Fall 2021

Mothering Through our Pain: Single Black Mothers’ Narratives

Yolanda E. Surrency

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd

Part of the African American Studies Commons, Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons, Family, Life Course, and Society Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/2312

This dissertation (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.
MOTHERING THROUGH OUR PAIN: SINGLE BLACK MOTHERS’ NARRATIVES

by

YOLANDA SUREMENT

(Under the Direction of Delores Liston)

ABSTRACT

Black women’s voices and historical contributions have been dismissed, and even excluded, making it difficult for their cultural knowledge to be transmitted to future generations. Black women battle with an unsettled consciousness from subscribing to the normalization of what dominant culture defines as good mothering. This study uses Black feminism to examine single Black mothers who navigate the negative images of the welfare queen and the matriarch. This narrative study uses Black feminism to examine the stories of single, Black mothers and their daughters. The purpose is to investigate Black mothers’ lived experiences to understand their struggles and resistance. Purposeful sampling was used to select seven single, Black mother-daughter dyads, both agreeing, to participate in the study. The participants answered semi-structured questions. Using Black feminism as a guide to explore participants’ stories, the researcher identified that Black women may shift through the childhood, teen, and womanhood stages of development. In each stage, the mother-daughter dyad shared oppressions and presented noticeable changes in their mother-daughter relationship. The analysis further revealed that single household Black mother and daughter dyads managed their household through various levels of interdependence as the daughter aged.

INDEX WORDS: Black feminism, Narrative study, Black women, Single Black mothers, Mother/daughter relationships, Legacy of struggle, Epistemic privilege, Resilience, Strength
MOTHERING THROUGH OUR PAIN: SINGLE BLACK MOTHERS’ NARRATIVES

by

YOLANDA SUREMENT

B.S., Thomas Edison State College, 2008

M.S., Central Michigan University, 2009

M. Ed., Georgia College and State University, 2011

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEDICATION

“We are our mothers’ children, every one of us. And that umbilical cord connection makes you and me, in ways unconscious and profound, their dream keepers” (Tyson, Burford, & Davis, 2021, p. 110). I dedicate this research to my children, Jaron, Ti’mea, and Makaila. This research has taught me that I have unconsciously made each of you my dream keeper. Reading Black feminist traditions and reflecting on my daughtering and mothering experiences allowed me to think deeper about my informal curriculum and generational transmission. It is my prayer that each of you look deep within to achieve self-actualization.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Black daughtering influences Black mothering and impacts a mother and daughter relationship. The daughtering experiences which is influenced by her mother’s experiences contribute to her informal curriculum. I would like to thank my single, Black mother, Betty McFerrin Lilly, who remained resilient while mothering three sons and two daughters. The doctoral journey and my dissertation allowed me to be reflective of our shared oppressions and make new meaning of my daughtering experiences. I am indebted to the Black women who trusted me with their stories and for their time and transparency during their interviews. I am especially grateful to my family, colleagues, and friends for their constant support, understanding, and encouragement throughout my doctoral journey. I appreciate the support of my immediate leadership at Fort Valley State University, Dr. Mark Latimore, and Terrence Wolfork during this difficult journey. I am extremely appreciative to my courtesy readers and editors, your inquiry and belief in my work sustained me during my doubtful times.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my dissertation committee Dr. Delores Liston, Dr. Meca Johnson-Williams, Dr. Sabrina Ross, and Dr. April Schueth for their insightful, and invaluable expertise that guided me to accomplish my dissertation goal. I am grateful to my chair Dr. Liston for providing feedback that challenged me to think deeper and to trust my thoughts; to Dr. Johnson-Williams for her qualitative and Black feminism expertise that immensely contributed to my understanding of the methodology section; to Dr. Ross who introduced me to Black feminism that formed my research interest while in my coursework and for sharing her expertise in Black feminism, counternarratives, and mothering; and to Dr. Schueth for sharing her expertise in sociology and guiding me to be inclusive. Their collective wisdom provided me a foundation that enhanced my research experience.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS........................................................................................................................................3

LIST OF TABLES..................................................................................................................................................5

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION..................................................................................................................................................6
   Purpose of the Study...........................................................................................................................................6

2 MOTHERING THROUGH OUR PAIN: SINGLE BLACK MOTHERS’ NARRATIVES.......................................................22
   Rearticulating Single Black Motherhood............................................................................................................22

3 REARTICULATING BLACK WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES.......................................................................................61

4 COUNTERNARRATIVES OF BLACK MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS.................................................................73

5 CENTERING MATRILINEAL SUBJUGATED KNOWLEDGE................................................................................131

6 HEAR YE, HEAR YE.........................................................................................................................................154

REFERENCES.......................................................................................................................................................162

APPENDICES

A RESEARCHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL............................................................................................................179

B CONSENT FORM..............................................................................................................................................181

C RECRUITMENT MATERIAL...............................................................................................................................183
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participant Profiles........................................................................................................77
Table 2: Population and Crime Index..........................................................................................152
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
Purpose of the Study

Black Women Playing in the Dark

Black women’s voices and historical contributions have been dismissed, and even excluded, making it difficult for their cultural knowledge to be transmitted to future generations (Baszile, 2016; Collins, 2000). The hegemonic cultural knowledge overshadows cultural knowledge that marginalized groups attempt to retain. Hegemonic cultural knowledge, seen as natural, normal, and inevitable, standardizes the values and beliefs in the United States of America (Collins, 2000). Contrary to the hegemonic efforts, Black women battle with an unsettled consciousness from subscribing to the normalization of what dominant culture defines as right and valid knowledge. The lack of Black cultural and historical knowledge makes it easier for Black girls to assume the values and beliefs of the hegemonic culture which has been known to be oppressive. Black feminism aims to use Black women experiences to reclaim the historical contributions and cultural knowledge of Black women and to redefine what it means to be a “Black woman.” Eleanor Traylor (2005), summarizing how Black feminism redefines Black women, writes that it emerges as a sensibility…explores first the interiority of an in-the-head, in-the-heart, in-the-gut of a discovery called the self…tests the desires, the longings, the aspirations of this discovered self with and against its possibilities for respect, growth, fulfillment, and accomplishment…finds sisterly empathy with complementary selves…discovers a voice by which to end its own entrapping silence and to end its silencing in the media of traditional and prevailing expressive modes…refuses the assumptions and terminology of
colonial, capitalist, racist, and gendered versions of reality; linguistically, its aspirations include the subversion of terms that reduce the ever-wide dimension of the self...liberate the agents of self and world revolutionary thought and change from imposed hegemonic interpretation or labeling. (p. xi-xii)

The complex uniqueness of Black women allows Black women to be many or all and varying degrees of Traylor’s (2005) redefinition of Black women. Audre Lorde (1984) argued, “We find ourselves having to repeat and relearn the same lessons over and over that our mothers did because we do not pass on what we have learned” (p. 117). Lorde’s argument is prevalent today in Black women lived experiences and self-care (Black & Peacock, 2011; Nichols et al., 2015). For instance, researchers have identified behaviors that revealed Black mothers suppressing emotions as a coping strategy to resist the strong Black woman stereotype (Nichols, et al., 2015). Black mothers who may value strong Black woman traits also see self-reliance as the critical developmental task for their daughters (Oshin & Milan, 2019). Latoya Owens recalled, “my mother modeled certain behaviors that I emulated to challenge oppression, there were various incidents when I feel I would have been better served by a peer support system” (Owens, et al., 2018, p. 128). According to Latoya Owens, Erica Edwards and Sherell McArthur (2018), girlhood studies “are not racially inclusive and do not reflect the variance in gendered experiences” (p. 130). Reflecting on and finding space to write about their experiences empowers Black communities.

**Researcher Reflexivity**

I am a Black middle-aged mother of three children, one son and two daughters. I have been raising children for 27 years of which I spent 12 years married. The doctoral program at Georgia Southern University introduced me to a new way of thinking about Black women and
Black motherhood. The curriculum studies professors introduced me to scholars that awakened my consciousness. Early in my program, Dr. Ming Fang He allowed each student to select a theorist to study for her course. Dr. He assigned me to research William Watkins whose work focused on Black curriculum after I had randomly selected a White male theorist. As I write this, I still feel her stare of displeasure which accompanied an assertive query as to why I selected this particular theorist. My lived experiences made Watkins’ scholarly work extremely relatable, and it led to my improved understanding of racial and social oppression as well as appreciation of Black feminism. Black feminist scholars and their narratives helped me unlock the ‘Pandora’s box’ to who I am as a Black woman and improved my understanding of my relationships as a wife, mother, and daughter. Black feminist thought became my pathway to liberation, and I decided to further my work exploring Black women lived experiences.

He’s scholarship in multicultural narratives broadens curriculum studies in education (He, 2009; He & Phillion, 2008; He & Ross, 2012; Phillion & He, 2004; Phillion, He & Connelly, 2005). He’s distinguished counternarratives (He, 2009; He & Phillion, 2008; He & Ross, 2012) share in the efforts of Black feminist thought exploring race, gender, and class oppressions of marginalized groups. Counternarratives are used to tell personal stories of marginalized groups’ lived experiences. Black feminism specifically addresses the oppression Black women struggle with from their intersecting identities of race, gender, and class. The oppression, whether a mother internalizes it or resists it, may affect how a Black woman mothers her daughter. Some Black mothers, who have found a healthy way to resist oppression, show this in her self-love and in her relationships with other Black women, but specifically with her mother and daughter. This dissertation contributes to the body of knowledge on relationships that single, Black mothers have with their daughters. Black feminist thought as the theoretical
framework produces an accessible document from a Black mother’s perspective for Black women. I do not have direct association to any of the people in the study; however, commonality may exist since I was raised, and have reared children in a single mother household. This counternarrative intends to understand how Black mothers recognize and resist oppression; and, more importantly, how Black mothers socialize their daughters.

Single, Black mothers’ perspectives on Black motherhood significantly contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of education. Black feminist thought can be used as a theoretical framework to investigate societal beliefs about Black women, specifically Black motherhood, that are transmitted through historical meta narratives and Black cultural knowledge. According to Ming He (2016), visionaries such as John E. Dewey have been ‘pushed to the margin’ for their beliefs that traditional education “opposed expression and cultivation of individuality” (Dewey, 1938, p. 19). He (2016) urges teachers, scholars, and policymakers to re(discover) the “common heritage of humanity…and research to cultivate the full human potentialities in an increasingly, complicated and contested world” (p. 37). John Dewey’s (1938) and He’s (2016) progressive intellectual thoughts encourage my interest to contribute single, Black motherhood experiences to the field of education. Counternarratives resolve complications and confusions instigated by ahistorical perspectives and invite knowledge that educators can use to, in Dewey’s prescient language, “arrange the conditions which provide the subject-matter or content for experiences that satisfy these needs and develop the capacities…for individuality of experience and yet firm enough to give direction towards continuous development of power” (Dewey, 1938, p. 58). Nichole Guillory (2012) used her multicultural course to create space, particularly for White preservice teachers, to deconstruct their assumptions. The preservice teachers employed
autobiography to “examine how various intersections create varying degrees of privilege, and
recognize how this privilege impacts their teacher identities (Guillory, 2012, p.12).

As I began to explore Black mothering, I discovered ways Black cultural knowledge
transcends through Black mothers’ storytelling and their behaviors. Patricia Collins’ (2000)
Black feminist epistemology depicts how knowledge and wisdom based on Black women lived
experiences can be used to educate Black girls. Black feminists are aware of the complications
Black girls experience from an ahistorical perspective taught in traditional education. Many
Black feminists also acknowledge the suppression of Black women’s contributions within those
curricular experiences (Baszile, 2016; Collins, 2000). Denise Baszile (2016) shared her
experience growing up in a family that embraced Blackness and how it allowed her to be drawn
to hooks’ (1990) scholarship. Baszile’s early exposure to Black feminism is an act of resistance
for a Black girl being “forced to show up in a place that consistently failed to meet her needs”
(Baszile, 2016, p. 12). Baszile’s experiences are similar to the ideas of Alice Walker’s (1997)
book *The Temple of My Familiar*.

Baszile’s (2016) experience demonstrates her ability to resist a curriculum that constructs
a disparaging worldview. Baszile reflects on a memory of her mother and aunt, “no one taught
me to imagine the possibilities in seeing Lillian and Bertha as intellectuals because it was
impossible for them to be intellectuals, right?” (Baszile, 2016, p. 21). Baszile accepts her
mother’s intellectual wisdom while she refrains from ascribing to the self-agency that was being
taught in schools. A mother’s curriculum, in this instance, led her daughter to the scholarships
that offered Black girls a reference to radical Black (female) subjectivity as a way to think and as
a “counterhegemonic force” (Baszile, 2016, p. 3).

*Researcher Positionality*
My interest in Black women experiences comes from my experience as a Black woman and as a Black mother. As a result, I seek to understand how race and gender oppression affect the lives of Black mothers and their daughters. According to Yvonna Lincoln, Susan Lynham, and Egon Guba (2011), an intergenerational study needs to be “derived from community consensus regarding what is ‘real’…a goodly portion of social phenomena consists of the meaning-making activities of groups” (p. 116). Evidence suggests that mothers tend to have the most influence in their daughters’ socialization, attitudes, and ideals about self (Arroyo, et al., 2017; Johnson, 2016). Analisa Arroyo, Chris Segrin, and Kristin Anderson (2017) found in their intergenerational study that Black women’s historical struggles and behavioral transmission appeared to be consistent from great-grandmother through great-granddaughter; yet the struggles with self-objectification remained from mother to daughter. Black mothers are most influential in contributing to their daughters’ perception of self and narrative methodology allows the researcher to make meaning of collective experiences (Arroyo, et al., 2017).

**Statement of the Problem**

Black women lived experiences and oppressions are based on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. As Black women journey through life, social forces contribute to their oppressions and lived experiences. The oppressions uniquely problematic for Black women increase for single, Black mothers. Primarily White America blames single, Black motherhood for causing societal strains for birthing and not mothering their own children (Johnson, 2016). Systemic structures and negative discourses effect some single, Black mothers financially, psychologically and emotionally as they seek ways to dispel the ‘Black genetic inferiority’ (Joseph, 1991). A single, Black mother who struggles financially to provide for her family, proven adequate or perhaps inadequate, also loses time she spends with her daughter. The reduced time for a Black woman and her daughter may infer a “too strong matriarch
raises…’unnaturally superior’ daughters” (Collins, 1991, p. 44). A Black mother and her daughter may suffer from oppression caused by exploitation; and, any internalized oppression is generally transmissible from a Black mother to her daughter (Collins, 1991). Gloria Joseph’s (1991) study finds that the transmission of knowledge and skills reflects that Black daughters have “undeniable respect and admiration for their mothers’ accomplishments and struggles” (p. 95). In a Black mother’s narrative retold by Baszile (2016), Black feminist thinkers analyzed a Black daughter’s story as a clouded gaze of a “complex of adoration and disappointment” (p. 33). Silence has the power to isolate Black mothers from their daughters, whether it is through their pain or the inaccessibility of intellectual wisdom found in Black women writings (Baszile, 2016). Importantly as Joyce Everet, Laverne Marks, and Jean Clarke-Mitchell (2016) conclude in their research, Black mothers understand their daughters’ need to recognize and draw from their inner strength. The importance of Black women writing is essential to be accessible to Black women for surviving and resisting oppression.

**Purpose of the Study Summarized**

The purpose of this narrative study is to examine how single, Black mothers’ experiences shape their attitudes about caring for self and their children to include variations in Black cultural knowledge and investigate how this cultural knowledge is transmitted intergenerationally.

**Significance of the Study**

Education has two major components, formal and informal, wherein Madeline Grumet (1988) differentiates the components by the type of knowledge learned (Kridel, 2010). Formal education provides technical knowledge that is used to learn a skill and gain employment. Formal education uses curricula developed for general audiences based on patriarchal ideologies, institutional policies, and capitalist needs (Grumet, 1988; Kridel, 2010; Watkins, 2001).
Informal education provides social and cultural knowledge that is transmitted through generations within families, homes, and communities (Grumet, 1988; Kridel 2010). Generally, patriarchal power and discourse control policies that mandate formal education and the social structures that affect informal education. For example, the government’s rhetoric around good mothering practices has changed based on the economy and labor shifts to support women working outside of the home (Kinser, 2010). Brianna Turgeon (2018) found “rhetoric about mothers of color further blames mothers for broader social issues, such as high rates of single motherhood, teen pregnancy, and incarceration…while middle-class expectations of child-centered mothering may involve mothers abstaining from the workplace, working-class and poor mothers are often expected to work as a way of providing for their children” (p. 130-132).

Although men make educational and institutional policies, they tend to blame women and mothers for students failing in formal education, which contributes both to economic and societal problems (Gay, 2018). The blame is more pronounced in Black communities even though Black children do not receive an equitable education compared to that of White, middle-class children (Gay, 2018; Grumet, 1988; Todd-Brelan, 2018). Therefore, Black women created networks to resist oppression caused by social, institutional, and educational structures (Giddings, 1984). These networks of Black women educate Black women and children, as well as provide historical and cultural knowledge. Many studies exist about Black families and Black mothers. Limited research has been done on single Black mothers and their relationships with their daughters. Grumet (1988) argued, “knowledge evolves human relationships” (p. xix). And through human relationships, more specifically in this case, mother and daughter relationships, knowledge reproduction and knowledge transmissions occur. As such, it is important to understand the lived experiences of single, Black mother-led households. Single, Black mothers’
stories discussing their attitudes, self-image, and acts of resistance contribute to the informal curriculum of Black mothers and their children. To examine the curriculum of Black mothers, the researcher employs Grumet’s (1998) prescriptive process “to think back through our mothers so that we may find forms to shape and express what…our curriculum choices are motivated by our responses to our experiences of reproduction” (p. xviii). April Few, Dionne Stephens, and Marlo Rouse-Arnett (2003) identified researchers quantitatively and qualitatively misrepresenting, misappropriating, and/or misconstruing the experiences of Black women. For example, “narratives about being single mothers are often rendered invisible in quantitative research methodologies that erase individuality in favor of proving patterns of welfare abuse” (Collins, 2000, p. 272). Other researchers disregarded collecting data from Black families and chose to represent “Black family life through comparative quantitative data collected mostly from Whites” (Few et al., 2003, p. 205) which objectifies and suppresses Black women experiences. This binary way of thinking may oppress Black women and girls, leaving them with a lack of exposure to the voices and stories of Black women. People develop and create meaning about their identities through self-reflection and “reposition themselves relative to others” (Baron, et al., 2012 p. 469) from the ambiguous and complex images in master-narratives. For this study, participants’ counter stories claim human subjectivity for Black women; yet, more relatively, for single, Black mothers.

Black feminism is knowledge from Black women about Black women. Epistemology, simply put, is the theory of knowledge. In this study, the discussion around epistemology centers on the requirement that Black women lived experiences produce social thought that is used to resist oppression. Black women researchers who share a similar social location renegotiate the stereotypes and myths in the pursuit of truthful knowledge for Black women (Few, et al., 2003).
The pursuit requires the researcher’s knowledge and, more importantly, consciousness to move them “beyond knowing to understanding what factors influenced that experience” (Few, et al., p. 206). This study contributes to narratives about single Black mothers by providing their epistemic perspectives about mother and daughter relationships within the Black feminist core themes of work, family, and motherhood.

The study also recognizes the contributions that women and mothers make to Black girls’ informal curriculum and offers counternarratives on how they navigate the intersecting oppressions shaped by institutional practices within formal and informal education (Collins, 2000). Julia Jordan-Zachery’s (2007) counternarrative shares her personal experience of feeling helpless as a Black mother when her six-year-old daughter questioned the exclusion of Black girls on a popular television show. Toni Morrison’s (1992) book *Playing in the Dark* negotiates the omission of Black presence and addresses the intersecting oppressions experienced by Jordan-Zachery's young daughter and other Black girls. Morrison confronts ‘literary whiteness’ and racial oppression as she theorizes “to force its invisibility through silence is to allow the Black body a shadowless participation in the dominant cultural body” (p. 10). This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of single, Black mothers and their daughters to examine how those experiences are used to navigate oppression. Furthermore, counternarratives allow marginalized groups to speak truth to power and, in so doing, move from silence and marginalization to speech and liberation (hooks, 1989). Grumet (1988) conceptualizes that it is “the settlement between lives we are capable of living and the ones we have” (p. xii – xiii). Black women counternarratives challenge formal education and offer Black girls subjugated knowledge so they are prepared to resist intersecting oppressions.

*Research Question*
In this study, the participants are single, Black mothers who have at least one daughter. The study on Black mothers’ and daughters’ experiences are guided by the research question, “What is the informal curriculum that single, Black mothers pass on to their daughters?”

**Objectified Black Women**

Black women exist in a patriarchal society where they suffer from oppression and the dominant discourse suppresses and silences Black women’s acts of resistance. The suppression of Black female voices is intentional to maintain social, institutional, and educational structures. These hegemonic structures primarily benefit White men, though Black men and White women seek emancipation while objectifying Black women (Giddings, 1984). Their objectified efforts are sometimes disguised in an effort of respectively unifying their plights, yet not at the sake of oppressing themselves (hooks, 2000). Because of these exclusionary effects, Black women birthed Black feminism to create a space for themselves and redefine what it means to be both Black and a woman. Black feminist counternarratives share experiences of how Black women resist their struggles through strength and hope, promoting positive images, and celebrating the diversity of Black women.

Black women’s oppression and inferiority begin with being born Black and female. The history of Black women’s racial and sexual/gendered oppressions at the hands of men and White women continues that plight. Nevertheless, Black women perspectives introduce Black women to experiences specifically for Black women, Black motherhood, and work. The counternarratives written by Black feminists negate negative images, challenge social, institutional, and political structures while supporting Black Mothers, both biological and non-biological matrilineal bonds, on the tenets of legacy of struggle, epistemic privilege, and resistance from the oppressive structures surrounding motherhood. Black motherhood, for the
purpose of this study, focuses on Black women and Black children, not Black women mothering White children.

Organization of the Study

In this section, the researcher briefly outlines how the study is organized. Chapter one provides the introduction, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. The researcher discusses the lack of Black women narratives that recounts their historical contributions and lived experiences within Black girls' curriculum. Chapter two provides a review of literature on the intersecting oppressions experienced by Black mothers. Chapter two focuses largely on Black women's legacy of struggle, epistemic privilege, and resistance. Chapter two also contains the theoretical framework which begins with a historical overview of Black feminism, followed by discussion on Black womanhood, Black family, and Black mothers. The theoretical framework provides an understanding of Black women lived experiences and their intersecting oppression from negative image stereotypes. Chapter three proposes a narrative methodology for the study. The methodology section begins with the origin of a narrative inquiry and how it has been used in educational research to collect stories about individual lived experiences. The researcher continues with defining the philosophical assumptions: narrative methodology is experience, reflexive, and relational. The philosophical assumptions complemented with Black feminist thought frames a Black feminism narrative study to collect and analyze data from three to seven single, Black mother families in middle Georgia. The researcher uses chapter four to explain the data collection process, and the virtual platform used for conducting interviews on a secured connection. Chapter four describes how the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis and research software was used to code and analyze the data. Black feminism tenets were employed to categorize the codes. Chapter five provides a data analysis of what knowledge was transmitted from a single Black mother to her daughter through the
childhood, teen, and womanhood stages. The final chapter summarizes the research findings and its contribution to education.

**Definition of Terms**

**Acculturation:** a set of social processes by which we learn how to ‘go on’ in a culture through the acquisition of the language, values, norms, and maps of meaning that constitute a way of life (Johnson, 2011).

**Black consciousness:** a form of identity politics, a worldview that sees lived Black experiences as important (Collins, 2000).

**Black genetic inferiority:** a blight on the surface of white respectability until sufficient numbers of Whites are affected and involved (Joseph, 1991).

**Blackness:** social construction of individual and collective identity of Black folks (hooks, 1993).

**Colorism:** prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color; reflects how Black women see and value themselves (Walker, 1983).

**Counternarratives:** contest the official or meta narrative that often portrays disenfranchised individuals and groups as deficient and inferior (He & Ross, 2012).

**Dual socialization:** an ability to be different people at different times without losing a core sense of self (Greene, 1990b).

**Epistemic privilege:** refers to Black women’s standards for assessing truth through collective experiences and accompanying worldviews that U.S. Black women sustained based on their particular history (Collins, 2000).

**Epistemology:** standards used to assess knowledge, or why we believe what we believe to be true (Collins, 2000).
Harsh criticism: confronting issues when angry, pissed, and desire to use “the truth” as a weapon to wound others or to assert power over another person. The practice of truth-telling to assault someone else’s psyche; “tell it like it is” (hooks, 1993).

Hegemonic: a form or mode of social organization that uses ideas and ideology to absorb and thereby depoliticize oppressed groups’ dissent (Collins, 2000).

Ideology: a body of ideas reflecting the interests of a particular social group. Scientific racism and sexism constitute ideologies that support domination. Black nationalism and feminism constitute counter-ideologies that oppose such domination (Collins, 2000).

Internalized racism: ongoing self-hate, low self-esteem, and constant assault of oneself by inner negative feedback; results in inability to fully self-actualize (hooks, 1993).

Intersecting oppression: interdependent concepts of binary thinking, oppositional difference, objectification, and social hierarchy. With domination based on difference forming an essential underpinning for this entire system of thought, these concepts invariably imply relationships of superiority and inferiority as well as hierarchical bonds that mesh with political economies of race, gender, and class oppression (Collins, 2000).

Intersectionality: analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape Black women experiences and, in turn, are shaped by Black women (Collins, 2000).

Jezebel: a woman whose sexual appetites are, at best, inappropriate and, at worst, insatiable. It becomes a short step to imagine her as a “freak” (Collins, 2000).

Mammy: overweight, dark, and with characteristically African features—in brief, as an unsuitable sexual partner for White men. She is asexual and therefore is free to become a surrogate mother to the children she acquired not through her own sexuality (Collins, 2000).
Marginalized groups: groups often psychologically abused and systematically degraded and humiliated (hooks, 2000).

Maternal thinking: intellectual capacities she develops, the judgments she makes, the metaphysical attitude she assumes, and the values she affirms (O’Reilly, 2009).

Matriarch: the sexually aggressive woman; one who emasculates Black men because she will not permit them to assume roles as Black patriarchs. She refuses to be passive and thus is stigmatized (Collins, 2000).

Motherhood: an institution that occupies a special place in transmitting values to children about their proper place (Collins, 2000).

Mothering: an active practice destabilizing the notion of motherhood and is always incomplete, indeterminable, and vulnerable; in which the maternal subject is engaged in a relational process that is never complete and demands reiteration (Springgay & Freedman, 2012).

Oppositional knowledge: a type of knowledge developed by, for, and/or in defense of an oppressed group’s interests. Ideally, it fosters the group’s self-definition and self-determination (Collins, 2000).

Oppression: an unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society. Race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, age, and ethnicity constitute major forms of oppression (Collins, 2000).

Othermothers: women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities—traditionally have been central to the institution of Black motherhood (Troester, 1984).

Redefinition: combining familiar ideas in new ways (Collins, 2000).


Self-definition: the power to name one’s own reality (Collins, 2000).
Sisterella complex: a Black woman who honors others but denies herself, achieves in her own right (or overachieves), yet works tirelessly through pain to promote, protect, and appease others. She tries so hard to be what others want and need that she has loses control of the shifting process or gives up too much of herself. She has internalized society’s messages that she is less capable, less valuable…she has lost sight of her own gifts and needs. Her identity is confused, personal goals are buried, and she shrinks inwardly; she becomes depressed (Jones & Shorter-Goeden, 2003).

Stepsister: who is indicative of class discord within the “sisterhood” of Black women; and has a higher socioeconomic class and has not dealt with a number of tribulations of the lower classes (McDonald, 2007).

Strong Black woman: aggressive, assertive woman who is penalized—abandoned by men, ends up impoverished, and is stigmatized as being unfeminine. Imaged as a dangerous, deviant, castrating mother who divides the Black community (Collins, 2000).

Subjugated knowledge: the secret knowledges generated by oppressed groups. Such knowledge typically remains hidden because revealing it weakens its purpose of assisting them in dealing with oppression (Collins, 2000).

Welfare queen: a phrase that describes economic dependency—the lack of a job and/or income (which equals degeneracy in the Calvinist United States); the presence of a child or children with no father and/or husband (moral deviance); and, finally, a charge on the collective U.S. treasury—a human debit (Lubiano, 1992).
CHAPTER 2
MOTHERING THROUGH OUR PAIN: SINGLE BLACK MOTHERS’ NARRATIVES
Rearticulating Single Black Motherhood

In this study, I seek to investigate and understand the experiences of Black women and motherhood. Black motherhood is subjected to the intersecting oppression of negative stereotypical images of the welfare queen (a woman has more children for money and refuses to work), or the matriarch (a woman blamed for emasculating men and failing her own children) (Mendenhall, et al., 2013). For this study, Black is capitalized to empower the Black race, and race is not intended to be separated from gender. The Black feminist theoretical framework grounds this study and focuses on the following tenets: a legacy of struggle, epistemic privilege, and resistance. The researcher discusses the strengths of this framework, including a historical overview, theoretical precedents, as well as potential criticisms and my defense of the use of the Black feminist approach to the tenets investigated.

The Legacy of Struggle

The legacy of struggle has been used by Black women in North America to resist oppression since slavery. Through the historical knowledge of systemic struggles, Black women understand their social relations of subservience and inform their acts of resistance. Collins’ (2000) matrix of domination refers to the intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender, and how they organize Black women’s individual and collective agency of power and empowerment. For example, Alice Walker (1983) affirmed that “it is the Black woman’s words that have the most meaning for us, her daughters, because she, like us, has experienced life not only as a Black person, but as a woman” (p. 275). Walker related more to Black women’s experiences and their social location than to Black men’s experiences as she references Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglas. Walker realized that she, along with many others, has fostered and advertised Black
men’s intellectual tradition for years; yet the epistemic perspective of slaves’ experiences vastly differs when considering gender. According to Black women writers, Tubman and Douglas endured similar treacherously dehumanizing experiences, yet Black female bodies were also violently exploited, sexually assaulted, and used as units of capital to produce more slaves (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1983). The narratives of Tubman, Truth, and other Black women intellectuals reflect a Black woman’s resilience and resistance against systemic oppression (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1983; hooks, 1981; Walker, 1983).

