the currently available research pertaining to mother-daughter relationships is developed from samples of white mothers, it is critical to begin isolating the literature that aligns with this research study with specifications to examine commonalities in minority mothering. For example, writer Amy Tan described Chinese mother-daughter relationships in the book (and later movie) "Joy Luck Club." Reflecting upon her relationship with her mother, Tan spoke of her mother's reason for starting the Joy Luck Club during the Japanese invasion of Kweilin while in China. The Joy Luck Club described a group of four Chinese women who met together to fellowship by playing Mahjong and eating, which inspired the name because of the joy of winning coupled with the luck that it takes to do such. Furthermore, Tan provides narratives to offer evidence that the existence of transgenerational trauma, (which is later examined in this study within Black families), is common among Chinese American families. Tan stated that her mother would often tell her the story of why she developed the Joy Luck Club, however, Tan also acknowledged that the story shifted: "over the years, she told me the same story, except for the ending, which grew darker, casting long shadows into her life, and eventually into mine" (Tan, 1989, p. 5). The story that Tan's mother shared was always one of needing like-minded women to connect and laugh with, however, as time passed, Tan's mother started to share more of the traumatizing images from the war that the Joy Luck Club was used as a distraction. Tan's

mother described memories of seeing stray dogs carry body parts after bombing attempts to rid the areas of all things living, or how normal it became to expect appendages to hang from phone lines as warnings of pending deadly attacks from Japan.

Tan continued to share that her experience as a first-generation American of a Chinese immigrant mother made her experience unique to anyone in her house as she stood planted amidst two worlds: the burdens of her mother's survival necessities and a world she creates for herself. Tan understood that to make choices that did not align with her mother's opinions would be seen as disheartening and dishonorable within her culture, ultimately negatively impacting her relationship with her mother; however, Tan also believed that her mother's sacrifices were for her to ultimately have the freedom to make her own choices for her life. Like other minority mother-daughter relationships, Tan's mother focused their relationship on preparing her daughter to survive the bombings be they literal or figurative.

The Joy Luck Club represents commonality in minority mothers' approaches to raising daughters which is the existence of "othermothers". Othermothers, a term developed by Black women during slavery, describes Black women who provide the same level of care and accept responsibility of care for a child that is not hers (Collins, 2000; Collins, 2022). Professor Jennifer Esposito shared that Latinx mothers have a similar tradition. "While the concept of othermothering often denotes mothering provided by African American women, Latina mothers often use what Delgado Bernal refers to as a "pedagogies of the home." Because Latino/a children in this country are part of a historically oppressed group, as mothers we must transmit lessons to them about resilience and empowerment" (Esposito, 2014). Professor, author, and Chicana feminist Bernal defined the "pedagogies of the home" as a set of strategies taught to young Mexican girls that provided a "blueprint" for how to conduct themselves outside of their

homes. Bernal continued stating that Mexican girls' view of womanhood and ultimately motherhood was shaped by their elders' collective experiences with oppression as well as narratives of building survival tactics such as resistance and silence (Bernal, 2001). Bernal described experiences and teachings of Mexican girls that mimic some of the same prioritization by Black mothers. Although some of the approaches of Mexican mothers of daughters align with those of Black mothers of daughters, the experience of living as a Black woman in America is incomparable to other ethnoracial group experiences. I turn now to a discussion of Black mother-daughter relationships which is the central focus of this study.

Black Mother-Daughter Relationships

To better understand Black mother-daughter relationships, it is important to understand the unique nuances and obstacles of Black motherhood. Historically, Black motherhood in America has been muddled and demeaned to justify its morphing from a miracle to a mere commodity coupled with expectations for Black women to freely succumb and even find joy in their sacrifice. Compared to white mothers, the additional element of membership in a despised race transformed Black mothers from creators of life to warehouse workers with the sole purpose of creating servile yet disposable Black whatchamacallits because to acknowledge Black bodies as humans would then demand acknowledgment of the inhumane treatment towards them (Narcisse, 2013; Roberts, 2007). Black Feminist and author Alice Walker suggested that the separation of Black women and motherhood stems from the antiquated beliefs developed during slavery to justify viewing the Black womb solely as an apparatus. This viewpoint even prompted white feminists to align with overtly masochistic views to better protect themselves and their children. Walker further expanded her explanation, stating that:

It occurred to me that perhaps white women feminists, no less than white women

> generally, cannot imagine Black women have vaginas. Or if they can, where imagination leads them is too far to go… She fears knowing that Black women want the best for their children just as she does. But she also knows Black children are to have less in this world so that her children, white children, will have more. Better then to deny that the Black woman has a vagina. Is capable of motherhood. Is a woman. (Walker, 2011, pp. 408).

Throughout American society, Black motherhood has been cemented in expectations of impossible demands. As represented in the common African American Vernacular English (AAVE) phrase, "damned if you do, damned if you don't," Black mothers are often left feeling as though their actions, regardless of their intentions, will never meet the expectations placed upon them by outsiders, who are intruders in the lives and the true experiences of Black mothers. The impossible demands and expectations placed on Black mothers can be traced to slavery and have been preserved in the white imaginary through the caricature "Mammy" that was developed during the same time frame. Law professor, sociologist, and social justice advocate Dorothy Roberts (2018) provided evidence of this correlation in her book Killing the Black Body when she stated:

> The image of Mammy was based on the Black female house servant who cared for her master's children. Pictured as round and handkerchiefed, Mammy was both the perfect mother and the perfect slave: whites saw her as a "passive nurturer, a mother figure who gave all without expectation of return, who not only acknowledged her inferiority to whites but who loved them… The ideology of Mammy placed no value on Black women as the mothers of their own children. Rather, whites claimed Mammy's total devotion to the master's children… While whites adored Mammy, who dutifully nurtured white children, they portrayed Black slave mothers as careless and unable to care for their own

children (p. 490).

Roberts noted that the devotion to demonizing Black motherhood to the point of dehumanization is a necessary evil for society to justify the overall mistreatment of all Black people. Time has not offered much assistance regarding improving the image of Black motherhood as Black mothers continue to be blamed for being "bearers of 'incurable immorality," a phrase used by men such as former president Thomas Jefferson. Although Thomas Jefferson was a man that "the people" voted into office his viewpoints of Black women come as no surprise given his long-term treatment of Black women such as Sally Heming a fourteen-year-old girl whom Jefferson enslaved (along with scores of other Black people), and whom he raped and fathered six of her children (Gordon-Reed, 1998). The mass mistreatment of Black women in society continues to be an influential factor in how Black mothers raise their daughters. Socialization and indoctrination to the hazards engrained in society must be prioritized in Black mother-daughter relationships. This phenomenon shapes the way that Black daughters understand and accept their mothers. Black "mothers have ensured their daughters' physical survival at the high cost of their emotional destruction" (Collins, 2007 p. 283) because they themselves have already experienced their share of traumatizing gendered racism while also carrying the transgenerational patterns within their families.

Although external injustices and negative biases have worked to poison the roots of Black womanhood and therefore create long-term difficulties in Black mother-daughter relationships, this dyad continuously showcases an ability to produce positive qualities. Historian Elsa Barkley Brown described her relationship with her Black mother "as the need to socialize me one way and at the same time to give me all the tools I needed to be something else" (Collins,

2007, p. 283). Regardless of the nature of their relationship, Black daughters typically devote time to understanding their mothers in attempts to develop compassion for them. As Black daughters age and become more aware of the extraneously malicious treatment that lies waiting for them outside the comforts of their homes, they rationalize that their mothers are doing the best they can, with what they can. Black daughters often equate love with their mothers' willingness to try to the best of their abilities (Collins, 2007; Narcisse, 2012). Studies (Collins, 2007; Narcisse, 2012; Roberts, 2007) with an emphasis on the narratives of Black daughters indicate that they have fond memories of their mothers teaching them to prioritize critical thinking and teaching the Christian faith. They also value mothers and provide a group of maternal figures for them to look up to and turn to for assistance.

Prioritization of Critical Thinking

Black mothers' prioritization of critical thinking has been sourced in physical survival and the development of skills for daughters to best protect themselves, coupled with the assumption that others will not work to provide protection for them. Studies (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Everet et al, 2016; Narcisse, 2012) show that there is a correlation between Black "mothers' education and their adolescent daughters' ideas about any possible limitations to the things that they can accomplish. As it pertains to the relationship between Black mothers and daughters, Everet, et. al (2016) stated that "given the increasing numbers of Black single-family households, it is imperative that we learn more about how Black mothers shape the sense of self in their daughters" (p. 347). Additionally, studies (Hefny, 2017; Narcisse, 2012) show that Black "mothers' exposure to college increased their daughters' expectations for becoming college-educated, employed, responsible, and independent… [furthermore] many mothers said they did not want their daughters to be financially dependent upon a man" (Narcisse, 2012, p. 159). Many

Black women also source their motivation to the "tough love" received by their mothers. For many Black women, "tough love or firm treatment [is] intended to teach them self-discipline, responsibility, and accountability" (Narcisse, 2012, p. 166). Black mothers often share in an obligatory hastiness to prepare their daughters for the maltreatment that awaits them and rely on "tough love" as a tool to teach their daughters how to protect themselves (Collins, 2007; Hefny, 2017). In addition to teaching critical ways to think in potentially physically harmful scenarios, Black mothers are also noted as the most important source of how Black daughters grew to think of their self-image.

Similar to other minority mother-daughter dynamics, many Black daughters report feeling duty-bound to live up to their mothers' expectations (Collins, 2000; Hefny, 2017; Tan, 1989). Minority mothers tend to view their struggles as necessary sacrifices so that their daughters will be afforded more opportunities to meet their expectations. Historically, a common expectation that Black mothers have for their daughters is for their daughters to be the best in everything that they do because the only rebuttal to the negative stereotypes about Black women was for them to be the absolute best. Critical thinking is prioritized in Black mother-daughter relationships due to the swiftness that Black girls are subjected to adultification, which begins as early as age 5 (Blake & Epstein, 2019). In addition to using critical thinking to better represent themselves, Black daughters were also taught that they would be expected to represent the entire Black race with their actions, therefore making it justifiable to blame Black mothers for the actions of all Black people. While an English professor at Princeton University, Wahneema Lubiano shed light on this impossible expectation, stating that Black mothers are the "agents of destruction, the creator of the pathological, black, urban, poor family from which all ills flow; a monster creating crack dealers, addicts, muggers, and rapists—men who become those things

because of being immersed in her culture of poverty" (Roberts, 2007, p. 494). In attempts to be combative and protect themselves against negative external depictions and opinions, Black mothers often find hopefulness in their Christian faith beliefs and the Black women-led support systems, also known as othermothers.

Faith-driven

In addition to being painfully stripped of their own belief systems, Black families were told that their practices were demonic, and they were forced to align their spiritual beliefs with the Western interpretation of Christianity. It is important to note that the practices of Western Christianity reinforced a racial hierarchal system and were therefore used to justify the mistreatment of Black people. The treatment received from white Christians was completely opposite the pillars that Black people retained from Christianity, the main one being the act of acceptance. "While the drive of much Black Christianity has focused historically upon recognizing the equality of all-people kind, this insistence was often historically met with hostility from the vast majority in white American culture" (Frederick, 2003, p. 153). Studies (Frederick, 2003; Narcisse, 2012; Williams, 2006) further show that Black people, particularly Black mothers, gravitated toward Christianity in hopes that the beliefs embedded within the religion would prompt better treatment from others while providing a space, the church, for like-minded people to commune outside of the confines of an openly oppressive society. This proved false for many Black mothers as they became aware that although self-identified as Christians, white people generally made no effort of racial inclusiveness within the church. Although their acceptance was not granted as initially presented, Black mothers found ways to integrate Christian beliefs into their family dynamics to provide answers for their difficulties.

Furthermore, these studies (Frederick, 2003; Narcisse, 2012; Williams, 2006) show that

many Black daughters relay being raised by a mother that held Christian beliefs and leaned into their beliefs during times of distress and/or to find hope in bleak situations. Daughters share that their mothers credited "inner strength" to a strong religious faith. While Black mothers are held most responsible for socially developing their daughters, Christian beliefs were "used to foster the development of whole human beings" (Williams, 2006, p. 1), and Black mothers offered the belief system to their daughters as protection from the world in their absence. Black daughters frequently report that the only way that they can combat their unique intersection of oppressive identities was "by the good Lord, and a lot of praying… the only way to cope was to continue to read [the Bible] and listen to Him [God] and sometimes you have to leave certain things along and certain people. You have to just follow Him and trust Him, continue to read, study" (Spates, et al, 2019, p. 520).

Alignment with Christianity thus became a transgenerational pattern within Black mother-daughter relationships, regardless of its likelihood of being used to solicit and condone the debasement of Black mothers and the entire Black community. More so, Christianity has cast long-term impacts on the Black mother-daughter relationship such as the perpetuation of silent acceptance as a way to indulge in blind faith. This current study does not offer an exhaustive review of the literature about the correlation between Christianity and Black mother-daughter relationships. Moreover, it would be invalidating to the Black belief system to not mention that the negative correlations between religiosity and white racism do not necessarily lie in the Christian beliefs, but rather in how Western civilizations have presented and applied the beliefs to a social-political hierarchy established on the debasement of Black people (Frederick, 2003; Millett et al, 2018; Narcisse, 2012; Williams, 2006).

Othermothers

Othermothers is a term used to describe an action of community mothering within the Black community. Common in Black communities, "the boundaries distinguishing biological mothers of children from other women who care for children are often fluid and changing… African American communities have recognized that vesting one person with full responsibility for mothering a child may not be wise or possible" (Collins, 2007, p. 277-278). Othermothering has been a practice in the Black community pre-dating slavery. Following the enslavement of Black people in America, othermothering assumed particular importance and a prominent role in Black communities because of the high possibility of children being forcefully separated from their biological mothers. This barbaric practice was employed liberally in response to the influence that Black mothers yield within the community. Black women were often granted power only in their position as a mother (Collins, 2007; Narcisse, 2012; Roberts, 2007). Although Black women have a long history of being the primary caretaker in the home, the villainous act of separating biological mothers from their children was a way to devalue all Black motherhood because not raising one's own children was a complete reversal of the image of "true womanhood" exuded by white women.

> While slavery both disrupted West African family patterns and exposed enslaved Africans to gender ideologies and practices of slaveowners, it simultaneously made it impossible, had they wanted to do so, for enslaved Africans to implement slaveowner's ideologies. Thus, the separate spheres of providing as a male domain and affective nurturing as a female domain did not develop within African American families (Collins, 2007, p. 279).

While the destruction of the Black family system shifted the dynamics of the Black family in its entirety, the dyad that was impacted the most was that of mother-daughter. Without the ability to receive financial support in the traditional family system way where the male provides the income, Black mothers were forced to work outside of the home, which consequentially left little time to devote to the emotional development of their daughters. Along with the almost impossible responsibility of keeping them safe, biological mothers also struggled to care for their children, who in too many cases, had been conceived by rape. Facing extreme poverty, many times the Black mothers were still children themselves. The struggles of being a biological mother were offset by the existence of othermothers. "Institutions of community-based childcare, informal adoption, greater reliance on othermothers, all emerge as adaptations to the exigencies of combining exploitative work with nurturing children" (Collins, 2007, p. 279).

The specifications of this current study lie in transgenerational trauma within Black mother-daughter relationships; however, the existence of transgenerational trauma does not invalidate the strength of those relationships. Rather, they are a declaration of that strength. Still, it is safe to say that generally, Black mother-daughter relationships have elements of transgenerational trauma. And that trauma is present no matter the dyads' acknowledgment of it or its impact.

Transgenerational Trauma Within Black Mother-Daughter Relationships

The phrase "transgenerational trauma" may lead one to believe that the traumatization begins and ends within the confines of the household, however, due to gendered racism this is impossible for Black women. Some researchers describe transgenerational trauma in Black women as "the legacy of trauma within, (Barlow, 2018) and a "cumulative impact of racism" (Birdsong, 2015). Due to the gendered racism that systematically fuels America, Black women

are consequently birthed into a position of questioning when and not if they will be mistreated. "Black women are called, in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, "the mule of the world," because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else—everyone else refused to carry." (Walker, 2007, p. 91). While the available peer-reviewed research depicting the direct experiences of Black women is growing, in terms of quantity, there remains a gap in comparison to other social identities. Many researchers (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Birdsong, 2018; Diouf, 1999) believe that the gap is due to the history of Black women's direct experiences being deemed invalid based on how they have been shared. For centuries in America, Black people were forbidden to learn how to read and write, leaving storytelling as the sole source of sharing their history (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Birdsong, 2018; Diouf, 1999). Although this forbiddance has since been lifted, the devaluation of Black culture and traditions continues, and any attack on Black womanhood undoubtedly attacks Black mother-daughter relationships.

The existence of transgenerational trauma within Black mother-daughter relationships is influenced by societal depictions of Black womanhood that are eventually internalized. Even prior to the births of their Black daughters, Black mothers prepare to properly protect their daughters in ways that others can't (Walker, 2007). This obligation is perpetuated by both the external and internal factors that impact the existence of transgenerational trauma in Black mother-daughter relationships. Ultimately it prompts Black mothers to teach their daughters coping skills to thrive in a society slow to acknowledge them as humans instead of as animalistic tools. In terms of its impact on Black mother-daughter relationships, poet and novelist Destiny Birdsong referred to the phenomenon as "matrilineal cultural trauma" which she defined as

> trauma that creates a symbolic birthmark on [a Black woman] while she is still in her mother's womb, and then continues to inscribe itself on her life in moments of usurped

> corporeality that are imposed on her by external forces, but also –both directly and indirectly –by her own mother (Birdsong, 2018, p. 98).

