Summer 8-1-2022

The Impact of Racial and Ethnic Socialization on Young Black Women's Roles in Interpersonal and Romantic Relationships: A Quantitative study

Jessica L. Elliott
Seton Hall University, jessicalynn0118@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations

Part of the Counseling Psychology Commons, and the Multicultural Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2957
THE IMPACT OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC SOCIALIZATION ON YOUNG BLACK
WOMEN’S ROLES IN INTERPERSONAL AND ROMANTIC
RELATIONSHIPS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

BY

JESSICA ELLIOTT

Dissertation Committee
Jason D. Reynolds (Taewon Choi), PhD, Mentor
Christiana I. Awosan, PhD, Committee Member
Pamela F. Foley, PhD, Committee Member

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
The Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy

Seton Hall University
South Orange, NJ
October 2021
APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Jessica Elliott has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ph.D. during this Fall Semester.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
(Please sign and date)

Dr. Jason D. Reynolds (Taewon Choi)
Mentor

Date

Dr. Pamela Foley
Committee Member

Date

Dr. Christiana Awosan
Committee Member

Date

The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate’s file and submit a copy with your final dissertation.
ABSTRACT

Children often receive their first understanding of the nuances of society and how to navigate their experiences from parents and family members. Parents and family members of children of color have the additional task of teaching their children how to navigate through society as a person of color. The present study used grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) and operated from a constructivist–interpretivist and critical–ideological paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005) to specifically explore the racial and ethnic socialization messages young Black women received in childhood and adolescence regarding the expectations of their roles in these relationships and how these messages impacted them throughout their young adulthood. Interviews focused on messages provided from family members about how they are expected to navigate through their romantic and interpersonal relationships. Messages related to the expectations of their roles in these relationships included five selective categories: 1) the expectation to put others’ needs before their own, 2) the importance of financial independence, 3) prioritizing the needs of their male romantic partner, 4) hiding and/or downplaying their sexuality, and 5) successfully managing work relationships. Findings related to how these socialization messages impacted participants in young adulthood included three selective categories: 1) long-term impact of racial and ethnic socialization by family members, 2) desire to have more nuanced conversations with family members, and 3) the realization of wants and needs within relationships. Clinical implications and future areas of research are discussed.

Keywords: socialization messages, parental messages, Black women
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee: Dr. Jason Reynolds (Taewon Choi), Dr. Pamela F. Foley, and Dr. Christiana I. Awosan.

To Dr. Reynolds, I will always be grateful for your support throughout this journey. Thank you for not just being an inspiration for the type of psychologist that I aspire to be but also for empowering me to believe in myself when it came to my research interests. This project and any future research projects that I decide to embark on will undoubtedly be impacted by your mentorship and the belief you instilled in our lab meetings that these stories and experiences matter and deserve to be shared with others.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to my committee members, Dr. Pamela F. Foley and Dr. Christiana I. Awosan, for their wisdom, time, and motivation throughout this process. There were times during the creation and implementation of this study where self-doubt crept in, and it was always motivating to receive your feedback and words of encouragement.

I would like to thank my mother, father, Wayne, Joshua, Matthew, Cat, and adorable niece, Mia. My mother and father for providing me with the foundation to believe that I could truly do anything and everything that I put my mind to. You two sacrificed so much so I could get to this point, and I can truly never repay you. My brothers and sister-in-law for providing the fun, light-heartedness and love I needed to push through the difficult times. My boyfriend for holding my hand during the highs and the lows that came with this long journey. My niece for adding fuel to my fire and reminding me about the importance of why I do this work. You all were my cheerleaders during the struggles and my rays of light when I needed you. This dissertation and degree is not just mine but all of ours.

To my cohort, you all are literal rock stars. I will forever be thankful that Seton Hall brought you all into my life. There is no other group of people I would have chosen to go on this voyage with.