Furthermore, the systemic oppression that slavery structured and supported continues to impact the social progress of Black women in North America due to their intersecting identities of race and gender. The intersectionality of race and gender positioned Black women at the bottom level of the power structure, both socially and economically. Socially, Black women struggled to be acknowledged and respected as women in society, similar to White women (Davis, 1983; hooks, 1981; Truth, 1851/1995). Theorists argue that the Black and woman social locations yield a rightful place of oppression and servitude to men and White women.

Historically, as well as economically, Black women have been forced to work tirelessly and have not financially benefited from their laborious contributions to capitalism (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1983). Confined to slavery, Black women’s bodies were viewed as commodities and valued based on their fertility or their ability to bear more children. Their work and their children were inherited by their slave owners. The social and economic oppressions appeared to affect Black female slaves or free Black women’s self-valuation and family values (Davis, 1983). Their values and ethics were rooted in their means of survival, which gave them daily hope and strength. For example, Black mothers demonstrated their love by caring for and teaching their children and other Black children after withstanding torturous workdays (Collins,
Black women understand that developing and socializing Black children to survive the intersecting oppressions is a collective responsibility that involves othermothers, which is used as an act of resistance (Collins, 2000; Everet, et al., 2016). Othermothers provide parenting support to Black mothers regardless of the father’s involvement. Everet, et al.’s (2016) participant described her relationship with her mother as “very traumatic and just unhealthy” (p.343). The authors recognize the protective quality of othermothers and affirm the positive impact resilience, coping strategies, and self-esteem of the daughters (Everet, et al., 2016). Othermothers are also a source of resilience for Black girls whose mothers suffer from internalized racism.

The struggle continues for Black women today; unfortunately, many historical repositories have limited Black female slave narratives and Black women’s intellectual traditions have been generally publicly inaccessible though particularly needed. Often libraries devalued Black women’s writings about their experiences. The shelves were stocked with literature written by men and White women scholars who objectified Black women writers. Black women are subjected to many forms of oppression through the mainstream discourse of inferiority. Throughout time, the voices and narratives of Black women have failed to be lifted and celebrated in the same way as the voices of Black men, specifically when it comes to experiences with struggle during the era of slavery. As such, Black women’s intellectual traditions have generally been inaccessible beyond the oral tradition. Black women intellectual traditions provide a platform from which Black women’s experiences, perspectives, and triumphs can be seen and heard. Without those traditions to inform their sense of self, some Black women are unable to be inspired to overcome societal expectations. Jamila Smith’s (2012) participant identified the hip-hop culture as modern slavery, arguing that young girls are unaware of societal
trickery as they seek to imitate sexual prowess and reaffirm negative images such as welfare queen or Jezebel. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) discuss how Black women depressed with “Sisterella” symptoms received inadequate treatment from mental health professionals due to their misdiagnoses. Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden defined a “Sisterella complex” as the complex of a Black woman who honors others, but denies herself, achieves in her own right (or overachieves), yet works tirelessly through pain to promote, protect, and appease others (p. 124). Consistent with the slave system’s genderless exploitation, a Black woman suffering from the Sisterella complex continues to share work demands comparable to a Black man and is generally denied feminine weakness allowed to White women (Davis, 1983; Truth, 1851/1995). Some Black women seem to be aware that “their endless capacity for hard work may have imparted to them a confidence in their ability to struggle for themselves, their families, and their people” (Davis, 1983, p. 11). Black women who internalize the societal messages of welfare queen or matriarch lose sight of their own needs which leads to battles with mental health and self-neglect.

Angela Black and Nadine Peacock (2011) suggest that Black women associate the “strong Black woman” identity with the need to sacrifice self-care. Black and Peacock’s participants revealed their need to be “a strong warrior” as they suppressed negative emotions to keep their families happy and healthy. As a result, they lived with pressures of expectations placed upon them by family, friends, employers, and society to be everything to everyone and blamed themselves when they failed. Bell hooks (1993) stated that Black women have the ability to self-heal and self-recover when they embrace the inherited strength that is embodied within as opposed to negatively internalizing it because of a metanarrative that defines them and their foremothers.
**Epistemic Privilege**

Black women, empowered by their lived experiences, are considered experts on Black women’s experiences and are more believable and credible than those who have not experienced life as a Black woman (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) expounded that the lived experience, “a criterion for credibility frequently invoked by U.S. Black women when making knowledge claims,” grants Black women epistemic privilege and validates their oppositional knowledge through their collective ideas and experiences (p. 276). Black feminists have the epistemic privilege to write in a tone that addresses the authentic pain from the strains of oppression that Black women have traditionally experienced and continue to endure. Historically, society has viewed Black women as being less feminine than White women, and Black women have been perceived as masculine when expected to labor beside Black men (hooks, 1993).

Additionally, Black women’s intellectual tradition uses their epistemic privilege to speak from experiences that are reflective of Black women, acknowledging their struggles and countering the misrepresentation described by the master narrative. Epistemic privilege refers to Black women’s standards for assessing truth through “collective experiences and accompanying worldviews that U.S. Black women sustained based on their particular history” (Collins, 2000, p. 273). There are four dimensions for Black women validating truth: lived experiences as criteria of meaning, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, the ethic of caring, and the ethic of personal accountability (Collins, 2000). The validated truth is connected to Black women’s legacy of struggle which is essential to their survival (Collins, 2000). Jones and Shorter-Goeden (2003) found that 80 percent of Black women struggle socially and psychologically as a result of shifting their behaviors due to racist and sexist myths indicating that they are inferior, unshakable, unfeminine, untrustworthy, and sexually irresponsible. For example, in Jones and Shorter-Goeden’s study, their participants who suffer from the “Sisterella” complex are talented,
hard-working, selfless Black women who suppress their own needs and lose their identity (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). In *Shifting*, Black women’s words are used in the hopes that readers who are Black women find a story that resonates with their own experience, and all readers “gain a deepened awareness of the terrible cost of bias and discrimination” (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 36).

Solidarity and empathy are crucial for Black women to assess and validate knowledge claims to collectively redefine Black women’s experiences (Collins, 2000). Despite their social norms and socioeconomic class differences, Black women “may find it easier than others to recognize connectedness as a primary way of knowing” (Collins, 2000, p. 279) through mothering and their need to rely on each other. Maya Angelou’s (1991) foreword in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters* vividly describes her experiences with Black motherhood and daughterhood which validated the knowledge claims of the chapter authors with her statement “being reminded of past gifts, I pray I shall have the courage to liberate my mother” (p. xii). Black women may share racial and gender identities; however, classism shifts worldviews and realities. Socioeconomic conditions tend to cause unrelatable experiences for Black middle-class and working-class women. Nevertheless, Angelou’s (1991) epistemic privilege united their motherhood and daughterhood experiences as she validated that her experiences too were in the quilt stitched by the many Black women narratives anthologized in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters*.

Authentic voice, an epistemic privilege tenet, shows an emotional tension that reflects the pain and struggles Black women experience from oppression. Conveniently, Black women intellectuals are expected to write in a “ladylike” or “play nice” voice (Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004). Black women’s intellectual tradition speaks to primarily Black women, and these writers’
epistemic privilege fuels the harsh tone that is sensed in their writings, resonating with the pain and frustration that may reside within Black women and, also, establish trust between the author and reader. If a “ladylike” voice is used to reach a broader audience, the mechanism may distort the message intended to speak to Black women (Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004).

If the purpose is to redefine Black women in terms of their strength and resistance and to improve the social conditions of Black women and their communities, then the task cannot be achieved passively or through a detached voice. The authentic voice, transferred to readers, equips readers to have a sense of urgency, to ultimately change lives through their newfound ideas and social consciousness so that Black women can accept the knowledge transmission and embrace their culture. The authentic voice is essential to establish pride in the authentic self and speak against the socialization of hegemonic values and prepare Black children for navigation of public spaces (hooks, 1993).

**Resistance**

Resistance, in terms of Black feminism, is when Black women use wisdom and knowledge to manage dual identities as a means of survival (Collins, 2000; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Black feminists stimulate resistance by reconstructing Black consciousness and reclaiming Black culture through literary works, cultural arts, or political platforms, which deconstruct negative images, ideas of inferiority, and oppressive structures (Collins, 1998, 2009; hooks, 1990). According to Collins (1998), “Black feminist thought can never remove itself totally from the ideas expressed by more powerful groups…in order to be both comprehensible and legitimated, it must use the constructs, paradigms, and epistemologies of the discourses” (p.124). The historical books, texts, images, and mainstream media readily accessible in Black education in North America are authored and funded by the dominant group: White males
(Watkins, 2001). Collins (2000) argues that the system is designed for social control and keeps Black women in their rightful subordinate place.

Black feminism provides space for Black women to be empowered by Black women intellectuals and their perspectives. Black women have been negatively portrayed or invisible in education. The discourse uses binary oppositions, and other oppressed statuses to objectify and dehumanize Black women. The racial and gender binaries, White/Black and male/female, legitimize social and institutional structures that define who and what is right and relevant. Both racial and gender differences have physical references; the preservation of inequality sustains oppression of Black women and other marginalized groups (Carby, 1999). Morrison (1992) theorizes that writers’ knowledge forms cultural practices and determines how “specific themes, fears, forms of consciousness, and class relationships” reinforce class distinctions and otherness while also asserting privilege and power (p. 52). Racial, gender, and other oppressed statuses also intersect Black women’s bodies, language, as well as cultural and social situations. For example, Black education celebrates the works of author Alex Haley, whose most common example of a Black historical genre is his book and subsequent movie, *Roots*. Alex Haley illustrated the sexual and economic usage of Black women and girls. The movie was popular and celebrated in the Black community. Coincidentally, Angela Davis (1983) interprets Black slave women and girls’ lived experiences significantly differently in her book *Women, Race, and Class*. Davis (1983) intentionally manages to uplift the spirit of a Black female slave with candor and viable examples. She addresses scholarly works by Black male theorists and White male and female theorists who did not recognize the strength and tenacity that Black women possess to resist oppression. For example, Davis (1983) acknowledges E. Franklin Frazier’s work on the impact of slavery on a Black family, but she illuminates the “spirit of independence and self-
reliance” (p. 14) of a Black woman. This example reconstructs my understanding of a Black woman. Davis’ (1983) interpretation resolves the daunting view of our foremothers as being helpless. Davis (1983) contributes to the cultural knowledge, recognizing and affirming the strength a Black woman needs to navigate systemic structures of oppression as effectively as her foremothers.

Communal networks are necessary to protect Black women, their families, and communities through an ongoing battle of resistance. Black women bring their diverse experiences to communal networks who have been marginalized and oppressed. Walker (1983) affirms “it is the Black woman’s words that have the most meaning for us, her daughters, because she, like us, has experienced life not only as a Black person, but as a woman” (p. 275). Black women are challenged to teach Black children ways to resist oppression associated with the dominant culture and reaffirm the richness of one’s heritage (Collins, 2000; Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004). Black mothers can embrace the approach from their Black slave ancestral mothers who taught their children to trust their own self-definitions and value themselves (Collins, 2009). Black mothers can share cultural knowledge with their children so that they can learn how to navigate through the various forms of oppressive conditions. Othermothering is a form of resistance valued in a Black community with the belief that “it takes a village to raise a child” (Collins, 2000; Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004). An example of this form of resistance was shown when President Barack Obama and the First Family moved into the White House and the family unit included the first daughters’ maternal grandmother. The grandmother’s role is interpreted to ensure that the daughters continue to be raised within the traditional matriarchal structure of the Black family when their parents’ assumed roles demand more of their time.

Black Feminism
Black feminism, as a theoretical approach, allows the researcher to understand Black women’s lived experiences and their oppression based on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. Some Black feminists seek to empower and liberate Black women from oppression by using Black women’s stories (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Hull, et al., 1982). In these collections, Black women intellectuals share their experiences and interpret the stories of others in expressive literary forms; the common expressive forms are autobiographical and biographical narratives, poems, or aesthetics. Black feminists anthologize literary texts to create subjugated knowledge from the perspectives of a collective of Black women, to be used for social uplift of Black women (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995).

Black feminism, grounded in the “intersectionality” of race, gender, and class, was established when Black women were continuously unable to benefit from their contributions to the social progress of marginalized groups. Black women are not represented when society references Black people, nor are Black women included in the Women’s Collective, as sometimes assumed (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 1981; Hull et al., 1982; James & Sharpley-Whiting, 2000). A Black woman ranks last on the social hierarchy with White men being first, while White women and Black men are equally placed or are sometimes interchangeable for a second and third social place (Collins, 2000). More concretely, Black women realized that they were excluded when rights were granted to both Black people and women. For example, Black women were denied a political voice despite their efforts for racial or gender equality. Black solidarity diminished after the liberation from slavery as “Black men encouraged Black women to assume a more subservient role” (hooks, 1981, p. 4) while establishing Black male patriarchy. Whereas White women felt Black women’s immorality was
the cause for their oppressive experiences (hooks, 1981), Black feminism addresses these social constructs of inferiority and devaluation.

The race and gender intersection promotes an identity of subservience, gender prejudice, and discrimination of Black women. Black women have contributed to and championed movements for political, social, and economic progress only to realize that progression did not yield Black women equitable opportunities, so their fight continued. Similar to exclusion due to race, social exclusion was placed on Black women by Whites, specifically, White women, during the social progression for gender equality in the Women’s Rights Movement. White women’s stance on “organize around your own oppressions” (hooks, 2000, p. 6) rejected unifying social statuses and differences specific to Black women. Socially, Black women received inequitable access to employment, housing, health care, and education (Collins, 2000). These inequities require a Black woman to work low-paying subservient positions which affects her overall quality of life. Black feminism evolved as a result of the exclusionary effects which denied full citizenship and equal rights as a result of the Civil Rights and Women’s Rights Movements. The exclusionary effects stripped Black women’s writings and cultural heritage purposed to strengthen a Black woman’s identity. Social hierarchy and its willful oppressions remain constant; furthermore, the exclusions of Black women’s writings are intended to prevent a Black woman from understanding her strength and the meaning of Black women’s experiences. Researchers theorize that Black men and White women writers often victimized Black women and excluded them in their contributions (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1983). Some Black women explicate “both power and inequality…helping us to understand the changing and historically contingent nature of these social constructs. Finally, through the lives of Black women intellectuals, we see the fragile and sometimes false nature of analytic categories. Binaries
between race and gender, politics and ideas, social science and the arts, and public and private all prove to be false as Black women thinkers move through space, time, and many spheres of ideas and action” (Bay, et al., 2015, p. 5). Black women’s epistemic perspective centers a story on the Black woman which shares her personal experience that also includes survival and acts of resistance. Paula Giddings (1984) describes a story about her enslaved great-great-grandmother who passed down her “rudiments of education, fine embroidery, and music, as well as the harsher lessons of being Black and woman in America” (p. 5). I often wonder why Black men and White women narratives exclude examples such as Giddings’ grandmother. Hooks (1981) argues that Black men and White women dismiss the racial and gender solidarity which reminds Black women of their oppressed identity and maintains a social hierarchy.

Black feminists’ “first job is to find out what liberation for ourselves means, what work it entails, what benefits it will yield” (Bambara, 2005, p. 1). Therefore, Black feminism was born to defy acculturation and refute the oppression of Black women by redefining what it means to be a Black Woman, empowering Black women, and questioning where Black women fit within society (Collins, 2000). Black female intellectuals remember the familial and communal Black women for the strength, beliefs, and loyalty that sustained their families and communities in the *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (Smith, 2000). The stories shared in *Home Girls* (Smith, 2000) are familiar experiences to some Black women. Black women writers discuss how they have always collectively shared their resources, healed sick people, and educated all children despite oppressive living conditions (Smith, 2000). Similar to *Home Girls* contributors, Barbara Smith (2000) explains, “I inherited fear and shame from them as well as hope,” yet many Black women continuously live fearful and shameful from childhood to and throughout adulthood without hope (p. xxiv). Black feminism’s purpose is to ignite hope by promoting
positive images, sharing experiences through counternarratives, and celebrating the diversity of Black women. Authentic voices are used to fuel the frustration ingrained in a Black woman’s core from oppression as she provides and sacrifices for her family.

Black feminist ideology of Black women writing about Black women may lead to an assumption that all Black women can be Black feminists. Collins (2000) stated, “Black feminism requires Black women to a process of self-conscious struggle on behalf of Black women, regardless of the social location” (p. 18). This self-consciousness comes from acknowledging the stories of foremothers and telling the relevant stories, the personal and historical truths, to empower Black women (Smith, 2012). Black women’s intellectual traditions have shifted the understanding of the value of knowledge. Though class varies among Black women, hooks (1993) found through her teachings that Black women have shared experiences despite class. Black women may share similar experiences due to intersecting oppressions of race and gender. Similar experiences of oppression should not infer that all Black women are Black feminists. Some Black women internalize self-hate, devalue their culture, and repress their family and community members. Black women’s intellectual traditions provide narratives to help Black women and their daughters understand why their anger may cause them to exhibit oppressive behaviors.

According to hooks (1993), not all Black women love or embrace “Blackness.” Isolated to distorted representations of the polarizing Black woman cause some Black women to disown their ethnic identity. Katrina McDonald’s (2007) study recruited 126 Black women from middle and lower-class populations to discuss the centrality of discrimination and relationships among today’s Black women.
While sistering across lines of personal and social difference has been the cornerstone of Black women’s activism historically, the desire and ability to sustain that legacy and to relieve the strain of discord within the twenty-first-century Black woman collective is—and always has been—a major concern. (McDonald, 2007, p. 129)

For instance, one of McDonald’s (2007) participants felt unfairly targeted as a child abuser due to her history of drug abuse. Her disdain for child abusers rejects racial solidarity with lower-class Black women and vulnerable marginalized groups (McDonald, 2007). Hooks (1993) also describes Black mothers fiercely critiquing young children to “behave appropriately in public settings” so the mother is “perceived as a good parent” (p. 24). Some Black mothers’ depictions of beauty and righteousness are unparalleled to appearances, behaviors, or inhibits Black family culture. What is affirmed communicates and seeps deeply into a child’s consciousness. Black women report in many studies that they are unaccepted by their family and the Black community when affluence is detected in their appearance, communication, or residence (Butler-Sweet, 2017; McDonald, 2007). Distorted representations of Black womanhood make Black women disassociate themselves from and condemn other Black women. They are hesitant to define relations with or share social connectedness and become harshly critical of one another (hooks, 1993; McDonald 2007).

Additionally, defined boundaries delineate epistemological assumptions for Black women’s intellectual contributions. As stated previously, Black feminists seek to provide knowledge from experiences that can help Black women identify and navigate oppression. That knowledge is also used to empower all women. Though men and women of other ethnicities may support and contribute to the Black feminist’s ideology and movement, they would likely be considered as advocates as opposed to Black feminists. Historically, men and White women have
separated themselves from Black women to benefit their own respective social progress 
(Giddings, 1984; Hull et al., 1982). In an attempt not to stereotype, this perspective stems from 
Collins’ (2000) epistemological tenet referring to U. S. Black women as “situated knowers,” 
meaning that she uses “we,” “us,” and “our” pronouns when sharing her Black women’s group 
standpoint, affirming that her audience is Black women; this tenet is not applicable to the 
experiences of Black men and White people, in general.

Coincidentally, some Black women share a role of advocacy. All Black women do not 
share a sense of agency to work for social advocacy in a Black community, whether that is due to 
a lack of social consciousness or perceived classism (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). 
McDonald (2007) suggests that some Black stepsisters are apathetic and may not share the same 
oppressive experiences as lower-class Black women. Black stepsisters “are of a higher 
socioeconomic class and have not dealt with a number of the tribulations of the lower classes 
including single motherhood, unsafe neighborhoods, and unreliable housing” (Butler-Sweet, 
2017, p. 389). Some middle-class Black women who assume supervisory roles marginalize low-
income Black women devaluing them as “inferior human beings and have the desire to exercise 
power over them” (McDonald, 2007, p. 77). Superiority is also exercised within Black woman 
scholars when “negative encounters with Black women peers, who often see differing opinions 
and lifestyles as reason to viciously trash, ex-communicate, and ostracize other Black women” 
(hook, 1999, p. 98). Hooks (1999) asserts that the legacy of being the ‘exception’ when White 
superiors place a Black woman in a ‘position of authority’ damages Black women’s ability to 
relate to one another.

In addition to social discord, researchers have found that Black women possess a 
generational discord within their group (Butler-Sweet, 2017; McDonald, 2007). McDonald’s
(2007) study participants found that young Black women do not collectively believe that Black liberation has relevance for today’s multicultural generation. Scholars argue that many young Black women are detached from the struggles of their oppressed ancestors to counteract and dismantle the adverse effects of systemic racism (Mendenhall et al., 2013). On the contrary, Black women activists have recently championed several movements for awareness and advocacy of physical abuse in the Black community (Cooper & Lindsey, 2018; Currie, 2020; Harris, 2018). Specific to the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, Black women operated as othermothers seeking rightful humanity for Black people. In 2007, Tarana Burke founded the #MeToo to assist young Black women and girls who have survived sexual violence (Currie, 2020; Seales, 2019). The #MeToo movement became widely recognized and gained significant traction after a White actress used and then credited the #MeToo movement Twitter handle in support of sexual assault victims in Hollywood (Currie, 2020). Furthermore, Black Lives Matter was founded in 2013 by Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometti to protect the Black community from police brutality, which for Black women also involved sexual assault (Cooper & Lindsey, 2018; Currie, 2020; Harris, 2018). Although Black Lives Matter advocates against violence on Black life, the tragedies experienced by Black men are more pronounced resulting in the invisibility of Black women fatalities (Cooper & Lindsey, 2018; Currie, 2020). Both movements aligned nationally with pioneers like Mary Church Terrell but also locally to Kolawole’s (1997) grandmother who advocated for any child with any noticeable evidence of physical abuse. Consistent with the historical civil rights and women’s rights movements, Black women’s lives remain at the margin of race and gender despite their efforts for civil and social progress. The narratives Black women write are sources of wisdom that help a Black woman understand how her action may heal her family as well as the Black community.
Relevance of Black Feminism

Black feminism intended to strive for Black women’s social uplift from “race, gender, and class oppression” (Collins, 2000). Credited in 1833 as one of the first Black feminist thinkers, Maria Stewart (1832), through an oral and written appeal, challenged other Black women to join her in redefining the negative images of Black womanhood (Collins, 2000; Stewart, 1832). Stewart (1832) publicly addressed the inequitable conditions that free Black women suffered while being contributing members to a society that dehumanized them. Stewart (1832) denied the “ragged set, crying for liberty,” and declared “our merit deserves, we feel a common desire to rise above the condition of servants…As servants, we are respected; but let us presume to aspire any higher, our employer regards us no longer” (p. 47). Her call to action not only addressed Black women but also Black men, noting to all Blacks that knowledge and respect is the responsibility of the Black race. Sojourner Truth, a freed slave, delivered her famous “Ain’t I A Woman” speech for equal rights less than a decade later. Sojourner Truth’s (1851/1995) speech unmasked the idea that Black women’s continued suffering was situated in their intersecting identities of being Black and a woman. Her speech also analyzed the treatment of free Black women and reinterpreted the designation of a woman, within the grounding principles of Black feminism. Stewart’s (1832) and Truth’s (1851) abolitionist efforts appealed to the fair treatment for all, and their public addresses specifically spoke to the mistreatment of Black women and their bodies. Frances E. W. Harper furthered Black feminist work by challenging sexual oppression through slave narratives (Collins, 2000; Giddings, 1984; Harper, 1893). Frances Harper’s (1893) slave narrative, Iola Leroy, captures how Black women suffered from oppression and prejudice. Black women intellectuals continued to emerge, such as Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell, sharing their experiences with fighting racism and lynching through their stories (Collins, 2000; Giddings, 1984; James & Sharpley-Whiting, 2000; Terrell,
The National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) was established in 1973 (Freedman, 2007; Giddings, 1984; James & Sharpley-Whiting, 2000). The NBFO was the first official Black feminist organization with over 2,000 members and 10 chapters in the first year it was founded (Giddings, 1984). Black feminism existed during slavery, and its efforts continue today in the narrative form of speeches, autobiographies, and biographies of outstanding Black women in professions related to intellectual endeavors, journalism, activism, writing, education, art, and community leadership to redefine Black womanhood and uplift Black women (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Black feminism has always been present in the social and political revolutions of Black women.

As such, Black feminism is appropriate to use as the foundation for this research because of its goal of uplifting the narratives and lived experiences of Black women. Black feminist scholars understand the significance of the historical plights and the internal strength of their foremothers. Black women slave narratives are included in anthologies and passages are referenced in their writings. This study aims to understand the ways of knowing strength, and what this means to a Black woman as well as how knowledge passes from generation to generation through maternal relationships, specifically those of a single, Black mother and daughter. Situating Black feminism in a historical lens allows for the acknowledgment of its role in the past while making room for its future role in the celebration of Black motherhood.

**Black Womanhood**

Black women are aware of and struggle with negative images and oppression (Collins, 2000; DeFrancisco & Chatham-Carpenter, 2000; Mendenhall et al., 2013; Scott, 2013). This awareness stimulates consciousness in most Black women and, as a result, they seek ways to redefine Black womanhood (DeFrancisco & Chatham-Carpenter, 2000; Scott, 2013). The Black women in Scott’s (2013) focus group “said they are well aware of stereotypes such as
‘overbearing, too outspoken, strong, angry, gold diggers, materialistic, oversexed, have lots of children, and unintelligent’ as the predominant images of Black women” (p. 319). Karla Scott’s (2013) counternarrative validates Mendenhall et al.’s (2013) participants who reject the social constraints with a sense of agency “to mitigate psychological risks” (p. 78). Redefinition helps Black women to understand their power, control their lives, and promotes resistance (Mendenhall et al., 2013). On the opposite end of the spectrum, Scott’s (2013) participants, young, Black women aged 19-25, articulated that “the status of ‘exceptional’ is not necessarily a point of pride…they see it as the norm” (p. 323). Linda, a participant, concluded, “I am a strong person because of the work I must do to succeed, but still there are people who either think of me as the exception because I’m not like other Black women they know” (Scott, 2013, p. 323). Scott’s (2013) participants normalized exceptional status for a hardworking Black woman as opposed to the Black woman hooks (1999) ascribed to superiority. According to hooks (1999) “usually, gifted brilliant Black women work in settings where it is easy to begin thinking of oneself as different from and superior to other Black women” (p. 97). Scott (2013) and hooks (1999) demonstrated that the exceptional label can be positively or negatively wielded. Some Black mothers teach strategies that are necessary to resist race and gender oppression and to redefine Black women’s normality. Scott’s participants used survival strategies to help them navigate a space that was not designed for them. These once young Black girls, who are often subjected to racial stereotypes and internalized racism within the Black community, were prepared to perceive themselves as competent, successful Black women (Scott, 2013). Consequently, Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) found that sometimes high-achieving Black women “break down emotionally or physically” while trying to prove themselves (p. 8). The idea of an exceptional Black woman may be exploited by White men, as hooks (1999) exposes in her
writings, to oppress other Black women and infiltrate negative images in their space, causing Black women to continually prove themselves.

A Black woman’s value for the continuation of life as she births, nurtures, and educates Black children in addition to the nurturing of some White children is also exploited. The historical reference of exploitation invites the personal narratives of Black women who speak about the need and appreciation for grandmothers and othermothers to assist with childrearing while a Black mother works long hours to financially provide for her family. In Victoria DeFrancisco and April Chatham-Carpenter’s study (2000), participants shared their appreciation of belonging to a neighborhood ‘family’ community that instills adaptive life skills in Black children when they were faced with life experiences. Harriett recalls, “the neighbors helped raise us. . . When our parents weren’t around… They would often be dissuaded from getting into trouble” (DeFrancisco and Chatham-Carpenter, 2000, p. 80). Very often, Black women assist when there is an absence of Black mothers who are working long hours and need help with childrearing.

The social and economic struggles that Black women experience maintain their inferiority and devaluation based on their race and gender (Collins, 2000). This pattern of inferiority is consistent with historical exploitations of Black women. For example, in 1661 a Virginian law stating that “children born of a Black woman, no matter who the father was, would inherit her status… a master could save the cost of buying new slaves by impregnating his own slaves, or having anyone impregnate her” was passed (Giddings, 1984, p. 37). In Harper’s (1893) slave narrative, *Iola Leroy*, Maria Leroy along with her two daughters became slaves after the death of her White husband. Maria understood the devaluation of Black women and her children when she told her husband, “I sometimes lie awake at night thinking of how… the children and I
might be reduced to slavery…I don’t mind the isolation for myself, but the children” (Harper, 1893, p. 79-80). Children born from Black women continued to be subjected to the status of inferior -- which was not applicable to children born from White women. Jewel Amoah (1997) explains, “lessons of the past lay the foundation for the present construction of the theory of resistance” (p. 96). Both the legacy of struggle and the theory of resistance empower Black women to survive racial and gender intersecting oppression that attacks their humanity (Amoah, 1997; Butler-Sweet, 2017; Collins, 2000; Mendenhall et al., 2013).

The intersectionality of race and gender maintains Black women’s status within the matrix of domination despite their contributions to social and economic progress. Hooks (2000) argues that Black women are aware that their servitude is indispensable and that knowledge “transcended poverty and despair, strengthened our sense of self and our solidarity” (p. xvi). Black women who are mentally and physically healthy empower Black children with a sense of self through the continuity of wisdom (Amoah, 2013). Counternarratives written by Black feminists confront harsh circumstances, share survival strategies, and act as resistance so Black women can live fully (hooks, 1993). A narrative of Black women is “both the theory and the practice. The unity of theory and practice implies the unity of the theorizer and experience. Black women are informed and shaped not only by their own personal experiences, but the experiences of those around them and those that came before them” (Amoah, 2013, p. 97). Participants reported that they have always been in a positive environment within the Black community (DeFrancisco & Chatman-Carpenter, 2000; Scott, 2013). A positive environment fosters both agency and communion.