Birdsong shared that her definition was heavily influenced by poet Natasha Trethewey. Trethewey is an award-winning author earning the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for poetry and a former U.S. Poet Laureate. Birdsong drew inspiration from an interview that Trethewey completed in 1996 with Jill Petty. During the interview Trethewey shed light into her journey writing Native Guard, a poem depicting Trethewey's relationship with her mother, stating that:

> I'm remembering [some] memories aren't mine immediately but ones that are given to me, and I think these become part of who you are, too. I really can't distance myself from my mother's life growing up in the 1950s and 1960s or my grandmother's life growing up in the 1920s and 1930s. They feel like part of my life (Trethewey, 1996 quoted in Birdsong, p. 98).

External Factors

Research (Nash, 2021; Roberts, 2007) suggests that children shape their worldviews as impacted by external influences and experiences that translate to how they internally view themselves. As pertaining to Black mother-daughter relationships, the most influential external factor in their relationship is gendered racism, discrimination faced acutely by Black women. Author and professor Jennifer Nash (2021) referred to this discrimination as "medical racism" specifically crafted with the belief that disrupting Black motherhood would cause long-lasting negative impacts on the entire Black community. Author and Black Feminist Dorothy Roberts provided further evidence by stating that:

> America has always viewed unregulated Black reproduction as dangerous. For three centuries, Black mothers have been thought to pass down to their offspring the traits that

> marked them as inferior to any white person. Along with this biological impairment, it is believed that Black mothers transfer a deviant lifestyle to their children that dooms each succeeding generation to a life of poverty, delinquency, and despair (Roberts, 2007, p. 486).

Research (Nash, 2021; Owens & Fett, 2019; Roberts, 2007; Witherspoon et al, 2022) shows that transgenerational trauma is transferred through lived experiences and internalized, thus one may conclude that Black daughters are subjected to the same physical and psychological reactions that their mothers face. They face them, at times, beginning at the prenatal stage. For Black women, medical racism frequently magnifies internalized racism by exposing Black women to the microaggressions and racial bias of medical providers. Additionally, research shows that discrimination from medical providers is heightened by other intersecting experiences that many Black women experience, such as poverty, lack of insurance, history of substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health diagnoses. As a result of medical racism, the internalization of this scourge manifests in expectant Black mothers experiencing poor patient communication and elevated psychological and physical stress. This, in turn, heightens the Black maternal mortality rate where Black women are currently 4 times more likely to experience pregnancy-related deaths than their white counterparts (Hardeman et al, 2021). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted case studies related to maternal mortality to further expose the existence of medical racism. The data show that 60% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable and "through a failure to mandate anti-racism training for perinatal care providers. Institutional racism also perpetuates lack of accountability of health care systems and their providers to deliver care, free from discrimination and bias" (Hardeman et al, 2021, p. 665). Medical racism itself has a long history within American culture.

Much like other systems that overtly dehumanize Black people in general, medical racism can be traced to specific targeting of Black mothers, beginning during slavery.

> Many of the field's most pioneering surgical techniques were developed on the sick bodies of enslaved women who were experimented on until they either were cured or died. A slaveholding surgeon, François Marie Prevost, pioneered cesarean section surgeries on American enslaved women's bodies through repeated experimentation. James Marion Sims, another famed 19th-century gynecologist, created the surgical technique that repaired obstetrical fistula by experimenting on a group of Alabama enslaved women (Owens & Fett, 2019, p. 1343).

In addition to mistreatment faced within the healthcare system, Black women commonly experience discrimination in other (structural, individual, and institutional) systems in America. Consequently, the impacts of facing such discrimination are seamlessly passed to their daughters. For Black daughters, the wait for their own direct experiences with gendered racism is not a long one due to the systematic oppression built into institutions like school systems and negative social stereotypes surrounding Black girls and women (Owens & Fett, 2019; Witherspoon et al, 2022).

School systems have a concrete history as being an institution utilized to assist the continued perpetuation of negative stereotypes regarding Black girls. Although Black girls make up only 16% of the female K12 student population, they lead in the number of negative school-centered experiences such as bullying, in-school disciplinary actions, and school-related arrests (Cooper et al, 2022; Marraccini et al, 2022). While it is common for school-aged children to bully, Black students report that the bulk of discrimination in school came from the adult employees of the school.

> Black adolescents are often embedded in racialized school contexts, which devalue their existence and undermine their well-being. These school experiences can adversely impact self-perceptions, identity development, psychological adjustment, and a number of academic-related outcomes. [Furthermore, although] Black youth contend with racial discrimination from various sources and levels within the school environment, adults, such as teachers, school staff, and administrators, are the most frequent perpetrators (Cooper et al, 2022, p. 171).

Although its prevalence is high within the school system, the mistreatment that Black girls are subjected to does not stop at school. The depiction of a Black woman in America has consistently derived from a collective thought that to be Black in America is to be less than other races and to be a woman in America is to be inferior to men. “Black women are uniquely situated between the crosshairs of two powerful and prevalent systems: race and gender” (Hall, 2018, p. 484). Although negative imagery of a Black woman is perpetuated within the general media in America, the traits of a Black woman are desirable in pieces such as fuller lips, wider hips, curlier hair, a tanner complexion, etc. are presented as ideal (Hill, 2021). Studies (Collins, 2007; Roberts, 2007) show that the societal raid on Black motherhood is a result of a grander acceptance of racism against the Black community. Any external maltreatment experienced by Black mothers almost monopolizes their relationship with their daughters as love becomes an act of preparing them for the same maltreatment that awaits. For Black mothers, the task of raising a daughter proves to be a delicate balance of teaching survival tactics to combat the inherited bias while encouraging their daughters to rise above the biases of others to accomplish the seemingly impossible. Research indicates that many Black mothers choose to prioritize teaching survival tactics over developing an emotional connection with their daughters, a decision that provides

safety but robs the dyad of a deepened emotional connection (Evans-Winters et al, 2018; Wun, 2018).

> For many Black mothers, the demands of providing for children while in the midst of intersecting oppressions are sometimes so demanding that they have neither the time nor the patience for affection. Hill-Collins said that Black daughters raised by mothers grappling with hostile environments have to come to terms with their feelings about the difference between the idealized versions of maternal love extant in popular culture, whether the stay-at-home mom of traditional family ideals or the "superstrong" Black mother and often troubled mothers in their lives (Hall, 2018, p. 486).

This act is often portrayed as providing "tough love," described by academic scholars as gendered racial socialization. Gendered racial socialization defines the "processes and subsequent identity development of African American girls is unique because of the interaction of racism and sexism" (Thomas & King, 2007, p. 138). While all Black children will experience racial socialization to best prepare them to survive in adult roles, Black girls must also be prepared for the additional discriminatory identity of being a woman. With the notion of transgenerational trauma in mind, Black daughters are typically saddled with the burdens of the past lives and experiences of their mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and so forth.

Although this current study was developed with a specific focus on the Black mother-daughter relationship, it is important to consider the impact that the entire family dynamic, or patterns for how family members interact with each other, may have on the development and continuation of transgenerational trauma. From a clinical mental health standpoint, it is best for an individual to heal away from the environment where the trauma occurred, however, a complete change in the environment may not always be possible. The overall family dynamics,

therefore, have a high impact on the transmission of transgenerational trauma because "if systemic changes within the family do not occur, then it is difficult for the children to sustain the emotional and behavioral benefits of individual-level treatment" (Pearrow & Cosgrove, 2009, p. 80). As it pertains to Black daughters, studies (Bryant-Davis et al, 2010; Goodman, 2013) show that their family dynamics typically encourage their silent resiliency when faced with adversities. More specifically, a common reoccurrence for Black daughters is being taught to protect everyone in their families regardless of how they are treated and frequently, at the cost of their own peace (Slatton & Richard, 2020). Furthermore, studies (Bryant-Davis et al, 2010; Goodman, 2013) show that since family social support is one of the main protective factors for Black women, the fear of losing the connection influences Black girls' willingness to conform to a life of silent suffering within the home. Although much of the mistreatment that Black daughters face will occur at the hands of external factors, the experiences are internalized and reoccur in how Black women parent their daughters. The choices in parenting approaches by Black mothers not only shape their dyadic relationship but also how the Black daughter sees herself and ultimately how she chooses to raise her daughters, creating transgenerational patterns.

Internal Factors

The internalization of the mistreatment of Black women manifests mostly as difficulties in mental health, self-esteem, and approach toward romantic partners (Anyiwo et al, 2021; Jean et al, 2022; Loyd et al, 2021; Winchester et al, 2022). This unique cycle is a direct attack on Black girls and women, academically referred to as internalized gendered racial oppression (IGRO) that leads to the gendered racial socialization of Black girls (Winchester et al, 2022). Studies (Jean et al, 2021; Loyd et al, 2021; Winchester et al, 2022) show that for Black girls, the deleterious impacts of IGRO are further exaggerated by how Black women are portrayed in the

media. “Research on Black media suggests that increased exposure to media messages about their ingroup makes an individual more likely to identify negative messages in the media and accept these messages as depictions of the self and the people they love” (Jean et al, 2021, p. 336). While many Black women are easily triggered by the negative and downtrodden portrayal of Black women in the media, at the same time such portrayals are widely presented in movies, television, and other media. Occasionally, however, some portrayals in media have offered a compelling counter-narrative.

For example, the movie *Beloved* which was set in 1856 Ohio, tells the story of an enslaved Black woman who escaped to freedom with her family. Due to the Fugitive Slave Act, the Black mother was forced back into slavery --- the most downtrodden portrayal for sure. However, instead of allowing her baby daughter to be raised in the abuse of enslavement, the Black mother chose instead to humanely free her daughter from a life of bondage. Although this act manifested into mental health issues for the Black mother, she relayed feeling at ease with her decision because she viewed it as an act of mercy. The negative depictions of Black women in media are bountiful, and because of their abundance, it is somewhat inevitable that some Black women will internalize these images. Unfortunately, in time this will contribute to negative transgenerational traumas that these women will pass on to their daughters.

Scholars report that Black daughters share that a common transgenerational pattern taught by their mothers and presented as a coping skill is the encouragement to develop their strong Black woman motif (Loyd et al, 2021). However, that motif has negative impacts on the development of their self-esteem and overall mental state.

Despite being exposed to myriad stressors, Black girls and women are socialized and expected to exhibit unyielding strength, care for others, and be self-reliant, which has

> allowed them to persist under conditions of severe psychological and physical trauma. Researchers have found that internalization of this stereotype, known as the Strong Black Woman schema, is linked to decreased support-seeking and self-care and increased mental and physical health problems (Loyd et al, 2021, p. 70-71).

The devaluation of traumas specific to Black girls coupled with external pressures, including those from their mothers, to be silent and "strong" about abuse contributes to the growing percentage (currently almost 70%) of Black girls who express having depressive symptoms that lead to suicidal ideation. Compared to their daughters, Black mothers often report mixed feelings about teaching their daughters to be silent and strong. Although they do not enjoy the expectation to always be a strong Black woman, Black mothers share little to no hope of finding a suitable alternative. This supplementally causes emotional strains on their relationship with their daughters while concurrently readying them for the heightened and noxious treatment that outsiders will subject them to (Butler & Shalit-Naggar, 2008; Evans-Winters et al, 2018; Uji et al, 2014; Wun, 2018). Ironically, while rooted in good intentions, Black daughters share that many of the coping skills offered by their mothers to combat the transgenerational trauma encourage them to expect the mistreatment while at the same time actively limiting experiences with the people that mistreat them. Furthermore, this reiterates the idea that Black girls in their authenticity will always be not enough and/or too much (Cox, 2015; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2009).

Coping Skills

Shifting

Qualitative researchers (Cox, 2015; Spates et al, 2019) have discovered that Black women often resort to "shifting" or changing certain elements of themselves in order to be more

accepted in varying settings. Black women collectively experience an inherited desire to rebel against the negative stereotypes rooted in America, yet they share finding it difficult to develop their own identities in a society that has historically demanded them to behave in certain ways. In relation to Black women's lived experiences, shifting is also referred to as "code-switching" and/or "shapeshifting."

> Shapeshifting is an act, a theory…a form of praxis that---although uniquely definitive of and defined by Black girls---reveals our collective vulnerabilities… Shapeshifting most often means shifting the terms through educational, training, and social service institutions to shape young Black women into manageable and respectable members of society whose social citizenship is always questionable and never guaranteed, even as these same institutions ostensibly encourage social belonging (Cox, 2015, p. 7).

Black women, many of whom are both daughters and mothers simultaneously, relay feeling as though they are constantly overthinking how they are perceived by outsiders---a continuous stress that develops into mental health disorders. Although at the risk of discouraging their personal development of self, Black mothers share that teaching shifting as a survival strategy was a necessary evil to better protect their daughters from outsiders with gendered racial discriminations. Therefore, shifting became the first line of defense between Black women and the ideals of a country that benefits from their conformity. "To cope with workplace discrimination, Black women often choose to focus on the aspects that they are able to control --- such as dress, speech patterns, and remaining optimistic about their circumstances --- to minimize the impact on self". (Spates et.al, 2019, p. 515).

Armoring

The term armoring refers to a form of gendered racial socialization that explains the process of African American mothers preparing their African American daughters to face future gendered racism and oppression. This was a concept first publicly shared by Edmonson Bell and Nkomo in 1998. The idea of armoring draws on Black Feminist Thought and contends that Black mothers socialize their Black daughters to be resourceful and strong to combat the oppressions that they will ultimately face in adulthood. Qualitative researchers (Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Townsend, 2008) note that armoring is aligned with how African American mothers impact their African American daughters' self-esteem. "Armor is a concept found in the psychological literature describing a self-protection strategy against racism...armoring is as much a coping mechanism against racism, as it is against sexism, and... a woman's family class origin is a strong moderating factor" (Bell & Nkomo, 1998). Furthermore,

> …armoring represents a critical element in African American girls' development. Because a mother's lived experience shapes her worldview and ultimately guides the socialization of her children, an appreciation for the multiple systems of oppression that African American girls and women face is inherent in armoring (Townsend, 2008, p. 433).

Armoring is a survival strategy, often presented as a gesture rooted in love but more often displayed as "tough love" and is most impactful to the Black mother-daughter relationship. Black daughters share that doubts about their self-esteem and self-worth frequently begin when they become consciously aware of some of their mothers' harshness. Moreover, the lack of communication, resulting from the commonly used minority mothering authoritative parenting

style, creates mistrust in the Black mother-daughter relationship (Loyd et al, 2021; Ridolfo et al, 2013; Townsend, 2008).

Sisterhood

Building a sisterhood or support system with other like-minded women has proven to be a necessity for Black women for both safety and sanity. Many Black daughters shared that as they aged, they realized that their othermothers were initially members of their mothers' sisterhood groups and over the years their relationships deepened, mirroring biological connections (Aston et al, 2017; Hall, 2018; Lane, 2014; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021). However, most of the current literature does not share a process of how these support systems are developed beyond including older family female members, such as mothers and grandmothers. An abundance of Black daughters shared that the strains, developed during their childhoods, on their relationship with their mother caused some of the difficulties in developing a support system in their family, leaving the Black daughters to construct their own sisterhood group for themselves. Black women often share that their emphasis on developing sisterhood groups is based on the exhaustion of explaining the nuances of their experiences to outsiders (Aston et al, 2017; Hall, 2018; Lane, 2014; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021).

Qualitative researchers (Aston et al, 2017; Hall, 2018; Lane, 2014; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021) believe that Black women thrive when they are part of sisterhood groups, mostly due to the space being crafted as a safe environment to share the nuances of pain that are unique to their social identities. Additionally, the researchers mentioned above conducted their case studies to show that connecting with like-minded women, typically in their age range, assisted Black daughters in developing their self-esteem and self-worth because they validated their unfavorable reactions concerning their childhoods. Furthermore, Black women shared that they

view sisterhood and communal accountability as unspoken principles of Black culture (Battista et al, 2017). Black women revered sisterhood groups as foundational to their survival, more so than any other coping skill that their mothers taught. While sisterhood groups can be formed by Black women representing the various forms of Black womanhood, members of sisterhood groups often share experiences in additional social identities such as social economic class and education.

As the number of Black women currently earning college degrees is higher than their male counterparts, it is important to note that many collegiate Black women find sisterhood among the National Pan Hellenic Council (NPHC). NPHC organizations are composed of nine historically black sororities and fraternities that were founded with shared intentions of protecting the Black community while simultaneously unifying and improving it. The NPHC sororities include Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. (1908), Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. (1913), Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. (1920), and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. (1922). While all the Black sisterhood organizations faced a significant amount of discrimination and hatred during their early formation and existence, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. was founded on a predominantly white institution which further exposed its members to harassment and threats by white supremacist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. This prompted members to travel in groups with their sisters for protection (Durham, 2006).

Research surrounding transgenerational trauma involves tracing how transgenerational patterns gradually develop within families. For Black people living in America, transgenerational trauma includes memories of being kidnapped, stuffed into boats, left highly susceptible to deadly diseases, stripped of their culture, forced into unpaid labor while facing promises of physical pain, being strung from trees as a declaration of their inferiority, etc. Furthermore,

modern Black Americans continue to face transgenerational traumas constructed by systematic racism. Additionally, Black women are subjected to transgenerational traumas against their womanhood, including, rapes, domestic violence, and being labeled as monstrous because we carry the womb that produces Black people, the most oppressed racial group in America.

Research Question

How does experiencing transgenerational trauma influence the way that Black Millennial-aged women raise their Black daughters?

Summary

This chapter offered a general overview of motherhood and the factors that shape how women approach motherhood. This overview was followed by a brief depiction of minority mothers with further attention to Black mothers' approaches to raising their daughters. Also, this chapter was constructed to provide a literature review of the current peer-reviewed articles about how transgenerational trauma impacts Black mother-daughter relationships and concludes with a brief discussion about the commonly used coping skills to defend against all factors of transgenerational trauma.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

This chapter depicts the research design of the current study. The roles of both the researcher and the participants are highlighted. The research design and study procedure; including sample, participant selection, interview questions; and data analysis are also discussed in this chapter. This study examines how transgenerational trauma impacts the way that Millennial-aged Black mothers raise their Black daughters. For centuries, Black women have been subjected to mistreatment from society and, at times, within the Black community; yet the examination of the impact of this mistreatment is rarely explored through an academic lens.