I would like to thank my friends near and far for the constant love and support that I felt during these past few years. The dinner dates, the hilarious texts and uplifting conversations helped push this project forward.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER

I. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1  
   Background of the Problem ............................................................................................. 1  
   Racial and Ethnic Socialization by Gender ................................................................. 3  
   Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................... 4  
   Racial and Ethnic Socialization and Black Girls ......................................................... 6  
   Definition of Terms ......................................................................................................... 7  
   Research Questions ......................................................................................................... 8  
   Significance of Study ....................................................................................................... 8  

II. Review of the Literature .................................................................................................... 12  
   Stereotypes about Black Women ................................................................................. 13  
   Stereotypes about Latinas ............................................................................................ 15  
   Racial and Ethnic Socialization ................................................................................... 16  
      Impact of Racial and Ethnic Socialization on Youth and Young Adults ............. 17  
      Racial Socialization ................................................................................................. 21  
      Ethnic Socialization ................................................................................................. 22  
   Parental Factors ............................................................................................................ 24  
      Immigration Status, Racial Identity and Socioeconomic Status ..................... 24  
      Impact of Parents’ Experiences .............................................................................. 25  
   Racial and Ethnic Socialization and White Youth and Young Adults .................... 26  
   Social Learning Theory and Socialization ................................................................. 27  
   Family Projection and Multigenerational Transmission Process ......................... 28  
   Intersectionality ........................................................................................................... 31  
   Socialization and Interpersonal and Romantic Relationships ............................... 32  
      Communication Patterns in Socialization ............................................................... 32  
      Generation or Immigration Status ......................................................................... 33  
   Conversations about Romantic Relationships in Communities of Color ............. 35  

III. Method ............................................................................................................................ 39  
   Research Design ............................................................................................................ 39  
   Participants ...................................................................................................................... 40  
   Method of Data Collection ............................................................................................ 42  
   Procedure ....................................................................................................................... 42  
   Analysis of Data ............................................................................................................ 43  
   Qualitative Analysis ....................................................................................................... 44
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality and Trustworthiness</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Reflexivity</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Results</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation to Put Others’ Needs Before Their Own</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message to Adhere to “Strong Black Women” Narrative</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Black Women Do Everything...For Everybody. All the Time.”</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of Financial Independence</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing the Needs of Their Male Romantic Partner</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Submissive and Shrink Self</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation To Be in a Service-Oriented Role in Romantic Relationships</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiding and/or Downplaying Their Sexuality</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating and Sex Are Taboo</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages About Covering Up Body and Not Exploring Sexuality</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully Managing Work Relationships</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needing to Work Harder Than Peers</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Navigate Microaggressions or Stereotypes</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of Being Respectful, Polite and Mindful of Tone and Outer Appearance</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Education</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term Impact of Racial and Ethnic Socialization by Family Members</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to Navigate Relationships on Their Own</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Messages Leading to Relying on Observations and Messages from Outside Sources</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling that Messages/Observations Have Led to Having Difficulty Asking for Help</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Have More Nuanced Conversations with Family Members</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Conversations About Race and How to Navigate Predominantly White Spaces</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Opportunities to Talk About Developing Sexuality and Healthy Romantic Relationships</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Messages About Family Members’ Experiences in Relationships</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling that Messages/Observations Have Led to Having Desire for Messages About Prioritizing Oneself</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realization of Wants and Needs Within Relationships</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Reciprocity in Relationships</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporating More Self-Love and Self-Care in Their Relationships</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

Introduction

This chapter provides an understanding of the study while also presenting information on the background of the presenting issue. Important concepts and terminology will be defined and explored in more detail as well. The specific research questions and significance of the study will be highlighted.

Background of the Problem

Parents and family members often provide children with their first understanding of societal norms and what is deemed acceptable. The implicit and explicit messages that parents and family members provide children have ramifications that can impact their perceptions of gender roles in the work force (Croft et al., 2014), gender-based expectations in education (Gunderson et al., 2012), as well as gender-based roles in society (Epstein & Ward, 2011). Parents and family members of children of color have the additional task of teaching their children how to navigate through society as a person of color (Bowman & Howard, 1985; T. L. Brown et al., 2010; Peck et al., 2014; Townsend, 2008).