Black women inherit knowledge and strength from their foremothers to survive the oppression that awaits them in life. This knowledge is transmitted across generations while a
Black girl is growing up. Amoah (1993) theorizes a “reconnect with one's past and one's ancestors in the process of asserting one's voice in the present...for the creation of a more equitable position in the future” (p. 91). Collins (2000) offers two opposing examples of how Black mothers teach their children to internalize or resist oppression: a mother teaches them to believe in their own inferiority or a mother teaches them to trust their own self-definitions and value themselves. The dominant narrative that suppresses Black women’s history and defines Black women and their experiences disempowers the knowledge transmission and hinders Black girls’ ability to discern their self-value and self-worth (Collins, 2000). Colorism, specifically from Black mothers, commonly causes internalized oppression in Black women (Collins, 2000; Walker, 1983). Colorism, prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color, reflects how Black women see and value themselves. Walker's (1983) *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*, Mrs. D. M. T recounts the hate she felt from her grandmother, “My grandmother love her bright child, seem to had only hate for me” (p. 29). Walker (1983) implores Black mothers to abolish the idea where freedom and whiteness are the same. In her memoir, Walker (1983) anthologizes Black women’s narratives about the spirit of Black women and how their strength is passed on from Black mothers to their daughters. These experiences are critical because they teach Black girls how to navigate through life while resisting oppression. Witnessing or learning about Black women’s experiences and contributions critically complement cultural knowledge and essentially prepare Black girls for Black womanhood.

A Black woman uses her knowledge and strength to take care of everyone else except herself, which leads to physical, psychological, and financial problems exacerbating a life filled with self-loathing (hooks, 1993; Jones and Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Nichols et al., 2015). The
strong Black woman image is a trait that Black girls learn from their mothers. Walker’s 1983 stellar essay describes what she learned from her mother:

During the “working” day, she labored beside—not behind—my father in the fields. Her day began before sunup and did not end until late at night. There was never a moment for her to sit down, undisturbed, to unravel her own private thoughts; never a time free from interruption—by work or the noisy inquiries of her many children. And yet, it is to my mother—and all our mothers who were not famous—that I went in search of the secret of what has fed that muzzled and often mutilated, but vibrant, creative spirit that the Black woman has inherited, and that pops out in wild and unlikely places to this day. (p. 238-239)

Walker (1983) honors her mother along with other Black mothers for the legacy of respect and resilience they passed down to their daughters. Linda Oshin’s and Stephanie Milan’s (2019) comparative study on White, Latina, and Black mothers reveals that Black mothers believe independence, self-reliance, and self-efficacy are critical to their daughters’ ability to manage and resist racism, sexism, and economic inequities. Black mothers also instill strength and independence attributes (Oshin & Milan, 2019) as a resistance to the negative welfare image. Conversely, Tracy Nichols, Meredith Gringle, and Regina McCoy Pulliam (2015) found that “mothers expressed the importance of serving as a role model of self-care to avoid their daughters feeling the need to be “a strong warrior and to suppress negative emotions to keep their families happy and healthy” (p. 183). In Black mother narratives, whether the Black mother illuminates, promotes, or teaches the characteristics of the strong Black woman image, the attention to self-care is vital. Smith (2000) also recalls watching not only her mother but all the women surrounding her who “cleaned, washed, iron, sewed, made soap, canned, held jobs, took
care of business downtown, sang, read, and taught us to do the same” (p. xxii). Smith (2000) believes Black women were training their daughters for womanhood.

In addition to strength and independence for self-survival, many participants were reminded to take care of or “help her brother and sister” (Oshin & Milan, 2019, p. 185). Learning and remembering to provide for self and family further overwhelms Black women. Researchers find that Black women’s health disparities are more common from exhaustion and stress management due to lack of self-care (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Nichols, et al., 2015; Waters, 2015; Watson & Hunter, 2016). Walker’s (1983) and Smith’s (2000) observations relegated self-care being insignificant in the preparation of Black women. Regardless of slavery and post-slavery oppressive experiences, Black women lived with hope for generations and found what freedom felt like to them (hooks, 1993). Hooks’ (1993) hope for Black women to use knowledge and resistance to heal themselves, support their Black sisters, and, as a collective, mend Black communities.

The Black Family

Historical slave practices destroyed families by selling Black men and leaving Black women to manage families (hooks, 1993). According to hooks (1993), the political influences that stem from slavery stimulate competition between Black men and Black women, which corrupted Black family harmony. Black families of African descent, in fact, were defined as a mother and her children (Greene, 1990a). In Rochelle Holland’s (2009) study, single Black mothers reported that “being a mother was more important than being married,” and their attitudes are consistent with African culture (p. 173).

African Motherhood

American Black women, similar to their African foremothers, share the qualities of a strong family and community life (Davies & Graves, 1986). African mothers also value
grandmothers and othermothers as a continuation of life and view their mothering as a collective responsibility of African extended families (Collins, 1991; Davies & Graves, 1986; Green, 1990a). African grandmothers’ social responsibilities are to be a “repository and distributor of family history, wisdom and Black lore, and retainer and communicator of values and ideals which support and enhance her personhood, her family, and community” (Davies & Graves, 1986, p. 258). African male scholars rarely acknowledge the significance a grandmother’s role has in western African communities and, as a result, oppress African women with their patriarchal ideology. Davies & Graves (1986) concluded “male African writers idealized views of motherhood are external factors leaving out grandmothers creating men leading characters” (p. 244). As an act of resistance to oppression by African male narratives, African women draw strength and survival from African women’s experiences in their community. Mary Kolawole (1997) writes about that strength as she remembers her grandmother’s “very strong personality, firm, strict, and feared by both men and women” (p. 10). Kolawole (1997) observed her grandmother exerting power as an othermother to sustain the well-being of the children in her community. She wrote, “my grandmother would follow any grandchild to school if there was any noticeable evidence that the child had been beaten and demand why her grandchild has been treated so cruelly” (Kolawole, 1997, p. 10). African women’s collective experiences served as a source of strength and resistance for African mothers’ liberation and self-actualization (Kolawole, 1997).

Mothering has two valuation systems in West Africa. In some African societies, an African female is granted her womanhood once she gives birth (Davies & Graves, 1986). A western African woman’s worth is measured by the number of children she births, and that worth increases for male births (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997). Carole Davies and Ann Graves (1986) note that
“women’s reproductive capacity is crucial to a husband’s lineage, and it is because of women that men can have a patrilineage at all” (p. 243). Buchi Emecheta (1994) concludes “what greater honor is there for a woman to be a mother, and now you are a mother—not of daughters who will marry and go, but of good-looking healthy sons” (p. 119). This patriarchal, social institution regulates sexual life with “male shall dominate female” (Davies & Graves, 1986, p. 96) in which the valuation benefits the male.

Conversely, in other western African communities, women value their matrilineage and find empowerment in their children and families. A mother uses her status to challenge some of the demands that African cultures place on African women (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997). African mothers may experience “cultural and patriarchal practices that give better socio-economic and/or political status to mothers, especially mothers of sons opposed to mothers of daughters” (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p. 25). Nevertheless, many African women reject the African patriarchal ideology that motherhood authorizes African womanhood and success. For example, Emecheta (1979), in her book The Joys of Motherhood, sends her daughters to school instead of marrying them off and sets up a trade, “constructing subjectivity and agency by positionality” (p. 32). Despite African motherhood’s conflicting ideas about women as forced mothers or sexual slaves (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997), African women continue to value and redefine their lives beyond their children and fertility (Davies & Graves, 1986). Oyeronke Oyêwùmi (2003) distinguishes feminism as a “broader reach in that it need not be confined by history; in fact, it describes a range of behaviors indicating female agency and self-determination” (p. 1). Since many West African societies are gender-inclusive and do not contain gender-specific terms (Oyêwùmi, 2003), African feminists argue that the patriarchal gender ideology was socially constructed for “women’s reproductive and sexual capacities” (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p. 17). According to
Oyèwùmi (2003), feminist practices align with European and American social inequalities; however, their practices are more similarly situated with Black feminist’s practices as African feminists share in solidarity with all oppressed women and men.

*Role of Grandmothers*

The extended family is an integral part of childrearing for Black mothers. An extended family includes parents, siblings, grandparents, other blood relatives, friends, and church members (DeFrancisco & Chatham-Carpenter, 2000; Greene, 1990a; Holland, 2009; Sterrett et al., 2015) who value childrearing as an act of “interdependence and collective responsibility” (Greene, 1990a, p. 210). Black women, specifically grandmothers, socialize children to have pride and cultural knowledge (DeFrancisco & Chatham-Carpenter, 2000; Greene, 1990a). Victoria DeFrancisco and April Chatham-Carpenter (2000) share their participants’ responses about their foremothers reflecting cultural knowledge: “I believe if we look at the true sense of pride, it’s that you understand who you are and you understand what people have gone through to get to where you are” (p. 83). This pride culturally socializes a Black child’s identity with the multiplicity of elements encompassed in self-love and Blackness. Arroyo et al.’s (2017) study found evidence of cultural transmissions between great-grandmothers through their great-granddaughters. The researchers observed four generations of Black women and their attitudes and behaviors of self and found the cultural transmission to be highly credible to resisting negative images associated with beauty standards (Arroyo, et al., 2017).

Some researchers have found that in Black families, grandmothers are more influential in childrearing than the mothers, particularly with “cultural transmission” (DeFrancisco & Chatham-Carpenter, 2000; Greene, 1990b). Consequently, Black children value support from extended family members (Sterrett et al., 2015; Wilson, 1984) in cases where Black children have “poor or non-existent relationships with their fathers” (Sterrett et al., 2015, p. 462). For
example, grandparents encouraged study participants to have positive and adaptive behavior, to remain motivated and goal-driven, to gain knowledge, and make healthy decisions (Sterrett et al., 2015).

Grandmothers in marginalized communities sometimes tend to assume the primary role. White (1991) pens an experience of a granddaughter observing life with her mother and grandmother, “I was aware of many nuances by observing my mother. Maybe each mother passes on to her daughter, unconsciously, certain ways or wiles which have resulted from living a racist and sexist society…For my mother knew as much about almost everything as my grandmother” (White, 1991, p. 192-193). And, unfortunately in the absence of parents, grandmothers sacrifice for their grandchildren to protect their grandchildren from social services and provide social support (Gibson, 2000).

*Role of Othermothers*

Black feminism created othermothers as a resistance by assisting bloodmothers with childcare and rearing which also supports a Black woman’s agency and power (Collins, 2000; Kinser 2010). A Black woman’s agency empowers her to attend higher education, obtain higher-paying jobs, and control the trajectory of her family and home (Kinser, 2010). Othermothers use mothers’ knowledge and maternal thinking that is not exclusive to a biological mother, and a woman who may or may not have children, to shape social expectations and norms (Kinser, 2010). Terrell implored “we can build a foundation of the next generation upon such a rock of morality, intelligence and strength, that the floods of proscription, prejudice and persecution may descend upon it in torrents and it will not be moved” (Terrell, 1902, p. 175). Mary Church Terrell (1904) promoted the necessity of othermothers and her ideas of race, unity, and social motherhood.
Othermothering is a valued, caring tradition for Black families, single-parents, or married couples that strengthens overburdened Black mothers and nurtures Black children (Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004). Black women use othermothers as an act of resistance for social support of motherhood and maternal caring for Black families. Emma Sterrett, Carlye Kincaid, Erin Ness, Michelle Gonzalez, Laura McKee, and Deborah Jones (2015) found that nonmarital co-parents providing maternal caring “do not necessarily have to be very close to the single mothers or their children” to assist the family unit (p. 456). Othermothers in the community, including Black teachers, principals, and parents, believe that racially uplifting “one’s own child, while ignoring the needs of other children, would [be] violating a cultural norm” (Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004 p. 11). In Jennifer Kerpelman, Marie Shoffner, and Sabrina Ross-Griffin’s (2002) study, research revealed that Black mothers who attended college are able to better prepare their daughters with strategies to navigate college than Black mothers who did not have higher education. Kerpelman et al.’s (2002) participants understood that college is a viable option for their daughters’ self-sufficiency. Therefore, othermothering could have been utilized to assist mothers who are unable to prepare their daughters as well as mothers who had college experience.

More so, othermothers reject the Black matriarch as found in Everet, et al.’s (2016) study. Their findings “recognize the protective quality of the extended family and othermothers and affirm the positive impact of Black mothers on the resilience, coping strategies, and self-esteem of their daughters” (Everet, et al., 2016, p. 347). Motherhood, Collins (1991) asserts, “whether bloodmother, othermother, or community other mother, can be invoked by Black women as a symbol of power. A substantial portion of Black women’s status within their communities stems
not only from their roles as mothers in their own families but from their contributions as community othermothers to Black community development as well” (p. 51).

**Black Mothers**

Despite Black feminists’ redefinition strategies of motherhood, racism and sexism continue to afflict Black women and their families. Historically, a Black mother was a “mammy” to White children before she could be a “mother” and nurture her own children (Collins, 1991, 2000). The act of nurturing is a dominant ideological basis for motherhood. A Black mother has always worked long hours for low wages, which limits the time spent nurturing her own child(ren). Isis Settles, Jennifer Pratt-Hyatt, NiCole Buchanan (2008) found that the perception of motherhood differed for White and Black mothers. Specifically, on the decision to balance work and family, White mothers were emotional, and employers respected their decision to stay at home; whereas Black women are less likely to stay at home or have access to professional positions (Settles et al., 2008). Settles et al.’s study (2008) found that White women’s perception of motherhood does not include the struggle of Black mothers. A participant who is a “73-year-old White mother suggested that attempting to combine the two is simply too much for women to handle successfully. When we stayed home and raised the children…I’ve never been for women out in the workforce and having children. You can’t have it all” (Settles et al., 2008, p. 463). The White woman’s comment delineates a Black mother as a strong Black woman and unfeminine. Settles et al.’s (2008) findings correlate with Collins’ (1991) assumption that “mothering occurs within the confines of a private, nuclear family household where the mother has almost total responsibility for child-rearing is less applicable to Black families. Racial oppression has denied Black families sufficient resources to support, private nuclear family households” (p. 43).

Additionally, there is “the assumption that motherhood and economic dependence on men are linked and that to be a ‘good’ mother one must stay at home, making motherhood a full-
time occupation” (Collins, 1991, p. 43-44). The ‘good’ mother perception, socially and economically, oppresses a Black mother as she struggles to carry familial loads, while daily sacrifices prevent her from caring for herself (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1993; Jones & Shorter-Goeden, 2003). Hooks (1993) shared a story of her “sister rushing home from work to meet the demands of her family who were capable of caring for their own basic needs” (p. 67). Contrarily, a Black woman in Settles et al.’s study (2008) recognized the strength she inherited from her single Black mother as she recounts, “I guess naturally my mother was a strong person and she worked every day and so therefore, by her being a strong woman it made me that way, too” (p. 463). These afflictions may shape a Black mother’s realities of her childrearing experience when she is busy proving her existence and worth (Greene, 1990a). The redefinition of Black motherhood in Settles et al. (2008), is a premise for Black feminist thought counternarratives. As demonstrated by participants in the Settles et al. (2008) study, mother/daughter relationships disrupt dominant narratives about the representation of Black motherhood. One of the researcher’s goals for this study is to understand how a mother transmits cultural knowledge and how her daughter interprets it.

Black mothers incorporate racial socialization in their childrearing regardless of socio-economic status and cultural adaptation (Collins, 1991; Greene, 1990a). This resistance approach may be used by a Black mother for childrearing and exposing her child to cultural and educational activities and is dependent upon her own childhood experiences. Black mothers raise their children, specifically their daughters, to be self-reliant and resourceful (Collins, 1991). In the Kerpelman et al. (2002) study, the researchers found “the main themes across participants for the daughters’ possible selves were being a college graduate, a career woman, a responsible person who was emotionally and financially independent, and someone who was socially
connected and morally upstanding” (p. 294). Settles et al.’s (2008) participants’ upbringing also emphasized being financially independent. A 21-year-old Black female participant said, “My mom raised me never to . . . ask or need a man for anything, and that has made me a better person, has made me a stronger woman than a lot of friends and people I know” (Settles et al., 2008, p. 463). There is a historical context that needs to be explicitly explored when preparing Black girls to be self-reliant. The differing expectations that promote success while yielding self-care cause emotional distress for Black women (Oshin & Milan, 2019). While researchers find Black mothers’ desires for their children are an act of resistance, they have dimensions of West African motherhood which values the family lineage as a mother-child bond (Collins, 1991). Black mothers who have rich, cultural experiences prepare children, their children as well as other children, for “dual socialization” to understand Black culture and survive in societal oppression (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1993; Greene, 1990b).

Contrary to dual socialization, Black mothers’ experiences can subliminally lead to internalized racism (hooks, 1993). Parental repression continues negative socialization when raising children and, at times, is intentional. Negative socialization may be intentional from a mother who feels she is preparing her child for a cruel world. Hooks (1993) argued that a Black mother’s love is displayed using harsh criticism or ‘telling it like it is’ intentionally to prepare her children. Harsh criticism is defined as Black mothers’ disparaging critiques and allowing siblings to critically analyze and expose children within the family (hooks, 1993). One aspect of harsh criticism appears to be telling people the truth about their appearance; unfortunately, the comments are deeply rooted within the social construction of what White society has defined as beautiful and perfect. An example is Black mothers who speak negatively about dark skin and kinky hair, which tends to create internalized racism among Black children. Black mothers may
publicly or privately say to their daughters, “Sit yo Black ass down with your nappy ass head.” This negative expression is usually uttered in an environment where lighter skin and straight hair are preferred or appreciated. The negative expression, which indirectly glorifies light skin and straight hair, often creates a competitive framework that fosters oppression within their own marginalized group. Similar to harsh criticism, in Katrina Greene and Pamela Garner's (2012) findings Black mothers report that they usually disregard their children’s opinions and do not negotiate their decisions. When these children grow up and become parents themselves, they may repress their children and suppress their voices. The approaches that Black mothers use to socialize their children and prepare them to defy the generalized conception that Black mothers neglect their children sometimes contributes to depression. The research of Lawrence Patihis, Corai Jackson, Jonatan Diaz, Elena Stepanova, and Mario Herrera (2019), “highlight[s] something different to the typical deficit-narrative that pervades research that compares Black and White” mothering and the affection their children remember receiving (p. 892). The data show “Black individuals scoring higher on items related to attachment, such as caring, trust, and intimacy in the family” (Patihis, et al., 2019, p. 892) that may not be illustrated in conflicting research on Black culture. The differing comparison of Black and White mothering is a “public awareness of the separation between margin and center” that provides a “sense of wholeness, impressed upon our consciousness by the structure of our daily lives, provided us an oppositional view that strengthen our sense of self and solidarity” (hooks, 2000, p. xvi). Black feminist thought uses counternarratives to help some Black women understand why they may be angry, and perhaps offer tools to positively mother Black children (hooks, 1993).

Single Black Mothers

The increase of single mothers has attracted the attention of researchers in various disciplines due to public concern of being the most vulnerable to physical, mental, and
physiological health disparities (Mather, 2010). Research indicates that single mothers living in poverty “may have a lack of self-care practices due to their responsibilities as a single mother, suggesting that single mothers may view self-care as a privilege for single mothers and not necessarily accessible in their daily life” (Long, et al., 2019, p. 353). Mark Mather (2010) reported that “24% of the 75 million children under age 18 live in a single mother family…and one-half (52%) of Black children [live in a single mother family]” (p. 1). The Forum on Child and Family Statistics (FAM1.A. Family structure, 2019) reported that single-mother families in the United States with children under the age of 18 decreased to 22.2%, and that of those families 48.1% are single Black alone families. The Georgia Family Connection Partnership (Children, 2020) reports 34% of Georgia residents are single-parent households. The concerns, specifically with single, Black motherhood, are strongly associated with negative economic and health outcomes which place these families at a higher risk of poverty reproduction. This is evidenced in Sinikka Elliott, Rachel Powell, and Joslyn Brenton’s (2015) study in which one of the study participants is described: “Victoria is a 52-year-old mother of three children. Once a nurse, she is now a homemaker since kidney cancer left her unable to work. Formerly homeless, she, her children, and her grandchildren now live in public housing, supported by Social Security. She has two daughters, Courtney, age 18, and Samantha, age 19—who each have a child” (p. 356). Victoria, a former nurse, with increased health risks, apparently struggled with inadequate health insurance, food insecurity, and affordable housing options for her and her children (Mather, 2010; Wight, et al., 2010). The oppressive conditions for single, Black mothers reduce their ability to fully care for themselves and their children. A Black mother’s stressors may lie in the “contradiction between ideology and lived experience when a mother believed that good mothering will produce good children and adults” (Elliott et al., 2015, p. 367). A single,
Black mother’s respective ideas of good mothering, whether they attended school to obtain a professional career or worked a subservient position to care for their children, “reflects a version of privatized mothering that is not conducive with the constraints placed on low-income, Black single mothers, and instead increases their burdens, stresses, and hardships even while providing a convenient explanation for these very difficulties: mothers are to blame” (Elliott et al., 2015, p. 367).

Furthermore, research finds single, Black mothers reporting an imbalance in parental responsibilities, financial hardships, and emotional support (Elliott et al., 2015; Holland, 2009). Ruby Mendenhall, Phillip Bowman, and Libin Zhang (2013) found a correlation between financial hardship and personal efficacy. This correlation captures the idea that “the women’s beliefs about their control over their lives in general with high levels indicating a sense of personal power and control and low levels of a sense of uncertainty” (Mendenhall et al., 2013, p. 82). This incongruous correlation suggests an instability and imbalance a single Black mother may experience from limited financial resources due to poor employment and access to education. Despite educational barriers, Adrianna, a participant in Elliott et al.’s (2015) study, possessed a college degree and an impeccable managerial background, yet is unable to earn a sufficient salary or receive public assistance to provide for her children and cover her household expenses (Elliott et al. 2015). Adrianna implicates class and racial systemic structures for her inability to provide for her children recognizing, “if you are African American, certain positions you don’t get” (p. 361). Elliott et al.’s (2015) participants’ consciousnesses are consistent with McDonald’s (2007) study of women who reported, “the world told them they were poor” (p. 133). This disparaging idea may affect single Black mothers interpersonally and psychologically; yet resilience and strength give some mothers the ability to be resourceful with meager means...
(Green, 1990a). Family and community-based support, as a resistance to the legacy of struggle, counterbalances the parental role strains.

Holland’s (2009) participants have successfully met the challenges of their multitasking roles, demonstrating that they have the strength to deal with being single mothers despite the personal and societal challenges they endure. Single Black mothers in this study benefited from healthy relationships and increased educational attainment that obliterated negative stereotypes that generally affect Black women (Holland, 2009). The single Black mothers in Holland’s (2009) study also reported their experience with role imbalances and financial hardships. The participants’ successful navigation through redefinition and knowledge was crucial to balancing the financial, emotional, and cultural deficiencies held in place by oppressive structures.

Mendenhall et al. (2013) theorized that “African American cultural strengths (religiosity and family coping) were associated with more resilient outcomes” (p. 93).

Many Black mothers who are expected to endure the financial, mental, and emotional burdens of their family, contribute to another dynamic of the curriculum and social identity for Black girls. In efforts to resist structural oppressions, Black mothers send their children to school expecting the best education possible. Scholars argue that school was designed to teach students how to “preserve and maintain the power and prestige of the United States” (Schubert, et al., 2002, p. 1) and perpetuate social roles and maintain social order. Michael Apple (1995) supports this statement adding that schools “have economic and cultural reproduction class relations…and produce the particular kinds of knowledge forms required by an unequal society” (p. 38). Black girls are exposed to a curriculum designed to deny their social and economic progression. The intersecting oppressions of race and gender threaten Black females and their education. This study is designed to employ Black feminist thought to investigate these concerns and offer a
counternarrative about Black women’s experiences in the hopes of promoting self-efficacy among single Black mothers.

*Single Black Mothers and their Daughters*

Black women’s identities are sandwiched between two dichotomized stereotypes—a matriarch and a welfare queen. Researchers found that Black women’s efforts to counter these oppressive images affect their self-image, family, and community (Everet, et al., 2016; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Watson & Hunter, 2016). Most single Black mothers do not inherently identify with either negative image that causes them suffering. Single, Black mothers who work long hours for low wages often struggle with health disparities and financial strains (Collins, 2000; Mendenhall et al., 2012; Settles et al., 2008). Advis Wilkerson (2007) used a Black feminist autobiographical counternarrative to share her experience as a single Black mother who navigated race, gender, and class oppression and the negative images of the “welfare queen” and the strong Black woman. She revealed resiliency rooted in knowledge gained from her mother and other Black women in her community, despite the social setbacks of being a single, Black mother who also had been raised in a poor, single-parent household. Hence, it is important to explore how single Black mothers interpret their experiences when working outside the home or staying at home to take care of their children. Rhonesha Blache (2017) decided she would use what she learned about resiliency and prosperity from her mothers’ lived experiences. Blache (2017) rearticulated single Black motherhood to be neither a welfare queen nor a strong Black woman,

As an adult, I am a confident woman about most things in my life. I am humbled by reality and generous in whatever way I can be. My mother always set her own high standards and broke records and barriers to pave the way for me to live a better life. I am now doing the same for my future children and myself. Although it seems like I am being
defiant, I see it as simply raising the bar, changing the game, setting my own standards
for life, declaring what I want, then pursuing it until I get it, just as she did. (p. 18)

While Blache admired how her mother navigated single parenting, she did not desire it for
herself. Blache (2017) conceptualized and explained the perceived differences and similarities in
her strength and resilience that she received from her mother. Sheree Alexander’s (2017) single,
Black mothers counternarrative confronts the judgment and negative images researchers use to
describe single, Black mothers’ lived experiences. Alexander (2017) declared a life of normalcy
in her inequitable and unsafe living conditions compared to the typical White, middle-class
standard of living. Alexander (2017) “learned to be resourceful, giving, and nonjudgmental”
from watching her mother, and the solidarity of other mothers, which provided a sense of security
(p. 4). Blache’s (2017) and Alexander’s (2017) counternarratives exhibit Black feminist tenets,
the legacy of struggle and resistance.

Notably, some Black mothers raise their daughters to pursue a college education and
professional careers as resistance to the welfare queen stereotype (Kerpelman et al., 2002). This
emphasis on self-reliance, strength, and independence is consistent with the strong Black woman
 stereotype characterized for creating single motherhood in the Black community. In Oshin and
Milan's (2019) study, Black mothers raise their daughters with these attributes as positive images
of Black womanhood. One participant shared that she wanted her daughter “to know how to
protect herself; know how to help her brother and sister” (Oshin & Milan 2019, p. 185). The idea
of self-reliance and family support is negatively portrayed as a killer of the hegemonic nuclear
family. Black women see it as a unique and important place in Black womanhood (McDonald,
2007). McDonald (2007) notes a Black woman’s childhood reflection, “all the women in my
family were very strong…I mean, nothing negative; I never felt negative things about Black
women…They gave just positive; I just felt love; I never felt afraid of anything” (p. 74-75). The strength perceived as unconditional love should not be sacrificial to her health. The perspective that Black women have about being strong Black women confronts societal stereotypes. Black feminist thought confirms Black women’s perspectives and makes them accessible through counternarratives.

*Devaluation of Black Motherhood*

The legacy of struggle, epistemic privilege, and resistance are tenets Black feminism uses to understand the social and economic oppressions affecting Black mothers’ experiences. Black mothers who work long hours for low wages or who choose to stay home “may be castigated both for failing to uphold standards for domestic order and for failing to give her children sufficient attention” (Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004, p. 27). Capitalists use negative stereotypes to deflect blame for societal problems from their greed for economic power onto Black mothers. Some Black women suffer from stereotypes that negatively dichotomize Black motherhood. Their social location maintains the devaluation and inferiority of Black women, motherhood, and their work. This narrative study focuses on stories from Black mothers and their daughters. The researcher investigates Black mothers’ and their daughters’ lived experiences to understand their struggles and resistance. Black feminist counternarratives purposefully develop group consciousness and subjugated knowledge (Collins, 2000).
CHAPTER 3

REARTICULATING BLACK WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES

The purpose of this narrative study is to understand how Black mothers’ experiences shape their attitudes about caring for themselves and their children to include variations in Black cultural knowledge and investigate how this cultural knowledge is transmitted through generations. In this study, the participants are single, Black mothers who have one or more daughters. The study on Black mothers’ and daughters’ experiences are being guided by the research question: “What is the informal curriculum that single Black mothers transmit to their daughter(s)?”

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative methodological approach that allows researchers to explore the historical, psychological, and cultural curriculum of one or many persons (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Rooted in anthropology, it emerged from the observations of anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and historians as they investigated the cultural context of people (Casey, 1995; Riessman, 1993; Short, 1991). The narrative approach uses participants’ stories to navigate the historical, psychological, and cultural narrative by retelling their stories as one story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). The stories collected from participants in this study were analyzed to make meaning of their experiences from their perspectives.

Through narrative inquiry, people shape their stories from their daily lived experiences. These stories, based on their individual experiences, come in two phases—telling (life as lived) or living (life as it unfolds) (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). Because life evolves, interpretation of individual experiences changes; new social and cultural meanings are realized through new knowledge and/or experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989; Phillion et al., 2005). A Black mother may develop new perspectives of her identity through reflecting on her lived experiences. The counternarrative produced from this study may also offer social and cultural interpretation as
a narrative approach requires participants to position, and perhaps reposition through ‘identity in interaction’ (Baron, et al., 2012 p. 469). Emilia Baron, Nancy Bell, Kimberly Corson, Erin Kostina-Ritchey, and Helyne Frederick (2012) define identity in interaction as a social interaction that “highlights the variability, ambiguity, and complexity of identity” (p. 469). A Black feminist narrative sharing stories about Black mothers and their daughters counters any discourse by social institutions to maintain power over oppressed groups (Collins, 2000).