Research Design

Qualitative Research Design

The complexity of surviving in America as a Black woman is taught with immediacy and often seamlessly woven into our upbringing. As noted in Dr. Brittney Cooper's Eloquent Rage, "…the process of our mothers and aunties and big sisters and grandmothers lovingly tugging our hair into place is often the first lesson Black girls learn about the inherently tough conditions we face, about how much effort it will take to prepare us to face a waiting world" (Cooper, 2018, p. 49). Cooper's connection to the culture of Black girls' hair and their treatment within society is one of the many pieces of evidence that Black girls are taught covertly to be less of themselves to be accepted by the majority. This current study examines transgenerational trauma and its impact on Black women, so it is also notable to mention how the complexity impacts the mental health of Black women. From a clinical standpoint, Black women are subjected to the highest risk factors for mental health diagnoses (Gibbs & Fuery, 1994) yet our traumas still ring as disparities within the mental health world because although Black women are naturally burdened with the most oppressed identities, our unwavering ability to be resilient leads many professionals to still

question the long-lasting impacts of our pains (Beal, 2021). For these main reasons, it was paramount to approach this current study from a phenomenological standpoint because it is the most concrete approach to participants sharing their individual experiences to showcase the similarities simply based on a shared race and gender.

The following qualitative study employs a phenomenological approach to examine how transgenerational trauma impacts the way that Millennial-aged Black mothers raise their Black daughters. A phenomenological study "describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). The phenomenon that this current study is examining is to what extent the participants' upbringing by a Black mother impacts the way that they raise their Black daughters. For phenomenological researchers, the main subject matter studied is how to explain the lived experiences of humans. Research questions related to phenomenological studies are developed around the desire to examine and understand what individuals' lived experiences mean to them (Creswell, 2014). As the researcher, I used semi-structured interviews and a qualitative survey as the data collection methods for this current study.

Semi-structured interviews

I conducted forty-five-minute individual interviews with each participant. The initial interview questions were designed to obtain information to answer the research question of the current study. "Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between structured and unstructured interviews. Specifically, researchers may use semi-structured interviews to provide some consistency across interviews while also allowing the respondents ample opportunity for offering richer and more personalized responses" (Heppner et al., 2015, p. 374). By utilizing a semi-structured interview approach, I was able to allow participants to answer the same initial

questions without limiting the depth of their responses. “Semi-structured interview allows interviewees to freely express their ideas within a certain range, so as to obtain rich and direct information” (Li et al., 2019, p.2). My decision to conduct semi-structured interviews was influenced by a concept of Black Feminist Thought, outsider within. By being a Black woman conducting semi-structured interviews with other Black women about their lived experiences I was also able to allow for sister-to-sister talk.

Table 3.0 follows with the list of interview questions as they relate to the research questions for this study.

Table 3.0 Interview Questions

Themes	Interview Questions
Transgenerational Patterns	1. Does your family have a history of abuse and/or neglect? 2. Does your family have a history or drug usage? 3. Does your family have a history of adolescent pregnancies? 4. How does your family handle conflict? 5. How did your family discuss race/racism growing up?
Mother/Daughter Dynamic	1. Did you enjoy your relationship with your mother growing up? 2. What is something that you would have wanted to change about the relationship with your mother? 3. What is something about your relationship with your mother that you have continued with your relationship with your daughter? 4. How did your mother discuss gender and/or gender roles with you? 5. What is the current status of the relationship between you and your mother?
Parenting Style with Daughter	1. How do you handle getting angry with your daughter? 2. What are some of the patterns within your family that you would want to continue with your daughter? 3. What are some of the patterns within your family that you would want to change with your daughter? 4. How do you speak with your daughter about race and gender? 5. Are you happy with the current status of your relationship with your daughter?

Qualitative Survey

In addition to conducting semi-structured interviews, I created a qualitative survey for the participants to complete. “Qualitative surveys are useful when you cannot rely on your own previous experience and the literature to guide in designing closed questions or when you want detailed information in the respondents’ own words” (Fink, 2003, p. 62). In my study, qualitative surveys provided enough similarities in the questions and documentary to create a foundation for comparisons while still allowing each individual participant to relay about the same experience

in their own unique ways. Before emailing each participant the Google link to complete the qualitative survey online, I required each participant to watch the Netflix documentary, "*In Our Mothers' Gardens*."

Rationale for Documentary

Inspired by Alice Walker's novel In Our Mothers Gardens, Netflix described the documentary of the same name as "Black women from across the globe unlock stories of their mothers to redefine holistic lives rooted in radical self-care and healing in this documentary" (Lewis, 2021). Based on the film, I developed a ten-question qualitative survey for the participants to complete that would strengthen my understanding of their relationship with their mothers and how it impacts their parenting approach to raising their daughters. In my study, the inclusion of this documentary and the survey that followed was a decision based on the film's correlation to the research question and theory referenced for the study. "*In Our Mothers' Gardens*" is a visual and audio representation of a phenomenological study, used to develop the documentary. The phenomenon that "*In Our Mothers' Gardens*" explores is the impact of maternal figures on the participants' lives; with a specification that all the participants are Black women. Like the documentary, my current study is an examination of how maternal figures impacted the lives of my participants, all of whom are Black women. The documentary involves twelve Black women who vary in their childhood upbringings, career fields, education, etc. yet all of the participants of the documentary share in the experience of learning how to approach life from their mothers and grandmothers. Contrary to the documentary, my current study is rooted in a specification of how experiencing transgenerational trauma has impacted the way that Black Millennial-aged mothers raise their daughters. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 follow with additional information concerning the documentary, "*In Our Mothers' Gardens*". Table 3.1 presents the list

of questions on the qualitative survey and Table 3.2 offers a description of the participants of the documentary.

Table 3.1 Qualitative Survey Questions

Themes	Survey Questions
Reaction from the documentary	1. Based on the description "Black women from across the globe unlock stories of their mothers to redefine holistic lives rooted in radical self-care and healing in this documentary," what was your initial expectation of the film? 2. Which woman's story did you connect to the most? Why is that? 3. Which woman's story was the least relatable for you? Why is that?
Relationship with own mother	4. What is a unique feature in your relationship with your mother that you did not see in any of the women's stories? 5. Have you had similar conversations with your mother like the women in the documentary? 6. What is something that your mother told you that you still remember to this day? 7. What is something that your mother did to you and/or for you that you still remember to this day? 8. Would you watch this documentary with your mother? Why or why not?
Parenting style with daughter	9. Did you learn anything while watching this film about your own mothering style? If so, what did you learn? 10. What was your biggest takeaway from watching the documentary?

Table 3.2 Description of the participants in the documentary "*In Our Mothers Gardens"*

Name of Participant	Description of Participant
Shantrelle P. Lewis	• Born in New Orleans • United Nations Programme for People of African Descent Fellow • Award winning filmmaker and author • Co-founder of SHOPPE BLACK • Lucumi Sango Priest and self-identifying Hoodooist
Tarana J. Burke	• Founder of 'Me Too' Movement • Over 30 years of organizing experiences for issues involving Black womanhood and Black girlhood • Created and lead campaigns to combat racism and sexism • 2017 TIME Person of the Year • 2019 Sydney Peace Prize recipient
Dr. Brittney Cooper	• Assistant Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Africana Studies at Rutgers University • Founder of the Crunk Feminist Collective • Award winning author
Dr. Marta Moreno-Vega	• Established the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute • Second director of El Museo del Barrio • Co-founder of the Association of Hispanic Arts, Network of Centers of Color and the Roundtable of Institutions of Color • Co-founder of the Global Afro Latino and Caribbean Initiative • Award winning author, director, and co-producer
Latham Thomas	• Maternity Lifestyle Maven • World Renown Wellness Leader and Master Birth Doula • Best-selling author • Creator of a guided meditation audio program • Visiting lecturer for improving labor and delivery experience for Black women
Tina Farris	• Former tour manager for artists such as the Roots, Queen Latifah, and Lil Wayne • Assisted in the production of previous top-sporting events such as the World Cup, the Super Bowl, and the NBA All-Star Game • Developed mentorship conference for women interested in entertainment industry
Rev. Dr. Theresa S. Thames	• Associate Dean of Religious Life and the Chapel at Princeton University • Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church

***Information of participants obtained from https://inourmothersgardens.com/cast-appearances**

Table 3.2 (continued)

Adama Delphine Fawundu	• Award winning visual artist and photographer • First generation West African American • Work can be seen in publications such as The New York Times, Vogue Online, TIME Magazine, and The Washington Post
Erica Sewell	• Talent Leader • Founder of creative consultancy • Former Head Designer of Isaac Mizrahi's Target line • Creative consultant for filmmakers and artists
Desiree Gordon	• Creative • Strategist • Founder of Create Anew Now • Director of Programs and Strategy at Brooklyn Arts Council • Programs Editor for Small Axe Visualities
Yolanda Sengweni	• First generation South African American • Senior Editor at ESSENCE.com • Co-founder of AfriPOP
Dr. Kokahvah Zauditu-Selassie	• Priest of Obatala in the Lukumi/Yoruba tradition • Professor at Morgan State University • National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow • National Council for Black Studies fellow at the University of Ghana, Legon • Fulbright Fellow in Cairo, Egypt • New York University Scholar-In Residence • Mellon Fellow at the Goree Institute in Dakar, Senegal • Fulbright scholar in the Republic of South Africa

***Information of participants obtained from https://inourmothersgardens.com/cast-appearances**

My decision to utilize both individual interviews and a qualitative survey is based on the various levels of intimacy and connection that both methods provide. During individual interviews, participants seemingly felt more inclined to share experiences that had been previously invalidated by others in their lives. By conducting individual interviews, I provided a

space for each participant to share their unique experiences that may not align completely with the other participants. Among the earlier stages of developing this study I considered utilizing a focus group with the participants but concluded that this data collection method had elevated potential of creating discomfort for the participants. Once I completed a random sampling to select participants it became clear that my participants may have prior relationships with each other that may impact their responses during the focus group. In comparison to a focus group, the qualitative surveys following watching "*In Our Mothers' Gardens*" created more potential for connection through experiences with other Black women while maintaining the confidentiality of my participants. Although the participants completed their qualitative surveys individually, the connection was rooted in their viewing of the same documentary. Qualitative surveys are currently underutilized; however, this survey crafted a space for the participants to find their connections to other Black women, more specifically other Black mothers (Braun, et. al, 2020).

Description of Participants and Researcher

Sampling

This study included seven participants that were randomly selected from the pool of fifty-two potential participants, collected from my personal Facebook and Instagram pages, in order to conduct random sampling. I elected to utilize a random sampling method for selecting participants so that pre-existing relationships between myself and the participants would not be a factor of selection bias. "Random sampling is a procedure in quantitative research for selecting participants. It means that everyone has an equal probability of being selected from the population, ensuring that the sample will be representative of the population" (Creswell, 2014, p. 247). Although this current study is a qualitative study, the use of random sampling proved to be

effective in assisting to alleviate possible bias due to the nature in which I obtained my participants. Based on how I compiled the pool of participants, individual responses to a post on one of my personal social media pages; there is a high probability that some of the participants may also know each other. The decision to conduct random sampling when selecting participants also aided in combating the probability of the participants knowing each other.

Participants

All of the participants of this study self-identify as Black mothers who have Black mothers and grandmothers. Furthermore, all the participants are Black mothers of, at minimum, one Black daughter. The ages of the participants range from twenty-nine to thirty-three which aligns with the current ages of individuals considered Millennials. The birth years for the Millennial Generation, or Generation Y, range from 1981 to 1995.

The participants were all born between 1989 and 1993 and they were all born in the Southeast region of America. Currently, four of the participants live in South Carolina, one lives in Virginia, one lives in Georgia, and one lives in Kansas. It is important to note that the participants are all from the same region because, although it was not examined in this current study, the environmental aspects of growing up as a Black person in the Southeast may also influence the participants' parenting approach to their daughter/s. The participants all identified as either married, divorced or single mothers, partnered and co-parenting. The two participants that described themselves as "divorced and single mothers" revealed that their former husbands were abusive, and the participants reported that they actively keep their child/ren away from their former husbands or offer limited and monitored interactions because of the abuse. The two participants also shared that they originally got married because of their pregnancies. It is important to note that they got married because they felt obligated, and it aligns with

transgenerational patterns that were revealed during the study. All of the participants are college graduates, minimally with a bachelor's degree. Out of the seven participants, five of them are full-time, outside-of-the-home working mothers and two of them are stay-at-home mothers to young children. All of the participants were also asked to define trauma in their own words and all of them shared that trauma was a negative experience. It was important to inquire about the participants' personal definitions of trauma because it created a baseline when we discussed trauma in our individual interviews.

Table 3.3 follows with a description of the participants and their definitions of trauma.

Table 3.3 Description of participants and their definitions of trauma

Marital Status	Birth Year	Definition of Trauma
Divorced single mother	1993	Anything that can cause a negative effect on a person's life (knowingly or unknowingly at the time)
Single mother	1992	Past hurt that affects your day-to-day thinking.
Married	1991	Mental, physical abuse that impacts your way of life negatively.
Married	1990	Emotional experience that with certain situations can be triggered right then or years later emotionally
Divorced single mother	1989	It's an emotionally damaging and disturbing experience that can present itself physically as well.
Partnered and co-parenting	1990	Trauma is emotional response to a singular or continuous event of an intense nature and that can often be violent. An example might be abuse of various forms, assault etc.
Single mother	1990	An event in your life that has affected your views on things in life in a negative way.

Researcher Positionality

In this study, I, the researcher, identify as a Black woman and believe that African Americans are disproportionately predisposed to experiencing trauma in comparison to their white counterparts. I am a Black Millennial-aged woman who does not have earthly children. In this instance, earthly children refer to children that have been born and exclude the children that I have miscarried. I have a Black mother and a Black maternal grandmother. I currently have an estranged relationship with my Black mother due to transgenerational trauma and my maternal grandmother is deceased. My estranged relationship with my mother is the core of the interest of this current research. As it pertains to the topic of this current study, my attitude and goals align with my desire to understand how adverse childhood experiences impact the manner in which Black girls develop into womanhood and ultimately raise their daughters.

I am currently a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Associate, National Certified Counselor, Clinical Director for a therapy center, published author, and doctoral candidate majoring in Counselor Education and Supervision. I have published novels and peer-reviewed articles related to mental health and am the founder of Not All Scars Heal, a social media-based mental health education platform, as well as the co-founder of It Takes a Village, a Facebook group devoted to creating a safe space for young African Americans to discuss mental health concerns.

Based on personal and professional experience, I believe that the participants of this current study will express having experienced adverse childhood experiences that impacted the way that they raise their daughters. My approach included conducting interviews and asking that the participants complete a qualitative survey after watching the Netflix documentary, *In Our Mothers' Gardens*, as a means to create an environment in which the participants feel as though

they can be authentic in their responses. I believe that the similarities between myself and the participants will assist in engaging in sister-to-sister talk throughout the interactions. By engaging in sister-to-sister talk and by expressing my personal history with the topic, I believe that the participants will be more inclined to respond without fear of being judged.

Researcher's Subjectivity Statement

I acted as an instrument for the completion of the current study because the collection and analysis of data were completely reliant on me. I developed the current study after becoming aware that my relationship with my mother is not unique and that other Millennial-aged Black women have similar relationships with their mothers. I then decided to add the element of examining how transgenerational trauma impacts the way that the participants raise their Black daughters in an attempt to understand how to not continue transgenerational trauma with my future children. I have experienced multiple miscarriages and there were initial concerns that my Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, and/or Generalized Anxiety Disorder would be triggered when discussing children. Thankfully, this did not occur as I utilized my developed coping skills in order to better manage the possibility of being triggered.

Procedure

Prior to conducting this current study, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at North Carolina State University. I provided IRB with the informed consent form that would be utilized for obtaining consent to complete a one-on-one interview, watch the "In Our Mothers' Gardens" documentary, and complete the qualitative survey after watching the film. For the IRB process, I also noted that each of the participants would receive a gift box following the completion of their participation in the study. Each of the gift boxes will include a stress relieving candle, a coloring book that consists of positive images of Black women, a

personalized bookmark, a thank you note, and a copy of the researcher's latest published book titled, *Removing the Armor*. The participants were recruited by me after they replied to a post that I placed on two of my personal social media accounts.

This study's initial pool of potential participants was developed following a post on my personal Facebook and Instagram social media platforms. The post read as follows: "Currently looking to recruit millennial-aged Black women who are currently mothers of daughters to be part of a study that examines the impact that your childhood experiences had on the way that you parent your Black daughters. Participants will receive a specialized care package after completion which will include exclusive VIP access to my next book which is all about Black women healing". On Facebook, the post was originally shared with my 4,948 friends and was then shared by 48 of them. Upon reading the post mentioned previously, 36 potential participants shared an interest in the study. On Instagram, the post was shared with my 4,375 friends. Upon reading the post mentioned previously, 16 potential participants shared interest in the study which resulted in having a pool of 52 potential participants.

After compiling a list of the 52 potential participants I messaged them and obtained their email addresses. Following obtaining their email addresses, I then sent them a preliminary survey that includes the following questions: 1) What is your name? 2) What are your preferred name and pronouns? 3) Do you identify yourself as a Black woman? 4) Does your biological mother and biological maternal grandmother identify as Black women? 5) Do you have a Black daughter? 6) What year were you born? 7) What is your definition of trauma? 8) Based on your definition of trauma, have you witnessed and/or experienced trauma within your family? 9) Do you feel comfortable discussing trauma that you have witnessed and/or experienced? 10) Do you

feel comfortable being visually and audibly recorded for the purpose of data analysis for this study?