Literature has discussed how family members provide their youth with implicit and explicit racial and ethnic socialization messages (T. L. Brown et al., 2010; Cooper et al., 2013; Peck et al., 2014). T. L. Brown and Krishnakumar (2007) defined racial socialization of Black youth as follows:

- parental strategies that convey explicit and implicit messages regarding intergroup protocol and relationships, including teaching youth about racial barrier awareness [defined as teaching children about the presence of societal racism and discrimination],
how to cope with racism and race-related discrimination, and the promotion of cross-racial relationships. (p. 4)

In comparison, T. L. Brown and Krishnakumar (2007) defined ethnic socialization as the explicit and implicit messages regarding intragroup messages about what it means to be a particular ethnic group, including the socialization of youth regarding African American cultural values, African American cultural embeddedness, African American history, celebrating African American heritage, and promotion of ethnic pride. (p. 4)

Racial and ethnic socialization from parents has been shown to act as a buffer for discrimination in the educational arena (Banerjee et al., 2018; Murry et al., 2009), increase self-esteem (Hughes et al., 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2009), and positively impact psychological adjustment (Neblett et al., 2013) for youth.

Other authors have discussed the impact of gendered racial socialization messages from parents and how these can impact Black girls’ perceptions of themselves and their decision-making. Gendered racial socialization messages are messages from caregivers that are aimed at the experiences that children may face at the intersection of their race and gender (D. L. Brown et al., 2017). Thomas and King (2007) found that when Black mothers provide gendered racial socialization messages to their daughters related to self-determination and pride (e.g., “Not to limit herself because of race or gender” or “Be proud to be African American” or “Black people are strong, resilient, smart, powerful” p. 140), these messages had a positive impact on their daughters’ self-esteem. This same study found that when mothers provide messages that deny their racial heritage, this can have a negative impact on how these girls view themselves. Other research (Stokes et al., 2020) found that Black girls who received gendered racial socialization messages that encouraged pride in being a Black woman were likely to have a more positive
attitude about being Black and other Black people. Stokes et al. (2020) also found that Black girls who heard negative messages about Black women (e.g., “Black women typically have bad attitudes” p. 6) were more likely to report negative feelings about being Black and experience more depressive symptoms than girls who did not.

Evans et al. (2021) examined gendered-racial socialization messages’ influence on Black adolescent girls’ sexual decision-making and found that Black girls who were exposed to more empowering messages about Black girls and women (e.g., “Black women can accomplish anything” p. 6) were less likely to intend to have sex at an early age. This study (Evans et al., 2021) interviewed participants ranging from ages 13 to 17 and asked them to rate how likely it was that they would have sex in the next month from 1 = not at all likely to 4 = very likely. The researchers also found that gendered-racial socialization messages that empowered these girls moderated the relationship between parental monitoring and the participants’ intentions to have sex. The researchers suggested that while parental monitoring of teens is still helpful, providing teens with empowering messages and values that encourage them to make safer decisions is also important and impactful especially during a time period where youth will seek out more autonomy, and constant parental monitoring may prove more difficult.

Racial and Ethnic Socialization by Gender

Research has shown that there are differences in how parents racially and ethnically socialize daughters and sons (T. L. Brown et al., 2010; Cooper et al., 2013; Peck et al., 2014), although research about the specific differences is unclear. Peck et al. found that parents identified providing their sons with more distinct messages related to being prepared for potential racial bias, while they provided their daughters with more distinct messages related to cultural socialization messages. T. L. Brown et al. (2010) found that African American female
adolescents reported receiving higher levels of racial and ethnic socialization when compared to their male counterparts. The content of the socialization messages for Black girls included higher levels of maternal caregiver’s socialization of coping with racism and higher maternal caregiver’s socialization of African American history and ethnic pride related to being Black (T. L. Brown et al., 2010). Peck et al. observed that 38% of Black parents reported providing their daughters with messages about biases they may face, while 57% of Black parents reported providing their sons with messages related to biases they may face. These same authors also found that 76% of Black parents reported giving their sons messages about ethnic pride and history, while 84% of Black parents reported giving these messages to their daughters. Some researchers (McHale et al., 2006; Peck et al., 2014) have hypothesized that the gender difference seen in racial and ethnic socialization among Black youth is due to the assumption that Black boys and men will experience more discrimination than their female counterparts, so the expectation is that Black boys and men need to be better prepared to handle the potential prejudices that may come their way. Staples and Johnson (1993) have attributed this difference to higher expectations of success being placed on Black girls and women than on their male counterparts. Further research needs to be conducted to better understand parents’ rationale for providing or not providing their children with different messages based on their gender.