*Narrative Inquiry and Black Feminism*

Narrative methodology complements Black feminism as a theoretical framework. Hooks (1993) theorized race, gender, and class oppressions as narratives in educational research. Hooks (1981) critiques literature for dismissing and disregarding the Black female experience in her first contribution, *Ain’t I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. In a White, patriarchal society, Black women writers are excluded from main circulation. Hooks (2000) exposes Black male and White female writers for disassociating their racial and gender oppressions from Black female experiences when writing about gaining the right to full humanity. Hooks (2000) writes “White women and Black men have it both ways. They can act as oppressor or be oppressed. Black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors of women. White women may be victimized by sexism, but racism enables them to act as exploiters and oppressors of Black people” (p. 16). Amoah (1997) stated, “Narrative is deeply rooted in African-American culture. It is a tradition based on the continuity of wisdom” (p. 84). Jonitha Johnson’s (2016) study revealed how Black single mothers’ continuity of cultural wisdom and its relevance helped progress Black daughters academically and socially. Consequently, narrative methodology allows the researcher to explore and write about Black women’s experiences in a way that is accessible to other Black women.
Narrative can be used as a theory, inquiry, or text. According to Amoah (1997), “theory is the key to growth and development…which is to be applied to and understood by a particular part of society, the theory should be infused with that particular group’s experiences” (p. 85). Researchers have reported in narrative studies how Black mothers prepare their daughters to maintain positive self-identity and resilience when faced with restrictions and failures (Hall, 2015; Johnson, 2016). For the purposes of this study, the researcher listened to understand the stories that Black mothers and their daughters shared about their lived experiences. The counternarrative text contributes to the dominant ideology of Black motherhood for the growth and development of Black women. Johnson’s (2016) participants shared how their mothers’ whispers maintained the sense of self and self-worth. In Johnson’s (2016) study, Heaven, a participant, recalls her mother whispering “who says you have to pass on the first time,” and Layla, another participant, reports “do your best…if that was your best that’s good enough for them because you passed it and it’s clear that you tried” when overcoming adversity (p. 160). Johnson’s (2016) counternarrative supports Ming He and Sabrina Ross’ (2012) interpretation of how a Black mother inspires and socializes her daughter. Narrative can effectively change who has the power to produce knowledge for this oppressed group, redefine one’s sense of self and self-worth, and serve as a tool for resistance (Amoah, 1997).

Furthermore, narrative methodology allows an affinity between the participants and researcher; it gives the authority of power over the researcher’s personal experience for liberation and enables the researcher to be reflexive when interpreting the participants’ experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; He & Ross, 2012). Narrative methodology also gives the restory the freedom to empower but restricts the researcher from representing and generalizing all Black women and/or their experiences and allows others to “call into question dominant
narratives that do not match the experience of life as lived” (Harnett & Bathmaker, 2010, p. 3).

Amoah (1997) asserts that Black women’s experiences are not the same; the uniqueness of Black mothers is due to their intersecting oppressed statuses. Narrative methodology research has forms that are accessible and literary for people to deconstruct images of themselves and others, make connections between past, present, and future, and give meaning to their lives (Baron, et al., 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 1989; Huber, et al., 2013; Phillion & He, 2004). These dual-purpose texts are accepted as scholarly and general memoirs, storytelling, and autobiography, which makes this work an accessible and useful source of survival and cultural resistance for Black mothers, as well as curriculum developers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; He & Ross, 2012).

Black intellectual scholars conclude that schools are designed to train students to maintain the existing hierarchical order where Black women remain subservient and obedient (Collins, 2009). Counternarratives speak for the experiences of marginalized people who are educated in a school system that does not create spaces for them to foster their individual gifts that may allow social upward mobility. Collins (2009) and hooks (2000) speak specifically to Black women’s experiences in formal and informal educational systems that perpetuate racism, sexism, and social inequalities. Collins’ (2000) Another Kind of Public Education addresses racism in formal education and how it personally impacted her and her mother’s academic and social achievements. Hooks (2000) recounts her personal experience as a Black girl who watched her mother live in social subordination in a Black patriarchal home. Black feminist counternarratives desensitize the normal to resist learned behaviors in formal and informal educational structures that are socially inequitable for Black women.

Single Black Mothers and their Daughters

This research focuses on single Black mothers who live in Georgia. Purposeful sampling was used to select at least three but no more than seven Black, single-mother families with at
least one daughter, both agreeing to participate in the study. A mother and daughter were required to be of the same family. A mother and her daughter, as participants from the same family, may lend discovery to intergenerational transmission. For example, a mother can also interview as a daughter with her mother. The participants, mothers and daughters, are between the ages of 18 and 70 years old. Daughters aged 18 years old and older are likely to provide their experience as a daughter and a Black woman. The daughter’s perspective may provide insight on the mother’s oppressive experiences from socioeconomic and cultural barriers, and her Black woman’s perspective contributes to Black women’s experiences. Jamila Smith (2012) conducted a similar study on mother/daughter relationships, but her participants were not limited to single motherhood. Similar to Smith’s (2012) intergenerational study, this research investigates the lived experiences of single Black mothers, daughters, and their relationships.

**Philosophical Assumptions -- Narrative Methodology is Experience**

In order to be successful in education, students acquire and comprehend organized bodies of information that prepare them to perform a skill. In traditional education, students are passive learners receiving information from the past, assuming the world is not evolving. Experience does not solve problems; however, it allows one to question the metanarrative and offers a new story where issues need to be addressed which conflict with what currently exists and what existed (Dewey, 1938). Experience gives the participant freedom to learn and contribute. Dewey’s (1938) organic connection generally occurs with the experiences shared between a mother and her daughter. Experience can hurt or improve an individual’s personal growth. Positive experiences contribute to a positive attitude and outlook on life, and negative experiences can cause disconnectedness (Dewey, 1938). The narrative inquiry explores contributing factors to personal experiences and encourages multiple points of view that can lead to a deepened perspective (Collins, 2009; hooks, 1993). Black feminist narratives offer a
different view of a Black woman’s lived experiences (Collins, 2000). Although Black feminist thought exclusively articulates for Black women, Black feminist narratives are accessible to all so that people become more reflective of their own experiences; and, perhaps, learn to value others who are similarly situated (Amoah, 1997; Collins, 2000). Narrative methodology can explore experiences to determine how education may improve the quality of life and change the direction of future experiences. Hooks (1993) theorized that marginalized people often make social progress through collective struggle when they embrace multiple perspectives. Thus, Black feminists use counternarratives to expose intersecting oppressions that Black women experience, and stimulate resistance (Collins, 2009).

*Narrative Methodology is Reflexive*

Experience humanizes education. Education should not be an assembly line where students passively move from one grade to another with knowledge being drilled into their minds. Narrative stories personalize a generalized metanarrative by creating a new understanding of how life is lived and experienced. Experiences shared by participants represent continuity; prior lived experiences shape new experiences and interactions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dewey, 1938). Telling their stories requires participants to think about past events and requires researchers to be sensitive to new constructions of stories that previously existed (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). Researchers found that stories change based on additional experiences and knowledge that question social and cultural stereotypes and look beyond what is familiar to an individual or group (Phillion et al., 2005; Riessman, 1993). Similarly, researchers found that interpretations can be fluid and dependent upon the researcher’s experiences and knowledge (Phillion et al., 2005). JoAnn Phillion and Ming He (2004) reported a shift in participants’ perspectives after reading multicultural literary narratives; the variance of the shift being dependent upon the individual participants and their assumptions. In the counternarrative, *Sisters*
of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery, hooks (1993) shares her personal experience on leaving for college and staying away to become an intellectual. Her perspective regarding life-affirmation shifted as she dreamed and “longed for the richness of my past, to hear again the wisdom of the elders” (p. 10). Collins (2000) describes a shift in hooks’ (1993) perspective, knowledge, and wisdom. “This distinction between knowledge and wisdom, and the use of experience as the cutting edge dividing them…Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate” (Collins, 2000, 276). The context of hooks’ (1993) counternarrative illustrates how “wisdom is essential to survival from the objectification from others” (Collins, 2000).

Narrative Methodology is Relational

Black feminists use counternarratives to confront the negative labels that continuously traumatize Black women and their families. The color-caste hierarchical system has negatively impacted Black women and how they socialize their children (hooks, 1995; McDonald, 2007). Black women who suffered from internalized racism perpetuated racial oppression in their families and communities (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1995; McDonald, 2007). Black feminists redefined beauty for Black women as a component of autonomy and empowerment (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1995). As an inclusive approach to improving Black women’s personal and social experience, Black feminists think contextually which involves rejecting binary and other oppressive status thinking altogether (Collins, 2000). Hooks (1995) challenged her very light-skinned grandmother for “the disparaging comments she made about darker-skinned people, including her own grandchildren” (hooks, 1995, p. 122). Black feminists use oppositional knowledge to confront oppressive behaviors that cause psychological damage and create a homeplace (hooks, 1995). Homeplace is a place of resistance that affirms “our beings, our Blackness, our love for one another” (hooks, 1990, p. 104).
Collecting and Sharing Counternarratives of Black Single Mothers

Black feminist narrative was used to frame this study of single Black mothers using seven Black, single-mother families with at least one daughter and with both agreeing to participate in the study. The researcher interviewed participants using open-ended questions about Black women and mothering her own Black daughter in a single-led household. Both the mother and daughter completed a joint, one-hour-long recorded virtual interview at a time that was most convenient for them. Each mother and daughter may also have been interviewed separately as a follow-up. The mother and daughter had to be of the same family. Having a mother and her daughter as participants may lend discovery to intergenerational transmission. For example, a mother can also be a daughter interviewing with her mother. The participants, mothers and daughters, were between the ages of 18 and 70 years old. Although the age range spans more than 50 years, the common experiences are Black womanhood and single motherhood. The narrative method was selected to understand how family values and social influences, which also include extended families, helped socialize single Black mothers to embrace and understand their heritage so that they can participate fully in their communities and navigate the wider society (Henry, 2006).

As previously discussed, narrative methodology’s three assumptions are appropriate for the Black feminist theoretical framework. Black feminists use subjugated knowledge and Black women’s scholarship about Black women’s lived experiences to question the metanarrative, create a counternarrative, and educate Black women (Collins, 2000). The assumptions are also applicable to an intergenerational study exploring Black mother/daughter relationships and allowing each participant and the researcher to be reflexive. And ultimately, through narrative methodology, the researcher can identify how the participants understand their experiences. This study is designed for participants to share their perspectives of life lived as a Black woman. The
researcher engages the participant with open-ended questions requiring her to think about her experiences from a young Black girl through Black womanhood, and also be reflective of her experiences with her mother and, perhaps, othermothers. The participant, as well as the researcher, may make connections between events, ideas, and beliefs, constructing new meanings of past understandings while being reflective. The interviews, both individually and jointly, provide space for both the mother and daughter to deconstruct and reevaluate social influences that positively and negatively impacted their individual experiences or their relationship. The researcher’s purpose is for each participant to gain new insights and contribute to the subjugated knowledge of single, Black mothers and their relationships with their daughter(s).

**Instruments**

Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to serve as the filter of how the participants’ stories are analyzed and interpreted. Black feminist thought uses narrative inquiry to investigate oppression from a Black woman’s perspective about her lived experiences. A Black woman’s perspective shared in narrative form, known as subjugated knowledge, is an act of resistance used for Black women to navigate oppressive structures (Collins, 2000). The researcher has constructed a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions to collect qualitative data from Black women participants about motherhood which has been historically dehumanized by patriarchal, capitalistic systems (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1983; hooks, 1999). The researcher recorded all interviews and noted non-verbal cues, as well as the researcher’s reflections after each interview. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed by GMR Transcription Services, Inc. Pseudonyms were used to protect all identities provided in the interviews. The transcribed files are stored on an encrypted portable hard-drive that is kept in a secured location when it is not in use by the researcher. Data collected enabled the researcher to
develop an understanding of the lived experiences of single, Black mothers and how their experiences affect how they view their lives, motherhood, and relationships—specifically relationships with their daughters.

A Black feminist narrative is appropriate for this study because of its ability to articulate the struggles of Black, single-motherhood, and the socialization of Black daughters. A significant finding which led to the dissertation title, Mothering Through Our Pain, was based on the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ varying expression of “pushed,” “push it,” or “push through” used to describe the mother parenting her daughter. The researcher remembers the mothers’ distress observed during the interviews and interpreted it as pain from internalized oppression. The researcher identified a pattern of a fear in the mother stories that were linked to pressure revealed in her daughter’s stories. Because Black women historically have been silenced and misrepresented, Black feminist narratives intentionally share those stories seeking answers to dispel myths and redefine how Black, single mothers interpret their experiences as well as how social and structural influences oppress them. This counternarrative is intended to expand research on how Black, single mothers socialize their daughters and what knowledge is intentionally and unintentionally transmitted. Since a participant may also participate in a follow-up interview after the mother and daughter interview, the participant has an opportunity to be reflective and gain a new understanding of her experience when hearing a different perspective of a shared experience. Black feminist thought “is dedicated to issues not only Black women’s social consciousness but also their unique gender consciousness—a dual consciousness formed from a history of racial and sexist oppression and resistance” (McDonald, 2007, p. 16). Black feminist thought uses counternarratives to share the stories of Black women through auto/biography to expand the perspective of White or male intellectual researchers.
Analysis of Narratives of Black Mothers and Daughters

The researcher collected and analyzed data for six months. During data collection, the researcher conducted one virtual interview for all participants of one hour. The audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed. The data set used ATLAS.ti, a Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software, for the data analysis. The researcher, who also identifies with the same oppressed statuses as the study’s participants, “interact(s) with and think(s) about” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 30) the stories shared in an attempt to exclude biases from data interpretation. Therefore, an inductive approach was used for preliminary exploration and data analysis. Also, in vivo coding was used for the first round of coding as an attempt to retain the participant's voice. Kathy Charmaz (2006) used in vivo codes to allow the researcher to preserve the meaning of how Black mothers interpret their experiences in the coding itself. A second round of coding was used to identify keywords or phrases for establishing themes to identify what a Black woman has learned and how she has survived oppressive and social conditions. Descriptive words from the participants were used to establish themes to understand what and how knowledge transcends through generations of Black women. Finally, the researcher iterated the transcripts searching for words and phrases to fit within the established themes that uncovered single, Black mothers’ experiences and how they parented their daughters through social, cultural, and/or economic inequities.

The Power of Subjugated Knowledge

Schools and community libraries have limited space offering Black women’s writings about their experiences. Meta narratives from a patriarchal perspective devalue and eliminate the contributions of Black women are heavily circulated as primary resources. Black women “counternarratives help tell silenced and neglected stories of repressions, suppressions, and subjugations that challenge stereotypes…and encourage examination of the forces of slavery,
racism, sexism, classism, religious repression, and other forms of oppression and suppression on life and curriculum” (He & Ross, 2012, p. 1). These intersecting oppressions impact Black women’s lived experiences and how they socialize their daughters. Counternarratives offer subjugated knowledge that can be beneficial to the education and self-actualization of Black women.

This research seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge on single Black mothers and their daughters. Hooks (1993) used the vegetable yam metaphor for Black women as “a life-sustaining symbol of Black kinship and community…It is a symbol of our diasporic connections. Yams provide nourishment for the body as food yet they are also used medicinally—to heal the body” (p. 6). In spite of the oppressive structures which Black women endure, hooks (1993) theorizes that Black women have the power to self-heal, and through kinship heal their community. The power begins with knowledge about us, created by us, for us.
CHAPTER 4
COUNTERNARRATIVES OF BLACK MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the experiences of single Black mothers and examine what knowledge the mothers transmitted to their daughters. The three Black feminist assumptions used to understand the experiences are legacy of struggle, epistemic perspective, and resistance. The stories in this narrative study were collected during seven Zoom virtual interview sessions. The researcher interviewed each family separately at a time that was most convenient for the family. Seven mothers along with their daughters who participated in their virtual sessions were residents in the state of Georgia. Six mothers were at one time married to their daughter’s father and one mother was never married. Each participant identified as a Black woman who lived in a single-parent household. The education level of the 14 participants ranged from some college, associate, bachelor, and master’s degrees. The employment statuses were identified as one retired, two full-time students, and 11 full-time employees. This chapter also includes an explanation of the collection and coding processes, as well as a presentation of the findings.

Data Collection

An application was originally submitted to Georgia Southern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct face-to-face interviews (H#20401). After my original submission, the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) led to unexpected school closings and the university implemented COVID-19 policies that included modifications to institutional research guidelines. The COVID-19 restricted exposure policy required either a delay in the data collection process so that the in-person interviews could be conducted or required a change to the data collection process to switch to video conference interviews. As such, the application was resubmitted to the IRB committee with the request to interview participants using a video
conferencing platform. The IRB committee and my dissertation committee approved the change. The approval to conduct the study on a video conferencing platform also changed the way participants were recruited. Recruitment efforts changed from advertising the flyer (see Appendix C) on local organizations’ bulletin boards to posting the flyer on social media, sending it via email, and utilizing online course announcements. The recruitment effort targeted Georgian single, Black mothers and their adult daughters. Ten families were recruited within a few days. The overwhelming response required an amendment to the IRB application to increase the number of participants from three to five families to 15 families. However, the decision to stop conducting interviews was made after the participation of seven families. The remaining three families were interested, but were slow or did not respond to voicemails or emails. After the decision to stop collecting data, participants who had been through the interview began recommending other participants who they thought would benefit from an interview with their daughters. Interestingly, the researcher found that Black women want to talk about their lives and their interactions with their daughters. The researcher watched as both the mother and daughter spoke about their admiration and displayed affection toward each other. Mothers hugged, kissed, and told their daughters how much they love them, sometimes through tears of joy. The daughters emotionally expressed their gratitude for their mothers’ sacrifices.

The criteria were that a participant had to identify as single, Black, and a woman. The self-identified single, Black woman also had to be a mother of a daughter aged 18 years or older. The participant search was open to the state of Georgia. Stories were collected from one family in Valdosta, one family in Marietta, one family in Fort Valley, and four families in Warner Robins (see table 1 on p. 82). Five separate families were interviewed with the mother and daughter in the same household, sitting together using one device. And the two remaining
mother-daughter dyads were in separate households during the interview, using their own devices.

Interviews were conducted over the course of eight days. The researcher emailed the informed consent document (see Appendix B) to the participants for them to review once the participants scheduled their virtual interview. Prior to proceeding with the interview, the informed consent and research purpose were discussed, and consent was obtained before proceeding with the study. The Zoom software application was used to establish a password protected and an end-to-end encrypted meeting with each family. The configuration setting for Zoom was adjusted to only download recorded files to a “local recording location” once the meeting ended. The researcher opened a secured meeting and invited participants by sending a link and password to their personal email or cellular number to prevent uninvited guests from joining the meeting. Participants’ questions were answered and permission to begin recording was requested prior to starting the interview. A semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A) was used to guide each interview that lasted for approximately 50 to 70 minutes. Zoom downloaded both audio and video files of the recorded sessions to the researcher’s local computer. The video files were deleted, and audio files were moved to an encrypted external hard drive designated for this research project. The audio files were uploaded to GMR Transcription Services after each interview. GMR Transcription Services returned each transcript within three to four days. The transcripts are stored on an encrypted external drive with the audio files.

Coding

The data collected were coded in Atlas.ti software. Each interview transcript, saved and referenced with the mother’s pseudonym, was imported as a document into the dissertation project created in Atlas.ti for coding and analysis. As the Pranee Liamputtong (2009) article
suggested, all transcripts were read to interpret the data before proceeding with the inductive method for the initial data analysis. In an attempt to minimize any biases and prematurely interpret data, Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson (1996) suggest researchers interact with and think about the transcript data. Interacting with the data allowed the researcher to identify words and phrases commonly used by the participants. The words ‘strong,’ ‘strength,’ and variations of ‘push’ required the researcher to think about the significance of each usage, contextually and/or structurally within the identified Black feminist tenets. In vivo coding was used during the first round of the coding process to stay true to the participants’ voices (Saldana, 2013). Participants’ words and phrases from their stories were used to code passages. Atlas.ti application’s feature tracked 124 codes highlighted in the dissertation project from the seven transcripts. The 124 codes were analyzed during the second round to discover any similarities or emerging themes. The deductive method was used to categorize the 124 codes into the three Black Feminist tenets: epistemic privilege (EP), legacy of struggle (LS), and resistance (R). Several codes fit more than one category; therefore, the following seven categories were created: EP, LS, R, EP/LS, EP/R, LS/R, and All. The researcher noticed discoveries of similar words and phrases used as a code may vary from the mother’s epistemic privilege to an act of resistance for her daughter. More so, a word may appear as a mother’s legacy of struggle or epistemic privilege yet bridges to resistance when it was transmitted to her daughter. Using Black feminist tenets as a guide to explore participants’ stories, the researcher detected that a Black woman may shift through the childhood, teen, and womanhood stages. In each stage, the mother and daughter encountered their individual, and sometimes shared oppressions, that presented a noticeable change in their mother and daughter relationship.
### Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother/Daughter</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Total children</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Marietta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latrisha</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Marietta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Warner Robins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariel</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Warner Robins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Valdosta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>College Student</td>
<td>Valdosta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsey</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Warner Robins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Warner Robins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deneen</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Warner Robins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breanna</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Warner Robins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Fort Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Fort Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonya</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>Warner Robins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brianna</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>College Student</td>
<td>Warner Robins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

As presented in the review of literature, single Black mothers have been dehumanized and accused of being the highest contributors to social, economic, and criminal issues in the United States (Collins, 2000; Johnson, 2016). The single, Black mothers in this study self-identified as single, Black, and woman. ‘Single’ is a legal term used for governmental purposes to determine marital status, which includes never married, divorced, or widowed. The participants’ single statuses consist of one never married and six divorced. Black and woman are
socially constructed identities based on race and gender, respectively. Race is socially constructed to identify a person’s race based on the family’s blood lineage and skin pigmentation. Gender is typically established at birth by genitalia. However, the social construction of gender is how men and women are represented and roles performed (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2000). A mother is generally a woman who has birthed, adopted, fostered, or raised a child. The common stereotypes found in the literature describing single, Black mothers were: lazy, welfare queen, matriarch, poor, unemployed, uneducated, and who raised hopeless and morally deficient children (Collins, 2000; Ford, 2017; Jones & Shorter-Gooden; Mendenhall, et al., 2013; Motapanyane, 2016).

Data Presentation

Fourteen Black women tell their personal stories about Black womanhood, motherhood, and their mother/daughter relationships. The stories give the researcher insight into how the participants define and understand their lived experiences while living in a single, Black mother-led household. Each participant introduced herself by responding to the question, “tell me about yourself, what you like most and least yourself, and how would you define yourself as a Black woman?” The participants spoke candidly about their struggles and strengths during their introductions. It was a consideration to interpret the participants’ responses and remove an excerpt of what the researcher encapsulates to be a response to tell me about yourself; however, keeping the text together allows the responses to reflect what is significant to the participants when introducing how she navigated the world from girlhood to womanhood.

Meet 70-Year-Old Beatrice and Her 53-Year-Old Daughter Latrisha

Beatrice, Age 70. What I like most about myself is that the accomplishment that my goal was to raise my children to be adults that was responsible, that was graduates of at least high school. And pretty much be a good citizen in the community of wherever they lived.
What I like least about myself. I really can't think of something I like least about myself except for my struggle with my weight. I like the fact that I have learned through the years to be healthy, take good care of myself and it has paid off. And be able to still help my children with problems as far as guiding them in their life. I guess one of the things I take back that I said I like least about myself, I would like to be able financially to help each and every one of them when they needed it. I'm proud of what I've become. I had a couple of junior colleges degrees, one in culinary arts or technical school and one in cosmetology. I continued that as an adult while my children – some of them were already out of the house. I only had one at home. I feel good about myself where I'm at. Those were goals that I had later in life. I love what I've done during raising them, learning the Bible and becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses has really helped me like clean my life up as far as, being a single mom and living in the world where people were just very, nonchalant about how they live their life with their children at home and the goals that they had as far as, drinking, dating, and partying. I was able to be an example.

Latrisha, Age 53. I am what I would consider a middle-aged woman. I raised two children and they were daughters. I was single the whole time. I got a divorce when my oldest was four years old and my youngest was three. Their whole life they have just lived in a household with a single parent. I didn't marry again until they were both grown and out of the house, so it was just the three of us. I feel like, I accomplished a lot raising them on my own. I always worked hard. Most times, I had to have two jobs. That was a struggle. That would be one of the things if I could have changed and have more of a career instead of just having jobs raising them, so that I wouldn't had to spend as many hours working as I did when they were younger. And being out of the house away from
them as much as I had to when they were growing up. Even having to do that, I feel like I taught them morals and I raised them in an environment where they knew right from wrong. They knew their family always came first. They never had to worry about feeling insecure or unprotected inside of our home because I dated when I was single and when I was raising them. The people that I allowed inside of our household was always limited because I always wanted to provide a protective home life for them. We kind of grew up together because I had them at a fairly young age. It wasn't a teenage pregnancy, but it still was young adult. So, I kinda grew up with my daughters. We had good relationships. And they learned me, grew up with me while I grew up, but we were close. If anybody knew me, if they see me, they seen them. I made sure that I taught them that school was important, that they always knew that was their job just like I had a job, that was their job. And they had to graduate, and they had to do their best in it. They didn't spend a lot of time watching TV and videos, which was very popular when they were growing up. I didn't allow them to watch music videos and stuff like that. And as my mother stated she did raise us to have a religious background, I didn't always follow that for my own household. There was still a lot of things that I never forgot and that I did take with me when I was raising my girls even though I wasn't practicing the religion that she raised us up to be which was Jehovah’s Witnesses. We still held onto a lot of those beliefs in our household still. I don't believe that I would change anything because I think because of the struggle and the achievements that we had, it made us who we are. And I feel like that it did make us close-knit.

Meet 53-Year-Old Cassandra and Her 28-Year-Old Daughter Ariel

Cassandra, Age 53. I am a very supportive mother. I am a very enthusiastic teacher, and I am a very humble woman. And the reason why I say those three things is because I look
at myself in those three aspects. Those are the three things that I do that’s involved in my life. That's how I describe myself. The one thing that I like the most about myself is my strength. I'm very, very independent. I'm very outspoken, yet my one thing that I dislike is a little shy and it’s come through all of that. As a Black woman, well, really being the youngest in the family of three girls, I always wanted to do what my sisters wanted to do. So, it made me: 1) very competitive, 2) very strong. In order for me to be able to do the things that they had to do, I had to work twice as hard because I was two and three years younger than both of my sisters. So that nature just stayed with me and that's where my independence and toughness came through because of the fact that I knew I had to do those things. I also tried to be tough in everything that I do. So, that brought about that particular portion of me as a Black woman. And that was instilled in me probably as early as I can remember – probably about four or five when my sisters wanted to do classwork, my mom had to buy me book because I wanted to stay up with them.

Ariel, Age 28. I’m not real good about tell-me-about-yourselves. I don't know why; I'm not good with that. I love my personality. I love my personality, then sometimes I hate my personality at the same time. I guess that's my most liked and least liked at the same time, my personality. I'm Ariel. I'm an only child. I love Black people. I love Black people. I'm pro-Black to the fullest. My doctors for the most part Black. If they not Black women, they Black, or they just women. I love – I try to support the minorities. My hair been natural for about 10 and some years. I'm just pro-Black to the fullest now.

Meet 49-Year-Old Charity and Her 20-Year-Old Daughter Ashley

Charity, Age 49. I am a veteran of the United States Air Force, served in the Air Force. I’m mother of five children. I have four that are biologically mine, and one that came into our life about seven years ago. She’s been with us for a while and she’s starting to look
like me, so she’s just mine. I’ve a worked with the federal government for about 25 years. And for me, I value my girls and – actually I kinda put myself last when it comes to my children. I try to make sure that they do like they’re supposed to. Being a single parent, you tend to put things on the back burner for yourself, and then make sure you that your children don’t miss out on anything. They’re not lacking anything. Well, it started in Korea. In high school, I always use to tell her, just because I’m a single parent, doesn’t mean that she can’t do what you’re supposed to do, or do what you want to do. Especially during school. Because I’ve never wanted them to grow up missing their childhood. And now, unfortunately, I was divorced when they were at a young age. It’s just been me in the household, and I never wanted them go without anything. I never wanted them to lack anything or come back later and say, momma, I never was able to do this. And that’s one thing that I fight on in trying to help them grow and mature as they’ve been prospering right now. As a Black woman you have to be strong in all aspects, it’s also with my job, being the single mom and what people look at, or what their expectations are, as a Black woman being single, is I get a lot of how do you manage to do all that. I mean, it’s just being a Black woman you have to do a lot more to prove to the world that you are capable of handling what you need to do. And I am a supervisor at my job. If something’s going on in my daughter’s life or at school. I like to be there, and tell the teachers at school, if I need to stop what I’m doing and if I need to check on my child, I’m gonna stop what I’m doing, and I’m gonna check on my child. So, sometimes when you’re in a supervisory position, all eyes are on you. And so you’re gonna leave your job, and you gotta go check on your child? Oh, she’s not doing what she’s supposed to do. Ah, you’re up under a microscope, most of the time. Wondering if I’m capable of handling what I
need to do on the outside with my children or is it what I’m capable of doing at work.

And nine times out of ten, you work, you work harder, you work longer, trying to prove to people that you’re able to do what they doubt that you can do. Sometimes when you’re put in those positions, and you work a little bit harder, it becomes a norm, and when it becomes a norm, sometimes you’re doing so much, you’re doing a lot, but people don’t even see you – as doing at all. That’s what she always do, or that’s oh my goodness, I’m losing my train of thought about what people are thinking in the workplace. I can’t even go to the bathroom half of the time without going for 15 minutes, without somebody coming to me, saying, where have you been? And I’m thinking, wow, I just handle about 20 projects on my desk, but you’re worried about how long I went to the bathroom. But they don’t see that part, and that’s tough in the work world when you’re trying – when you are a supervisor, and you are a single parent, and you put out all this energy for people to doubt what you could do. So, that’s tough in itself. I guess you could say, okay, being spiritually grounded is the must, when you’re a single mom. For me, sharing that with my girls, and knowing that they are spiritually grounded, and they put God first in everything that they do. That helps out tremendously when you’re going through it alone, or when you’re having to go out into this dog-eat-dog world. I mean, it’s just a little thing, being too nice I think always find myself with the girls, and my sons, to always be nice. And, to take care of others. You know never judge anyone you always accept, you know, you accept people for who they are, and a lot of people take advantage of that niceness.