These preliminary questions allowed me to find a sample of Black Millennial-aged mothers of Black daughters. The question of lineage and having a Black mother and grandmother is an important cultural element of the current study. Although all Black women or women of African descent may have similar experiences, the current study is specific to having lived in the United States for the majority of your life and having a biological Black mother and grandmother that lived the majority of their lives in the United States. This is an important factor because events such as slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, and modern media depictions of Black women are unique to having lived in the United States.

The pool of potential participants was then filtered using a criterion-based sampling method. Potential participants had to meet a minimum of two criteria: identity as a Black mother who has a Black mother and a Black grandmother; and the ability to verbally articulate and write about their lived experiences. From the initial fifty-two potential participants, thirty-eight of them matched the two-part criteria. Once the new sample was obtained from potential participants that met the two criteria, I randomly selected seven participants to invite to the study by assigning all the potential participants' numbers and using a random selector to pick numbers. I then emailed the randomly selected participants an interview schedule. After each participant completed their individual interviews, they were asked to watch the Netflix documentary, "In Our Mothers' Gardens". Once each participant completed the film, they emailed me to let me know, and I sent them the Google link for the qualitative survey.

The interviews were conducted virtually on Zoom, and the qualitative survey was administered online. The one-on-one interviews were roughly forty-five to sixty minutes long.

The interview questions were asked verbally, and participants were required to answer the questions verbally. Prior to the interviews and the qualitative survey, participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form. The informed consent form prompted the participants to give me consent for video and audio recording for the duration of the interviews. The informed consent form also asked the participants if they were comfortable with watching the film and completing the qualitative survey.

Data Analysis

I was the sole person to analyze the data collected from the participants. All of the participants had to first self-report that they have Black mothers and Black grandmothers. The interviews were recorded for visual and audio information. By audibly and visually recording the interviews, I was able to retain the ability to reaffirm what each of the participants shared during the interactions. Following the completion of the interviews, I then; (1) reviewed the videos for quality, (2) transcribed the interviews, (3) analyzed the data using intentional analysis, and (4) validated the data using triangulation, member checking, clarifying personal bias, and discussing contrary information. (Creswell, 2014).

The method that I used to analyze the data for this study was the intentional analysis method. “Intentional analysis begins with a situation just as it has been experienced -- with all its various meanings and requires the researcher to reflectively explicate the experiential process through which the situation is lived, thereby producing knowledge of human situations, their meaning, and the processes that generate those meanings” (Heppner et al., 2015, p. 390). The decision to analyze the data by the intentional analysis method was made with the goal to preserve the direct language that my participants used without ciphering them in a way that removes their individual opinions. “Intentional analysis is carried out through the researcher’s

development of an empathic understanding of the participants' lived experiences. Meaning units from participant data are highlighted and grouped into themes to provide a written description of the essence of participants' experiences" (Heppner et al., 2015, p. 390).

To achieve intentional analysis, I followed a step-by-step process. After the transcriptions were completed, I then reviewed each transcription and emailed each participant a copy of their one-on-one interview. Once all the participants approved their individual transcriptions, I then began looking for themes in their responses. Since the interview questions were the same for all of the participants, the three categories of the questions; transgenerational trauma patterns and impacts, mother/daughter dynamic, and parenting style with daughter, became the overarching categories that I developed themes from. While themes for the mother/daughter dynamic and parenting style with daughter developed organically, the themes for the transgenerational trauma patterns and impacts were more covert. Although all of my participants defined trauma as being a painful experience that lingers and changes an individual, many of them did not consider some aspects of their childhood to be traumatic. For this reason, my classification of trauma followed the clinical definition provided by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) created by the American Psychiatric Association which defines trauma as a terrible event that resulted in negative long-term reactions (APA, 2022).

Once I indicated themes within the categories, I then began to look for direct quotes from the participants that would assist in conveying their feelings and experiences to the reader. The use of direct quotations is important when using intentional analysis because it allows for each individual participant to discuss the same phenomenon without fear of "answering it wrong;" a fear expressed by one of my participants. While I did not blatantly state my intended use of intentional analysis to my participants, I encouraged them to answer the questions as honestly as

they could without consideration of how others would react. By using intentional analysis, I was able to use the participants' own stories to interpret their lived experiences as Black Millennial-aged mothers of Black daughters.

Validation Strategies

To validate the data collected from the participants I utilized the validation strategy of triangulation, which includes member checking, clarifying personal bias, and presenting negative and/or discrepant information. Triangulation is a means to validate the accuracy of the data collected by "examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201); member checking, clarifying personal bias, and presenting negative and/or discrepant information are all aspects of using triangulation as a validation tool. Member checking is used to validate the accuracy of the data collected by "taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). By using member checking to validate the data, I was able to determine the context of the participants' vocabulary to combat the limitations of the intentional analysis. Following the completion of transcribing the one-on-one interviews, I emailed the participants their individual interview transcription and asked that they check the transcription for clarity, which is a method for member checking. I added any notes from the participants that were helpful in clarifying what the participants shared.

Another aspect of triangulation that I used as a validation strategy was to clarify any personal bias. By clarifying personal bias, I was able to "create an open and honest narrative," by disclosing how my "interpretation of the findings is shaped by [my] backgrounds, such as gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin" (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). Within the one-on-one interviews with each participant, I briefly offered a synopsis of my personal and professional

experiences that became the foundation for my current research interest. I informed my participants that although my personal relationship with my mother is estranged, my current study is a depiction of their individual relationships with their mothers and how they relate to the other participants. In terms of motherhood, I also informed my participants of my prior miscarriages and ensured them that my personal trauma surrounding motherhood would not be included in the analysis of the data collected from them. All of my participants had prior knowledge of my academic and professional background because of our connections on social media, however, I allotted time for them to ask any questions that would assist in them feeling comfortable discussing the topic. None of my participants had any additional questions or concerns prior to beginning their individual interviews.

The last validation strategy that I employed was to include information that was contrary to the majority of the other data. I included all of the themes that developed over the course of the one-on-one interviews, even if the themes did not align with the transgenerational trauma aspect of this current study. In terms of validating the accuracy of the data, presenting negative and/or discrepant information was completed by "discussing contrary information" (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). Within this current study, most of the participants acknowledged elements of transgenerational trauma that they experienced growing up; however, not all of them considered their childhood to have lingering impacts on unexpected aspects of their adult lives. The most glaring example of this was in how the participants described and discussed their romantic relationships (past and present) and the correlation that they may have to their parenting style with their daughters. Although this current study did not further examine the impact that romantic relationships have on parenting styles, the data that was collected suggests that there is

a correlation. Some may consider this lack of information to be a limitation in providing a full picture of the phenomenon explored for this study.

Methodological Limitations

There are several limitations that impacted this current study. One limitation is that I obtained the participants of this study from a post on my personal social media pages. This decision limited the potential participants to individuals that had access to my social media post on my page. The participants for this study were also limited to individuals whose availability aligned with my pre-established interview schedule. Another limitation is that the interviews were conducted virtually. If participants experienced a lack of privacy during the interview, this may have impacted their responses to the questions.

I disclosed to the participants that while I am a Millennial-aged Black daughter of a Black mother, I do not currently have any earthly children. Due to the sensitive nature of parenting, this may have been a limitation for the participants to feel completely comfortable discussing their parenting styles due to a fear of possible judgment from a non-parent. The final limitation of the current study is how I obtained the participants. I used a method referred to as convenience sampling, obtaining participation from a population that is convenient for the researcher, by posting the request for participation on my social media platforms. This is a limitation because one could assume that the individuals on my social media platforms have additional commonalities with each other such as education, socioeconomic status, and location that may influence their responses. By limiting the potential participant pool to the individuals reached via my social media pages, it may be more probable that the participants may have previously known each other.

Summary

This chapter provided the process related to deciding the research design of the current study. The roles of both the researcher and the participants were discussed in greater detail. The sample, participant selection, interview questions, and data analysis were also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS

This phenomenological study was conducted to examine how transgenerational trauma impacts how Black Millennial-aged mothers raise their Black daughters. Contrary to the information presented in the previous three chapters, which were focused on available peer-reviewed research, this chapter will focus on the findings that emerged from the current qualitative study. The research question for this study is: How does experiencing transgenerational trauma influence the way that Black Millennial-aged women raise their Black daughters?

Description of Participants

The sample for this study consisted of seven Millennial-aged Black women who self-identified as having a Black mother and grandmother; also, each participant has at least one Black daughter. All the participants were born between 1989 and 1993 and they were all born in the Southeast region of America. Most of the participants have lived in the Southeast region for their entire lives; one participant is from a military family and moved often. Most of the participants currently live and are raising their daughter/s in the Southeast region, one of the participants is in the military and currently living in the Midwest region. Although this current study did not examine possible regional influences on parenting styles, it is important to note for future research.

The participants also varied in the number of children that they have, marital status, and work status; however, all the participants are college graduates and self-defined trauma as being a negative experience. The seven participants each completed a virtual individual interview with me, watched the Netflix documentary “In Our Mothers’ Gardens,” and completed a qualitative survey based on the film. To ensure anonymity, the names of the participants have been falsified

using pseudonyms to limit the possibility of a non-participant discovering the identity of any of the participants based on their descriptions and/or responses.

Brittany

Brittany was born in 1993 and self-identified as a divorced single mother. When asked to define trauma, Brittany stated that trauma is "Anything that can cause a negative effect on a person's life (knowingly or unknowingly at the time)." Brittany is from the Southeast and currently lives in the Southeast region. She has one daughter under the age of 10. Brittany's highest level of education is a master's degree. Brittany currently works full-time outside of the home.

Amanda

Amanda was born in 1990 and self-identified as being in a relationship and parenting within the home. For Amanda, trauma is defined as an "emotional response to a singular or continuous event of an intense nature and that can often be violent. An example might be abuse of various forms, assault, etc." Amanda is from the Southeast region and currently lives in the Southeast. She has one daughter under the age of 10. Amanda's highest level of education is a bachelor's degree. Amanda currently works full-time outside of the home.

Frankie

Frankie was born in 1991 and self-identified as being married and raising their children within the home. Frankie defined trauma as "Mental, physical abuse that impacts your way of life negatively." Frankie is from the Southeast and currently lives in the Southeast and has a daughter under the age of 10. Frankie is currently a stay-at-home mother and a student. Frankie

has earned a master's degree and is currently working to complete the requirements to earn her doctoral degree.

Gail

Gail was born in 1990 and self-identified as being a single mother. For Gail, trauma is "an event in your life that has affected your views on things in life in a negative way." Gail has a daughter over the age of 10. Gail is from the Southeast and currently lives in the Southeast region of America. Gail has earned a bachelor's degree and currently works out of the home full-time.

Melissa

Melissa was born in 1992 and self-identified as a single mother. When questioned about her definition of trauma, Melissa stated that she believes trauma to be "Past hurt that affects your day-to-day thinking." Melissa has one daughter under the age of 10. Melissa has earned a bachelor's degree and she works full-time outside of the home. Melissa is from the Southeast and currently lives in the Southeast region.

Emily

Emily was born in 1989 and self-identified as a divorced single mother. Emily believes that trauma is defined as "an emotionally damaging and disturbing experience that can present itself physically as well." Emily has two daughters, one under the age of 10 and the other over the age of 10. Emily is from the Southeast region and is currently living in the Midwest. Emily has earned a bachelor's degree and works full-time outside of the home.

Rebecca

Rebecca was born in 1990 and self-identified as being married and collectively raising her kids within the home. Rebecca defined trauma as an "Emotional experience that with certain situations can be triggered right then or years later emotionally." Rebecca has one daughter under the age of 10. Rebecca is from the Southeast and currently lives in the Southeast. Rebecca has earned a bachelor's degree and is a stay-at-home mom.

Findings

This section will present the findings from this study. The data for this study was collected through individual interviews and a qualitative survey after the participants watched the Netflix documentary, "In Our Mothers' Gardens". Through the participants' responses to the interview and survey questions, four main themes emerged: Transgenerational Patterns, Relationship with Mother, Parenting Style with Daughter, and Unity; subthemes were also revealed. The research question of the overall study was: How does experiencing transgenerational trauma influence the way that Black Millennial-aged women raise their Black daughters? The following three tables are depictions of the findings of the current study, and they are categorized by the main themes.

Table 4.1 Themes of Participants' Interview Responses

Interview Categories/ & Questions	Themes	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)
Transgenerational Patterns	Adverse Childhood Experiences	• Directly experienced abuse. (6/7) • Witnessed domestic violence. (3/7) • Sexually assaulted as children. (3/7) • Felt an obligation to protect abusers. (4/7)
	Lack of Communication	• Lacked consistent communication. (6/7) • Were told that questioning adults is disrespectful. (6/7) • Felt unprotected because of lack of communication (7/7)
	Racism	• Witnessed gendered racism. (7/7) • Experienced direct racism before age 18. (6/7) • Called "nigger" (6/7) • Followed in stores. (4/7) • Threatened with death. (2/7)
Relationship with mother	Hyper-independence	• Taught hyper-independence from mother. (7/7) • Raised by a single mother. (5/7) • Feared becoming a single mother. (2/7) • Stayed with abusive partners that mimicked their parents' dynamic. (2/7)
	Othermothers	• Experienced othermothers during their childhood. (5/7) • Wanted othermothers to assist. (2/7) • Grandmothers were othermothers. (4/7) • Noticed a difference in the relationship between grandmother and mother. (4/7)
	Current relationship with mother	• Mutually respectful relationship. (4/7) • Relationship with mother maintained as a resource. (2/7) • Mother deceased. (1/7)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Parenting Style with Daughter	Gentle parenting	• Use gentle parenting skills. (7/7) • Biggest struggle of gentle parenting is managing anger. (7/7) • Gentle parenting style has created distance in relationships with friends and/or family. (7/7) • Taught to handle anger & conflict with aggression. (5/7)
	Open communication	• Encourage open communication with their daughter. (7/7) • Struggled to find answers for themselves during their childhood. (7/7). • Identified that the most difficult topics to discuss with their mother were: racism, sexism, sexuality, religion, gender roles, and healthy coping skills. (7/7)
	Acceptance	• Prioritize unity and othermothers for daughters. (7/7) • Accept all Black womanhood. (7/7)

Table 4.2 Interview Categories and Participants' Responses

Interview Categories	Participants' Responses			
	Brittany	Amanda	Frankie	Gail
Transgenerational Patterns	• Directly exposed to abuse • Lack of communication • Witnessed gendered racism. • Experienced direct racism before 18 • Taught to be silent about mistreatment. • Learned more from mom's actions.	• Directly exposed to abuse • Lack of communication • Witnessed gendered racism. • Experienced direct racism before 18 • Taught to be silent about mistreatment. • Learned more from mom's actions.	• Directly exposed to abuse • Lack of communication • Witnessed gendered racism. • Experienced direct racism before 18 • Taught to be silent about mistreatment. • Learned more from mom's actions.	• Directly exposed to abuse • Lack of communication • Witnessed gendered racism. • Experienced direct racism before 18 • Taught to be silent about mistreatment. • Learned more from mom's actions.
Mother/Daughter Dynamic	• Learned hyper-independence from mom. • Raised by a single mother. • Raised with othermothers. • Great current relationship w/ mom. • Relationship w/ mom was always close.	• Learned hyper-independence from mom. • Raised by a single mother. • Raised with othermothers. • Great current relationship w/ mom. • Relationship w/ mom improved over time.	• Learned hyper-independence from mom. • Raised by a single mother. • Great current relationship w/ mom. • Relationship w/ mom improved over time.	• Learned hyper-independence from mom. • Raised by a single mother. • Raised with othermothers. • Mom is deceased. • Relationship w/ mom improved over time.
Parenting Style with Daughter	• Practice "gentle parenting" style. • Welcome open communication w/ daughter. • Prioritize teaching self-love. • Teaches acceptance of all Black womanhood.	• Practice "gentle parenting" style. • Welcome open communication w/ daughter. • Prioritize teaching self-love. • Teaches acceptance of all Black womanhood.	• Practice "gentle parenting" style. • Welcome open communication w/ daughter. • Prioritize teaching self-love. • Teaches acceptance of all Black womanhood.	• Practice "gentle parenting" style. • Welcome open communication w/ daughter. • Prioritize teaching self-love. • Teaches acceptance of all Black womanhood.

Table 4.2 (continued)

Interview Categories	Participants' Responses		
	Melissa	Emily	Rebecca
Transgenerational Patterns	• Directly exposed to abuse • Lack of communication • Witnessed gendered racism. • Taught to be silent about mistreatment. • Learned more from mom's actions.	• Directly exposed to abuse • Lack of communication • Witnessed gendered racism. • Experienced direct racism before 18 • Taught to be silent about mistreatment. • Learned more from mom's actions.	• Witnessed gendered racism. • Experienced direct racism before 18 • Taught to be silent about mistreatment. • Learned more from mom's actions.
Mother/Daughter Dynamic	• Learned hyper-independence from mom. • Raised by a single mother. • Raised with othermothers. • Great current relationship w/ mom. • Relationship w/ mom was always close.	• Learned hyper-independence from mom. • Raised with othermothers. • Great current relationship w/ mom. • Relationship w/ mom improved over time.	• Learned hyper-independence from mom. • Raised by a single mother. • Great current relationship w/ mom. • Relationship w/ mom was always close.
Parenting Style with Daughter	• Practice "gentle parenting" style. • Welcome open communication w/ daughter. • Prioritize teaching self-love. • Teaches acceptance of all Black womanhood.	• Practice "gentle parenting" style. • Welcome open communication w/ daughter. • Prioritize teaching self-love. • Teaches acceptance of all Black womanhood.	• Practice "gentle parenting" style. • Welcome open communication w/ daughter. • Prioritize teaching self-love. • Teaches acceptance of all Black womanhood.