**Statement of the Problem**

Considering the vast array of stereotypically negative images of Black women and girls seen in society (P. H. Collins, 2000; Hall & McCurtis Witherspoon, 2015; Thomas et al., 2004), research showing that African American parents provide different patterns of socialization to their daughters may be a result of the stereotyped messages aimed at Black women and girls. Black women and girls often find themselves navigating a society where they are part of at least
two marginalized communities: being a person of color and being a woman. Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) examined how the oppression related to race, gender, and class leaves Black women and girls in jeopardy of being oppressed on multiple frontiers. R. Epstein et al. (2017) found that compared to their White counterparts of the same age, Black girls were perceived as needing less nurturing, protection, support, and comfort by a sample of 325 adults from various racial and ethnic backgrounds and different educational levels across the U.S. These participants were recruited via an online service in order to gather a large sample size of adult participants. The same study found that for mature topics such as sex, these participants perceived Black girls to be more knowledgeable about these areas. In addition to premature adultification of Black girls, these assumptions regarding adult perceptions of Black girls have been associated with stricter punishments in the education system as well as greater consequences or penalties in the juvenile justice system (R. Epstein et al., 2017). They suggested that this may be due to adults’ subconscious use of stereotypical images of Black girls and that these images lead to the belief that Black girls are more mature and adult-like than their peers.

Literature has also explored the experiences of Black girls navigating negative attitudes, lower expectations, and differential treatment from peers and teachers in the educational arena such as: higher rates of suspension, increased chance of being disciplined for subjective infractions, and higher percentages of being referred to law enforcement or arrested (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; R. Epstein et al., 2017). Research has shown that in romantic relationships, Black girls have to contend with images portrayed in media and society about how the world views them, which include images such of being emasculating, loud, aggressive, angry, hypersexual, and self-sacrificing. Past research (P. H. Collins, 2000; M. L. Collins et al., 2015; B. H. French, 2013; Hall & McCurtis Witherspoon, 2015) has discussed the negative and
stereotypical sexual images (e.g., “The Sapphire,” “The Jezebel,” “The Mammy”) that are associated with Black women and girls. Literature has observed that the internalization of these negative stereotypes about Black women are not only linked to negative psychological outcomes (P. H. Collins, 2000; Townsend et al., 2010) but also to an increase in risky sexualized behavior such as not feeling empowered to negotiate condom use in sexual relationships (Davis & Tucker-Brown, 2013; Tolman, 1999). These studies indicated that Black girls find themselves having to navigate social interactions where their abilities and competencies are questioned while also finding themselves highly scrutinized and penalized in comparison to their peers.

**Racial and Ethnic Socialization and Black Girls**

Research has been conducted related to racial and ethnical socialization and its impact on Black girls’ academic achievement, self-esteem, and psychological well-being (Banerjee et al., 2018; Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes et al., 2009; Mandara et al., 2009; Neblett et al., 2013; Tynes et al., 2012); however, more studies are needed on how these mechanisms impact Black girls’ navigation within interpersonal and romantic relationships. The purpose of this study is to build on the previous literature focused on racial and ethnic socialization to better understand the effect they have on Black women and girls’ sense of their expected roles in relationships. This study explored the experiences of young Black women, specifically how racial and ethnic socialization from family members has impacted their interpersonal and romantic relationships. This study will also shed light on the impact of parental messaging on youth, particularly Black girls and teens, and highlight how it may impact development as they transition into adulthood. Findings may offer insight for parents and improve communication patterns between family members.
Definition of Terms

Racial socialization

Racial socialization messages include parental strategies that convey explicit and implicit messages regarding intergroup protocol and relationships, including teaching youth about racial barrier awareness [defined as teaching children about the presence of societal racism and discrimination], how to cope with racism and race-related discrimination, and the promotion of cross-racial relationships. (Brown and Krishnakumar, 2007 p. 4)

Racial socialization includes explicit and implicit messages related to racism and potential barriers that an individual may face from society because they are a member of a certain racial group.