Ashley, Age 20. A lot of what I value is mostly my family, especially my mom, and all she has done for us. And just seeing how strong she is, and she makes me wanna be that
strong of a person too. And to give to others as much as she does, and just really, really just try and be like her. Like, she’s right. The thing to do is really, is by those who you look up to for a lot of us. So, for me, when I was in high school, I didn’t act like how a lot of the people thought Black people acted. Like they said, I talked White, or, oh, you don’t do, I just don’t do certain things that they thought that Black people did. And it was like, it kinda, like caught me off guard, because you grow up with these people. I’ve known them since middle school, and they’re still like, oh, well, you know, you’re like one of the good Black people, and it was very hard just hearing that, and just being in that type of environment, that whenever I left, it was more so, like I had to learn to like, love myself more, not be like, oh, I should be acting more this way, or I should feel bad for even being myself. Sometimes you get, people who take advantage of that. Especially, that is I’m more of a yes person. Like, it doesn’t matter, whatever, I will do anything. So, at the same time it’s kinda good to be nice, but not too nice.

Meet 55-Year-Old Chelsey and Her 30-Year-Old Daughter Nadia

Chelsey, Age 55. What I value about myself is the fact that it’s just amazing how I look at my age, sometime, and I’m just surprised that, when you think about your parents and grandparents, the people before you that were at my age, they were not as active as I am. And I think the fact that I’m still active, I get out and go. I don’t have a problem traveling by myself. I love that part about myself. I’m not a stay-at-home person. I’m able to get out and do things, and don’t have to depend on anybody else or wait on anybody else. I’ve always loved being in the military. Ever since I was a little girl, that was my goal, to come into the service, so… I did join at the age of 19. I stayed for three years, got up to ten, and then came back in at the age of 30 plus. So for me to look and see that I actually retired, I said, “That’s just amazing.” And it has helped me along the way, because
becoming a single mother was a blessing that I’d have never thought I would have been able to accomplish, raising my two children. The fact that not only did they support me, I had a family that supported me. And one thing I said was that whenever you in a situation, that some single parents go through a lot with their children. Especially being a single parent. But I had no problems out of mine and I just thank the Lord each and every time I reflect back and think about how great my children are. And I need to be as honest as you can on this video, okay? I don’t have a problem with that. Oh, goodness. Like those are the key things like I said in the beginning, what I like about myself and what I have accomplished so far, and I’m definitely looking for the next chapter in my life. But thank you. Being a woman and a Black woman. I have to honestly say, I know some people… Well. Sometimes, I think I really did not have any barriers, but then again, as a Black woman, I did have barriers. I had barriers when I had to go to a team that was predominantly White. And me being a Black woman, having to take over that team, and they did not like it. But I had to realize who I am, and what position, what role, I held while I was down there. So, I could not allow them to break me. There was a lot of people who went down, but – especially men, that, … Because they never had a female in charge of them. So, that was something new. And not only just a female in charge, they never had a Black person in charge of them. So, that was definitely new. And to break that, it was a little difficult, but prayer works. I’m telling you that, because the Lord hears my prayer and He got me out of there. But as far as just seeing that side, I never… In my career, I never had to deal with that. And that was something that I truly had to deal with. But because of the fact, it taught me how the other side was. Me, being a Black woman, a single parent, more or less, because I had to. My children were growing at the time.
Being a Black woman, and having to deal with some people, they show me how they can befriend you, more or less, and still talk about you behind your back. So, something I never had to deal with in my face. Let’s just say that. It taught me another side, but it also taught me what was in me, dealing with that situation. Once I left there, I always say, sometimes you’ve got to go through a rough act in order to get to the sunshine, through dark clouds. And going through that dark cloud, it was definitely an experience. I made it to the other side. Moving on from there, I ran into the roadblock again, when I ran another team, but we were it was diverse, so it wasn’t as bad. But the people that were over me did not too much care for me being a Black woman. One thing I can say, I don’t think I really look at the fact that is me, is the fact that the strength that I get from going through it. And that’s what I hold onto. I dealt with people who, I would say, “This is prejudice that’s going on,” they say to me, “Don’t look at it like that. Let’s look at it a different way.” So, I had to learn to turn that, and attack it in a different way, instead of just thinking, because of the fact of who we know that, but still, me knowing that your attitude gets worse. When you attack in a different area, you’re able to, uh, see things a little more clearer. That’s what I, as far as a Black woman really all I dealt with, just in my military career.

Nadia, Age 30. I am just 30 years old; I am a single, 30-year-old Black woman in today’s society, which is rough. Rough in the sense that it’s like I don’t think that I’ve experienced anything that… Not to say that other people haven’t experienced, but I think that with today’s time, everything’s so different technology-wise, with dating and just how we interact in general. I feel like that plays a huge role. At least, in my generation and my cousins that are younger than me or whatnot. As far as just who I am as a person,
I feel like I’m very straightforward. I love that about myself. I love that I don’t take no mess. I’m a little too mean. I think that’s probably one of the things that I don’t like about myself, is that I really will be mean to people just because I don’t want to be bothered with folks. I don’t know. Being that I am as young as I am, I don’t feel like I’ve experienced any obstacles being that I am a Black woman. At least, I haven’t noticed it. I just remember my dad saying that me and my brother don’t really understand what Black people have actually gone through to get to where we’re at. We, have the luxury of not having to look at life, and feel unfair about whatever’s going on in life, or feel like anything is done to us because of who we are. I always remember that, because he’s a Black man that grew up in Mississippi. Of course, you’ve experienced more so racism than I’ve ever experienced in my life. I think the only time I’ve ever felt like, “Oh, people are treating me differently because of my complexion,” me and mom went to a Hello Kitty store. And this woman kept following us. And I was like, “What is she doing?” And it made me think back to a TV show where they had a scene like this before, and I’m like, “Oh, people really do follow Black folks in the store.” So, you think it’s just TV stuff. You don’t think that people actually do it. And then, you’re like, “Wait a minute!” Because we were just looking! So, it made me never want to buy anything from that company, because of that experience. It’s weird, talking about myself. Even in an interview, where you’re like, “So, tell me about yourself.” I’m like, “Uh?” You know? I don’t know what to say half the time, which is probably not a good thing. I should probably work on that, too. I’m tolerant of my job. I won’t say that I love my job. I think I do what I can to pay my bills, but I’m hoping that, at some point, I’ll think of what it is that I actually do want to do, and I go toward that. What I value most about myself… I
feel like I am a caring person. I feel like I do care, and I do try to help other people as much as I can despite me not wanting to be bothered with folks. I can’t turn away from family, I’ll say that. If I know somebody, especially with my younger cousins, I didn’t get along with one of my cousins a lot growing up, and now we have a relationship with each other, and I’m very proud of that, because we are six years’ difference, and we used to fight all the time. Now, I’m going to cry… I’m happy we get along with each other now, because she has a daughter, now, to make up for how I treated her, I try to love her daughter as much as I can and do for her daughter. And we’ve had moments where she’ll bring it up, and she’ll be like, “You were mean,” or whatever. I’m just thinking, “We were kids. It was no big deal.” I’m like, “You’re fine. You got over it.” But I never actually sat back and thought the way that I treated my younger cousins could have affected them as they got older. And I don’t want to be that person that’s a roadblock in anyone’s life, to say, “Well, this person treated me this way, so now I feel this way about myself.” I don’t know if it was subconsciously just because you go through the kind of issues because I have only one older cousin. The only other person that’s older than me is my brother. She and I bumped heads a lot, but I think that’s because we were so close. And we grew up together, it was easy for us to have moments where we disagreed and didn’t get along. And I think that’s probably the only thing that I felt like maybe that’s why I acted the way that I acted towards my cousins, because I had that experience with her. So, I didn’t think it was anything like I’m treating somebody a certain way. I was kind of like… This is the way that things are.

*Meet 54-Year-Old Deneen and Her 29-Year-Old Daughter Breanna*

*Deneen, Age 54.* Well, growing up as the oldest child, I always felt that I needed to be the one to kind of like lead the direction of my brothers and sisters to make sure that one, that
we never got in trouble, and two, as we getting older, being able to be self-sufficient. one
ting questions. I’m not one to sugar-coat anything. It is what it is whether
able to be self-sufficient. one
I think I like about myself is that I’m a person that one, I listen. I try to be very
honest when asking questions. I’m not one to sugar-coat anything. It is what it is whether
you like it or not and I do that because I want to lead by example. I’m not what do I want
to say? I’m not a person to pretend. I’ve never been like that. One of the things I’ve never
truly liked about myself is at one point in time, I think growing up, I was so self-
conscious that I was scared a lot of times to say things, things that I really wanted to say.
But as I got older and I start thinking for myself, then I know if I didn’t do it, then no one
else would listen or do it for me. So, I had to grow out of not being competent enough to
think that I was good enough to do a lot of things. So, that kind of held me back at first,
Well, as a Black woman growing up, I never truly felt like at first that I was being
appreciated. I always felt like I always was the one that was in the background because I
didn’t think I was pretty enough. I can’t say that I wasn’t smart enough because I knew I
wasn’t dumb. It’s just that I always felt like I always was the second chosen, not because
they really wanted me, but because they didn’t have anybody else. I felt like that for a
long time. But as I got older and growing up, then I realized that I had to make the
decision as to who I wanted to be. I couldn’t always just worry about what people
thought. And sometimes I still deal with that now even at 54. But you know, I know that
years, just learning different people and see how I am that I’ve got to love myself first.
It’s hard being a Black woman especially when you’re real confident and you know
yourself, then people want to think you’re a Miss know-it-all. It’s not that. It’s that if I
didn’t do it for myself, who would?
Breanna, Age 29. I’m an only child. Growing up it was always me and me and me. One thing that I really like about myself is that I am so outgoing. I think being an only child you sink or swim. Either you’re going to be really introverted and you don’t really fend for anyone else, or you’re going to go out and really just try to make yourself friendly in a way, so then you talk to others and have others around you. One of the things that I really like about myself, and I know that was something that’s strong within me.

Something that I did not like about myself. I think this is something that’s happened in the last 10 years that’s really bothered me is that people now have a habit of saying that I’m a mean person. I don’t think it’s that I’m mean, because people who truly know me know that I’m not a mean-spirited person. But I do think sometimes I do come off as very different. If there’s something that’s going on that I’m very passionate about, and I ask someone to do something, I expect you to do it only because I don’t ask a lot of people for a lot of things. If I ask you, it’s because I actually need you to do something and then if you don’t do it or you lie about doing it, I don’t think you’re serious and I feel in a way some sort of disrespect. I guess my sternness in those situations, people take it more being mean. I guess as a Black woman, that’s something that’s stereotypical for us. The whole mean narrative, or the attitude narrative that builds behind that. I’ve really had not a lot of negative experiences being Black, maybe because I’m young. I’ve had some things that have happened, of course, because I am a chocolate girl, so I had that whole breakdown when I was growing up about the self-consciousness of not feeling beautiful because of the color of my skin. But then I grew out of that because I was like, “I am cute. I’m cuter than a lot of people.” It varies.
Meet 48-Year-Old Elizabeth and Her 24-Year-Old Daughter Julia

Elizabeth, Age 48. I’m Elizabeth. I’m 48 years old. I am a single mother. What I value most in my life is my heart. With recent health scares, I’ve learned to take better care of myself, but I’m still working on that. What I value most in my life is my heart because without my heart, I can’t do anything for anybody else because once my heart stops, everything else stops. And I also value my relationship with my daughter. We grew up together, and it’s a very endearing bond that we have. What I value least… I would say my weight gain, which I should value most, but I’m working on that also, and I value them, I wouldn’t be where I am – we wouldn’t be where we are. Being a Black woman…as I’ve grown into an adult, I’ve learned that it has not been easy, and as a young adult – teenager – I really didn’t relish on that. I was living; I was among everyone, but with different job venues that I’ve had – personally, the one that I have now, being a Black woman, it’s hard sometimes, and I’m not a loud person, and sometimes I need to be. If things are going wrong in the office, they come to me first to settle it so they’re hoping that I won’t get upset, but I never get upset so everybody come to me the – the spot in the office to make sure everything is smooth and nobody shows out. Also, being a Black woman is the best thing in the world because I’ve seen Black women in my family overcome struggles that I know other women in other races couldn’t even stand a chance in, and I think that’s – it’s in our DNA as a strength to deal with the – with things that aren’t in our norm…if that works.

Julia, age 24. I am a 24-year-old Black woman. I do my family, my friends, and myself. I value my family and friends because they are my support system. I know that if I’m feeling down or anything, I can go to them, or if I’m excited about something, I can go to them, and I know that they’ll reciprocate the energy that I give them, or if I’m down,
they’ll make me feel better. I value myself because if I don’t value myself, I don’t feel as though anyone else would value me, so I always try to make sure that I put myself first, and in all situations. Something that I don’t value, I guess would be…sometimes I’m reserved and scared of trying new things, but as I’m getting older, I’m not as reserved as I was, but if something becomes difficult, I will kinda go back into that reserved shell, and trying new things is just difficult because I like routine, and I like things to be a certain way all the time, but like I said, as I’m getting older, it’s not how life works, and that’s not how situations work. Like my mom said I didn’t really notice it when I was young the difference between a Black woman and a White woman. Well, I knew physical differences, but not emotional differences or things that we go through on a daily basis. It didn’t really hit me until I started off at a PWI, and it was a weird experience because you could tell it was a very different experience, but like my mom said, basically, you know, people look to you to be angry because most Black women have Black woman, but that’s not my personality. And, when I transferred to a HBCU, as a Black woman, I felt more included, I felt more at home because it was more people who look more like me, and I could share experiences with them about, you know, my career path, so just things I was going through on a daily basis that they could understand where I was coming from, whereas I couldn’t do that at my PWI, so I didn’t notice anything until I went off to school – went off to college.

Meet 41-Year-Old Tonya and Her 18-Year-Old Daughter Brianna

Tonya, Age 41. I am a military brat. Lived in several places and in Europe. I would describe myself as ambitious, hardworking, loyal a little rigid. I'm a mother of three girls. I'm an entrepreneur – I'm an educator. Let me see. Things that I'd say I least like about
myself would be somewhat my, my rigidness. I'm flexible but, hmm, I wish I was a little more spontaneous. What I like the most about myself? I would say my loyalty.

_Brianna, Age 18._ I'm an older sister. I'm a college student going to school for dental hygiene. I only have two more years left. Things I like about myself is that I'm very pretty, and I can be very nice. But I can also be very mean is what I don't like. And now I have to stop being so mean. Well, stop saying things without thinking about ‘em all the time. And I love my mommy. I like to do yoga. I look good in my skin color. Cute.

It appears that motherhood and oppression can be weaved into the fabric of the mothers’ identities. Black mothers are born with their ancestors’ inherited strength and inferiority status becoming targets of negative stereotypes. Single, Black mothers are faced with the double burden of the welfare queen and matriarch stereotype. Most single, Black mothers suffer role strains by working extra hard to manage their paid and unpaid responsibilities and risk their physical and psychological well-being by trying to avoid being labeled as a welfare queen. Participants in this study reporting financial hardship included the mothers who worked two jobs. These mothers demonstrated strength to overcome their struggles “making a way out of no way,” or as in Elizabeth’s statement, “it’s in our DNA as a strength to deal with things that aren’t in our norm” which was similar to the participants in Jasmine Abrams, Morgan Maxwell, Michell Pope, and Faye Belgrave’s (2014) study who “believe that if their ancestors could be strong in displaying resilience, they should be able to do to the same” (p. 509). Furthermore, Black mothers who use their epistemic privilege to prepare and support their daughters to resist oppression are labeled as matriarchs who raise unnaturally superior daughters. Through a close data analysis, the mothers in this study set expectations for their daughters based on their oppressed experiences and then pushed their daughters to meet their expectations. This
expectation analysis was consistent with Donna Shambley-Ebron, Debora Dole, Akosua Karikari (2016) finding their participants guided their daughters so “their daughters would avoid making mistakes they themselves made” (p. 30). For this study, Black mothering was not only guided by the legacy of struggles but their personal oppressive experiences.

Black mothers may have used epistemic privilege, knowledge from a collective of Black women’s experiences and worldviews, to navigate and prepare their daughters for physical barriers and mental oppression (Collins, 2000; Everet, 2016; Hall, 2015). The participants in this study shared stories on how epistemic privilege affected their Black mothering, Black women work, resilience and redefinition in Black mothering, and mother-daughter relationships.

**Black Mothering**

Based on the concerns expressed in the stories shared, it is apparent that Black mothers have become untrusting of the world and feel that this world is unsafe for their daughters from the time that they are born. Charity, a Black mother entering into protection mode, whispers to her daughter after she is born, “I want to protect you. You will never be alone. I don’t want anybody around you. I just wanted to keep you all to myself.” Charity’s concluding sigh “but I knew what I had to do—watch her grow. And then, watch her become her own individual,” resonated in the stories shared by other participants in this study. Collectively, the reactions from these mothers’ concerns establish a sense of resistance. It was apparent from the participants’ stories that a Black mother’s protection began instinctively the moment her daughter was born. A mother’s preparation for her daughter to survive and resist oppression was based on the mother’s experiences with her own oppression. Through an analysis of the mother and daughter stories as a shared experience, the researcher discovered the subsequent sections protecting Black girlhood and mother’s expectations.
Protecting Black Girlhood

The single, Black mothers in this study shared stories about how they mothered their daughters and protected their home environments. The participants reported that they were selective with who had access to their home. Beatrice spoke of how her mom did not allow her and her sisters to physically touch any male who was not her father or brother. It appears that Beatrice provided the same protection for her daughter. Latrisha mentioned regulating male access to her home where she lived with her two daughters. What appears to be transmitted is the necessary protection of their daughters by limiting male interactions. Therefore, the mothers transmitted the importance of protecting Black girls and teaching them how to protect their bodies from being violated.

Beatrice’s mother, born in 1925, lived during a time when it was acceptable for Black female bodies to be violently abused. Beatrice described her awareness and mistrust as being a hands-on parent,

She has always been there for us. I was grateful that she was always a on-hands parent. She raised us in the household. She never put her responsibilities off on anyone else. She was always there for us. Not only did she teach us how to provide, but she taught us how to love each other and morals. We had a lot of rules and a lot of structure to our household and the protecting of us as girls. She did not allow anybody strange to come around. And if she seen you hugging anybody, she’d look at you like you were crazy. If it ain’t my daddy and it ain't my brother, you don't touch him. When I was a child, those were some of the things that I hated, now that I'm a mother, I'm exactly like her. A lot of the things that I learned, I learned them because of my mother. As a teenager we used to think boy, she is like a military person. She was very loving, she stuck to her guns. What she tried to teach you and what she wanted you to know was right, you learnt it.
Beatrice’s mother understood the legacy of struggle from Black female experiences and confronted oppressive behaviors by creating a homeplace of resistance for her children. This homeplace affirmed their being and love for one another (hooks, 1990). Latrisha embraced Beatrice’s epistemic privilege and, in turn, structured her home with resistance. Latrisha said:

Before you don't understand, but when you get in your shoes, you have to walk in those shoes and your eyes become open. You realize all of the things that you hated as a child, the things that she did and the way that she raised you. You realize the reasoning for it, see the benefits in it and the protections. You can’t do anything but be grateful to her and for her. I think I have the best mom in the world. So often when you have a good mom, you can't count the number of times even if you don't say it, you think, man, I'm so grateful for her. I have to thank her because when you start experiencing some of the same stuff she experienced with you with your children, you appreciate the things that she did for you or the reasons behind what she was trying to do for you. You have to go back to her and say, “man, I'm sorry or I love you so much because I understand now.”

Latrisha reflected on the importance of creating a safe environment for her daughters by remaining single and limiting guests to her home so her daughters would feel safe. The desire for a Black mother to protect her daughter continues beyond a hospital and her home. According to Ariel, Cassandra chose the one friend she could spend time alone with during her childhood. Cassandra expressed her concern and how she protected Ariel beyond her home.

I wanted to make sure that she was safe. I knew that her friend’s parent had a lot of the same values and I felt comfortable with my daughter going with this particular friend. And that was why I was comfortable. Whereas, a lot of her other friends, I did not know their parents. I didn't know their values.
Nadia shared a story about her mom protecting her from physical harm. She refers to her mother as a superhero:

We were getting ready to go to church, and I was in the backseat. I don’t know what my mom asked my brother to do, but my brother did something in the car, and the car started going backwards. And I’m like, “Okay. Oh, my gosh. What is happening? What is happening?” I opened the door, thinking that if the door caught onto the tree, it would stop the car from moving. All I remember is looking up and seeing my mom racing to the car, and when she got in the car, she stopped the car from moving. I didn’t even know what was about to happen, just hoping that, okay, I can’t jump out of the car, but… I just always remember seeing her running to the car, and then hopping in, and putting it in gear. [Laughs] Not even realizing if any cars were coming in the street or not.

Single, Black mothers transmitted cultural knowledge through their behaviors about how they parented and protected their daughters. The daughters’ stories collectively validate the fears that single, Black mothers have about something happening to their daughters. The daughters’ understanding of the factors that influenced their mothers’ behaviors was illustrated through restorying how their mothers cared for and protected their daughters. The consistent transmission, specifically through Beatrice and Latrisha, transcended through four generations. Beatrice shared her experience as a daughter and a mother to Latrisha. Both Beatrice and Latrisha used epistemic privilege to protect their daughters from the dehumanization of Black female bodies. Knowing their daughters have inherited their social status, reveal their awareness of Black women’s vulnerability to rape (Collins, 2000), vicious exploitation (Giddings, 1984), and capitalist exploitation (Baszile, et al., 2016), and the strategies these mothers employed so their daughters can escape psychological damage (Davis, 1983) or an agonizing spiritual death
Consuela Ward (2016) learned ‘wifely submissiveness’ (Davis, 1983) from her psychologically damaged mother. Ward saw her mother, “a strong woman who had repeatedly stood up to any man or authority figured,” remain married to a man who physically and sexually abused them. Ward escaped from a “toxic generational cycle” and found a healing place in Black women’s intellectual traditions (p. 38). Violating Black female bodies has been a legacy of struggle causing oppression to Black women since the caste system. The participants’ narratives in this study established that some Black mothers shield their daughters and teach them how to navigate oppressive situations.

*Mother’s Expectations*

The coding process revealed the educational expectations these single, Black mothers had for their daughter. During the interviews, the participants reported the importance of obtaining an education and performing well academically. A specific profession was not discussed or targeted. These Black mothers spoke specifically about their daughters attaining college degrees to have access to better employment. Black mothers in this study reported that they were pleased with their daughter’s professional life. Educational attainment was a goal and accomplishment celebrated by both mother and daughter. Charity talked about how letting her daughter go off to college was the hardest thing because she had to let go. A Black mother’s expectation of her daughter to become independent carries the burden of epistemic privilege and how society objectifies Black women. As previously mentioned, daughters inherit their mothers’ social status, a consistent pattern of inferiority and devaluation (Collins, 2000). Chelsey inferred that Black women are disadvantaged, “a lot of times, we’re not dealt the best hand, but we make do with what we have,” discerning that Black women continue to be vulnerable to devaluation and dehumanization. Some Black mothers’ reflection and deliberation (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989) of their daughtering experiences shape how they mother their daughters. Cassandra’s epistemic
privilege informed her daughter’s preparation, “I tried to instill a lot of the things that I have learned over the years that would actually benefit her, whether or not she like it or not.” Deneen maintained that same privilege reflecting on her experience, she speaks of her daughter, “it gets scary, because I know that one day that, even though she is an adult, she’s going to one day truly spread her wings and go out and be her own person.” Sensing her pain of Black womanhood, Deneen continues, “I hope that everything that I’ve tried to teach her that she’ll take it with her.” Cassandra authentically speaking through her oppression, “if push come to shove…I go overboard sometimes in doing it, she may say, “Well, Momma, this is enough,” and I’m like, “No, baby, we need to do this.” The mothers experienced the stress that can be debilitating from oppression, so they protect their daughters by guiding and assisting them during their Black womanhood stage (hooks, 1993). In an effort to protect their daughters from oppression, these Black mothers may endure the objectification of a controlling matriarch.

The matriarch label has also infiltrated the Black community; Black men disregard Black women’s power and relegate these women to passive subservient roles (hooks, 1981). Theorists uncovered that highly educated Black women with high-paying salaries find it more difficult to find suitable marriage partners (Butler-Sweet, 2017; Tichenor et al., 2017). Mothers in this study were more focused on constructing their daughters’ “subjectivity and agency by positionality” (Emecheta, 1979, p. 32) as a response to Black men disregarding Black females as a threat to their personal power (hooks, 1981). Cassandra wanted to empower her daughter Ariel, “you don't have to have a man in your life in order to be a strong black woman.” Ariel, who is in her late twenties, shared she is considering becoming an unmarried mother, “I was gonna have a baby with or without a man, I don’t need no man.” Another example of disregard for Black women was experienced by Tonya who shared she did not want her daughter to “repeat [her]
mistake of staying in a miserable marriage if she marries somebody horrible… and if [she] does, leave and not stay forever 'cause it just gets worse.” Their intersecting identities along with inherent inferiority (hooks, 1981) place Black women in a competitive framework (Butler-Sweet, 2017) of oppression within the Black community. Some Black mothers reflect on their past and present experiences to help navigate their daughters to achieve self-reliance as resistance to Black womanhood oppression.

Most, if not all mothers talked about the importance of a college education. The mothers were aware that they were sending their daughters to make it through academic programs that were not designed for their daughters to be successful. Black children are often exposed to and adopt deficit thinking (Haynes, Stewart, & Allen, 2016) about their possible selves (Kerpelman, Shoffner, & Ross-Griffin, 2002) which led them to perpetuate social marginalization (Gay, 2018). Teachers believe that Black children enter the classroom without any prior knowledge (Evans-Winters, 2019) requiring them to foster the invisibility of the Black bodies in literature (Morrison, 1992). Owens shared feeling invisible, “While my mother modeled certain behaviors that I emulated to challenge oppression… My K-12 experience, much like the documented experiences of other Black girls, reflects consistent incidents of being overlooked for positive recognition” (Owens, Edwards, & McArthur, 2018, p. 128). According to Ladson-Billings (2009) “failing to incorporate the African American students into the community of learners… foster alienation” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 62) and enacts a power of silence that isolates (Baszile, Edwards & Guillory, 2016).

Elizabeth said her daughter’s graduation day brought her great joy because she had not given up. This struggle was all too familiar for both the mother and daughter. Elizabeth became pregnant with Julia while in college. Elizabeth talked about how she wanted Julia to graduate
from college and “not be a single mother like me, and not finishing school also, like me. I wanted that for her, and I pushed it.” Elizabeth’s aspirations for Julia were transmitted. Julia said her mother feared her getting pregnant and not finishing school. Upon Julia’s graduation, tearful and joyful expressions were exchanged between mother and daughter. Julia said, “my mom, she was there throughout my whole process – and just like she saw how happy I was, I saw how happy she was too, and how proud of me she was.” The college degree attained by Elizabeth’s daughter, Julia, redefines the narrative of single mothers birthing dropouts, in which Elizabeth felt she joined the stereotype of a young mother, college drop-out. Elizabeth’s epistemic privilege was revealed with “I wanted her to take a different path and she did.” Julia’s graduation pushed Elizabeth through the oppressive single mother stereotype; Elizabeth is finishing her bachelor’s degree at Valdosta State University.

The word “pushed” is interpreted as an expectation through the mother’s epistemic privilege of being a failure. In *Home Girls*, Smith (2000) wrote,

I learned about Black feminism from women in my family—not just from their strengths, but from their failings, from witnessing daily how they were humiliated and crushed because they had made the ‘mistake’ of being born Black and female in a White man’s country (p. xxiv).

Smith witnessed Black women training their daughters for womanhood. And, despite their objective circumstances, the Black women believed their daughters could have a future beyond theirs (Smith, 2000). The study participants’ fear of failure carried through Black mothering and expectations. Black feminism clarifies failure and helps Black women understand “[they] are not hated and abused because there is something wrong with us, but because our status and treatment is absolutely prescribed by the racist, misogynistic system” (Smith, 2000, p.
Breanna recalls her mother pushing her academically, which resulted in her also pushing herself. Breanna wrote her mother a three-page letter expressing her gratitude for her academic preparation and asking her to live her life now that she was departing for college. Deneen’s ‘push’ also transmitted to her daughter as an expectation. Deneen shared, “I did a lot of pushing. I always felt like if I didn’t push her, she wouldn’t do her best so that she could be self-sufficient.” Breanna shared Deneen’s perspective of pushing her academically with knowing her mother experienced ‘intellectual inferiority’ during her girlhood (Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004). Vanessa Siddle-Walker and John Snarey (2004) challenged the label of “intellectual inferiority” for Black people for the reason that it devalues the construction of knowledge connected to marginalized groups and “quells fears about relativism” (p. 59). Deneen recalled an experience at school, “I may have been dumb” as she feared to ask questions to avoid being taunted by her classmates with, “Man, she don’t know nothing.” Deneen suffered from oppression as a young Black girl, she “fear[ed] that I had of being a failure, just didn’t have that guidance, didn’t know if I were doing it right.” Breanna expressed how grateful she was about her mother’s preparation while tearfully discussing an unexplained struggle while in college:

I put my mom through a very hard time. I had a rebellious early 20s stage. It came from decisions I had made, and thinking that no one, even including her, would understand. I didn’t finish college on time, and sometimes even now I beat myself up about it, but I finished. [Laughs]. Those three years were very rough. I was not honest with my mom a lot of times. Instead of me saying, “Hey, I think that I need to sit out of school.” I would just not go to the class and I would fail classes, and for no reason at all because the work was not hard. I didn’t have a reason to the outside world. I was just dealing with some personal things and instead of me being an adult or being a young adult and saying, “I’m
struggling, and I don’t know how to tell you I’m struggling but I am. Can I just not do school right now?” I couldn’t do that, or I wouldn’t do that, and I had a really hard time. It was a very, very scary place to be because like, nobody else’s opinion really mattered. But, when I knew I was disappointing my mother, it was a really big deal.