Table 4.3 Qualitative Survey Results

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Expectations	Based on the description "Black women from across the globe unlock stories of their mothers to redefine holistic lives rooted in radical self-care and healing in this documentary" what was your initial expectation of the film?	• Surprised by content of documentary. (3/7) • NOT surprised by content of documentary. (3/7) • No initial thoughts or expectations. (1/7)	• " Black women telling stories about their upbringing with their mothers" . – Brittany • " I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I thought maybe it would be an interesting film, but I was not sure of how profoundly it would affect me" . – Amanda • " I had no initial expectations" – Frankie • " My expectation was that it would be older black women talking about their upbringing" . – Gail • " My initial expectation was exactly what the film was about. I imagined it to be about women telling stories about their mom and seeing a piece of mama in them. When I see the title " In Our Mothers Gardens" I picture an actual garden grown by our moms. As we walk through it we pick flowers along the way. That is a symbol of the traits we have in us from them. As grown women we realize the good, the bad, and the ugly traits we picked. Now we have accept the good and heal the bad and ugly in order for us to enjoy this beautiful garden" . – Melissa • " I thought it was going to be another " find Jesus" type documentary. I' m not sure what I expected" – Emily • " I honestly didn' t know what to expect in this world wanting to pump out trauma porn I was expecting the documentary to be about more pain than women sharing their stories of where they come from, I felt as if I connected with them all" . – Rebecca

Table 4.3 (continued)

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Relatability with cast members	Which woman's story did you connect the most to? Why is that?	• Connected mostly to Tarana J. Burke (2/7) • Connected mostly to Shantrelle P. Lewis. (2/7) • Connected mostly to Dr. Brittney Cooper. (2/7) • Did NOT connect to any of the cast members' stories. (1/7)	• " I connected to the store about the grandmother who didn't play. Also the grandmother who never said she loved them. I have a great grandma who would tell you off and never said she loved us but we all knew she did. Also how mothers will suffer in private. Now that I'm older I understand a lot of what my mom went through". – Brittany • " This is a hard one. I had a lot of moments where I nodded and said yes and completely understood the speaker, regardless of who she was. I think Shantrelle's viewpoint was close to my own in a lot of ways, but I also felt very at home with this film...it was very relatable overall. I definitely felt I was the kind of person they made it for" – Amanda • " I think I could connect a little to most of them but the one story about the grandma not saying she loved them but the response being love is a verb. We didn't always hear it but we were supposed to be able to interpret in the things our parents were supposed to be doing. It doesn't feel like the same thing". – Frankie • " Shantrelle P Lewis story is most similar to mine. Just like her mom , my mother always wanted the best for me. She may not have always been emotionally available she forever had my back. She was always supportive in her own way" – Gail • " I connected to Dr. Brittney Cooper's story the most because that's how I grew up. My mother is in the church and uses her bible as therapy. My family is right up the street from each other, and my mother was once abused too. I grew up with a loving mom but I also grew up in survival mode. She showed her love by working and providing and that spilled over onto me. I've been working since college and I'm glad that I'm catching myself early to have time for me. I've seen my mom work and only take 2 vacations. TWO!!! It was work, children, church, repeat. I'm breaking that cycle like Brittney did" – Melissa • " I don't feel like I connected to any of them. My story is much different than those women. They all speak so highly of their mothers, but it's extremely hard for me to do that" – Emily • " Dr Brittany Cooper both of our mothers coming out of near-death experiences at the hands of a man they loved" – Rebecca

Table 4.3 (continued)

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Relatability with cast members	Which woman's story was the least relatable for you? Why is that?	• Connected least to Dr. Kokahvah Zaudito-Selessle. (4/7) • Connected least to Shantrelle P. Lewis. (1/7) • Connected least to women that shared knowledge of their family lineage. (1/7) • No connection to cast members. (1/7)	• " How the women would be talking about their family generations. I don't know much about many women in my family" . – Brittany • " The lady, Mama Koko I believe is her name? was a captivating storyteller - and just had so much presence! but I did not connect with her story very much. It is just so different than my own. We don't have any traditions of any kind, especially any ancestral references or matriarchal wisdom in the same way. But I do think that's something I would like to know more about and incorporate into my relationship with my daughter" – Amanda • " The ones about having that family lineage, living down south and having this rooted sprawling family. I don't/didn't have that. Though I am learning my family history, I didn't experience that history authentically in the place where they " began" . – Frankie • " Dr. Koko was the least relatable. I did grow up with spiritual grandparents. They worked in factories and [were] stay at home mom. They frowned upon things like gambling and multiple marriages. Her upbringing was very different from mine" . – Gail • " Dr. Koko Zauditu Selassie's story was the least relatable because of her beliefs. I respect her beliefs but that's not how I grew up. I don't believe in speaking to the ancestors and the Bible tells us that we cannot speak to the dead. I will say that I love her style and upbeat, don't take no crap, attitude" . – Melissa • " The woman who spoke of her mother smoking, drinking, cursing, and going to church was least relatable. I knew my mother would sneak cigarettes on our back porch, but I never saw her drinking. She'd go to church, but she'd only " curse" to say " hell" or " damn" back then" – Emily • " Shantrelle's just in the sense her upbringing was so tough and her no nonsense mother and grandmother" – Rebecca

Table 4.3 (continued)

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Personal relationship with mother	What is a unique feature in your relationship with your mother that you did not see in any of the women's stories?	• Noticed a unique feature with personal relationship with mother. (6/7) • Did NOT notice a unique feature with personal relationship with mother. (1/7)	• " How my mom is so down to earth. We could always talk about anything and she would keep it as real as possible" – Brittany • " I think I struggle to connect with the women's stories in the physical absence of my mother. It is often the point at which my experience is different from others, and though some mention of absence was there, it was not the same" – Amanda • " City life. It seemed like this was more about grandmothers and slightly about mothers. It was there though. But I didn't get an emphasis on relationships to mothers like I thought it would be. The trauma wasn't explicit either. It was kind of glossed over a bit" – Frankie • " My Mother was loving and involved in her own unique way. She was not very affectionate but you felt the love. She was very supportive in whatever her children dreamt of . She was multitalented and unique in her own way" . – Gail • " This is tough to answer because everybody had a piece of something that my mom and I could relate to" – Melissa • " I feel that my mother didn't protect me as she should have, and that will forever stain [the] relationship" – Emily • " I saw a bit of everything my mother and I share in a few of the women's stories and it makes me proud to know that black women can be so similar like we come from one home" . – Rebecca

Table 4.3 (continued)

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Personal relationship with mother	Have you had similar conversations with your mother like the women in the documentary?	• Have had similar conversations with mother. (3/7) • Have NOT had similar conversations with mother. (4/7)	• " No but it made me want to" . – Brittany • " No, which I found inspiring. I have thought about this concept of my mother as a person and what she has let go to become the person and mother she is now, but not explicitly from the view of creativity - I find myself encouraged to talk with her about her own "garden", and those of her mother and hers before her" – Amanda • " Not really" – Frankie • " Yes. My mother was very big on her children having their own! Working hard and making it happen for yourself" - Gail • " I have similar conversations with my mom all the time. We started as mother and daughter to now being best friends. So we talk about a lot" – Melissa • " I' ve tried, and it never went well" – Emily • " Yes the older I get the more transparent my mother and I have gotten closer and I don't feel as apprehensive to speak with her" . – Rebecca

Table 4.3 (continued)

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Personal relationship with mother	What is something that your mother told you that you still remember to this day?	• Positive memory. (5/7) • Negative memory. (1/7) • Nothing. (1/7)	• " My mom told me that she was proud of me for breaking many generational curses" . – Brittany • " My mother told me I am the strongest person she knows. I think she dismissed how strong she is and how much she's lived through in saying this. I also felt pity for us both for having to be so strong" -Amanda. • " She never really bad anecdotal sayings and things that felt proverbial. My grandmother wound always say " say what you mean and mean what you say" . – Frankie • " My mothers last words to me ," Be wise in EVERYTHING you do !" – Gail • " She told me one time and one time only that she had two kids in her 20s that died after being born. She didn' t go into detail about how and I didn' t ask questions because I saw the hurt on her face when she told me" – Melissa • " " You can either be a whore or move on. The choice is yours" . – Emily • " It's ok to be selfish yes you have babies to care for and a husband but if I'm not here things will still run smooth" . – Rebecca

Table 4.3 (continued)

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Personal relationship with mother	What is something that your mother did to you and/or for you that you still remember to this day?	• Positive memory. (6/7) • Negative memory. (1/7)	• " The day I told her I was being sexually abused by her boyfriend and she packed all our stuff and left" . – Brittany • " My mother told me I am the strongest person she knows. I think she dismissed how strong she is and how much she's lived through in saying this. I also felt pity for us both for having to be so strong" . – Amanda • " She showed me how to be strong and independent - sometimes to my detriment with not being able to let people see me vulnerable" . – Frankie • " The most valuable thing that mom did for me that still plays a part for me to this day was helping me raise my daughter so I could attend school and get my bachelor' s degree. I am forever indebted to her for that" – Gail • " My mom would take me and my brother to work with her almost everyday during the summer after summer camp was over. That was the best thing ever. Her job use to be in an old warehouse with very few workers and a lot of space for us to run around. We had carts that we would push each other in and race with the other kids that came with their mom. It is a family owned and operated business so my moms boss would have snacks for the kids, we could go to her house to get in the pool, and she had lots of games for us to play. I' ll never forget those summer days with my mom" – Melissa • " She failed to come to my defense. It overshadows any obligatory good she might have done" . – Emily • " Protected me from an abuser and teaching me how to protect myself if something were to happen to her" . – Rebecca

Table 4.3 (continued)

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Personal relationship with mother	Would you watch this documentary with your mother? Why or why not?	• Would watch the documentary with her mother. (5/7) • Would NOT watch the documentary with her mother. (1/7) • Maybe. (1/7)	• " Yes! I would love to use this as a way to start some conversation about her and her growing up" – Brittany • " Yes, actually. I feel inspired to not only watch with her, but to encourage other family to do the same. Or at least to watch and discuss. It definitely made me hopeful that we could connect and bond in such a way" – Amanda • " Maybe" . – Frankie • " If she was here , I most definitely would. It' s an amazing conversation starter and maybe I could' ve learn even more about her upbringing" – Gail • " Yes I would watch this documentary with my mom. I believe that it could start a conversation about how she grew up. I know a few things about my moms life but she' s very guarded and refuses to open up about certain things" – Melissa • " No. She' d get too defensive and shut it off." – Emily • " Yes to unlock more from our relationship and get her perspective more on the women who came before her" . – Rebecca

Table 4.3 (continued)

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Lessons from documentary	Did you learn anything while watching this film about your own mothering style? If so, what did you learn?	• My daughter's perspective of her childhood will differ from mine. (1/7) • Similarities in her mother's parenting style and the participant's personal parenting style. (3/7) • Share more about personal experiences with their daughter/s. (2/7) • Did NOT learn anything new a bout parenting style. (1/7)	• " I learned that I' m just like my mother and other mothers who suffer in private in order for my child to live a happy life." . – Brittany • " I think I learned that I want to be a certain type of mother. I really do want my daughter to know me as her mother, but also as a person. I don't think I realized how much of that I don't know about my own mother, or even her about her mom" . – Amanda • " It just affirmed my mission to fill in the gaps that I didn' t have" – Frankie • " No I haven' t really learn anything about my particular mothering style that I haven' t already acknowledged" . – Gail • " Yes, I did learn something about my mothering style. It' s a lot like my mother. I do so much for my kids to make sure they have a better life, to the point that I rarely have time for myself. I can be a bit overprotective but that' s because it' s just me and them." – Melissa • " That I am raising them to the standards that my ancestors raised their children but with my own twist. I am old school but not ignorant that times are different" . – Rebecca

Table 4.3 (continued)

Themes	Qualitative Survey Question	Subthemes and number of participants (number of participants that agreed with/number of participants of the study)	Participants' responses
Lessons from documentary	What was your biggest takeaway from watching the documentary?	• Desire to learn more about women in their families. (2/7) • Healing is personal and necessary for healthier motherhood. (4/7) • Everyone's experiences are valid. (2/7)	• " I think I should really learn about the women in my past because they may teach me more about myself than I know." – Brittany • " That we should always be open to seeing things from other perspectives. That we should take more opportunities to learn from our ancestors and matriarchs - living or otherwise - because often there are lessons and so much more in their stories. They are our stories, eventually" – Amanda • " Your healing is your own" . – Frankie • " That everyone upbringing is unique and that we all can take something from one another" . – Gail • " My biggest take away from the documentary was to never forget where you came from but also be better as you grow into a woman" – Melissa • I learned that my own daughters will forever remember me in their own way. It makes me want to ensure I do things right or their sakes" . – Emily • It is my responsibility to overcome my own demons if I want to kill trauma being passed down and to fully experience joy and that healing isn't unreachable" . – Rebecca

Transgenerational Patterns. As it pertains to the interview questions for this study, the theme of transgenerational patterns was represented by the following interview questions:

1. Does your family have a history of abuse and/or neglect?
2. Does your family have a history of drug usage?
3. Does your family have a history of adolescent pregnancies?
4. How does your family handle conflict?
5. How did your family discuss race/racism growing up?

These interview questions were designed to begin conversations surrounding the participants' childhood experiences. For this current study, it was important to learn about the participants' childhoods because they represent a time in which transgenerational patterns would have been initially introduced to their lives. Within the major theme of transgenerational patterns, three subthemes emerged: adverse childhood experiences, lack of communication, and gendered racism.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

While not all of my participants used the word "trauma" to describe their childhood, all of them shared experiences that are clinically considered to be traumatic. More specifically, all of the participants described having Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). Although I did not provide a formal screener for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) to obtain an actual number for each of my participants, all my participants provided evidence of them experiencing ACE within their narrative responses in their interviews. Adverse Childhood Experiences describe situations in which an individual under the age of eighteen felt so unsafe and/or helpless that it impacted the individual long-term. "There is ample evidence that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) cause toxic stress and lead to lifelong negative health outcomes. Almost half of all U.S. children have experienced at least one ACE with documented, detrimental effects on lifelong

health for those that experience two or more." (Thompson, et al., 2020, p. 100). ACEs include experiences such as witnessing domestic violence, being a survivor of abuse (emotional, physical, and/or sexual), being a survivor of neglect, parent abandonment, single-parent household, incarceration, drug and/or alcohol abuse, and a parent with mental health difficulties. The most common ACEs amongst the participants for this study were being a survivor of abuse (emotional, physical, and/or sexual) and experiencing and/or witnessing drug and alcohol abuse within their family.

In terms of abuse, six of the seven participants shared that they were directly exposed to abuse during their childhoods and that the abuse came from members of their own families. Three of the participants shared that they witnessed domestic violence on their own between their mothers and father figures. Three of the participants shared that they were sexually abused during their childhood by family members; their families were aware of who the abusers were and most of them did nothing. Brittany shared that when she informed her mother that she was sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend, her mother left immediately; however, they did not discuss the abuse again. When questioned how her family reacted after leaving the situation, Brittany stated "I feel like everyone tried to forget what happened. She [her mother] never talked about it after that… I don't think it was taken as something that could have a lasting effect on my life. I think it was like, hey this happened so we're going to get out of the situation type of thing and that should solve it." Brittany's expected silence following the abuse was revealed to be a believed expectation for all the participants that shared their direct experiences with abuse, further evidence of the existence of Black Women's Post-Slavery Silence Syndrome that was defined and detailed in Chapter 2.

While analyzing the participants' individual recollections of the abuse that they witnessed, they all shared that they: felt an obligation to be silent about the abuse, found themselves minimizing or justifying the abuse, and felt protective of their abusers. When asked about experiencing abuse in her childhood, Frankie initially asked that I clarify what I meant by abuse and then quickly stated that she did not experience abuse in her childhood. It was not until there was a question about neglect that Frankie made a correlation between family members abusing substances and how it impacted their ability to care for the children. Frankie had seemingly made attempts to minimize the effects of the neglect, sharing that since other family members tried to "feel in the gaps" what she experienced was "…like neglect. Not really neglect, but yeah, neglect. So yeah."

Gail and Melissa also made attempts to justify the abuse from family members through their battles with substances. Gail shared that when she was younger, she thought "that's just mommy" when her behaviors shifted but later found out that it was due to her mother drinking. Melissa attributed her father's domestic violence toward her mother to his battle with alcohol and later multiple incarcerations. Although Melissa shared that her relationship with her father was estranged at the time, she still believed that "he drank a lot and that's what caused the abuse most of the time. So yeah, with him drinking and the abuse, him going to jail…it caused him to be a felon and it caused him not being able to find work. So, I guess stress from that it caused him to drink more." Most of the participants who shared that they had experienced abuse would also attempt to justify the abuse and/or otherwise protect their abusers.