Ethnic socialization refers to

the explicit and implicit messages regarding intragroup messages about what it means to be a particular ethnic group, including the socialization of youth regarding African American cultural values, African American cultural embeddedness, African American history, celebrating African American heritage, and promotion of ethnic pride. (Brown and Krishnakumar, 2007 p. 4)

Ethnic socialization includes explicit and implicit messages related to the history, values, and cultures that are associated with being a member of a particular ethnic or cultural group.

Gendered-Racial socialization

Evans et al. (2021) defined gendered-racial socialization as “the process through which caregivers send messages to their children about the intersections of their race and gender” (p. 2). These potential messages from caregivers include beliefs about pride and empowerment and/or internalized forms of oppression (D. L. Brown et al., 2017).
**Research Questions**

This study explored the following research questions:

A) What racial and ethnic socialization messages did young Black women receive in childhood and adolescence regarding expectations of their roles in interpersonal and romantic relationships?

B) How did these racial and ethnic socialization messages impact them through young adulthood?

**Significance of the Study**

Much of the literature on racial and ethnic socialization has examined the impact these processes have had on individuals’ self-esteem (Hughes et al., 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2009), beliefs regarding their academic abilities (Banerjee et al., 2018; T. L. Brown et al., 2009), and their psychological adjustment (Mandara et al., 2009; Neblett et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2009). These studies have highlighted how racial and ethnic socialization from parents has been found to act as a buffer against negative stereotypes and discriminatory factors that individuals within the Black community have to endure by providing participants with coping strategies such as connecting with others who are dealing with the same or similar difficulties or engaging in religious or spiritual activity (Blackmon et al., 2016; Bowman & Howard, 1985; Dunbar et al., 2017).

This study built on previous literature by exploring the importance of racial and ethnic socialization from family members and its impact on Black women and girls. By identifying the positive messages young Black women received from family members at a young age, this study could potentially help Black families (and clinicians looking to work with these families) gain better insight into the impact of these messages and how these positive messages can be used as
a means of empowering and uplifting Black girls and women. This study also expanded on previous literature that focused on gendered racial socialization messages and sought to understand how these messages impacted young Black women as they navigated a variety of relationships. Additionally, this study sought to uncover the messages young Black women received from a variety of family members (e.g., fathers, siblings, etc.), as much of the extant research has examined the messages daughters received from mothers (Dennis & Wood, 2012; Townsend, 2008). Past literature (Cooper, 2009; Cooper et al., 2013) has highlighted the need for more research to examine the impact that Black fathers have on the socialization of their children.

There has been increasingly more research performed on the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, yet more nuanced research still needs to be conducted. Throughout the past three decades, there has been an increase in literature specifically geared toward better understanding racial and ethnic socialization and the impact that these processes can have on various aspects of an individual’s well-being. This study will look to expand upon previous research and gain a better understanding of the relationship between racial and ethnic socialization and interpersonal and romantic relationships specifically with respect to Black women and girls.

From a multigenerational perspective, this study explored if and what messages are being transmitted from parents to children related to perception and expectation of being a Black girl or woman in these relationships. This study will highlight potential functional and dysfunctional messages that are being passed down within Black families specifically related to Black women and girls. DeGruy (2005) explored how the multigenerational trauma of centuries of slavery and continued oppression can result in the passing down of certain patterns, symptoms, roles, and
values from past generations. It is important to keep in mind that many of the negative stereotypes associated with Black women and girls have roots that originated from slavery, and because of this, Black families have had to provide their children with socialization messages based on these experiences and past histories (DeGruy, 2005). Considering the derogatory nature and sexual undertones seen in the stereotypes placed on Black women and girls (e.g., stereotypes related to being emasculating, loud, aggressive, angry, hypersexual, nurturing and self-sacrificial), this study focused on messages related to interpersonal and romantic relationships to explore if and how parents use racial and ethnic socialization to inform their daughters about the expectations others may have of them. Having better insight into what messages are passed down from generation to generation can provide families with insight into how messaging can be helpful or harmful to their children, may help clinicians working with Black families, and can be used for programming focused on empowering Black women and girls.