Breanna inherited from her mother “what no one could have taught her, and what she couldn’t have attempted without her mother’s struggle” (Steinem, 1995, p. xxvi). Deneen’s epistemic privilege guided her parenting to ensure Breanna was intelligent and as Deneen says, “well-educated.” The push expectation transmission was revealed when Breanna discussed how she would not be a helicopter parent inserting a disclaimer that her mom was not a helicopter mom. Breanna described her idea of parenting in the following way:

I am not going to helicopter parent my children. My mother didn’t helicopter parent me, but I see it so often where people live their life through their children. I don’t want to ever do that. I want to live my own life and make my own decisions so that when I do have children, and they start making their decisions, I don’t make them feel that they are making them for me, and I don’t put that burden on them. I want them to be their own people because that’s what ultimately will make them happy. Looking back, I made these decisions for myself and not to please anyone else.

Breanna redefines Black womanhood paralleling confidence to Regina in Kamesha Spates, Na’Tasha Evans, Brittany Clarvon-Watts, Nasra Abubakar, and Tierra James’s (2020) study who gets motivated by negativity and refuses “to be the stereotype of what Black women are ‘supposed to be.’ I try to do better and present myself … in an intelligent way and I bring whatever knowledge I have to the table” (p. 518). Breanna validates the transmission that educational expectation is necessary for survival. Breanna’s epistemic transmission also includes
resistance when she adds “raising kids should not put a mother’s life on hold.” The transmission from Deneen to Breanna calls for a more balanced approach to a mother’s sacrifices for her daughter that may include self-care. This awareness in mothering was also realized by Deneen when she says she could have stepped back, “I think now, she’s right. I did a lot of pushing, maybe I could’ve stepped back a little bit. But I always felt like if I didn’t do it, or push her, that she wouldn’t do the best.” This counter-narrative of a mother’s parenting practices transmitting sacrificial love for her daughter bridges epistemic privilege and resistance.

Using Black feminism to center single, Black mothers’ experiences is critical to narrative inquiry because knowledge shared “from the subject’s lived experience is considered epistemologically valid” (Baszile, Edwards, & Guillory, 2016, p. 19). Black mothers who center love in their labor and struggles transmit oppositional knowledge that resists dehumanization (hooks, 1990) to their daughters and liberation becomes possible (Baszile, Edwards, & Guillory, 2016). Black mothers in this study used push to go beyond, to ensure their objectives or desires for their daughter were achieved. Ariel describes her mother, Cassandra, who also used push, as helpful, stern, and stuck on what she says. “Stuck on what she’s stuck on and I be stuck on what I want and we be stuck together.” Elizabeth used push when admitting that she takes over in good nature, she says, “when she comes to me with something, I see a big picture. She’s looking through a smaller lens than I am, and I just want her to bring it forward because whatever she does, I’m behind her.”

The participants’ stories revealed how the mothers used their epistemic privilege to guide them as they raised and loved their daughters through their fears caused by oppressive experiences. A restory of their girlhood experiences living in Black female bodies was visible in their mothering. A mother’s self-expectation was to help her daughter evade similar experiences.
She pushed her daughter without confronting her own struggles. As a result, a mother transmitted survival knowledge with lingering effects of internalized oppression to her daughter (Everett, et al., 2016). Everett, et al. (2016) reported one participant who described her relationship with her mother as very volatile and just unhealthy. She explained, “Not a lot of communication, a lot of criticism, and then, in turn, a lot of self-deprivation on my part and self-hatred” (p. 343). Black women’s writing and othermothers, both acts of resistance, provide support and coping strategies for the daughter’s resiliency (Everett, et al., 2016). The researcher interpreted the participants’ varying expression of “pushed,” “push it,” or “push through” as a Black mother breaking her daughter through an obstacle of an oppressive structure which the mother had succumbed to devaluation. Ultimately, a Black mother transmitted to her daughter to keep going by communicating, “I’m here with and for you.”

*Care for Family*

Most of the participants, both mothers and daughters, revealed an expectation to care for family. The daughters conveyed the expectation of helping their mothers by taking care of their siblings. Mothers verbalized this expectation by telling their daughters to always look out for their siblings. The participants’ responses revealed that caring for family members was an inherited behavior that may have included some aspects of othermothering.

Deneen remembers growing up as the oldest child feeling like she needed to provide direction to her siblings. She inherently assumed mothering duties by taking responsibility “to make sure that we never got in trouble and… [were] able to be self-sufficient.” Differently from Deneen’s inherited mothering expectations, Charity’s discussion with her daughter, Ashley, provided a more direct expectation about sibling care,
Charity: I think she had to do a lot to help guide her brother in a good way. So we both were like mother hens.

Ashley: My brother was the oldest, but then it was more like, I was in that role of being the oldest child, and like taking care of everyone.

Charity: I knew she could take care of things, like no one else could. And I knew she was capable of getting those things done...taking care of her sisters, just making sure. Charity described Ashley as precise and explained how she depended on Ashley to make sure her brother and sisters got things done. Charity did not realize she was giving Ashley everything. Some mothers usually place more responsibilities on the oldest child, particularly to care for their younger siblings; therefore, it is likely that Ashley has experienced sexism since she has a brother who is the oldest and has not been trained to have the same expectation of responsibility. Charity’s expectation of her oldest daughter aligns with Chodorow’s (1999) idea that “mothers re-created and reproduced mothering in their daughters” (p. 84). Charity’s reliance on Ashley was not only common in this study but also in Hall’s (2015) study which found that Black mothers teach their daughters early on to assume family roles. Charity stated, “I knew she could take care of things, like no one else could. I knew she was capable of getting those things done.” Charity’s need for Ashley to assist with family care relegates them both to a place where they struggled with oppression of a single, Black mother and Black womanhood. A Black mother’s reliance on her daughter to care for her siblings, thereby balancing her household responsibilities, can be considered an act of resistance.

The participants’ caring for family members was more specific to immediate family, meaning a mother and her child(ren). Daughters expressed how they would love to provide for their mothers, even though the mothers were established. Mothers expressed how their daughters
could always come home. Beatrice said she would like to help her adult children financially if she could. Cassandra’s act of resistance to protect Ariel from financial hardship was transmitted to her daughter. For instance, Ariel achieved self-independence and financial security stated that “her mother would give her last to help her out.” Chelsey spoke from a daughter’s perspective about a mother-daughter cyclical caring by saying, “with any child, you want your parent to not have to like worry about pretty much anything…You see what they do for you, so you hope that you get in a position where you could do a lot more for them.” Chelsey’s act of remembrance (Kinser, 2010) aligns with DeFrancisco and Chatham-Carpenter’s (2000) findings, “self-reliance was not developed to separate one’s identity from her parents or other social support; it was nurtured within those support systems” (p. 87). A daughter’s desire to relieve her mother of cumulative toll (McDonald, 2007) is a conscious gesture of the daughter honoring her mother’s struggle (Kinser, 2010). In addition to seeing their mothers struggle, the daughters also witnessed their mothers’ resiliency and strength during their struggles. As such, with the cumulative toll, the mothers continued the transmission of collective consciousness that embraces interdependence (Evans-Winters, 2019; McDonald, 2007). The mothers and adult daughters in this study promote female solidarity to confront the economic insecurity that Black women are likely to experience (Brown, 2012). The desire a Black mother and her daughter have to continuously provide for each other is an act of resistance to oppression by alleviating Black women suffering from financial strains.

*Black Women’s Work*

The single, Black mothers in this study reported the importance of college degrees to have access to better employment opportunities and to obtain self-reliance. All participants reported either pursuing or obtaining a college degree. Although participants appreciated their job opportunities, the mothers’ employment experiences contributed to why they supported and
pushed their daughters. Employment discrimination which includes access to higher salaries and skilled positions is and continues to be a legacy of struggle for Black women. The uncertain employment conditions some Black mothers endured showed in their preparation for and support of their daughter. This support continues through adulthood as the mothers discussed how their daughters can always return home, or the daughters reported how they would love to retire their mothers. Both the mothers and daughters in this study are too familiar with the limited employment opportunities and employment conditions that required the mothers to work long hours for inequitable pay trying to prove their worth. Beatrice reported showing her children her income and bills “so they knew that we didn't have a lot, so, that they understood when I told them we couldn't do this, or we couldn't do that.” Latrisha described her experiences as similar to her mother’s, Beatrice:

I feel like I accomplished a lot raising them on my own. I always worked hard. Most times I had to have two jobs so that was a struggle. One of the things I wished I could have had more of a career instead of just having jobs raising them, so that I wouldn't had to spend as many hours working as I did when they were younger as much as I had to when they were growing up.

In addition to working long hours, Charity recalled receiving scrutiny even though she is working harder to prove that she can manage her position while being a single mother. She adopts the strong Black woman stereotype to prove her ability to manage her life as a single, Black mother and a Black woman in a managerial role. Charity shifts to “shatter the stereotypes of the lazy welfare mother…and the unqualified token” (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 151). She remembers being asked “how do you manage to do all that,” and it followed with conflicting experiences, “people don’t even see you…somebody coming to me saying, where have you
been…and you put out all this energy for people to doubt you.” Charity loses a sense of self
(Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003) during the interview stating, “oh my goodness, I’m losing my
train of thought about what people are thinking in the workplace.”

Elizabeth talked about working different jobs and inequitable salaries. Her most current
position had a more pronounced racial experience.

The one that I have now, being a Black woman, it’s hard sometimes. I’m not a loud
person, and sometimes I need to be. If things are going wrong in the office, they come to
me first to settle it hoping that I won’t get upset. I never get upset so everybody come to
me—the spot in the office to make sure everything is smooth and nobody shows out. I’ve
been blessed with pretty good employment, I think it would have been better with me
having a degree to stand on because sometimes, you don’t have a degree, you’re getting
paid less, but you’re doing degree work.

Elizabeth’s daughter, Julia, lists stability and more job opportunities among her hopes for her
future. Julia wants a family and a career with equitable pay that allows her to be self-reliant and
provide for her family. In 2020, the average annual salary earned by Black women was $39,728
compared to $62,452 for White men, $43,160 for Black men, and $49,712 for White women
Mabud, Amity Paye, and Sanjay Pinto (2021) showed an increase in income disparities,
particularly for Black women who work in subservient positions. The Pinto et al. study reported
income losses between March and October 2020 for “Latinx and Black workers (45% and 42%,
respectively) lost income—substantially higher numbers than the 28% of White workers” (p. 14),
and also found “1 in 11 workers (9%) experienced at least one of four key forms of wage theft:
not being paid for all hours worked, not being paid at the correct wage rate, being denied tips, or
having the cost of personal protective equipment deducted from pay. Black workers (14%) and Latinx workers (11%) reported higher rates of wage theft than White workers (6%)” (p. 15). Wage theft upholds capitalism and structurally maintains the social status that particularly keeps Black women inferior to White women and men.

Some White women continue their stance “organize around your own oppressions” (hooks, 2000, p. 6) since White women earn 20% higher wages than Black women and are also afforded a career choice to mother their child(ren). Most of the mothers in this study reported working two jobs for an extended period or working a full-time job and going to school full-time explaining “somehow, someway, we always defy the odds.” Based on their stories, many of the mothers would have chosen a career and raised their family if capitalist greed did not continue to profit from exploiting and impoverishing Black women (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1983). Financial hardship impacted Black women at a higher rate during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 social distancing mandates and guidelines imbalanced unpaid work responsibilities with school shutdowns, and adversely impacted “unpaid family care needs and paid work, access to unemployment and paid leave supports, and the ability to pay household bills and maintain steady housing” (Pinto et al., 2021, p. 13). Charity’s sentiments to her children, “I’m a single parent, doesn’t mean that she can’t do what you’re supposed to do, or do what you want to do,” collectively represented the attitudes of the mothers in this study. Financial hardship was a consistent struggle experienced by the participants in this study; however, Cassandra’s “we make it work by any means necessary” was a shared strength-based perspective for single, Black mothering.

*Black Woman Oppression Identity (Self-care)*

Black women struggle with different aspects of devaluation. The devaluation and dehumanization traumatized some Black women’s lives through violent physical and mental
acts. The negative stereotypes single, Black mothers suffered from caused self-hate, silenced their voices, and stole their identity blocking their ability to self-love, understand their strength, and redefine their identity. The participants shared stories frequently referring to strong, strength, and a strong mind that transcended oppression to redefinition. The legacy of struggle changed to lessons learned. Black women learned to use their experiences from their struggles to teach resistance to their daughters. Reclaiming the beauty of Black women was necessary to heal from self-hate. Deneen’s admittance to her feeling self-conscious and unconfident since her youth frames the participants’ perceptions about their identities as shy, rigid, very mean, too nice, and putting oneself last or scared to try new things. The participants’ self-loathing continued about their weight loss, academic achievements, and financial hardships. Black women’s struggle with despair transitions to resistance when they use oppositional knowledge for their daughters to survive. In addition to a mother’s preparation and protection, a daughter also witnessed. Beatrice believed “being born in the house with a lot of strong women as adults helped her [daughter] to materialize,” as a descendant of strength “I had a strong mother image.” Ashley’s perspective of living with a mother of strength elucidates, “seeing how strong she is, she makes me wanna be that strong of a person too.” The daughters’ inheritance and observation of their mothers’ strength create a “sphere of influence” Collins, 2000, p. 222) for both the mothers and their daughters to control their own self-definition through collective wisdom.

*Body Image, Health, and Weight.* Beatrice and Elizabeth talked about their weight and health concerns. When discussing self-valuation, both participants shared their struggles with their weight. Beatrice shared, “I really can't think of something I like least about myself except for my struggle with my weight. I like the fact that I have learned through the years to be healthy, take good care of myself and it has paid off.”
Elizabeth shared she values her heart and is concerned,

With recent health scares, I’ve learned to take better care of myself, I’m still working on that. Without my heart, I can’t do anything for anybody else because once my heart stops, everything else stops. What I value least, I would say my weight gain, which I should value most, but I’m working on that also, I value them, I wouldn’t be where I am.

Chelsey who is aged between Beatrice and Elizabeth talks about valuing her health and mobility. She has maintained a healthy lifestyle to be independent in comparison to her mother and grandmother.

It’s just amazing how I look at my age, I’m just surprised when you think about your parents and grandparents, the people before you that were at my age, they were not as active as I am… I’m able to get out and do things, and don’t have to depend on anybody else or wait on anybody else.

Ariel also shared struggles with her weight. Ariel continues with how supportive her mother was, “when I was trying to lose weight… at first, I was going by myself, but then she started, you know, being my little support system. We’d go so we could lose weight together.”

Cassandra joined Ariel’s weight loss journey to routinely support her daughter’s goal. Health and weight management is usually the self-care that is neglected, although the study participants along with Black women in general have the “desire to eat right and exercise to maintain their health” (Nichols et al., 2015, p. 183). The families in this study lived in urban or rural communities which are impacted by structural racism and systemic barriers that limit access to adequate food and social resources (Keefe et al., 2018; McDonald, 2017). The grocers in these communities sell pre-packaged and ready-to-eat foods with limited fresh foods. Prepared foods are more convenient than cooking fresh foods, particularly for Black women who often solely
manage multiple jobs, children, and her household. According to Asha DuMonthier, Chandra Childers, and Jessica Milli (2017) research found that approximately 75% of Black women are overweight due to limited access to healthy food choices, regular physical activity, and experiences of racism. Generational transmissions of unhealthy habits that maintain serious health conditions in the Black communities were tragically confronted by Covid-19 (Mabud, et al., 2021). Black families experienced “disproportionate virus-related infections and deaths due to the generational impact of structural racism” (Pinto, et al., 2021, p. 20). Although the women in this study struggled with their weight, they each found positive ways to improve their lives. The support exchanged between mothers and daughters encouraged the women to live better and healthier was successfully transmitted. Health and well-being are essential to independence.

*Self-Independence.* Financial challenges and the quest for financial security was an essential skill that mothers desired for their daughters to be self-independent. Most of the participants talked about financial challenges they experienced as a child growing up and as an adult. All mothers desired independence for their daughters, however, they took different approaches to ensure their daughter was prepared.

Beatrice associated her financial challenges as part of her identity. Her statement, “I like least about myself; I would like to be able to financially to help each and every one of them when they needed it.” Beatrice talked about the long hours she worked, sometimes at more than one job, to provide for her children. Beatrice’s statement indicates that she does not have financial security and suspects her children may children experience similar financial challenges.

Financial management was a focal point for the study’s participants. Cassandra was intentional about teaching her daughter to manage money to be self-independent. Cassandra recalled making Ariel a little checkbook around the age of seven, “when we went to the store and
I wrote a check, she wrote that check as well. So, my daughter is probably one of the few her age who actually knows how to write a check.” Cassandra decided to teach her daughter about budgeting at an early age. According to Ariel’s response, the transmission of self-independence was successful.

I am financially stable and that's pretty much because of my momma. When I got my first job at 15 – I was working at Sonic and I thought I had a whole $100.00 check I was going to blow. I just thought I was gonna be rich. $100.00 back then was a lot of money, so I was going to be rich and spend my money and stuff like that. She made me put up half of my check in my checking I can spend and half of it I had to save. It kind of stuck with me now because I still put a portion of my check in another bank account that I can't even touch. I pay my bills and stuff with the rest of it. I still got a portion over there that I can't touch because it just stuck with me.

Cassandra did not learn about budgeting. She shared her reasoning for teaching her daughter, “it's me and her. And when I'm gone, I want to feel comfortable in knowing that I have provided her way to be independent rather than dependent upon someone.”

Charity also considered her experiences when guiding her daughter Ashley with her financial decisions,

I know my mom bailed me out. I had to bail my baby out. I had to teach her from my mistakes, what I made when I was going to school. I showed her credit offering you $500, and I’ve told her about how credit works. I thought about having her savings account. I didn’t want them to fall into a financial setback as they got older. They went with me with purchasing a home. They know about their credit score, the interest rate; we went through that when we were buying your first car. The lessons my mom taught me
by me being reckless, I just had to pass it on to them, and make sure that they don’t hurt themselves.

Elizabeth learned about budgeting on her own and allowed her daughter Julia to witness bill-paying without involving her in budgeting. They both shared that they knew about bills being a task their mother took care of. Julia shared her first experience in college, “when I was in school, she would send me money because I wasn’t working and I had to figure out how to use it when I need it instead of just splurging on things to have fun. I couldn’t call her every week, ‘Mama, I don’t have XYZ.’ ‘Well, I just sent you some money last week.’” They both became exposed to money management as an adult when it was necessary and part of their own responsibility.

Deneen does not remember being taught about finances. She said:

It was a rude awakening and I think I still struggle … I just got onto a point where I’m like, ‘Hey, you don’t need to shop that much.’…I’ve really reduced the amount of shopping that I’ve done to try to be more financially responsible.

Breanna remembers talking about finances when she was an adult. Breanna remembers her first learning experience about budgeting while at college.

Whoa, got to use less paper towels. This is expensive. Toilet tissue is not cheap. You need to find a brand that’s maybe cost-efficient. I can’t just buy Charmin because Charmin is $18.00…she would give me money and then tell me it was all I had to spend. Breanna shared that to avoid stretching and stressing her mother, she quickly learned to be responsible with the money she was given. Breanna knew how committed her mother was and felt that because she didn’t work, “that was a blessing, because a lot of students do have to work and my mother, she didn’t force me to do that.”
The financial knowledge transmission varied between the mother and daughter in the study. Knowledge about budgeting and savings accounts were common concepts. Cassandra described a significantly different experience that she had and what she provided for her daughter Ashley. Elizabeth, Cassandra, and Deneen all shared that they learned budgeting through hard life lessons. Julia’s self-taught financial situation was the same as her mother Elizabeth; however, Cassandra saw a need to teach and incorporate financial management with Ariel early. Deneen’s preparation pushed Breanna to be self-reliant and allowed her to quickly adapt to budgeting. Isolated and very limited discussions were exchanged about retirement savings. The retirement savings were limited to the daughters’ desire to provide financial support for their mother in retirement which may indicate that there is limited knowledge about investments. DuMonthier, et al., (2017) report 24.6 percent of “Black women in the United States live in poverty, compared with 18.9 percent of Black men and 10.8 percent of White women” (p. xiii) and collectively, Black women have financial assets and are more likely to experience financial setbacks from job loss, medical costs, or divorce (Brown, 2012). Black single motherhood further disadvantages a Black mother’s ability to accumulate financial assets due to racial and gendered differences in socioeconomic resources and the cost of single motherhood (Brown, 2012). A Black mother’s limited knowledge of financial assets is a legacy of historical and racial discrimination impeded by the lack of a resource-rich social network (Brown, 2012); however, their daughters’ desire to mitigate the historical financial struggle is an act of resistance to the lessons they learned from their mothers.

**Lessons Learned (Self-Conscious) Self-Love.** The experiences of Black women in this study are summarized by Cassandra, “People always see the worst in us, so I try to see the best in us.” According to the participants, Black women are stereotyped as mean and with having
attitudes. Most participants’ stories included mean experiences, incongruously of oppression and resistance. For example, Breanna feels there is a mean narrative that landscapes Black women’s experiences that apparently does not apply to her,

People have a habit of saying that I’m a mean person….I do think sometimes I do come off as very different if…I ask someone to do something, I expect you to do it only because I don’t ask a lot of people for a lot of things…if you don’t do it or you lie about doing it, I don’t think you’re serious and I feel in a way some sort of disrespect. I guess my sternness in those situations, people take it more being mean.

There was consistency with Breanna’s mother, Deneen. She shared:

I don’t do excuses. I just don’t, especially with our Black young women today. My mom is a very stern person and they say, “You’re just like your momma.” Well, thank you. I appreciate that for certain things…from her perspective, even from looking at Breanna…I smile like, hmm, I guess I did something right.

It appears that Breanna and Deneen both “get it from their mama.” Oshin and Milan (2018) found that since only Black mothers encouraged their daughters to be assertive, independent, and strong-willed, Black daughters may have more negative connotations with non-Black clinicians or teachers who misinterpret the behaviors as aggressive rather than as traits necessary for survival. Deneen was self-conscious as well celebratory about people considering her to be mean. Although being mean bothered Deneen, she established pride in her authentic voice (hooks, 1993) when she acknowledged her ability to be stern to disrespectful behavior.

Siddle-Walker and Snarey (2004) theorized Black women’s authentic voices possess emotional tension and resonate with their frustrations. Nadia also struggled with being straightforward and mean. She said she is a straightforward person, but tearfully talked about being mean to her
cousin. Nadia reflected, “I love that I don’t take no mess. I’m a little too mean. I think that’s probably one of the things that I don’t like about myself. I can be mean to people just because I don’t want to be bothered with folks. But I don’t know why.” Nadia continued, “I am a caring person and I do try to help other people as much as I can despite me not wanting to be bothered with folks. Nadia’s straightforward response to her cousin who reminded her how mean she was, I’m just thinking, “We were kids. It was no big deal.” I’m like, “You’re fine. You got over it.” But I never actually sat back and thought the way that I treated my younger cousins could have affected them as they got older. And I don’t want to be that person that’s a roadblock in anyone’s life, to say, “Well, this person treated me this way, so now I feel this way about myself.”

Although Nadia felt that her cousin could recover, Nadia reported that she showers this cousin’s daughter with love ensuring the baby girl feels loved. Nadia appeared to struggle oppression from her experiences and an act of resistance for her cousin’s daughter. Consistent with Black feminist writing in a tone that embodies authentic pain from oppression, Black women are seen as being mean when they may be operating through their oppression on the margin of societal norms.

Charity felt that “people have this vision of what they think a Black woman is, and it’s like a whole bunch of stereotypes, and you don’t wanna be like what they define you as. You wanna be your own definition.” Charity prided herself as a single, Black mother who was gainfully employed in a management position. She handled a high workload to avoid being questioned about balancing her home responsibilities with her work responsibilities, specifically if she needed to “stop what she was doing to check on her child at school.” Unfortunately, Charity still felt like she was under a microscope, "wondering if I’m capable of handling what I
need to do on the outside with my children or is it what I’m capable of doing at work.” Charity who refused to be labeled as a lazy, welfare queen displayed what Davis (1983) had described Black women to possess as an “awareness of their endless capacity for hard work (that) may have imparted to them a confidence in their ability to struggle” (p. 11). Charity acquiesced to the strong Black woman stereotype trying to evade the single, Black mother stereotype. Charity’s daughter Ashley had a different experience about stereotypes:

> When I was in high school, I didn’t act like how a lot of the people thought Black people acted. They said I talked white or I don’t do certain things that they thought that Black people did. It caught me off guard, because you grow up with these people. I’ve known them since middle school, and they’re still like you’re like one of the good Black people. It was very hard just hearing that and being in that type of environment. Whenever I left, I had to learn to like and love myself more, and not be like, I should be acting more this way, or I should feel bad for even being myself.

Ashley felt devalued when her White peers told her that she was one of the good Black people. Ashley questioned her identity and behaviors because her White peers’ perception made her feel, as Collins (2000) theorized, in her rightful place. Ashley’s intellect, behavior, and tone were acceptable and more closely associated with their dominant cultural norms. Although Ashley was familiar with the stereotypes that oppressed Black women, her ability to embrace differences came from living in different countries during her formative years. Ashley adopted “peace over everything” after seeing her mother rebuild their life after losing everything. Ashley’s peace was temporarily disrupted by epistemic violence (Shadid, 2015) from her White peers’ “forceful displacement of knowledge and ways of knowing in order to maintain dominance over oppressed communities” (p. 64). Their hegemonic ideas defined her identity as other, meaning she is not
White but a good Black which differed from Butler-Sweet’s (2017) informants who were terrorized by lower-income Black girls for not “being Black” enough (p. 385). Arroyo, et al., (2017) found that “influences come from a multitude of sources… a mother, is most influential in contributing to one’s perception of self” (p. 113). Charity’s idea of being your own definition was transmitted to her daughter. Ashley learned to love and define herself through self-affirmation. Ashley’s experiences were mimicked by Julia. Julia reported:

It didn’t really hit me until I started at a PWI … it was a weird experience because you could tell… it was a very different experience, people look to you to be angry because most Black women have stereotypes as a Black woman, but that’s not my personality. I transferred to a HBCU, as a Black woman, I felt more included, I felt more at home because it was more people who look more like me, and I could share experiences with them about my career path… things I was going through on a daily basis that they could understand where I was coming from, whereas I couldn’t do that at my PWI. I didn’t notice anything until I went off to college.

Chelsey did not recall having any barriers until she had to manage a predominantly White team that did not like being managed by a Black woman. She recalls, “I had to realize who I am, and what position, what role I held… I could not allow them to break me.” Her daughter, Nadia, also remembered limited experiences with people treating her differently because of her skin complexion. Nadia shared the one memorable experience, “me and mom went to a Hello Kitty store and this woman kept following us. I was like, ‘What is she doing?’ It made me never want to buy anything from that company because of that experience.” Both mother and daughter felt empowered to change the outcome from their racist experiences. Deneen never truly felt appreciated, however, she decided to focus on her self-valuation:
I know that I’ve got to love myself first. It’s hard being a Black woman especially when you’re real confident and you know yourself, then people want to think you’re a Miss know-it-all. It’s not that. It’s that if I didn’t do it for myself, who would?

Deneen recalled her daughters’ empowering experience that redefined the moment for both her and her mother. Breanna wrote a letter to thank her coach for not treating her any different and shared how scared she truly was. Deneen stated that it was one of her proudest moments, “I’ve had during her lifetime so far.” The coach read the letter to the team who cried. She was proud that her young seventh-grader wrote a letter that touched her heart and reached the hearts of the team.

Differently from Deneen, Breanna said:

I’ve not got a lot of negative experiences being Black, maybe because I’m young. I’ve had some things that have happened, of course, because I am a chocolate girl, so I had that whole breakdown when I was growing up about the self-consciousness of not feeling beautiful because of the color of my skin. Then I grew out of that because I was like, “I am cute. I’m cuter than a lot of people.”

Both mother and daughter felt self-conscious about having a darker complexion, Deneen mentioned earlier that she still struggles at age 54 and Breanna has already embraced her beauty. The self-consciousness may have transmitted from mother to daughter, Breanna continues to empower her mother through redefining who they are.

Beatrice, the oldest participant, felt very proud of her life and empowered from her experiences. She acknowledged that it is a struggle. Beatrice shared, “sometimes I feel like people use the race-card a lot, which I don't really buy into because I feel like people create their own greatness or their lack of.” Each daughter used strong to describe their mother’s resilience
that was used to overcome their struggles. Self-love was essential for the participants to resist societal stereotypes and redefine single, Black mothering.

Resilience and Redefinition in Black Mothering

The single, Black women in this study interpreted strength in two ways. There is a way of doing and the other is a way of feeling. Both interpretations are understood to be inherited. Society uses this understood strength to oppress Black women by harshly criticizing them as being unfeminine, domineering, and emasculating (Collins, 2000). The participants’ reconciled their daughtering experiences and acknowledged their mothers as strong Black women who “keep on keeping on despite the exploitation, misrepresentation, and invisibility that often defined their lives” (Baszile, 2016, p. 6). The participants believe the struggles contribute to their strength in constructing strong mothers and strong daughters who are self-reliant, selfless, fearless, and resilient.

Self-Reliance

Breanna described Black women as a magical essence. Her uplift of the strong Black woman continued regardless of how society attempts to bring down Black women:

We still continue to achieve over greatness. I don’t think it’s because we’re women. I think it’s because we are Black women, and we possess something that’s very special about us that allows us to continue to thrive and to win at life because…who we are, who we’ve always had to be.

Charity concurred with Breanna, and shared her experiences about being a Black woman,

You have to be strong. People look at what their expectations are. As a Black woman being single, I get a lot of how you manage to do all that. It’s just being a Black woman you have to do a lot more to prove to the world that you are capable of handling what you need to.
Cassandra described the magical essence of the strength in Black women by saying, “regardless of who it is, my mom or anybody on the street, you can't tell what we've been through if you see us. Because we’re good at covering up.” Cassandra and Beatrice, who participated in the study with their daughters, both witnessed their mothers navigate and resist oppression by being strong Black women. Many of the daughters in this study also identified their mothers as strong Black women.