Among the six participants who self-disclosed direct experience with abuse, four of them shared that they actively worked to protect their abusers and the extent of the abuse because their abusers were family members. Furthermore, their abusers were family members that had abused

others as well freely; backed by the families' unwillingness to protect the girls over protecting the family's external image. Amanda shared that when she spoke about her abuse when she was a child, she was met with "disregard, not only denial" and did not discuss it again. Amanda later discovered that the family member that abused her, had also abused multiple of her girl cousins without any consequences; "my other cousin had been assaulted by the same person and it wasn't until I spoke with them saying this happened to me too. We were like, oh wow… we don't feel comfortable telling our parents because we don't believe they would take our side." Emily shared that although she remained silent about her abuse throughout most of her childhood, she decided to speak out about her abuse on her Facebook page when she was older. Emily stated her family continued to deny and disregard the abuse, with her parents not speaking with her for three months. Emily showcased the belief that by breaking the silence and publicly drawing attention to her family's abuse, the family's image was threatened. Emily shared that since "everyone puts on a face like we take care of each other," very few people outside of her family knew of the abuse. Although one of the participants, Rebecca, did not relate to the other participants' experiences with abuse in their childhood, she could relate to the expectation of "putting on a face" to the outside world. Rebecca shared how this expectation and witnessing her mother rely solely on herself, attributed to her hyper-independence as an adult. From a clinical standpoint, hyper-independence is typically a trauma response based on a fear of instability. Rebecca shared that she did not spend much time with her father after her parents divorced; and although Rebecca did not consider this dynamic to be traumatic, parent abandonment and single-parent households are ACEs. Even though all of the participants ultimately revealed a history of trauma, most of them struggled with acknowledging it which reiterates the research provided

earlier in this study, Black women are taught at a young age that our strength is in our ability to remain silent and statuesque no matter the obstacle.

With an emphasis on examining how transgenerational trauma impacts an individual's parenting style, this current study also provides evidence of the correlation between acknowledging past pains/ healing and the individual's approach to parenting. The correlation is discussed in greater detail within the theme of "parenting style with daughter," however, the participants first provided recollections of their childhood; memories which revealed that all of them had experienced one or more ACE. Following the general discussion of their childhood, participants were asked questions specific to their relationships with their mothers.

Lack of Communication

Communication, rather the lack of it, proved to be a transgenerational pattern that six out of the seven participants shared. When questioned about how they were spoken to about uncomfortable topics, those six participants shared that the responses from their mothers mimicked common phrases from the Black lexicon, also known as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), such as "stay in a child's place" and "if you don't like my rules you can leave" (Lauture, 2020). The six participants also all shared that if they continued with their inquiries, their mothers would make a correlation between asking questions and being disrespectful to combat their consistent curiosity as children. One of the participants, Frankie, shared that she defaults to her mother's way of communication because she has witnessed the conflict between her mother and sister that was caused by their differing communication approaches. Frankie stated that her mother's common response was "whatever you want" and that the lack of clarity was a frustration for her during her childhood. Another participant, Amanda, shared that the lack of communication with her mother would often leave her feeling "lonely" and "unwanted". The

six participants seemingly felt as though during their childhood, their mothers would communicate with them out of necessity instead of interest. Furthermore, the six participants' narratives presented as their mothers mostly focused their communication on how to protect themselves, how to care for others, and coping skills for gendered racism.

Although Rebecca shared that she experienced open communication throughout her entire childhood, she stated that conversations about controversial and/or uncomfortable topics were reactive instead of proactive. An example that Rebecca provided was that her mother discussed racism with her after Rebecca's first time experiencing it. Rebecca recalled being about ten years old and moving to South Carolina where she was ambushed by a white adult in a store and told, "this isn't a store for you." Rebecca's mother responded by simply telling her that "Black isn't good for everybody," encouraging Rebecca to accept that others may not like her because of her race. While Rebecca was grateful for the open and honest communication with her mother, she shared that she wished the timing had proved to be more helpful long-term with more in-depth explanations. As she continued, Rebecca shared that she believed that if she knew more about racism prior to experiencing it, she would have felt better prepared to protect herself when it occurred.

Although the participants provided various beliefs for the reasoning, all of them shared that they felt as though there were situations in their childhoods where their mothers did not protect them. The discovery that the participants felt as though they lacked protection in their childhood is evidence of a large-scale hindrance for Black girls, adultification bias. Following the analysis of a large-scale study titled *Listening to Black Women and Girls: Lived Experiences of Adultification Bias*, researchers Jamilia J. Blake and Rebecca Epstein discovered that on average, most "adults perceive Black girls as less innocent than white girls as young as 5-9 years old,"

(Blake & Epstein, 2019, pp. 1) and therefore believe that Black girls need less protection from others and are expected at early ages to learn ways to protect themselves. Furthermore, the study revealed the difference in how Black mothers approach raising their sons with the mentality to protect them from the world versus raising their daughters with the mentality that they must learn to protect themselves. During this current study, one of the participants, Frankie, shared that she felt as though her mother "raised her daughters, loved her sons." Frankie expanded the discussion of her experiences by stating that instead of showing her and her sister the same grace and love as her brothers "she [Frankie's mother] taught us [Frankie and her sister] to survive." Even though this current study did not further examine the differences between how Black girls and Black boys are raised, there is an abundance of available peer-reviewed research that provides evidence of the differences (Ahmed, 2012; Nickert, 2022; Spencer, 2020). The participants stated that their mothers and othermothers would not often provide verbal answers, rather they would show them through their actions. Ultimately, all of the seven participants shared that their mothers influenced them more by their actions in comparison to their verbal communication.

Gendered Racism

All of the participants mentioned that they witnessed their mothers being mistreated inside of their homes, as well as outside of their homes by strangers. Although most of the participants shared that sexism and racism were not typical conversations within their homes; they also shared that they were subjected to the manifestation of gendered racism when outsiders exposed harmful biases towards their mothers. In addition to bearing witness to the mistreatment, the participants developed coping skills from their mothers to be combative of the injustices they promised were waiting for them. Due to the uniqueness of the intersection of race and gender,

experiencing gendered racism is a common occurrence for Black women, so common [in fact] that many Black girls are taught to expect the mistreatment. In addition to experiencing blatant bias, the participants also shared that they felt expected to not stand up for themselves when it does happen. While from an outsider's perspective, the lesson to ignore the mistreatment may read as a contradiction to being raised to protect themselves, as noted in Chapter 2 of this study in discussions surrounding Black Women's Post-Slavery Silence Syndrome, Black women are also taught that their silence is often bartered for protection.

Of the seven participants of this study, six of them shared that they experienced racism prior to reaching adulthood. Melissa, the one participant that denied having experienced direct racism, expressed pure disbelief that she had not had such an experience, however, she continued with the belief that it is "bound to happen." Stating, "I'm 30. I haven't even experienced it yet…I'm pretty sure it's coming," Melissa provided insight into the larger narrative of feeling unsafe as a Black woman, regardless of your personal experiences. Gail, who shared that her mother provided open discussions surrounding racism, shared that the conversations often felt like warnings against the belief that she could trust any white people. Gail expressed how her mother would hesitate to accept her having white friends because her mother was skeptical of a white person's true intentions. Like most of the other participants, Gail recalled her first experience with racism; being a child under the age of ten and getting followed around in stores by adults.

Four of the six participants that expressed experiencing racism at an early age shared that their first experiences involved being called "niggers" and being stalked around stores. As if those situations were not unsettling and disheartening enough as stand-alone events, two of the participants shared that their first experiences with racism expanded into a more immediate fear of death. Both Frankie and Emily shared that their first experiences with racism involved being

called a “nigger,” being stalked, and being threatened with death; moreover, being threatened with death in public spaces as young Black girls and receiving no protection from spectators. Emily shared that when a white student threatened to “kill all of the black people on the bus,” the bus driver proceeded to let the student onto the bus. Emily did not share if the white student ever obtained consequences for his threat, but it is my assumption that nothing happened to the student based on the rest of the conversation. Frankie shared that while walking home with some of her friends, they were approached by a white male adult on a bike. He stopped and got off his bike to harass a group of Black girls coming from school because he overheard them discussing the Jena Six case; a case in Jena, Louisiana where six young Black men were charged and convicted, despite a blatant lack of evidence, of attacking a white classmate in retaliation for the white classmate referring to them as “niggers” (Powell, 2011). The white male adult self-identified as a former Marine and then proceeded to tell the group of underage Black girls his opinions about Black people. The white male adult continued to harass the group, even posing the question “do you know how many people I’ve killed,?”. While the situation with the stranger is a clear indication of gendered racism, most relevant to this current study was the reaction that Frankie received when she told her mother of the incident. Instead of showing concern about her overall well-being, Frankie shared that her mother became upset with her, spewing questions like “why didn’t you do this?, why didn’t you do that?.” Presumably, Frankie’s mother believed that Frankie would have been safer, had she remained silent and ignored the white male adult.

The life-threatening experience that Frankie described and the response from her mother showcases aspects of all of the subthemes of this section, adverse childhood experiences and lack of communication. At a young age, Frankie and the other participants were taught “survival skills” for living as a Black woman, the same skills that their Black mothers were taught by their

Black mothers, and likewise generations prior. A generalization of the collective transgenerational patterns that the participants shared is that Black girls are raised with the expectation to happily and quietly step into their roles as "superwomen," committing them to a lifetime of less-than-humane treatment. Furthermore, Frankie's story is additional evidence of the unique oppressions reserved for Black women as presented in evidence-based realities such as Black Women's Post-Slavery Silence Syndrome and Gendered Racism. This current study was not intended to, and therefore does not provide an exhaustive review of, the correlation between societal treatment and Black mothers' parenting approach to their daughters. However, evidence provided by the data collected in the following interview segment shows that the way Black mothers experienced the world as individuals impacted the way that they raised their daughters. Regardless of the impact, participants shared that their relationships with their mothers were, and some still are, their most important relationships.

Relationship with Mother. For this current study, the theme of "relationship with mother" was isolated through careful analysis of responses to the following interview questions:

1. Did you enjoy your relationship with your mother growing up?
2. What is something that you would have wanted to change about the relationship with your mother?
3. What is something about your relationship with your mother that you have continued with your relationship with your daughter?
4. How did your mother discuss gender and/or gender roles with you?
5. What is the current status of the relationship between you and your mother?

These questions were intended to obtain insight into how the participants viewed their relationship with their mothers during their childhood and how they view the relationship now as

mothers to daughters themselves. For this current study, it was paramount to examine the participants' relationships with their mothers because oftentimes, how an individual is parented becomes the blueprint for their approach to parenting (Rodriguez et al, 2009). Amongst the main theme of "relationship with mother," the following subthemes were discovered: hyper-independence, othermothers, and current relationship with mother.

Hyper-independence

Of the seven participants, five of them shared that they were raised by a single mother, inadvertently experiencing life with a Black woman as the head of the household. All of the seven participants shared that regardless of the presence of a father figure in the home or not, they witnessed their mothers "do it all," while verbally declining assistance with common Black American locutions such as "move, I'll do it myself." The participants all self-identified as being hyper-independent; six of them stated that it was a result of witnessing their mothers work to take care of everyone else and one of the participants stated that it was a result of the more overt trauma of her parents' abandonment and overall neglect. Melissa, a participant who shared that her hyper-independence was obtained from watching her mother, responded that "we just, we just figure it out for ourselves," when learning about topics such as sex, racism, self-confidence, etc. As the interview persisted, Melissa shared that the hyper-independence she learned from her mother has a history of influencing her romantic relationships. Self-identifying the influence as negative, Melissa stated "relationships don't really work out. We kind of feel like we're superior in our relationships instead of the man. I guess, playing the man's role." Although gender roles were mentioned in alignment with the feeling of obligatory hyper-independence, this current study does not expand greatly into the nuances of the connection. A

brief synopsis of the impact/s that living in a traditional home with gender roles has on Black motherhood can be located in chapter two of this dissertation.

Regardless of blatantly stated gender roles, all of the participants shared the sentiment that they are expected to "do it all" as they had witnessed other Black mothers do despite the difficulties that they faced and in spite of how they were feeling. Whilst conversing about the lack of self-care that she witnessed from her mother, Brittany quoted activist and co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, in stating, "I do not remember us as humans being. We have always had to be humans doing." Brittany, in addition to four other participants, shared that witnessing her mother "do it all" with little to no complaints was admirable and aspiring. Even though Melissa self-identified the negative impacts of witnessing her mother's hyper-independence, she relayed feeling joyous when her mother would "take charge," as well as empowered to potentially care for a family alone if she had to raise her child/ren as a single mother.

Although they held their mothers in high regard for their ability to be single mothers, two of the participants (Brittany and Emily) shared that witnessing the difficulties of single motherhood made them fearful of not having a partner. Furthermore, the two participants shared that they unconsciously gravitated towards partners similar to their fathers and were subjected to years of domestic violence within their marriages. As she relayed how witnessing her mother's hyper-independence within an abusive two-parent home impacted her romantic relationship, Emily stated that "it messed me up. That's why I stayed married so long. Why I got married. I was pregnant and I thought that's what were had to do." Emily continued with how it did not take long for her "loving" marriage to become a "living hell" with ongoing emotional, mental, physical, and sexual abuse. Emily seemingly attributed the expectations of being independent

and strong to silently withstanding any form of mistreatment. Brittany shared an almost parallel justification for accepting abuse from her former husband; “the only reason we got married was to have a solid foundation for her [Brittany’s daughter] and always have someone around that could possibly be very trustworthy with her.” Brittany’s rationality also shows how she learned to prioritize the protection of her daughter by becoming almost obsessive with creating safe environments for her and being intentional about who has any level of access to her daughter. All of the participants shared that the intentionality of choosing the people who have access to their daughters was developed because of their own life experiences including, but not limited to, the abuse that they witnessed and personally experienced. The participants attributed an abundance of their growth and eventual healing to having othermothers assist their mothers in raising them.

Othermothers

Most of the participants in this study share experiences of being cared for by othermothers. Five out of the seven participants shared that their childhood and continued growth have been heavily impacted by maternal figures outside of their mothers. The two participants that did not have othermothers during their childhoods shared that they longed for those connections. Rebecca and Frankie both had expectations of having connections with othermothers, both expressing the belief that their mothers would have benefited from such but that their hyper-independence superseded their willingness to accept assistance. When posed the question of what she would have changed about her relationship with her mother, Rebecca stated that she was almost heartbroken at the fact that her mother did not accept help from others; “we had a village but she was the one taking it all,” Rebecca tearfully continued with, “I just wish she would have, I wish she would have had more help. And I wish that we would have had more help.” Frankie similarly shared her knowledge of the benefits of having a “village” by stating,

"my mom didn't necessarily facilitate the village but we understood. Like, for me, I understood that I needed to find people to fill those gaps." Both Rebecca and Frankie believed that if their mothers were more open to their needs, other women in their families would have been willing to assist them. The other five participants share the commonality of their othermothers being within their biological family as either grandmothers, cousins, and/or older sisters.

Four of the five participants that shared their experiences with othermothers stated that their grandmothers were/are, in a sense, interchangeable with their mothers. A unique perspective was provided by Emily. Emily shared that when she initially publicly shared about getting sexually assaulted by a family member, the first person to reach out to check on her was an older cousin. While having an older cousin check-in may not initially strike all as unique, Emily shared that her older cousin began telling her about the "family secrets" related to sexual assault; almost condemning their behavior. Emily continued with, she later discovered that the same older cousin had reacted in a completely different way when her own daughter informed her of being sexually assaulted by a family "friend;" responding to her daughter in disbelief and a continuation of forcing her to visit with the family "friend." Emily shared that her older cousin informed her that she did not properly protect her daughter, however, she did not explain the extent of her behavior or how it created the estrangement in their current relationship. Based on Emily's story, it is my assumption that her older cousin felt more pressured with being a biological mother because of the expectations attached to being an othermother. Further analysis of the other participants' relationships with their mothers versus those with their othermothers may be additional evidence that succeeding as an othermother was often less pressurized than succeeding as a biological mother.

The four participants that shared that their othermothers were often their grandmothers also witnessed oppositional differences between the relationships. The participants stated that their mothers' relationships with their grandmothers would sometimes feel tensely rooted in unspoken conversations involving their pasts, which differed completely from the overwhelming nurture that their grandmothers provided in their relationships with the participants. In explaining the differences in their relationships, Amanda shared that she has more experience with witnessing her mother and grandmother as opponents instead of allies. Amanda stated that although she initially lived with her mother, things changed following a visit with her grandmother; "so the story goes that I went to visit, and I was never given up." Continuing with her response, Amanda reflected that she was not given a clear answer about why her grandmother kept her, however, she was aware that her mother had difficulties with "emotional vulnerability" that may have influenced her grandmother's decision. The other three participants stated that their othermothers were a source of additional protection. Brittany shared that when her mother fled her abusive relationship, they were able to immediately move in with her grandmother, without question. Melissa had a similar idea that her mother could flee her abusive marriage by moving in with her grandmother, "my grandma lives seven miles away, we can go live with grandma. Who cares if I switch schools, it doesn't matter to me." However, Melissa's mother did not choose to leave, and Melissa believed that it would be taken as disrespect if she asked her mother to leave. Melissa did share that her mother's seeming willfulness to stay and endure the abuse, taught her lessons about how to approach her future relationships. Melissa, along with all the other participants shared that their childhood relationships with their mothers directly influenced their adult relationships.

Current Relationship with Mother

Six of the seven participants shared that they currently have active relationships with their mothers; the one exclusion of a current relationship is due to her mother's death. Gail, the participant whose mother has passed, shared that their relationship went through various emotional shifts before it stabilized prior to her death. When asked if she enjoyed the relationship with her mother Gail stated, "when I was little, yeah. When I became a teenager, not really so much. I kind of resented her for a lot of things. And then when I became a mom like once I got pregnant, we got back being close again." Gail spoke of the resentment of her mother stemming from witnessing her mother endure abuse at the hands of her father as well as how her mother decided to separate from him; "I felt like she ran my dad away and I felt like a lot of things that went on in our house, that was her fault. And it was like her moving us from New York and taking us away from everything that we knew…My whole life is there. You just take it up and move us away. I hate you." Gail continued that she resented her father as well, even telling them both; "you can't disappoint me because you already have. So, like, I'm already disappointed. So, there's really nothing left you could do to upset me." Gail concluded the discussion about her parents by sharing that both of them improved; her mother's when Gail became pregnant., Specifically, her mother became more open to discussing the source of their estrangement, and her relationship with her father improved after Gail's mother died. The remaining six participants shared that their current relationships with their mothers are all rooted in their relationship dynamics as children. Furthermore, the other participants stated that their mothers' relationships with the participants' daughters are improvements from their personal relationships with their mothers.