It is also important to consider how adults’ perceptions of Black girls “as less innocent and more adult-like than White girls of the same age” (p. 4) will ultimately lead to the adultification of Black girls and young Black women (Epstein et al., 2017). The implicit or explicit messages associated with the adultification of Black girls and women could increase the perceived hypersexualization of this population or the assumption that these girls and young women are older than they actually are. This combination of being perceived as more adult-like and being perceived as being hypersexual could also potentially contribute to already high levels of sexual assault that takes place within this community (The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2017). As per the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 21% of the Black women surveyed were raped during their lifetime, and 38% of the Black women surveyed experienced other forms of sexual violence in their lifetimes. A better
understanding of the particular messages adults provide Black girls and teens will allow us to counteract these harmful narratives, which, in turn, could impact how Black girls and young women are depicted and perceived by society.

Counseling psychology historically has deep multicultural and social justice roots when working with individuals, communities, and organizations (Scheel et al., 2018). By gaining an improved understanding of the impact that racial and ethnic socialization has on Black girls and women, clinicians may be better prepared to help parents have healthier and more effective patterns of communication with their children.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Humans naturally divide up the world around them into categories. This can be seen in the tendency of humans to categorize others as either “in-group” members or “out-group” members (Coleman, 2013; Pettigrew, 1979). While this does not automatically lead to the development of stereotypes, it allows for stereotypes about individuals and groups to be more easily accessible (Devine, 1989). A stereotype “reflects the belief that a particular attribute is characteristic of the group as a whole, regardless of the actual variation among the group’s members” (Aronson, 2018, p. 290). Some prevalent examples of stereotypes in our society revolve around race, ethnicity, and culture. Studies have found that stereotypes related to race, ethnicity, or culture can impact students’ experiences in college (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Nadal, Griffin et al., 2014; Nadal, Wong et al., 2014), recognition of certain mental health concerns (Gordon et al., 2001), persistence in particular academic fields or careers (Chang et al., 2011; Trytten et al., 2012), and even interactions with law enforcement (Carroll & Gonzalez, 2014). Racial stereotypes (such as the Black community being associated with violence, having a flashy car or jewelry, being uneducated, and being sexually promiscuous) are also widespread in popular culture, and these implicit and explicit images and messages can impact how individuals shape their identity and how others perceive them (Childs, 2014).

Due to their intersectional status as both a woman and person of color, Black female experiences are impacted on multiple dimensions. Intersectionality takes into consideration how overlapping social identities can have an impact on one’s lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). Previous research on the experiences of Black women indicates that throughout their lives they have to navigate racism and sexism seen in society (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Jordan-Zachery,
This includes Black women experiencing the paradoxical “outsider within” experience as a leader in the work environment (A. N. Smith et al., 2019), the relationship between greater frequency of gendered racial microaggressions and negative mental and physical wellbeing (Ashley, 2014; Lewis et al., 2017; Mwangi & Constance-Huggins, 2019), and having to decide whether or not to engage in beauty practices to align with mainstream Eurocentric standards (S. Brown, 2018; Davis Tribble et al., 2019).

**Stereotypes about Black Women**

Throughout American history and culture, there have been four prevalent stereotypical images associated with Black women. These roles are Mammy, Sapphire, Jezebel, and Superwoman (P. H. Collins, 2000; Hall & McCurtis Witherspoon, 2015). The Mammy stereotype (West, 1995) is typically depicted as an individual who is always willing to prioritize the needs and wants of others even if it is detrimental to her own well-being. This stereotype often goes along with the image of the obedient domestic worker who would be portrayed as being more caring towards the family she worked for than her own family at home. The Sapphire stereotype (West, 1995) is typically depicted as being loud, belligerent, and almost verbally assaultive with her words. Another key component to this stereotype is the notion that this woman is emasculating to the men around her. The Jezebel stereotype (West, 1995) has a history of being rooted in the justification of why African American women were being sexually assaulted during the age of slavery. The Jezebel stereotype is seen as being sexually seductive and manipulative as well as being almost animalistic in her desires for sexual activity. The Superwoman (Thomas et al., 2004) is typically depicted as being extremely strong willed, resilient, and independent. Unlike the other three stereotypical images, on the surface this depiction could be conceived as a protective factor or aspirational goal. While there is a large
emphasis placed on the strength of this woman, there is also the assumption that she is expected to provide and support others while feeling unable to show her own vulnerability or acknowledge her own stressors (Thomas et al., 2004).