Ashley saw her mom push through her struggles. She described her mother Charity as strong from, “seeing everything that my mom has been through, and how strong she had to be for us…everything she was going through that I know that she had to be strong.” Latrisha also saw strength in Beatrice’s mothering saying, “my mother was a very strong person to struggle through raising five children own her own.” Strong was not exclusive to describing mothers, it was also a term of endearment mothers used for their daughters.

Beatrice felt Latrisha lived in a house with and was surrounded by a lot of strong women that “she materialized like none of my other kids. She was very strong, helpful. She was my backbone.” Charity also used backbone to describe how she saw her daughter, Ashley, as being strong. Backbone, contextually from the stories, was the strong support a daughter provided that mothers relied heavily on to help manage their households. Deneen saw Breanna as a strong Black young woman because she knew how to use what she learned. Cassandra wanted Ariel to know that she could be a strong Black woman with or without a man. Tonya talked about being strong when it comes to male relationships. Tonya expressed to her daughter, “I do not want them to marry somebody…to see 'em go down the road being in a miserable marriage…if you do, leave and not stay forever 'cause it just gets worse.” Tonya remembered her mother teaching her how to be strong and know her self-worth, “my mom telling me to learn how to leave
people.” The daughters witnessed their mothers resist oppressive barriers. It is apparent that mothers in this study wanted to ensure that their daughters were independent, selfless, and resilient.

**Selflessness**

According to the participants in this study, selflessness is a characteristic of being strong. Ashley says her mother is strong because she sees how much she gives to others. Charity details selflessness in being strong.

Putting your personal feelings aside and doing the things that you’re supposed to do. It is encouraging someone, it’s supporting someone whether it is financial, helping somebody put food on the table. Visit and talk to someone. That’s strength, because some people don’t do that. You going out not thinking about yourself…You’re strengthening other people that could strengthen someone else. It’s like a cycle. When I think of strength, I think of not being selfish but selfless.

Breanna defined Deneen’s selfless characteristic as a caring heart. Her story continued with describing Deneen as an othermother who “if she truly cares for a person, she’ll do anything for.” Breanna continued, “sometimes I think she overcommits herself to people because of how she is…And so, I worry about people taking advantage of that.” Breanna expressed her concern about people’s intentions who gravitate to her mother’s caring heart.

**Fearlessness**

The participants also see being strong as having courage and being unafraid. Charity says Black women have courage and faith, “we’re not afraid. We stare in the face of so many things, be it sickness, heartbreak, or loss. We stare it in the face, and we overcome it.” Elizabeth and her daughter, Julia, agreed with Charity. Julia and Elizabeth talked about it being hereditary or coming from experience. Julia, speaking of and as a Black woman, says, “you’re not afraid, you
go for it and whatever happens, happens.” Elizabeth gives an example of a silently shared exchange between two Black women in a grocery store, “where if I’m in line at a store, and something’s about to jump off, and I turn around, and there’s another Black woman, we look at each other, and you get the sense of power or you’re not as afraid.” Elizabeth identifies the exchange as a power of courage that all Black women possess. She concluded, “we’re not afraid, and that’s what makes others afraid.”

**Resilience**

The last characteristic identified in the narratives is resilience, rebuilding after a struggle. Charity and her daughter Ashley had a candid conversation about rebuilding after you lose what you have. The mother and daughter said it made them cherish their family and peace. Being a strong mother, Charity says her approach to resiliency was rebuilding with her children,

I always look at what can I change different? If I had not had gone through the things that I have gone through, I wouldn’t be where I am right now. We always talk about it. We probably would have never come across our blessing, if we hadn’t gone through things. We had some bad days we bounced through it. It also made us closer, and it made us stronger.

Beatrice had a very similar perspective about her struggling experience with her children:

I don't believe that I would change anything because I think because of the struggle and the achievements that we had, it made us who we are. And I feel like that it did make us close-knit. And it taught them a lot about how life is and to prepare them…When they’re older and they have their own children.

Chelsey and her daughter Nadia talk about resiliency being the power to do better. Chesley spoke candidly of how single, Black women raise their children, without complaining and simply doing what needs to be done:
They need to find a way out of their situation, we do it. I hate to hear men say, “I can’t do that, and they don’t have anything.” I’m thinking, you got this woman. She’s single, got two or three children, working a full-time job and going to school full-time. That’s a power within yourself. Something that ignites you to make you want to do better. That just impresses me about all single Black women, when we do that.

Chelsey concluded how proud she was to see a single Black woman who makes something out of humble beginnings, “it’s just what I love about Black women, single Black women especially.” Elizabeth, spoke of her experiences as a single, Black mother, who loves Black women because she and all the Black women she knows are resilient. According to Elizabeth, “All Black women persevere through anything that they come across, it’s a certain strength you can’t take from them … knock them for having it.” Elizabeth and the Black women she knows apparently exuded resiliency because her daughter Julia talks about where she thinks her source of strength comes from, “maybe my mom, my aunt, and my friends, I know for a fact I’ve seen my mom go through things, and she just has a strength about her, where nothing really gets to her and nothing really bothers her.” Julia wants to mirror the strength she witnessed her single, Black mother exude as she goes through experiences in her own life.

Several participants self-identified as strong. Breanna self-identified as strong from being an only child; she decided she needed to swim by becoming an extrovert and become friendly to those around her. Cassandra saw her strength develop from being the youngest child trying to keep up to be just as ‘good’ as her older sisters. She said that her independence and toughness came from trying to keep up with her older sisters. Whether you are the only child or a child with siblings, Charity said, “you have to be strong and positive no matter what you do.” Tonya knows being a strong Black woman intimidates people. In agreement with Charity, Tonya says that
being strong is useful for navigating the world but knows how to switch between soft and tough. Tonya speaking of Black women, “we're resilient. Like, no matter what situation is thrown our way, we figure out a way to bounce back, to make it through. When we're faced with obstacles, somehow, someway, we always defy the odds.”

*The Mother-Daughter Relationship*

The emerging dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship developed through communication. This communication exchange between a mother and her daughter may have been verbal, directly and indirectly. The mothers were direct while teaching their daughters to be self-reliant. Cassandra, preparing her daughter for her absence, told her, “it’s me and [you], and when I’m gone I want to feel comfortable in knowing that I provided her way to be independent rather than dependent upon someone.” Deneen expressed similar sentiments to her daughter, “you need to learn how to take care of yourself.” Elizabeth shared a story about why she told her daughter that she paid a Santa for her toys, “I couldn’t let him take away from me.” Being truthful appeared to be the foundation of preparing their daughters for the inferior status of a Black woman. Transmission from these mothers to their daughters was apparent since all participants reported honest communication was most important in their relationship. With indirect communication, daughters witnessed their mothers exude strength to defy odds. The daughters expressed appreciation and gratitude as the (re)member their mothers’ sacrifices; for example, Latrishia, “you appreciate the things that she did for you or the reasons behind what she was trying to do for you,” or Breanna, “I knew that my mom had sacrificed a lot to be my mother...realizing everything that she had done for me and to get me where I was in my life.” The development of trust, communication, and interdependence solidified a special bond. The following themes were revealed from the narrative analysis to describe the mother-daughter relationship: confidant, admiration, and best friends or sisters who experienced growing pains.
These growing pains, felt by the mother and even more so the daughter, stemmed from the idea of ‘I am going to raise her to be strong.’ Becoming strong was generally building the daughter’s strength to fight or conquer an oppression that their mother endured. The process created temporary adversity between the mother and daughter. The temporary adversity was described by the participants as ‘growing pains’ or ‘bump[ing] heads’. Nevertheless, the mother-daughter relationships were described as my best friend, my confidant, and my backbone.

A mother who conquered a lingering pain from oppressive struggles was affirmed by her daughter. The daughters’ responses to the stories shared created parallelism to the mother’s pain. For example, Chelsey and her daughter Nadia described their relationship as a special bond where they entrust each other that began with Chelsey and her mother. Chelsey shared a secret with her mother. She was surprised at how her mother responded to her with care instead of “why did you do that?” Chelsey admiringly stated, “I truly knew who my mother was, and that’s when I knew I could tell her anything without her even getting an attitude about it.” Chelsey’s mother became her confidant, and she supported her daughter when she needed a friend. Nadia says she has a very open relationship with her mother, Chelsey, and can talk to her mother, “I feel more comfortable to talk to her about stuff now than I did when I was younger. We have a very good relationship...she says we act like how her and my grandmother acted.” The mother transmitted the feeling of security in having a mother as a confidant and her best friend. Nadia says, “I’m a lot closer to my mom than I know other people to be to their parents. And I think that’s unfortunate that if you can’t talk to at least one of your parents about what you’re going through.”

Tonya feels that transparency and honesty about life decisions are important. She and her daughter Brianna agree they have a good relationship. Tonya and Brianna made it clear that
boundaries are important for each to have a private life. Tonya remains transparent and honest with Brianna so she does not make the same mistakes. Tonya’s biggest regret was spanking her children, sharing what she feared, “that they don't get judged, or arrested, or mistreated when they're out of my care… you spank them in fear so that they won't repeat those behaviors outside of the home.” Brianna expressed that she wants a large family and will choose not to spank her children. They share the same self-care interests and spend time doing those activities together to build their relationship. Brianna feels she and Tonya have a good relationship, “we just cuddle all the time. She gives me a lot of love and always makes me happy.”

Latrisha recalled a time where she felt like she did not want to be like her mother. After she had her own daughters, she understood and cherished her mother and the life Beatrice struggled to provide for her family. Latrisha earned the same admiration from her oldest daughter when she read a paper her daughter wrote about who she most admired for a high school assignment. Latrisha remembered thinking, “she chose me which really touched my heart because we always did struggle… even though we didn't have much, she never knew she was poor because of the way I provided for her.”

The stories create a sense of self-worth between the mom and her daughter. The dynamics of their stories are generally similar in nature that offer specific complexities. The common thread between each mother and daughter relationship is a struggle a mother endures that evolves in their relationship. Admiration was mentioned and affectionately displayed during the interviews. Mothers hugged, kissed, and told their daughters how much they love them sometimes through tears of joy. The daughters expressed their gratitude for their mothers’ sacrifices. Since all participants were 18 years or older, the daughters understood and sensed the need behind their mothers’ struggles. The daughters, who the mothers affectionately referred to
as “[their] backbone,” understood their role to help with household management. The phase of the backbone was also coincidentally a growing pain. Growing pains are interpreted as friction between the mother and her daughter’s needs. As the daughter aged, the mother’s reliance overburdened her daughter. In addition to a daughter balancing her mother’s role strain, expectations, and harsh protection, the daughter struggled with oppression from her own intersecting identities. The pressure experienced by the daughter fluctuated between the girlhood and womanhood stages. The teen struggles with both her own and her mother’s oppression. The mother needing help and her daughter needing her youth with less responsibility. Sometimes growing pains along with the idea of we grew up together helped mothers and daughters become best friends. Growing up together, the mother shared a lot of struggles with her daughter which fostered their ability to be each other’s confidant.
CHAPTER 5
CENTERING MATRILINEAL SUBJUGATED KNOWLEDGE

The purpose of this study was to examine how a single, Black mother’s lived experience shapes her attitudes about caring for herself and her children. As stated previously, a Black mother is a knowledge producer for her family’s lineage and provides informal education that transmits through generations. This study used Black feminism as the theoretical framework to understand the narratives shared by seven mother and daughter families aged between 18-70 years old. A participant’s experiences as a Black girl and a Black woman provided insight about how a Black woman makes meaning of her life, Black motherhood, and her relationship with her daughter. The participants’ experiences as a daughter shaped their Black womanhood and how they mothered their daughters, socially and culturally. Intergenerational knowledge transmissions were evident when a mother spoke about her childhood relationship with her mother, and her daughter talked about being a mother. These transmissions conclusively encapsulate protection, self-love, self-reliance, and selflessness. For instance, a mother’s experiences that contributed to her parenting practices were noted when her daughter described her childhood experiences. Some situations uncovered in the daughter’s stories parallel her mother’s internalized oppression that impacted her self-worth and expectations for her daughter. A few specific examples, Julia’s graduation from college liberated Elizabeth from internalizing her status as an unwed and uneducated young mother; Breanna’s self-confidence and courage liberated Deneen from her low self-esteem; and, Ariel’s self-reliance liberated Cassandra from her financial concerns.

Mothering

A Black matriarchal household has always been accepted in the African and Black communities (Collins, 2000; Greene, 1990a; hooks, 1981). A Black mother, regardless of blood-
relation, has also been the primary source for continuing social and cultural transmission. A Black mother, who sometimes respectfully earned the title ‘matriarch’ by being acknowledged as the pillar of her family or within her community, became a target of negative stereotypes. The dominant discourse of the matriarch stereotype was not created to celebrate Black women for mothering generations of children. Instead, the stereotype was created by White men to castigate a Black mother’s resilience as a disadvantage to the Black community (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981). Black feminist traditions, nevertheless, provide more accurate narratives on Black mothering and their resiliency to dispel negative stereotypes about Black motherhood. Single, Black mothers may benefit from how Black feminists capture the many ways Black mothers transmit cultural representations of strength, love, and family to specifically equip Black women to be resilient and resist negative stereotypes. Mothers in this study shared stories that acknowledged the stereotypes and celebrated their struggles. In this counternarrative about single, Black motherhood, the participants collectively expressed ‘the struggle made us who we are.’ Furthermore, the participants contributing to this counternarrative defied the welfare queen representing Black, single motherhood as degreed and employed Black women. The Black women also appreciated an opportunity to share their stories about living in a single, Black mother household, and perceptions of their mother and daughter relationship.

Through an in-depth analysis, three stages of a mother-daughter relationship were detected from the participants’ stories. The participants’ stories revealed how the mother’s parenting practices, along with her relationship with her daughter, significantly shifted during the girlhood, teen, and womanhood stages. The mother participants’ voices dominated the girlhood stage as they described mothering their daughter. During the girlhood stage, the mother’s time spent bonding and the hands-on parenting of her daughter were emphasized in the mothers’
stories. The daughter participants’ stories were more pronounced in the teen stage where the daughter gained household and family responsibilities, earning the title of being her mother’s backbone. According to both the mother and daughter, their relationship reached a best friend or sisterhood status during the womanhood stage. The stories in this study indicated that a single, Black mother’s social location informed her mothering as an act of resistance. In an attempt to use her epistemic perspective to empower her daughter, there was evidence that the mother’s experiences from all three stages appeared to have been transmitted to her daughter, and, ultimately shaped the mother-daughter relationship.

*Girlhood*

The mothers shared joyful memories of their daughters during the girlhood stage. The mothers’ stories revealed more about the mothers’ parenting practices and expectations. All mothers reported being happy about having a daughter and the opportunity to raise a ‘mini-me.’ The mini-me idea may have been figural; interestingly, the data analysis revealed that most mothers’ parenting practices and expectations were influenced by their internalized oppression. Mothering through internalized oppressions substantiates Mendenhall, et al.’s, (2013) theory that these mothers believe they can prepare their daughters with “a sense of personal power and control and low levels of a sense of uncertainty” (p. 82). Nevertheless, their parenting practices primarily protected their daughters from physical and mental harm. The expectations propelled the daughters through educational barriers to obtain financial security. Here, education is viewed as an option for self-reliance (Kerpelman et al.).

Mothers who were happy about birthing their daughters and excited about the opportunity to raise a mini-me also confronted a basic fear. All mothers feared the broader structural oppressions that objectify Black women and shapes their internalized oppression of inferiority. In this stage, mothers focused on protecting their daughters, and even more so on preparing their
daughters by organizing and overseeing their educational and social activities. For instance, Latrisha took the approach of limiting her daughters’ access to televised negative images. Latrisha emphasized that school was important, and her daughters’ job was to graduate. Latrisha’s wanted to protect her daughters in the same vein as Smith’s (2012) participant who argued that young girls are unaware of societal trickery as they seek to imitate sexual prowess and reaffirm negative images such as welfare queen or Jezebel. This desired protection manifests to avoid Black girls from getting trapped into modern slavery -- fears typically evolved from the mother’s lived experiences. Collectively, education was also an expectation transmitted to daughters. Breanna recalled her mother pushing her academically so that she in turn began to push herself. In addition to self-reliance transmission, the mothers’ protection went beyond the boundaries of home.

Furthermore, the transmission of the caste system and modern slavery resided in mothers’ fears of their daughters experiencing mental and physical harm. Tonya spanked her daughter to ensure her safety from being publicly mistreated, and to protect her from a cruel world (hooks, 1993). Spanking was a way Tonya used for her family to “adjust to living in a White-supremacist context” (hooks, 1993, p. 34). Spanking for Tonya was a way of “setting a system of internal checks” (hooks, 1993, p. 35), Tonya said, “we're Black, let's just be honest. When they do stuff, we, you spank them in fear so that they won't repeat those behaviors outside of the home.” Tonya shared that spanking was her biggest regret; she continued, “I would've exercised more patience and I would've found some other means of discipline.” Tonya examined her behavior and “engaged in a process of self-recovery” (hooks, 1993, 38). Tonya’s regret for spanking was transmitted to her daughter, Brianna who explained, “I won't spank my kids. I used to say timeout was White people discipline but I'm gonna have to use it because I won't whoop 'em.”
Tonya’s spanking mimicked an oppressor’s behavior, however through Tonya’s self-healing, she and her daughter understand that mothering through love is an act of resistance.

This research indicates that mothers raised their daughters from internalized oppression that they tried to subconsciously resolve with their daughters during the girlhood stage. The pressures the mother felt from her lived experiences in all stages used her epistemic perspective to prepare her daughter for a world that caused her oppression. Through fear of a Black mother’s plight, the mother tried to protect her daughter from various harm. This harm may be from dehumanization and the violation of the daughter. The transmission during this phase was to establish expectations that would lead to the daughter being independent and resilient. These verbal expectations were telling the daughter to be strong academically, to be able to earn a college degree to then obtain employment. Nonverbal expectations were expressed through care. Most daughters reported having everything they wanted and never feeling poor. It was evident that mothers were self-sacrificing to ensure their daughters had everything they needed. This finding was consistent with Patihis et al. (2019) who found that Black children reported high on “caring, trust, and intimacy in the family” (p. 892) which conflicts with most research on Black culture. For instance, Beatrice recalled about her mother, “not only did she teach us how to provide, but she taught us how to love each other and morals.” Love and caring were represented differently throughout the narratives. Reflecting on the feeling of love transmitted to herself Deneen explained,

I think it would be more so hearing the words, ‘I love you,’ more so than taking it for granted. You know, you can do a lot of things for me, but just hearing the words makes it makes you feel good too. You know, not that I didn’t feel like I was loved, because I knew I was loved, but just never heard the words. And I know a lot of times that’s how
that person grew up, you know? So, I always vowed that I would never do that with my child. ‘I love you,’ going to bed.

Deneen’s childhood experience was very common in Black families, and according to Siddle-Walker and Snarey (2004) children raised by Black mothers reported that “love was never talked about…the reality of love was unmistakable” (p. 27). Deneen choosing to speak ‘I love you’ changed “centering love as a counter-hegemonic force” (Baszile, 2016) in her household. Historically, a Black mother was rarely affectionate with her children due to the fatigue of “double duty” (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 147). A Black mother’s love, however, was demonstrated in protecting and providing for her children (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1983; Siddle-Walker & Snarey, 2004). Deneen’s desire to say the words “I love you” to her daughter changes the way a Black mother expresses her love.

**Teen**

In the teen stage, the participants’ stories revealed how oppression evolved in the mother-daughter relationship. Through the daughters’ stories, parenting practices shifted the dependence between the mother and her daughter. The daughter’s reliance on the mother in the girlhood stage transitioned to the mother relying on her daughter. The mother’s internalized oppression and her role strains affected the relationship. During this stage, “the daughters identify with their mothers, [and] they also reject them” (Collins, 1991, p. 52). For example, some daughters felt pressured by their mothers’ overreliance on them, although they wanted to help their mothers care for the family and manage the household. Some daughters reported benefits from their mothers’ guidance, yet felt the mothers were too overbearing and protective. The adaptation of role strain and the mothers’ expectation of caring for family caused some daughters to struggle with their mother’s oppression. Also, during this stage, the verbal expectations and demands became harsher as the mother realized her daughter was getting closer to entering womanhood.
The pressure experienced by the daughter fluctuated between the girlhood and womanhood stages. The teen struggles with both her own and her mother’s oppression. The Black teen is beginning to detect racism and sexism that perhaps she was too young to detect during her girlhood stage and is overwhelmed by her mother’s reliance to help with family and household responsibilities. For example, Ashley was struggling with her identity from racist comments in school; she was also responsible for caring for her siblings. Ashley’s experience aligns with the Oshin and Milan (2019) study whose participants learned strength and independence for self-survival yet struggled with caring for her siblings thereby straining their relationship with her mother. Black women are vulnerable to societal norms (Collins, 2000); Charity’s reinforcement of self-worth taught Ashley how to resist oppression by valuing herself. Ashley decided to reject the inferiority of racist classmates by trusting her own self-definition. This was a pivotal time where the parenting practices were still present, and evidence of the transmissions began to emerge. Collectively, most daughters reported their own struggles during this teen stage that strained their relationships; although varied in their experiences, they all suffered from the intersection of race and gender. Beatrice generalized her perspective of the mother-daughter relationship strain, “we went through problems that we have as parents grow, and children grow. They get their own ideas. And they think sometimes that you’re really rough. But you continue to be rough as a parent so that you can give them that guidance that they need. So, that they can grow.” Latrisha, responded to Beatrice’s comment, “there has been some tension between our relationship. But those were growing pains, which I would never trade.” Latrisha admitted she could not wait to leave her mother’s home only to realize in Black womanhood, “all the blessings that you had in your mother as a child that you hated.” Ashley felt much pressure of “reproduced mothering in [her] daughters” (Chodorow, 1999, p. 84), and wondered why her
mother “put a lot of responsibilities on me.” Breanna stated she would “refuse to take on the mantle of martyr” (hooks, 2001, p. 40) as she worried about her mother who frequently overcommitted to help people. Perspective sometimes adjusts as the daughter enters the Black womanhood stage. Latrisha reflects, “once you grow up, you realize all the blessings that you had in your mother that as a child you hated…because of you start experiencing some of the same stuff she experienced.” The daughters’ maturity showed personal efficacy and the mothers’ reliance on their daughter taking over the role of ‘backbone’ in this study was consistent with Mendenhall et al.’s (2013) findings of how Black mothers identified backbone as a protective factor to promote resiliency.

**Womanhood**

The womanhood stage encompasses lived experiences from the perspective of two Black women: the single mother and her adult daughter. The daughters’ stories included some personal struggles from their own oppressions. In this stage, the daughters were able to closely relate to some of their mothers’ experiences which created solidarity. The mother and daughter also formed a bond mutually relying on the other as theorized by hooks’ (1999) tradition that Black women learn through shared values and experiences. The struggles that the daughter feels as a Black woman are connected to her intersecting identities, Black and woman, and the continuance of a Black woman’s social location. Breanna’s experience with her mother was representative of the study’s daughters, “a lot of things that happened as I grew up, it really forced us to be mother/daughter and she was always a parent…sometimes you go through life experiences and you can’t tell anybody else, or no one else may understand, but I knew my mom did.” The daughters in this study had more trust and respect for their mothers once they entered the stage of Black womanhood and began to experience some of the same oppressive experiences they witnessed their mother overcome. The participants remembered their mothers’ strength and
resilience and sought their mothers’ wisdom while navigating through the Black womanhood stage. Latrisha, who taught her daughters the same values she learned from her mother, reflects on her mother’s experiences, “she had even more struggles than I did because she was raising five children on her own, where I only have two.” As with most of the participants, Nadia felt more comfortable talking to her mother now than she did when she was younger. Her mother, Chelsey, also had the same relationship with her mother. According to the participants, the struggles experienced living in a single, Black mother-led household made them closer and stronger and gifted them with an interdependent relationship (Collins, 2000) that is built on trust and communication. The mothers and daughters refer to their relationship as sisters or best friends. The daughters shared ‘that we are just alike’ brings the reality of the mother’s desire to raise a ‘mini-me.’

The participants in this study self-identified as strong, Black women who inherited strength from being raised by a strong Black mother. The adult daughters did not ascribe their mother’s strength to the matriarch stereotype. The daughters witnessed their mothers ‘making a way out of no way’ and viewed their resistance strategies as strength. Charity believed, “being a Black woman, you have to do a lot more to prove to the other world that you are capable of handling what you need to do.” Her daughter Ashley desired that same strength, seeing everything that my mom has been through, and how strong she had to be for us. A lot of the times, she had to put her feelings aside for us, and everything that she was going through that I know that she had to be strong. And just seeing how strong she is, she makes me wanna be that strong of a person too. To give to others as much as she does, and I just really, really just try and be like her.
Ashely is 23 without children, contrarily 53-year-old Latrisha who has two adult daughters had the same perspective of her mother’s inherited strength, “my mother was a very strong person. She had five children. So, she had even more struggles than I did because she was raising five children on her own, where I only have two.” Regardless of economic challenges, daughters reported they did not know they were poor because of the sacrifices of their mothers. According to Mendenhall et al. (2013), the importance of understanding strength and resilience are culturally in the closeness of friendship that connects generational knowledge from mother to daughter. It is evident that the daughters were reminded of past gifts (Angelou, 1991). All the daughters expressed their appreciation for the strength their mothers exhibited to overcome many obstacles to sustain their family. The daughters also desired to possess that same strength so they may liberate their mothers from oppressive burdens.

The mothers and daughters shared a sense of understanding during the womanhood stage. They relied more on each other for encouragement, emotional support, and advice. Many participants shared it was trust that binds their friendship. Chelsey’s sense of understanding epitomizes mutual respect between two Black women,

“When she’s going through things, like I’m going through, we understand each other. And it’s kind of funny because we give each other advice. It doesn’t matter the age. Just because I’m 55 does not mean I’m supposed to be you know – I am more mature, have to deal with a whole lot of things, but sometimes I look at things from her perspective. And I’m like, ‘huh. She got a point, there.’ I take heed to that even though, she still respects me as her mama. [Laughs]… Sometimes, people on the outside don’t keep your secrets like your parent will keep your secret.”
The daughters, more so than the mothers, appreciated transparency but sometimes felt their conversation may be too personal for a mother and her daughter. Agreeing with Chesley, Nadia shared, “I feel like we have a very open relationship…I feel like I can talk to her about stuff a lot more now. She picks on me all the time, because she says we act like how her – my grandmother acted. Like, my mom will tell me stuff, and then forget that I’m still her child.” Nadia affirms that their mother-daughter friendship is generational and culturally embedded in resiliency. Through the mother’s intellectual wisdom and self-actualization, the mother and daughter “create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as the struggle, also opposes dehumanization” (hooks, 1990, p. 15). Knowledge and resistance lie in sisterhood, and sisterhood fosters liberation.

Resilience

The strength of a family lies in the Black motherhood according to the dominant discourse that praises the matriarch stereotype for her resiliency in society and also blames her for deteriorating the Black family (Collins, 2000). The participants’ counternarratives celebrate the strength of Black mothers from a Black woman’s perspective who was raised in a Black single mother household. The researcher aimed to understand how a Black mother’s ways of knowing strength transmit from generation to generation through maternal relationships, specifically those of single, Black mothers and daughters. The participants’ stories about a Black mother’s resilience were consistent with Settles et al. (2008) participants who attributed that Black women’s strength was inherited and learned from their mothers.

Strong – Inherited

Black feminists urge Black women to embrace the inherited strength (hooks, 1993) and the spirit of independence (Davis, 1983) transmitted through generations from their foremothers. Elizabeth believes she was born with strength, “it’s in our DNA as strength to deal with things
Elizabeth’s perspective aligns with the Black feminist standpoint; she is descended from Black women whose sources of strength were attached to “their concrete experiences as slaves” (Davis, 1983, p. 29). She continued, “I’ve seen Black women in my family overcome struggles that I know women in other races couldn’t even stand a chance in.” Elizabeth referred to the same strength as “a silent shared trait” that is recognizable between Black women, “if I’m in line at a store, and something’s about to jump off, and I turn around, and there’s another Black woman, we look at each other, and you get the sense of power or – you’re not as afraid when you look around and see someone mirroring you.” Elizabeth’s silent trait supports hooks’ (2000) idea of Black women’s awareness of their sense of self and solidarity with other Black women during times of despair. The sense of personal power Mendenhall et al. (2013) and ‘little voice in the back of her head’ that remind Black women “of the centuries of strength, resilience, and determination of Black women to keep on keeping on despite the exploitation, misrepresentation, and invisibility that often defined their lives” (Baszile et al., 2016, p. 6). Elizabeth and her daughter Julia discussed courage as being a characteristic of the inherited strength. Elizabeth stated, “we stare in the face of so many” and we overcome it. Julia concurs with her mom, explaining, “Black women are just not afraid, they go for it and whatever happens, happens.” While Breanna feels the strength within her, Deneen her mother expresses generational transmission where people tell her how strong she is, ‘You’re just like your momma’... even from looking at Breanna, I smile when a lot of things that she does and she don’t even realize.” Varyingly, Charity acknowledges how Ashley gained through observation “she seen what the struggle is like, and what it was like to have, and then have it taken away, and then rebuilding again.” Chelsey recognized herself and many single, Black mothers “who know they need to find a way out of their situation, we do it.” She describes it as
a ‘power within yourself’ stating “something that ignites you to make you want to do better.”

The participants perceived their inherited strength as a form of resilience, and they valued their Black mothers’ struggle to make a way out of no way.

Strong (As in Doing)

Strong epitomizes Black motherhood, and even more so for single, Black mothers. The participants in this study are hard-working and selfless, who as Jones and Shorter-Gooden’s (2003) study found, suppress their own needs and lose their identity in Black motherhood.