Three of the participants shared that their relationships with their mothers have always been close. Brittany shared that following her multiple experiences of being sexually abused, she only trusts her daughter under the sole care of her mother or grandmother. She noted even requiring her daughter's father to be under the supervision of her grandmother during their visits following Brittany's abuse by his hands. Continuing with the root of their relationship, Brittany attributed her closeness to her mother to how her mother reacted to her childhood sexual abuse; "I think we have the best mother-daughter relationship. After that [the sexual abuse] I felt like I could always talk to my mother." Similarly, Melissa shared that witnessing how her mother, and grandmother, approached stressful situations was paramount to the early developed closeness in their relationships. Melissa stated that her mother taught her how to manage her reactions when she is angry with her own daughter; "I take a breather because of my mom. She never ever got angry with me. She is the nicest lady ever, and she never got angry with me or my brother…My grandmother, she was a sweet woman, a gentle woman mom as well. So, I guess that's where my mom gets it from." Rebecca also shared the sentiment that her relationship with her mother has been close from as far back as she can remember. Rebecca raved about the relationship with her mother, stating that although it was not perfect all the time due to conflicting opinions on topics like sexuality, the relationship has always been one of overall mutual respect and a willingness to understand each other. Comparably, the other participants attributed the longstanding unwillingness to understand each other when their views differed to the trials of the relationships with their mothers.

The remaining three participants shared that the birth of their own daughters was the catalyst for improving their relationships with their mothers. Emily's relationship with her mother proved to have the most dramatic transformation following the birth of her oldest

daughter. After leaving home and attempting to cope with her childhood with less-than-ideal methods such as drinking, Emily felt as though her relationship with her mother would never improve. Emily tearfully expressed that the desire for her mother to "like her" during her childhood developed into an acceptance that her mother ultimately provided a "blueprint" on how not to raise her daughters. When questioned about how the birth of her oldest daughter changed her relationship with her mother, Emily shared that she began to see her mother as a resource for assistance with childcare. "My parents both owe me," Emily shared that she has strong boundaries in her current relationship with her mother and that their communication "begins and ends" with discussing care for her children. Emily shared that although she does not believe that her mother has emotionally evolved since her childhood, she trusts that her mother will not harm her children. While Frankie and Amanda relayed utilizing their mothers as assistance with childcare as well, they both also shared that their mothers' emotional growth was a necessity in improving their adult relationship. Frankie sourced her mother's emotional maturity to her mother being an othermother to a godson; "it was like looking in a mirror [watching her godson's relationship with his mother]. I think she recognized that [some things] probably weren't the best but it was the best she could do at that time because if was maybe all that she knew." Amanda shared the experience of witnessing her mother become more "emotionally vulnerable" and open to discussing the root of their estrangement. Regardless of how they saw fit to repurpose the lessons instilled by their mothers, all participants believe that their relationships with their mothers directly impact/s their relationships with their daughters.

Parenting Style with Daughter. Within this current study, the theme of "parenting style with daughter" was examined using the following interview questions:

1. How do you handle getting angry with your daughter?

2. What are some of the patterns within your family that you would want to continue with your daughter?
3. What are some of the patterns within your family that you would want to change with your daughter?
4. How do you speak with your daughter about race and gender?
5. Are you happy with the current status of your relationship with your daughter?

These questions were developed with the intent to examine how the participants' relationships with their mothers have impacted their approach to parenting their own daughters. Six of the seven participants shared that there is at least one thing about their relationship with their mother that they enjoyed and have continued with their own daughter/s, and the other participant shared that her relationship with her mother showed her how not to approach the relationship with her own daughter/s. Although not directly related to this current study and therefore only briefly examined, all of the participants shared that they challenged themselves to become more self-aware about their own beliefs and actions in order to become better mothers. The participants all believed that if they had not taken the time, and continue to take the time, for their own healing they would not be able to deter themselves from repeating more of the negatively impacting transgenerational patterns that they learned. Directly related to this current study, all seven participants shared that their parenting approach includes gentle parenting and open communication to build and/or maintain a generally positive relationship with their daughters.

Gentle Parenting

The phrase "gentle parenting" refers to a parenting approach rooted in mutual respect between the parent and child with an emphasis on explaining requests versus the expectation that

demands are completed by the child without question (Weaver, 2022). Although the nuances of their mothers' parenting approaches differed, all of the participants shared that the decision to have a "gentle parenting" approach was highly influenced by the desire to combat the lack of communication and expectations of hyper-independence at early ages that they experienced as children. All participants contributed their overall ability to lead with gentle parenting to their determination to break generational curses. Generational curses refer to transgenerational patterns that have negative influences on behaviors and lead to potentially harmful thought patterns (Aston et al, 2017). Participants expressed the necessity to initially and, at times, painfully excavate and evaluate their own childhoods in order to not repeat the harmful cycles that they were exposed to. As it relates to this current study the participants believed that an estranged, for any significant length of time, mother-daughter relationship was a significant generational curse that was broken by their willingness to have a gentle parenting approach.

During her interview, Emily showcased her approach to gentle parenting in real-time. As we conversed, her daughter continued to text her and "beg for extra time on her phone." Emily approached the potentially frustrating nuance by "gently reminding her that she can't have more time and if she continues to beg, she will get no time." Emily reflected how her approach to parenting had completely deviated from her mother's approach; sharing that her daughter's level of persistence would have been received as disrespectful and met with a "whooping," or physical reprimanding. All participants shared in the experience that their biggest challenge with gentle parenting occurs during moments of frustration when they are angry because their mothers often reacted to being angry by not speaking about it and/or "whooping"; a tradition upheld within their families' generations as instilled in the Black community during slavery when the white "master" would take an animalistic approach of using physical abuse to assert dominance. All

seven participants expressed that their gentle parenting approach has caused distance from their family and/or friends. The participants stated that they would rather sever the connection than change their personal parenting beliefs. In seeming defense of her loved ones' disapproval of her parenting approach, Amanda declared that "I do not want my child to have to recover from anything… I want to raise a good human, so [I'm] teaching her empathy even with the little things." Participants' recollections of getting "whoopings" by family members were always paired with a sentiment such as "you know" when responding to me; further, showing how commonly physical reactions are expected in response to differences is a deformed mentality that remains within the Black community. Although Brittany did not further elaborate on the specific people she was referring to, when discussing how conflicts were solved, she stated that "a lot of my responses were to fight, but that's just what we knew. If you didn't like something, you fought about it and you got over it. That's how we solved all issues, even inside the house." All of the five participants who mentioned that a "whooping" was a potential consequence within their childhood homes also acknowledged knowing that although they were taught to physically react to conflict, they understood that they were expected to always willingly relinquish power to their mothers without even considering physical retaliation. Furthermore, the participants shared that this expected differentiation to their approaches to a conflict was always backed by acknowledging number five of the Ten Commandments in Christianity, "honour thy father and thy mother." All seven participants shared that their mothers would often rely on common phrases in the Black lexicon, many rooted in Christianity, to answer questions instead of having open conversations; a transgenerational pattern that none of them wished to continue with their daughters.

Open Communication

The participants all expressed the feeling of longing for more time and one-on-one, open communication with their mothers. Gail sourced her general mistrust of others and overly cautious approach to building "meaningful" relationships to her mother's unwillingness to provide more elaborative, and therefore better understood, explanations of their experiences. Gail shared that her mother's resistance to open communication is the main influence on her approach to communication with her daughter, stating that her biggest disappointment with her relationship with her mother is "the lack of communication" so that for her daughter she wants to "have that openness where you can come to me about literally anything, no matter how big, no matter how small. I want my kids to be comfortable." Gail continued, sharing that her daughter has begun showing evidence of her trust in the relationship through their open discussions about her daughter's sexuality. All of the participants conveyed their prioritization in assisting their daughters in developing their self-love while simultaneously preparing them to thrive in a society that has historically benefitted from the concerted effort to maintain a hierarchy that buries Black women to the bottom like the country's shame; consequently, sentencing us to be "fundamental" sacrifices while being blanketed as indispensable martyrs with such resilience that modern academics believe it should be studied (Dale & Safren, 2020). Participants believed that the only way to truly accomplish such an exhausting, nearly impossible task is to provide open communication with their daughters; regardless of the difficulty and/or discomfort of the topic.

The participants' willingness to engage in open communication with their daughters directly misaligns with a common idea within the Black community that children should "speak when spoken to" and "stay in a child's place." Drawing on traditional African American family culture, the phrase reflects a belief in upholding a power dynamic between parent and child; a

dynamic that comes with an expectation that the child does exactly what the adult says when the adult says to do it and without question. While the participants shared that they prioritize open communication with their daughters because they want to prepare and protect them, they also stated that their initial desire to have a gentle parenting approach and open communication was due to remembering the difficulties of their own healing following their abuse as children. When the idea of "staying in a child's place" was compounded with the lesson that disagreeing with adults in any regard was seen as disrespect that could lead to physical consequences, participants shared that they eventually became hesitant to converse with their mothers, approaching some conversations almost politically. All seven participants shared that the most difficult topics to discuss with their mothers during their childhood were racism, sexism, sexuality, religion, gender roles, and coping skills. Furthermore, the participants shared that their difficulties in attempting to discover the necessary answers for themselves included, but weren't limited to; abusive romantic relationships, disjointed relationships with other Black women, depression, anxiety, hyper-independence, promiscuity at a young age, drug/alcohol abuse, and self-harm. None of the participants expressed feeling as though they could completely protect their daughters from all of the mistreatment destined to disrupt their paths simply because they are laced in the "magic" of being a Black woman. However, all of the participants share the motivation and determination to protect their daughters more effectively while also ensuring to teach patience, love, unity, confidence, balance, intentionality, creativity, and ultimately how to approach life without the limitations that others will burden them with after the outsiders deem themselves more suitable to make decisions.

Although all of the participants differed in the nuances of their individual childhood experiences and experiences in mothering their own daughters, they all shared a collective

willingness to understand and accept all elements of Black womanhood. All seven participants attributed their desire to accept their daughters as their authentic selves while simultaneously teaching them to accept themselves, regardless of how society will treat them, to their openness to Black women with an alternative lifestyle from their own. Participants collectively believed that one of their initial heartbreaks as children was due to their mother's disapproval.

Unity

During their individual interviews and prior to being asked to watch the Netflix documentary, "In Our Mothers' Gardens," all the participants shared that they were raised by, or desired to have, a community of other mothers as a means of assistance for their mother. Since all the participants shared how unity and community were important to their childhoods and to their personal parenting style; it became paramount to explore the extent to which the participants connect to other Black women with stories that differ from their own.

While the Black woman's experience is not monolithic in nature, and therefore not in motherhood, the themes based on this current study shed light on the similarities of Black Millennial-aged mothers' approaches to mothering their daughters, including believing in the necessity of finding unity and connection amongst other Black mothers. Although having never met as a collective, all of the participants conveyed an unwavering conviction to use the memories of their relationships with their mothers to craft the relationships with their own daughters. No matter if they were experienced and categorized by the participants as positive or negative, they all prioritized their mothers' influences. Furthermore, the participants shared that their expanded willingness to better understand their mothers was developed by witnessing how their mothers were and/or are treated within society; generally justifying why their mothers disappointed them as children. Regardless of the past and present status of the relationship with

their mothers, the participants shared that witnessing how their mothers were consistently mistreated amongst other populations is what initiated the development of their empathy and self-exploration. More so, how becoming open to understanding and forgiving their mothers' self-identified shortcomings as parents later became applicable to the development of their parenting styles with their own daughters.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings followed by an analysis of those findings of this phenomenological study. Due to the nature of the data collection method, the findings represented the participants' narrative responses in a verbatim format. The sole research question was: How does experiencing transgenerational trauma influence the way that Black Millennial-aged women raise their Black daughters? The findings revealed that experiencing transgenerational trauma has a direct impact on the participants' relationships with their mothers as well as their parenting approach to their daughter/s.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

This chapter includes a synopsis of the findings from the individual interviews and qualitative survey conducted for the current study examining the impacts of transgenerational trauma on how Black Millennial-age mothers raise their daughters, as well as research from similar studies previously conducted. Following a summary of the findings from this current study, this chapter will provide implications for the future use of this study and its limitations. This chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research and a summary.

Discussion of Study Findings

The current study was designed to examine how transgenerational trauma impacts the way that Black Millennial-aged mothers raise their daughters. As a qualitative phenomenological study, the data collection involved collecting first-hand experiences from my participants related to the sole research question of this study: How does experiencing transgenerational trauma influence the way that Black Millennial-aged women raise their Black daughters? As the researcher, I developed fifteen interview questions based on three major categories: Transgenerational Patterns, Relationship with Mother, and Parenting Style with Daughter. Following the interviews, the participants were asked to watch the Netflix documentary, *In Our Mothers' Gardens*, and complete a ten-question qualitative survey developed by me as well. Following the analysis of the data collected through one-on-one Zoom interviews with the seven participants, three major categories were revealed: Transgenerational Patterns, Relationship with Mother, and Parenting Style with Daughter. Additionally, the data analysis of their completed qualitative surveys revealed that the participants all believed in accepting Black womanhood in all healthy forms.

Table 5.1 provides a description of the major interview categories and the themes revealed by the participants' answers.

Table 5.1 Interview categories and themes from participants' responses

Interview Categories	Themes from Participants' Responses
Transgenerational Patterns	Adverse Childhood Experiences
	Lack of Communication
	Racism
Relationship with Mother	Hyper-independence
	Othermothers
	Current Relationship with Mother
Parenting Style with Daughter	Gentle Parenting
	Open Communication
	Acceptance

To be Black in America is often difficult, and to be a Black woman in America is frequently exhausting; however, to be a Black mother in America… often can seem nearly impossible. The findings of this current study expose an unbounded list of transgenerational traumas that the group of Black women are subjected to and therefore, both consciously and unconsciously seemed bound to pass on to their daughters. For Black women, transgenerational trauma has looked like getting kidnapped… raped…hung from trees as babies were cut out of them. For Black women, transgenerational trauma also looks like poverty…grief… and being systematically oppressed for both their race and gender. For Black women, transgenerational

trauma can also look like nothing because Black mothers often arm their daughters with hyper-independence, silence, and a lifetime of overthinking every interaction. More specifically this current study, for the Millennial-aged Black mothers of daughters who offered their truths as participation, transgenerational trauma looks like motivation. The participants of this study collectively share a willingness to change how transgenerational trauma occurs throughout their families and a dedication to lightening the burdens of memories for their daughters. This study examined transgenerational trauma patterns and impacts on mother/daughter dynamic parenting styles with daughters.

Although negative stereotypes and archetypes have plagued the depiction of Black women within American society, there remains a lack of inquiry into how the treatment impacts a Black woman long-term. While the specifics of this study are related to Black motherhood, the study also considers how external factors like treatment within society, influence the way that Black women see themselves. This ultimately impacts how they teach their daughters to see themselves and a cycle develops that can (and often is) perpetuated. This study revealed elements of transgenerational trauma both covertly embedded as actions and behaviors or overtly offered as protection. For Black mother-daughter dyads, transgenerational trauma is not limited to the genetic changes developed after trauma (Barlow, 2018). Transgenerational trauma in Black mother-daughter relationships also stems from how Black mothers approach parenting their daughters. As revealed through the literature reviewed in conjunction with this current study, minority mothers often use the authoritarian parenting approach which limits their open communication with their children; prompting their children to listen and obey authority without questions (Payne, 2013; Rodriguez et al, 2009; Yaffe, 2023). This becomes a specific place of concern in Black mother-daughter relationships because Black mothers frequently feel obligated

to teach their daughters survival skills as a priority over assisting their daughters in developing into more well-rounded adults, a decision that ultimately causes rifts in the dyad's relationship. Like previously conducted studies (Narcisse, 2012), in this current study the participants relayed that during their childhoods, they felt as though their mothers' actions were hurtful, personal attacks on the people they were becoming. Furthermore, the participants shared that the "tough love" provided by their mothers often felt like a lack of love from their mothers. The participants shared that their mothers providing "tough love" is one of the transgenerational patterns that their mothers deemed necessary in their mother/daughter relationship.

Transgenerational Patterns

The initial commonality revealed by post-data analysis is that although not all participants explicitly stated experiencing trauma, all of their responses to the interview questions and/or qualitative survey have reportable adverse childhood experiences. Furthermore, the participants all felt as though they were encouraged verbally or shown physically, to be silent about their traumatic experiences (Barlow, 2018; Graff, 2017). Similar to my current study, Graff's study was an examination of the impact of intergenerational and historical trauma on Black Americans dating back to the Middle Passage. Graff notes that there are three main instances of the transgenerational transmission of trauma; Black girls are frequently sexualized at early ages, corporal punishment is higher among Black children, and Black children are typically diagnosed with attachment disorders more than their white counterparts. Graff related these modern occurrences to the normality developed around slavers sexually assaulting Black girls and women, how Black mothers were taught to fear that if they do not physically discipline their children then their children would be spoiled and disrespectful, and how common it was for Black children to witness their parents being beaten and removed from their homes (Graff,

2017). All seven participants of this current study also relayed experiencing adverse childhood experiences such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, substance abuse, etc. Some of the participants' hesitations or even inability to acknowledge traumatic experiences lie in how the frequency of transgenerational trauma in Black mother-daughter relationships has resulted in its normality within the dyad. When discussing their relationships with their mothers, all the participants shared witnessing similarities in the actions and behaviors of their mothers, grandmothers, older sisters, older cousins, and/or aunts. Although Black Americans are statistically more predisposed to some of the experiences previously mentioned, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are not exclusive to Black Americans. "Almost half of all U.S. children have experienced at least one ACE, with documented, detrimental effects on lifelong health for those that experience two or more" (Thompson et al., 2020, p. 100). Related to ACE, psychiatrist and best-seller author Dr. Bessel A. Van der Kolk stated:

> As long as you keep secrets and suppress information, you are fundamentally at war with yourself. Hiding your core feelings takes an enormous amount of energy, it saps your motivation to pursue worthwhile goals, and it leaves you feeling bored and shut down…The critical issue is allowing yourself to know what you know. That takes an enormous amount of courage (Van der Kolk, 2015, pp. 235).