Charity shared that she must be strong on her job; being a single mom she is constantly asked, “how do you manage to do all that?” Charity believes she must do a lot more to prove to the world that she is capable of handling her job and family responsibilities. Charity’s perspective of being strong was transmitted to her daughter Ashley who shared, “seeing how strong she is, she makes me wanna be that strong of a person too.” Cassandra affirmed Charity’s experience and how she and other Black mothers make it work, “it’s single mothers with four, five kids and they make it work with what they got…they make sure that their kids got what they need…we make it work by any means necessary.” The matriarch theory, according to hooks (1981), significantly impacts Black women’s consciousness. While they are being economically oppressed, they believe they have control over their lives (hooks, 1981). Cassandra explained, “they do not give us the respect that we deserve as a Black woman, then a lot of Black women lose themselves, lose self-esteem, and lose their integrity because they are constantly trying to defend themselves as a Black woman.” Deneen who pushed Breanna to be self-sufficient and be able to do on her own shared she would change how hard she pushed when she was raising her daughter. The effects of that push were described in Breanna’s story about a time where she lost herself and did not choose to talk about it with Deneen. She recalls this being a very scary time when she did not want to disappoint her mother, “I would fail classes, and for no reason at all because the work
was not hard. I was just dealing with some personal things and instead of me being a young adult and saying, ‘Hey right now I’m struggling, and I don’t know how to tell you I’m struggling but I am.’” Deneen may have transmitted the “strong warrior” identity that Black and Peacock (2011) found in their participants who suppressed negative emotions and sacrificed self-care. The Black mothers in this study were advocating their daughters’ possible selves (Kerpelman et al., 2002) by constructing subjectivity (Baszile, 2016; hooks, 1993) and agency (Emecheta, 1994) to resist objectification that has historically confined Black women to inferiority. Black mothers must be intentional teaching their daughter’s self valuation and self-reliance to navigate an educational system where Black girls adopt deficit thinking (Haynes, et al., 2016) from playing in the dark (Morrison, 1992), and a society structured to teach their daughters to “learn early on how to…use their sexuality as a commodity” (hooks, 1993, p. 115). The study mothers, fearful of their own oppressions, pushed their daughters through academic programs that lacked Black women intellectual traditions and beyond teen pregnancy to counter the stereotype of high school dropouts and welfare queens. Latrisha protected her daughters by limiting their access to hip-hop videos and sitcoms. Latrisha, the only daughter participant with children, became a mother post-high school. While all participants reported attending or graduating from college, Elizabeth’s college graduation liberated her mother from internalizing dropping out of college and becoming a single mother. The participants remarked a sense of agency by claiming their struggle, “it made us who we are.” The mothers transmitted female agency and self-determination (Oyewumi, 2003) to their daughters through inherited and observed strength. The mothers in this study decided to “have it all” (Settles, et al., 2008, p. 463); Chelsey centers a single motherhood experience, “I’m just so proud when you have humble beginnings, and you make something out of it without allowing anybody to stop you. It’s just what I love about black women, single black
women especially.” Chelsey’s perspective defines female agency emerging through adversity when pursuing college degrees for better employment opportunities and higher salaries.

**Work**

Collins’ (2000) and hooks’ (1981) scholarly works provide cultural knowledge to prepare single, Black mothers to understand their strengths and to endure societal challenges and oppressive conditions (Holland, 2009). Many described experiencing inequitable salaries and limited opportunities. As previously mentioned, the average annual salary earned in 2020 for Black women was $39,728 compared to $62,452 for White men, $43,160 for Black men, and $49,712 for White women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). According to DuMonthier, et al. (2017) 77.7% of single, Black mothers with children under the age of six years old are faced with childcare costs that exceed 20% of their median income, providing a hardship for 97% of the single, Black mothers in Sterrett et al.’s (2015) study who rely on othermothers to assist with childcare. As reported by Brown (2012), “at least half of black women have zero or negative liquid assets throughout middle and late life, suggesting that they lack the savings to cover minor, unanticipated expenses” (p. 253) creating a culture of poverty (Turgeon, 2018). Turgeon (2018) shifts the blame from mothers to “the role of structural forces – such as joblessness, economic crises, and lack of resources – that contribute to inequality” p. 129). The effects of the interlocking layers of oppression limit the ability of low-income mothers and their children to thrive. Arissa emphasized, “I can’t live like this [being depressed], with my girls… when you’re like this, your kids see it. They reflect what you live through when you’re [down]… and when they’re older… I don’t want my kids to feel like that” (Keefe et al., 2018, p. 282). In this study, mothers experienced inequitable salaries, and some mothers suggested that a “career” or “degree work” would have secured a higher paying salary. The education expectation was a strategy used to prepare their daughters to resist employment inequities. However, the participants who had
college degrees reported low wages or working hard to prove themselves worthy of higher wages or advancement opportunities. This finding is consistent with research on Black women’s perceptions who reported as “Black women (we) have to prove ourselves” (Nelson et al., 2016, p. 557) in the workplace and academic settings. Black feminist scholarship suggests that Black women’s unpaid family labor is simultaneously confining and empowering for Black women (Collins, 2000). Feeling confined to the social context of good mothering, Black mothers reported in several studies feeling overwhelmed and stressed (Black & Peacock, 2011; Hall, 2015; Keefe et al., 2018). The daughters in this study described their mothers as sacrificial, loving, strong, and caring; and it was evident from the mothers’ stories that motherhood and oppression were weaved into the fabric of their identities which aligned with Rochelle’s who was “being the best mother you can be…Doing what needs to be done family-wise, whether it be in the house, or at work, or, you know, attending to your kids or family …whether it’s cooking, cleaning, emotional support …just listening (Keefe et al., 2018, p. 275). Furthermore, most single, Black mothers whose work is undervalued for paid labor and devalued for unpaid labor feel “pressured by societal and personal demands to be good mothers” (Keefe et al., 2018, p. 275). The participants neutralized this pressure with a strength-based perspective as they reported, “basically just handling what you need to do,” or “we stare in the face of so many things, and we overcome it.” Black mothers usually find the strength to overcome obstacles through the love for their children. Tammy, in Keefe et al.’s study, describes how her children give her strength, “They looking up to you, and…depending on you. So you have to do what you gotta do, and my kids always –it makes me cry all the time, because I get these cards: ‘Mom, we love you mom, you’re a go-getter mom, you’re the best mom we ever had, you never give up, you work so hard’” (p. 276). The Black mothers in this study created a home place as a site of
resistance (hooks, 1990) by teaching their daughters at an early age to assume strong family roles (Hall, 2015). Both the mothers and daughters highlighted the value of work for empowering each other believing that “the struggle made us stronger.” The word strong was associated with managing paid and unpaid labor for Black women who work outside the home and manage their household.

Paid

Socially, Black women receive inequitable access to employment, housing, health care, and education (Collins, 2000). These inequities of low wages and limited opportunities can affect housing and health care. According to the 2020 State of the Nation’s Housing report from the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, significant racial disparities in homeownership rates for Black households was 42.8% compared to 73.3% for White households, 46.3% for Hispanic households, and Asian households 57.3%. The Covid-19 pandemic created housing and healthcare cost burdens for households of color putting them at risk of losing their homes in 2020. Black renters had the highest share of cost burdens (53.7%), compared to Hispanics (51.9%), Asians (42.2%), and Whites (41.9%) (Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2020; United States Government Accountability Office, 2020). The Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies report also highlighted “the impact of this systemic inequality is evident in the lower incomes and wealth of today’s households of color, a legacy that perpetuates their struggle to obtain decent, affordable housing in safe neighborhoods” (p. 5). The mothers in Keefe et al.’s study (2018) were concerned about “overall safety of their children as well as the safety of the environments in which they were living” (p. 280). In this study, participants’ expectations for educational attainment were for their daughters to be prepared to resist unfair employment practice and impoverished housing communities. While Elizabeth appeared to be satisfied with her work, she believed a degree would have afforded her better employment opportunities,
“sometimes when you don’t have a degree you get paid less, but you’re doing degree work.” Elizabeth’s experiences transmitted through her expectations for her daughter Elizabeth to gain self-reliance. Systemic racial structures limited college-educated Adrianna’s ability to provide for her children as she recognized, “if you are African American, certain positions you don’t get” (Elliot et al., 2015, p. 361). Beatrice and her daughter Latrisha shared that they worked two jobs and struggled to provide for their families. Beatrice and Latrisha both shared that they would have preferred to have the additional time with their children, which is less likely an option for single, Black mothers. The single, Black mothers who held career and managerial positions recognized barriers that led to undue stressful conditions. Charity recalls that while working harder became the norm for her, she continued to have to prove herself, “sometimes you’re doing so much, you’re doing a lot, but people don’t even see you.” Charity felt her colleagues were, “wondering if I’m capable of handling what I need to do on the outside with my children or is it what I’m capable of doing a work.” Charity detected the myth of inferiority from feeling like she was under a microscope. Chelsey recounts, “I could not allow them to break me,” explaining how she had to remember who she was when she was assigned to manage a team of all White males. Chelsey attributed being the only financial provider as a single, Black mother, as the motivation needed to deal with racism in order to be able to provide for her children. In this study, participants chose to financially provide for their families through paid labor rearticulating the welfare queen myth. Mothers maintained full-time employment while mothering, and at times worked multiple jobs which debunks the myth of being lazy and dependent on a welfare check, and even more so being motivated to birth more children to increase that financial assistance from the government (Kinser, 2010). All participants had reached the childbearing stage at the time of the interview; only one mother had five children, one mother had four
children, and the remaining women had two or fewer. Keefe et al. (2018) interviewed many single mothers with four to seven children who collectively believed their maternal responsibilities “involved financially providing for one’s children irrespective of systemic or daily hardships” (p. 277). The legacy of struggle for Black mothering persists juxtaposing hypervisibility and invisibility (West et al., 2016). The experiences and attitudes reported by the Black mothers, according to West, are “hyper visible in terms of the misrecognition of their identities (i.e., stereotypes), while also being invisible for any recognition that affirms their identities as hardworking, ambitious, and self-assured” (p. 405). As an act of resistance, Black mothers established academic expectations early in the girlhood stage to prepare their daughters to be self-reliant as found in other scholarship centered on Black mothers in the United States (Johnson, 2016; Kerpelman et al., 2002) and Africa (Emecheta, 1994). Believing education is a gateway to equitable employment opportunities and salaries for their daughters, educated Black women, however, continue to suffer from structural oppression, typically earning 66 cents to one dollar of a White man’s salary (U.S. Bureau of Labor of Statistics, 2021), and Black women incur student loan debt at a higher rate than men and White women (DuMonthier, et al., 2017). Multiple levels of systemic barriers affect Black women with families, constrain their ability to build wealth (Brown, 2012), and recreate generational poverty at a rate of 24.6% as reported by DuMonthier, et al. Single, Black mothers suffer emotional and psychological distress (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003) as they find ways to survive as a form of resistance.

*Unpaid*

The single, Black mothers in this study generalized struggle when meeting the demands of caring for their families. Financially, the mothers budgeted their salaries and provided safe, clean homes. The inequities in career opportunities and salaries structurally place Black single-led families in impoverished communities. Communities in this study were racially
disproportionate for people of color to White people in 2018 (Georgia Crime Information Center, 2018), and ranked 3-10% of the safest cities in the United States (Edwards, 2021). Specifically in Fort Valley, 83.6% residents reported Black or Hispanic compared to 15.5% reported White of their 8,962 population; Marietta, 45.5% residents reported Black or Hispanic compared to 48.1% reported White of their 60,867 population; Valdosta, 58% residents reported Black or Hispanic compared to 38.7% reported White of their 56,457 population; Warner Robin, 46.8% residents reported Black or Hispanic compared to 44.7% reported White of their 77,617 population (see table 2 on page 152) (Georgia Crime Information Center, 2018). Redlining and predatory lending further sustain housing disparities (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2019) often ushering single, Black mother families to the Black neighborhoods with poor educational systems and high crime rates (Keefe, et al., 2018). American families reported they are most concerned for their personal and family security, and property crime (Edwards, 2021). Edwards’ study indicated that Americans associated their concerns with unemployment, drugs, homelessness, jobs, housing insecurity, and civil unrest, (Edwards, 2021) typically characteristics that plague communities in which single, Black mothers reside with their families (Keefe, et al., 2018). The personal costs of living in an impoverished neighborhood may result in being a victim, witnessing, or fearing crimes that, “can lead to stress and isolation, impair physical and mental health, and diminish school and work performance” (Office of Policy Development and Research, 2016, p. 3). The mothers in this study shared they were fearful of losing their daughters. Beatrice’s strength-based perspective, “we always had—we didn’t always live in the best places, but we always had a very nice and clean household,” is an act of resistance to “multiple systemic barriers” (Keefe, et al, 2018, p. 282). In addition to managing a household, Beatrice reported that she spent time making sure the children were loved.
A mother’s love was expressed by teaching life skills, ensuring safety, supporting academic and extracurricular activities, and spending time together. After working full-time jobs and managing household responsibilities, these mothers sacrificed any personal time for and with their children. Breanna’s statement resonates with the quality of time both mothers and daughters shared, “she never was just sending me to my grandma’s every weekend. She was a very, very present parent. Whenever I needed her, she was always there. She made it her business to be there, so I did recognize that she made a lot of sacrifices for me.” Breanna felt the same love from Deneen as Charity epitomizes the perspective of mothers, “I never wanted them to go without anything.” Although these mothers significantly discussed the burdens of unpaid labor, it was surmised consistently ‘I struggled’ or ‘it was a struggle’ but ‘we make it work, by any means necessary.’ Researchers found that most Black mothers do not connect their sacrifices to the social-structural context of their lives (Keefe et al., 2018). An example from the Robert Keefe, Carol Brownstein-Evans, and Rebecca Rouland Polmanteer’s (2018) study, Rochelle states of her mothering, “Since I became a mom that’s all I’ve been doing is taking care of my kids …being the best mother you can be. Doing what needs to be done family-wise, whether it be in the house, or at work, or, you know, attending to your kids or family …whether it’s cooking, cleaning, emotional support …just listening” (p. 275). Similar to their foremothers who also experienced social and economic oppressions (Davis, 1983), Black women remained committed to their self-valuation or family values which are rooted in their means of survival. Collective responsibility was also used by all mothers in this study when they relied on their daughters to balance the household responsibilities to make things work. According to J. Camille Hall (2015), “African American daughters are taught at an early age to assume family roles” (p. 141). Most daughters concurred with Ashley’s feelings during her teen stage, “I didn’t
understand why it was so much pressure on me to be that person inside the household.”

However, the mothers and daughters collectively felt as Black women that personal sacrifice is necessary and the “struggle made us who we are.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fact</th>
<th>Fort Valley</th>
<th>Peach County</th>
<th>Marietta</th>
<th>Cobb County</th>
<th>Valdosta</th>
<th>Lowndes County</th>
<th>Warner Robins</th>
<th>Houston County</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population estimates</td>
<td>8,962</td>
<td>27,546</td>
<td>60,867</td>
<td>760,141</td>
<td>56,457</td>
<td>117,406</td>
<td>77,617</td>
<td>157,863</td>
<td>10,617,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons under 18 years</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons 65 years and over</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Crimes</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>5,714</td>
<td>2,201</td>
<td>16,680</td>
<td>3,257</td>
<td>3,298</td>
<td>4,029</td>
<td>6,468</td>
<td>284,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Index, % Safest US Cities</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Population and Crime Index.

Summary

The Black mothers in this study dissociated themselves from the matriarch and welfare queen stereotypes. And their Black mothering offered unrelenting, self-sacrificing, and unconditional love rewarding them with a bond with their daughter in the third stage of the mother and daughter relationship. These Black women, who experienced life in single Black mother’s households, described witnessing strength from their mothers and other Black women. Similar to Holland’s (2009) participants, these single Black mothers relied on their daughters to
overcome challenges from managing their mother and provider roles despite the structural barriers and limited employment opportunities. These mothers transmitted resiliency, self-agency, and empowerment to their daughters consistent with the single, Black mothers in Mendenhall, et al.’s (2013) study which also used “protective cultural strengths” (p. 75),” to navigate Black womanhood. This counternarrative study moved Black women’s social location from devaluing Black motherhood and their work to centering their experiences. The participants add value to their experiences claiming about their struggle “it makes us who we are.”
CHAPTER 6
HEAR YE, HEAR YE

This study focused on the experiences of Black women who lived in a single, Black mother’s household. Centering this study on the participants’ experiences captured their pride in how they triumph over rather than suffer from oppression. In sharing stories about how they experienced and witnessed devaluation from birth through Black womanhood, the participants contributed to the research question ‘what is the informal curriculum that single, Black mothers pass on to their daughters?’ Single, Black mothers and their daughters told stories about daughtering in their girlhood, teen, and womanhood stages that affected their attitude and approach to mothering. The research participants, self-identifying as a Black woman raised by a Black mother, collectively spoke of both inner and outer strength that was necessary for a Black mother to survive, and essential for her to protect and prepare her daughter from inferiority and dehumanization. The mothers’ stories conveyed their love and fear for their daughters being born in a society that devalues their Black and female intersecting identities. The mothers’ jubilant stories about the birth of their daughters ended with somber sighs and worries. Entering Black motherhood was joyful overall; however, these mothers subconsciously feared the dehumanization and rejection their daughters may experience navigating the Black girlhood, teen, and womanhood stages.

In the data analysis for each family, the researcher identified transmissions of the mother’s fears in her daughter’s stories, which may limit self-discovery during her girlhood stage. Mothering in the shadows of her past girlhood experiences, a mother risks becoming an oppressor to her daughter based on her fears that restrict the daughter from her own identity. The mother’s pride in preparing her daughter, at times were interpreted as the mother subconsciously having a second chance to live a life that she could have lived absent of societal influences,
internalized hate, generational oppression and repression, and equitable opportunities. Notably, Black feminist traditions educate Black women on cultural norms and societal nuances (Butler-Sweet, 2017) that are necessary as Black mothers seek to expose their Black daughters to communities and activities typically inaccessible to most Black children. Black women’s writings share subjugated knowledge (Collins, 2000) that incorporates strategies to dispel negative perceptions (Scott, 2013) in intergenerational transmissions. Healing Black women is an act of resistance for mothering. As previously mentioned, Black daughters are socialized to mother during the girlhood stage (Hall, 2015) and continue the transmission of Black mothering or othermothering in their teen and Black womanhood stages.

Inherited and observed strengths were used by the participants to describe the Black women in their family lineage. The daughters were doubly vulnerable to the matriarch stereotype during their teen stage living in a single-led household. The mothers’ reliance on their daughters’ strength strained their relationship. During the teen stage, Black daughters are navigating their own oppressions while and adjusting to the role strains to support the demands of their mother. Black women typically transmit their strength to their daughters when a daughter watches her mother make a way out of no way. Their stories debunked the matriarch label refusing to feel insecure about being born from and living in strength. Chelsey proudly redefines the strength she observed, “I’ve seen black women in my family overcome struggles that I know other women in other races couldn’t even stand a chance in.” The participants’ stories also revealed that they embodied strength inherited from their ancestors and observed the strength of their mothers and other Black women who navigated and resisted racial and gendered oppression. This “strength-based perspective” (Evans-Winters, 2019, p. 73) prioritizes single, Black mothers’ concerns and can be used by educational and social institutions to specifically support the needs of Black
women and Black girls. A primary transmission the daughter learned in single, Black motherhood is strength and resistance cultivated throughout their struggles. For example, Black mothers prepare their daughters to be self-reliant as a resistance to oppression. In this research, it was evident that a single, Black mother and her daughter managed the household through various levels of interdependence as the daughter aged to resist oppression.

The stories about the daughters’ Black womanhood appeared to be self-affirming for the mothers in this study. Their stories spoke triumphantly over the undertone of struggles via systemic oppression as they protected and prepared their daughters. The daughters shared a sense of pride and protection. They acknowledged their mothers’ strength and sacrifices that they witnessed during the girlhood and teen stages. The role strains the daughter shared with her mother during the teen stage were more understood during the womanhood stage as a result of the mother’s reliance caused by systemic pressures. The daughters were understanding as opposed to being overwhelmed by their mothers’ fears and shared oppression. Both the mothers and daughters were forgiving of their contributions to the tension caused by their shared oppression. Regardless of the oppressive constraints, the daughter now understands life strains of lived experiences as Black women surviving being sandwiched in her mother’s and her own oppressions. The daughter, however, learned from her mother how to resist oppression.

According to Evans-Winters, it is the “shared set of circumstances that fostered a shared collective responsibility,” (2019, p. 37) that Black mothers transmit to their daughters verbally and behaviorally that cultured their relationship to and through womanhood. Both the mother and daughter spoke about caring for and supporting each other through sisterhood. Black sisterhood is a common thread binding in a “legacy of struggle against racism and sexism” (Butler-Sweet, 2017, p. 372), “an awareness of gender-based discrimination and exploitation” (McDonald,
2007, p. 37), and may “repudiate class exploitation” (hooks, 1984, p. 58). For mother-daughter relationships, it is “mothering the mind” (Collins, 2000, p. 208). Elizabeth explains, “some things were not good, but we made it through, so everything that we’ve done, we’ve done together, and we’ve been through together.” Through the many experiences the mother and daughter shared, they feel like they grew up together and developed a very enduring bond.

As previously mentioned, Grumet’s (1998) prescriptive process defines how our mothers’ experiences contributes our informal curriculum. The researcher revealed knowledge reproduction and knowledge transmissions from life decisions the daughters shared telling (life as lived) or living (life as it unfolds) their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). The daughters’ decisions proved that a mother’s lived experience contributes to her daughter’s informal curriculum. As the participants recalled stories to share, they each (re)membered differently based on who they were and whether they were either mothering or daughtering (Dillard, 2012). The researcher’s data analysis revealed that a Black girl’s informal curriculum sometimes includes her mother’s oppression. Black women are less likely to find someone to take care of them, and therefore are taught to be self-reliant and find strategies for self-protection to resist race and gender oppression. Some mothers in this study taught their daughters self-love which complements self-care and self-reliance which contradicts their expectation for their daughters to be self-less and self-sacrificing. The expectation of Black girls mothering at an early age to resist oppression also contributes to their informal curriculum. Therefore, Black women’s tradition should be accessible to Black women to understand their strength and how to navigate their struggles opposing dominant narratives.

The absence of single, Black mothers and Black girls in literature presents an opportunity to fill a gap about a Black woman’s strength and resistance in curriculum studies. This study
offers a counternarrative for Black mothers to consider what experiences they are contributing to their daughters’ informal curriculum, and how it may influence their formal curriculum. Theorists may use this literature to understand the generational transmissions of a mother to her daughter and how the daughter’s experiences may restory the experiences with and for her mother. This research supports diversity in literature in the field of education to redefine single, Black mothering and daughtering. It also adds to Black women’s writing that centers the experiences of Black mothering from Black girlhood through Black womanhood challenging a deficit-narrative where Black women and their daughters may feel isolated (Patihis et al., 2019). Furthermore, educational institutions may also use the findings to provide student-centered needs to support the intellectual growth and emotional development of Black girls. Finally, this scholarly work can also be helpful for social organizations missioned to raise consciousness in an informal setting beyond the traditional academic setting.

To conclude, the COVID pandemic required this study to be advertised and conducted using alternatives spaces. The interviews shifted from in-person to online/virtual interviews. The concept for using alternative spaces, such as social media platforms, can also be used to disseminate knowledge that promotes positive messages regarding Black motherhood’s strength and resistance. For example, the findings in this study indicated that single, Black motherhood is strength and resistance embedded in their struggles. Consequently, social media can be used to disseminate Black women’s stories in video vignettes and images that exemplify strength and resistance.

The researcher used local coherence as an approach to validation since daughters and mothers were interviewed at the same time (Reissman, 1993). Since the participants may have been reluctant to negatively speak about the other person, the researcher used “linguistic devices
to relate events to one another” (Reissman, 1993, p. 67). Most mothers spoke positively about their relationship with their daughters; however, there were contrasts observed from the daughters such as Latrisha stating “there's always been some, well, not always but there has been some tension between our relationship,” or Ashley stating, “we’ve gotten closer now.” In narratives, meanings also shift through restorying.

**Limitations**

Three of the seven families lived in the state where the study was conducted. Since Georgia has several military communities throughout the state, the researcher suggests that ‘hometown’ should be added to the demographics for both the mother and daughter. The participants’ experiences are not representative of single Black mothers in all geographic areas in the United States. Furthermore, four of the seven families lived in several states due to military obligations, and their lived experiences are not limited to the state of Georgia. The only families who agreed to participate in this study were mothers and daughters who are close and had a positive relationship. Emotional, political, and social perspectives of maternal love throughout the daughter’s childhood, teen, and womanhood stages promoted female solidarity in the Black womanhood stage. A mother’s primary role, love, and her attachment for her daughter sustained her relationship with her daughter. Primary love and survival are psychological transmissions within a Black mother’s curriculum.

Single, Black mothers included Black mothers who were either never married, divorced, or widowed during the participants’ childrearing years. The single qualifier is a marital term and disqualified Black women who may have raised their children in a nuclear family under a patriarchal household where mothering was solely the woman’s role. The role strain may be equal to a single mother and daughter whose father actively co-parented. Furthermore, research on single, Black motherhood should include mothers who are married, lesbian, and transgender
to understand any differences or perhaps similarities in what the mother transmits to her
daughter.

The COVID-19 restricted exposure policy required that video conference interviews be
used for the data collection process. The video recording presented some challenges with
participant recruitment. Two Black mothers who agreed to participate declined to share their
experiences when they learned they were going to be on camera. The two Black mothers that
declined were older than 60 years of age and offered experiences of a three-generational family,
similar to Beatrice and Latrisha. This limited the representation of knowledge and experiences
from that age group. The policy also limited participant recruitment at social and community-
based organizations which may not have had access to digital flyers. The participant
demographic data revealed that it was highly educated and employed women who found the flyer
and agreed to participate.

*Implication for Future Research*

Most research studies that include single, Black mothers’ families generate deficit-
oriented results seeking to resolve societal problems. The findings generally result in laws and
policies that structurally regulate the lives of Black mothers and their families. The findings in
this study organically challenged the single, Black mother welfare queen and matriarch
sterotypes through two aspects of strength: a state of being and doing. Future research is
recommended to explore the contradictory ideas of self-love and self-sacrifice to understand
what Black women are learning to be strong. Their stories collectively proved their awareness
and oppressive experiences as they navigated and prepared their daughters to resist devaluation.
Any similar future research should study a larger population and expand Black mothers to
include married, lesbian, and transgender mothers to capture strength and resistance transmission
from a Black mother to her daughter. The purpose would be to explore the experiences and
relationships of Black mothers and evaluate if the father’s presence or other marginalized identities influence their collective concerns. I also would suggest a study to follow-up on a daughter’s desire to provide continued support as her mother ages and is likely struggling from financial strains of single, Black motherhood. Finally, this study was also limited to one 70 years old participant. Future research is recommended for a population with more than one participant who is closer to 70 years old. The rich data gathered from 70-year-old Beatrice’s stories provided a historical transmission of two generations through the civil rights and women’s movements.
REFERENCES


Currie, K. (2020). That was then, this is now: The revival of the proposed equal rights amendment and the co-optation of the #MeToo movement. *Golden Gate University Law Review, 50*(2), 169–195.


Hull, A., Bell-Scott, P., & Smith, B. (1982). *All the women are white, all the blacks are men, but some of us are brave: Black women's studies*. Feminist Press.


APPENDIX A

RESEARCHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about yourself (both mother and daughter take a turn)

   Probe:
   a. Person
   b. Woman
   c. Black woman
   d. What do you value most about yourself?
   e. What do you value least about yourself?
   f. If you could rename yourself or develop a pseudonym what would it be?

2. How would you characterize your mother daughter relationship?

   Probe:
   a. 5 adjectives that describe your mother (daughter)
   b. How did it feel to bring your daughter home after the birthing process? (mother)
   c. How did you select the name for your daughter (mother)
   d. What is your most memorable experience(s) of your mother? (daughter)
   e. What things or opportunities that are important in your mother daughter relationship?
   f. IF your mother ever needed a TIME-OUT what event would that be and why?
   g. What do you believe is (was) biggest fear for your children (or) What did your mom share as her biggest fear for you?
   h. How did your mom discuss money or budgeting in your household while growing up?
3. How would you describe your family in general?

4. How did that effect your thinking about spending and saving money?

5. What things would you do differently if you change anything?

6. What would make you feel happy and free about your children’s lives or about your mother’s life?
   a. Probe: What is the most powerful characteristic of yourself, your mother, and other Black women that you know?

7. What do you hope for the future?

8. What’s the one thing you decided you were not going to do as a mother?
I, ________________________________, agree to participate in the research project titled, “Lifting as I climb: Single Black Mothers’ Narratives, conducted by Yolanda Surrency, under the direction of Dr. Delores Liston, Georgia Southern University, College of Education. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary; and, I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of my participation returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this narrative study is to understand how Black mothers’ experiences shape their attitudes about caring for self and their children to include variations in Black cultural knowledge and investigate how this cultural knowledge is transmitted through generations.

I will voluntarily agree to participate in an one hour, audiotaped interview at an agreed time and in a study hall at a local library. I understand that the questions are related to my attitude about my life, and motherhood. Due to the personal nature of the questions, I may experience some uneasiness. However, every precaution will be taken to minimize any discomforts. At the completion of this study, a summary of my comments will be made available to me.

I understand that the results of this study will be confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent. I understand that the researcher will use pseudonyms to protect my identity in any research products. The tapes used to record interviews will be kept confidential; and, will not be used for future research studies and will be destroyed approximately three years from the completion date of this research.
The researcher will answer any further questions about my participation during the study. My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

___________________________________  ___________________________
Researcher Signature (Yolanda Surrency)  Participant Signature

ys00226@georgiasouthern.edu (478) 334-9669

This project has been reviewed and approved by the GSU IRB under tracking number H#20401. Participants must be 18 years of age or older to participate. Contact GSU IRB for answers to questions about subjects’ rights at 912-478-5465 or irb@georgiasouthern.edu.
APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT MATERIAL

ARE YOU A SINGLE BLACK MOTHER
Research Participants Needed
WHO HAS AN ADULT DAUGHTER?

PURPOSE: To understand how Black mothers’ experiences shape their attitudes about caring for self and their children.

ELIGIBILITY: Black mother with a daughter, both aged 18 - 70

COMPENSATION: No compensation, participation voluntary.

This study is being conducted for a dissertation at Georgia Southern University.

PLEASE CONTACT YOLANDA SURRENCY
(478) 334-9669 • YS00226@GEORGIASOUTHERN.EDU