In his lengthy research pertaining to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Van der Kolk emphasized that acknowledging pain is paramount in healing and that healing is consequential to not repeating a harmful cycle. One of the findings of this current study was that Black Americans are more likely to experience a racial version of PTSD, referred to as Post Traumatic Slave Disorder (DeGruy, 2005). Even more specifically to the population examined for this current study, its findings show that Black women experience PTSD and Black Women's

Post-slavery Silence Syndrome (Barlow, 2018) as a result of gendered racism. These adverse experiences that start in Black girls' childhood typically continue as they age, eventually manifesting into negative self-esteem in adulthood. As shown throughout the literature review for this dissertation, as well as the findings of the current study, experiences with gendered racism coupled with a decline in self-esteem create negative transgenerational patterns that have traumatizing impacts. Furthermore, the participants of this current study shared that their mothers' willingness to continue hurtful transgenerational patterns shaped their overall relationship.

Relationship with Mother

Participants shared that a major difficulty with their relationships with their mothers stems from how their mothers taught them to handle traumatic situations, encouraging their silence. In addition to using silence as a coping skill, participants shared that their mothers also encouraged them to adopt the "strong Black woman" motif and to find a sisterhood group because only other Black women would be able to truly understand their pains. Thomas & King (2007) conducted a study that used a mixed method approach to their data collection in their pursuit of exploring the messages of socialization that Black mothers teach their daughters in attempts to prepare them for the unavoidable sexism and racism that they will face. The commonly adopted approach is to encourage Black daughters to emphasize their assertiveness and the "strong Black woman" motif to combat negative societal biases (Thomas & King, 2007).

All seven participants share in their adoption of the "strong Black woman" motif and how it created hyper-independence in their thoughts, actions, and general behaviors. The participants shared that their hyper-independence has caused increased stress as well as difficulties in romantic relationships. While some of the participants are currently partnered, all of the

participants act as the primary caregiver for their children. Although some of the participants shared that they witnessed their mothers struggle to be the primary caregiver without asking for help, all of them shared that they have developed support systems to assist with the care, development, and protection of their children. Participants shared that their greatest support systems include other Black women that ultimately act as othermothers for their children.

While not all the participants shared the experience of having othermothers during their childhoods, all of them expressed having knowledge of their necessity within the Black community and how they have worked to craft sisterhood groups that act as othermothers for their children (Lewis, 1989; Valandra, 2015). The existence of othermothers within the Black community dates further back than written history has attempted to maintain accurate accounts of the Black experience. Many Black mothers have shared that their reliance on social support groups, commonly referred to as "villages" within the Black community, is a necessity given their compounding responsibilities (Dale & Safren, 2018). Even more, the participants of this study share the idea of only being able to entrust the care of themselves and their daughters to other Black women. The participants shared that by accepting assistance with their responsibilities, they are able to better prioritize the emotional development of their daughters as well. The participants of this current study also all believed that the transgenerational trauma within their families had direct negative influences on their relationship with their mothers, prompting the participants to constantly work on themselves so that they do not continue to pass transgenerational trauma to their children in the same way. The participants shared that they have all been involved in inner work such as therapy to better manage their feelings in hopes that they do not inadvertently impact their relationships with their daughters.

Parenting Style with Daughter

In addition to a collective experience with various forms of transgenerational trauma, all of the participants of this study shared that their negative experiences with their mothers directly influenced their personal parenting style with their daughters. All seven participants relay taking a "gentle parenting" approach with their children, an approach that mimics an authoritarian parenting style. Furthermore, participants shared that their gentle parenting approach caused disagreements with some of their loved ones, as also noted in previously conducted studies (LeCuyer et al, 2015; Pittman et al, 2012). Within their longitudinal study of Black mothers and the transmission of transgenerational trauma, LeCuyer et al. (2015) also displayed how Black women faced criticism when they chose a parenting style that differed from their own mothers'. LeCuyer et al. (2015) utilized participants in a 1992 study about parenting practices to find participants for the 2012 study. The 2012 study mimicked the 1992 study and involved participants that are also the Black daughters of the participants of the 1992 study and allowing for direct observation of the transgenerational transmission of parenting styles and disciplinary measures used.

Participants of this current study also share a desire to prioritize open communication with their daughters to arm them with knowledge over fear. Reflecting upon their relationships with their mothers, the participants shared being fearful of asking questions about difficult topics like racism, sexism, gender roles, stereotypes, etc. Even more so, the participants shared memories of their mothers encouraging their silence following traumatic situations and stating that silence was often the only way to guarantee their safety from further traumatization. Compared to their experiences with their mothers, the participants share an obligatory feeling of positively influencing their daughters' self-esteem and encouraging them to expand their goals

beyond the stereotypes of Black women in America. Participants believed that by prioritizing the development of their daughters' self-worth and open communication about the societal realities that await them, they could protect their daughters with critical thinking and pride. For this current study, the existence of transgenerational trauma within their own lives impacted the parenting approach that the Millennial-aged Black mothers adopted for raising their own daughters. Participants share that they acknowledge that as Black girls their daughters are predisposed to have traumatic experiences, however, they do not want their relationship to be an additional source of trauma.

Implications of the Study

Implications for Theory

Black Feminist Thought (BFT) was developed to address the unique intersection of oppression that only Black women are subjected to (Collins, 2000), which made BFT the most helpful theory to structure this current study. The theory of Black Feminist Thought (BFT) has been paramount in providing a space in the academic world to use direct narratives from Black women as evidence pertaining to the mistreatment that Black women face. Black Feminist Thought encourages researchers to utilize a narrative approach to better examine the daily reality that Black women face and how those experiences shape how Black women see themselves, use their voices, and ultimately how the experiences shape the way Black women teach their daughters to behave. As it pertains to the current study, the use of Black Feminist Thought allotted opportunities for more in-depth depictions of how transgenerational trauma has impacted the participants' lives from childhood to motherhood. Black Feminist Thought worked well to examine the longevity of the impacts of transgenerational trauma, furthermore, BFT helped to

account for the nuances of each participant's individual experiences while simultaneously exposing the commonalities in the participants' experiences.

By applying the use of Black Feminist Thought, as the researcher, I was able to develop open-ended questions for the interview and the qualitative survey that prompted the participants to authentically share their experiences without concerns about if they were answering "correctly." Throughout the interviews, all participants shared concerns about constantly overthinking their words and actions to better protect themselves from how outsiders may react to them. By being a Black woman and conducting the interviews myself, I created a safe space for genuine discussions where African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and sister-to-sister talk could be freely used without worries of misinterpreting the participants' responses. Sister-to-sister talk is "Afrocentric slang to describe congenial conversations or positive relating in which life lessons might be shared between Black women". (Few, et. al, 2003, p. 205). Although Black Feminist Thought is a theory specific to examining the lived experiences of Black women, to further address the specifications of how Black mother-daughter relationships are impacted by transgenerational trauma, a theory would need to be developed that connects family-based theories with Black Feminist Thought.

Research indicates that gendered racism is the most impactful external factor in the continued existence of transgenerational trauma in Black mother-daughter relationships. Policies such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (Jennings & Rentner, 2016) and *Affirmative Action* (Fryer & Loury, 2005) are presented as tools to address racism in the school system and workforce, but those policies do not explicitly address sexism which is another source of oppression for Black women. Moreover, while they may be safeguards intended as protective factors against racism and sexism, they fail to protect against the intersection of these scourges and therefore Black

women remain vulnerable to the impacts of both. The findings of this current study indicate that the external treatment Black women face is internalized and often passed to their daughters. This transmission of transgenerational trauma occurs both consciously and unconsciously and it often manifests in the survival tactics that Black women have established to protect themselves. An improvement in the external treatment of Black women will undoubtedly create room for direct improvements in Black mother-daughter relationships.

Implications for Advocacy, Practice, and Policy

To properly address transgenerational trauma in Black mother-daughter relationships, advocacy must begin with addressing how Black women are generally treated within society. Transgenerational trauma develops in the collective memories of the negative experiences faced by a family; however, many factors constitutive of transgenerational trauma initially develop outside of the home and are later internalized. A positive shift in the treatment of Black women would demand changes in all of the systems of America that benefit from the malicious oppression of Black women. From the healthcare system that has a long history of medical breakthroughs perfected under the unnamed and discarded bodies of Black women to the modern workforce system that continues to require Black women to outperform their counterparts with other social identities while simultaneously getting paid significantly less; true advocacy is necessary. True advocacy to assist in bettering Black-mother-daughter relationships is a dedication to improve the way that Black women view themselves and the possibilities of their lives because following the external mistreatment, Black women often relay beginning to believe the negative stereotypes and internalize the very gendered racism that others subjected them to. As Black women internalize the negative stereotypes it begins to negatively impact their actions, behaviors, and beliefs. In relation to my career as a licensed mental health professional, I have

found that providing culturally competent counseling is essential for assisting Black women to combat the internalization of negative stereotypes. Previously conducted studies (Nash, 2021; Owens & Fett, 2019; Roberts, 2007; Witherspoon et al, 2022) show that this internalization often leads to diagnoses such as depression and anxiety conveyed through behaviors including being hyper-vigilant during daily activities. The findings of this current study support a potential correlation between transgenerational trauma and the prevalence of mental health diagnoses in Black women. Furthermore, this implies that training mental health professionals in cultural competence counseling must include confronting one's own biases that may negatively impact their work with Black women.

An additional implication revealed following the conclusion of this current study is that advocacy for Black women must improve within Black communities. Participants of this current study shared their experiences of feeling unsafe due to members within the Black community, specifically Black men. A shift to improve the safety of Black women in the community will consequently decrease transgenerational trauma related to love, relationships, and self-worth passed from Black mothers to their daughters. When a Black woman becomes a mother, her focus typically shifts to protecting her children from the same external mistreatment that she has experienced. More specifically to Black mothers of daughters, the protective lessons prompt Black daughters to develop "armor" to protect themselves, all at the risk of their emotional development. The prioritization for Black mothers to teach their daughters how to physically and financially protect themselves frequently leaves little or no time to develop a strong emotional connection between the dyad, a misstep that often has negative and long-lasting impacts on the dyad's relationship. Due to the systematic gendered racism embedded in the roots of America, a true step to the decrease of transgenerational trauma in Black mother-daughter relationships is a

call for radical acknowledgment that Black women face vicious treatment while simultaneously burdened with engrained trauma derived from centuries of mistreatment of their foremothers. More so, for change to be solidified the acknowledgment would have to be followed by deep-seated affinities that address maltreatment.

Implications for Counselors

Regarding the practices when working with Black girls, courses that teach cultural competency and sexual biases should be mandated for all providers that work with them directly, such as teachers, counselors, police officers, etc. Since previous studies show that Black girls face adultification as young as five years old (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Roberts, 2007) these mandated courses would work best starting with providers working with Black girls in kindergarten to those working with Black girls through adulthood. Specifically for my work as a clinical mental health counselor, the findings of this study can influence how mental health providers work with Black women as clients. The participants of this study all shared that their relationships with their mothers directly influenced the participants' self-esteem, how they identify as Black women, romantic relationships, platonic relationships with other Black women, and ultimately, their parenting styles with their own daughters. As mental health professionals working with Black women that are struggling with things such as depression, hyper-independency, healthy relationships, self-image, and anxiety, questions related to your client's relationship with her mother and/or mother figure would be helpful in better understanding the source of their actions, behaviors, and thoughts. Example questions include: (1) what do you know about your mother's life prior to your birth, (2) how would you describe your relationship with your mother, and (3) what is a lesson that your mother taught you that you still remember? Questions related to the client's mother will assist in tracing how the client crafted their own

self-esteem and how they see themselves within society. Furthermore, as mental health professionals, it is paramount to be culturally conscious of how our clients' experiences with others influence their own self-image. This study's findings show commonalities in how Black women present themselves to outsiders, i.e. code-switching and hyper-independence, and that the presentation is often limited to what the participants felt would be accepted by the general public. As mental health professionals it is important for us to acknowledge this as a possibility and encourage our Black women clients to explore why they don't feel accepted in their authenticity. As mentioned throughout this dissertation, Black women face discrimination that starts when they are young girls who have yet to develop the cognitive functions to protect themselves. Efforts to decrease the quantity of the transgenerational trauma that lingers over Black mother-daughter relationships would require an unrealistic eradication of the racial and sexual biases that are generationally passed throughout other families employed to ensure that Black women remain the "mule" of America.

Research Limitations

Limitations

An initial limitation of this current study is the method of obtaining participants. By utilizing my personal social media pages to request participation, the chances of the potential participants knowing each other were high. Most of my social media pages are built around relationships developed during my collegiate career, which elevated the possibility of the participants having similar educational and social economic backgrounds. Furthermore, using this method to obtain potential participants heightened the possibility of my participants having a personal history with me and/or the other participants. Moreover, depending on how long I had

been connected to the participants on social media, there was an increased chance that I would also know the participants' mothers and/or daughters.

Another limitation of this current study was the location used for data collection and safety measures against the spread of Covid-19. While online interviewing is sufficient, it limited my ability as the researcher to account for the participants' body language compared to meeting in-person. As a licensed mental health therapist, I have studied body language and could have obtained additional data by analyzing the participants' physical responses. While most of the participants and I lived in the Southeast region at the time of data collection, we lived in various cities and/or states. Consequently, it would have required my participants to pay for their own travel in order to arrive at a central location to conduct in-person interviews. More so, scheduling in-person interviews would create additional exposure for each participant and their families to the Covid-19 viral and potentially deadly infection. The decision to host in-person interviews would have also prompted the participants to obtain childcare for the duration of the interviews to maintain the participants' autonomy and privacy when answering the questions.

Additionally, limitations of this study include a small sample size, limiting the participants to one per family, and generalizing the findings of this study to present in a condensed manner. While the small sample size of seven provided concrete commonalities within the participants' lived experiences, a larger and more diverse sample would strengthen the argument that transgenerational trauma widely impacts Black mother daughter relationships broadly, and in similar manners. The participants of this study also shared commonalities in other social identities such as education level and geographical location which may have increased the commonalities in their lived experiences. Although the interview and qualitative survey for this study prompted participants to share experiences with their mothers and

daughters, as the researcher, I did not extend an invitation to their mothers and daughters to participate in this study. By merely obtaining the participants' opinions of their relationships with their mothers and daughters I subsequently obtained their unconscious bias as well. In limiting the participants to one per family, an opportunity to trace the specific route of the family's transgenerational trauma was missed. While generalizing, the findings of this study was necessary to present a cohesive depiction of the phenomenon examined, it is also a limitation of this study. The generalization of this study's findings is a limitation because it leaves little room to discuss the nuances of each participant's individual experiences and how they may have impacted the participants' thoughts and behaviors more than the existence of transgenerational trauma within their relationships with their mothers.

A final limitation of this study was the depth to which the participants' traumas could be discussed. Although I am a licensed clinical mental health professional, I was not engaging with the participants in the capacity of a therapist. While some uncomfortable feelings were expected, it would be potentially triggering to deepen my inquiries developed as the participants were discussing their past experiences. The interview questions were written with the intention to invoke the least amount of potentially triggering conversation; however, the interviews were constructed to limit the length of time for the interviews and participants could share as much of their experiences as they felt comfortable sharing.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research into the impacts of transgenerational trauma on Black mother-daughter relationships would require a larger population size as well as participants that differ in their other social identities, such as education, social economic class, and location. To strengthen the available literature regarding the impact of transgenerational trauma, future research could

include the perspectives of the participants' mothers and daughters as well. Most of the participants of this current study shared that it was still difficult to have conversations with their mothers about their childhood. Furthermore, the lack of communication causes their mothers to be concerned with how they parent their daughters; expressing fears that a "gentle parenting" approach will have negative influences. By including the participants' mothers and daughters, researchers could assist in widening the perspectives of all those involved.

Considerations of how many children the participants have, and the genders of their children would also be beneficial to future research pertaining to how transgenerational trauma impacts the way that Black mothers raise their daughters. Literature related to motherhood revealed that there are typically differences in a mother's approach to raising her son compared to raising her daughter. In addition to how children are represented in the family system, it would also be helpful to future research to consider how the parents' relationship with one another impacts transgenerational trauma in Black mother-daughter relationships. The participants of this study shared that while their mothers may not have had consistent conversations about relationships and gender roles, they learned by watching their parents interact.

Conclusion

Transgenerational trauma in Black mother-daughter relationships is not merely a familial problem, but rather a global cause for concern. The roots of transgenerational trauma lie in the collective experiences of a biological family and the collective experiences of Black people in America. More specifically to Black women in America, transgenerational trauma involves gendered racism resulting in the openly accepted, even encouraged, devaluation of Black women. As a result of the heinous treatment that Black women endure, negative beliefs about themselves are internalized and accepted as irrefutable truths. Black women are taught that the

only ways to combat this discrimination are to be less of their authentic selves and conform to fitting into one of the long-lasting negative stereotypes of Black women (Jezebel, Sapphire, or Mammy) until they fully developed into a "strong Black woman" who could take the mistreatment in silence, eventually finding joy in their sacrifice. When Black daughters are birthed to Black mothers that are still burdened with the transgenerational trauma that pumps through their veins…the cycle continues. But the mothers in this study have shown that does not have to be the case. Rather, mothers can commit to *removing the armor* so that transgenerational traumas do not burden their daughters or future generations of their families.

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