While the existence of these stereotypical images is problematic, even more alarming is that they are not just being associated with Black women but also Black girls. Epstein et al. (2017) found that compared to their White counterparts of the same age, Black girls are perceived as needing less nurturing, protection, support, and comfort by adults. Along with these findings, the same study found that when it comes to mature topics, such as sex, adults (such as educators or law enforcement officials) perceive Black girls to be more knowledgeable about these areas. If one examines the assumptions adults (such as educators or law enforcement officials) place on Black girls, there is a similarity of traits that can be found across the stereotypes mentioned above. These assumptions regarding adult perceptions of Black girls have not only been associated with the adultification of Black girls but also with stricter punishments in the education system as well as greater consequences or penalties in the juvenile justice system (Epstein et al., 2017). Literature on this topic has focused on the need and process of Black mothers to protect and prepare their daughters to face the racism and sexism because of their social identities as Black and female (P. H. Collins, 1997; Jones & Shorter Gooden 2003).

Scholars have discussed this process that Black mothers undergo and have labeled it a variety of names. Some scholars have termed it racial–sexual socialization (Greene, 1990), while others have termed the process armoring (Edmondson Bell & Nkomo, 1998). Greene described the process of racial–sexual socialization to include three components: (1) learning to label racism accurately and to acknowledge its extent, (2) having role models establish what is deemed appropriate in various situations and how to advocate for one’s self, and (3)
understanding that the experience of being a racial and gendered minority will come with a wide range of feelings differing from their counterparts of the same race or same gender. Edmondson Bell & Nkomo (1998) described armoring as a psychological buffer to protect young Black women from not only racism but also sexism.

**Stereotypes about Latinas**

When it comes to research on the Black community, it is important to recognize that members of the African Diaspora are not a monolith. For members of the Afro-Latinx community, it is important to consider the negative stereotypes associated with having both identities. Girls and women who identify as Afro-Latinx also have to contend with the sexual stereotypes associated with Latinas. These stereotypes are linked to the “good girl/bad girl dichotomy” that revolves around the concept of *marianismo* (Allen, 2015; García, 2009).

*Marianismo* is characterized as the “undersexed, suffering, submissive woman” (Allen, 2015, p. 3). A Latina who abides by this stereotype is assumed to endure the act of sex solely for the sake of procreation. For Latinas who do not abide by this concept, they are viewed as being the “hot fiery” Latina who is “too hot” and “with uncontrollable desires” (Allen, 2015, p. 3). Other stereotypical images associated with Latinas include being “dependent, submissive, family oriented, domestic and highly sexual” (Nanda, 2012, p. 30).

Studies have indicated that clinicians (López & Chesney-Lind, 2014) and juvenile justice professionals (Gaarder et al., 2004; Pasko & López, 2015) who work with Latinas utilize these stereotypes in their work with these youths. In a study aimed at examining the impact of racial and gender stereotypes on the relational dynamics of Latina clients and their clinicians, it was found that clients believed that society assumed that Latinas are “always pregnant” (López & Chesney-Lind, 2014, p. 8). López and Chesney-Lind also found that clinicians confirmed the
clients’ beliefs in their assumptions that teenage pregnancies are considered as acceptable in Latinx culture. In a qualitative study focused on examining Latina youths’ experiences in sex education courses, several of the 40 Latina participants indicated that their instructors placed an emphasis on them to be “good girls” or “young ladies” in order to maintain a certain level of respectability with society (García, 2009). The participants in this study also highlighted that this messaging was different from their male peers who did not receive any warnings about how their respectability was tied to their sexual behavior. The findings from these studies indicated that similar to their African American peers, Afro-Latinas have the burden of contending with societal expectations for how they will behave as both women and women from a community of color.

**Racial and Ethnic Socialization**

This awareness and messaging about how one’s race and/or ethnicity can impact individuals has often been studied in the context of racial and ethnic socialization. In the past two decades, there has been an increase in research studies conducted to gain an understanding about racial and ethnic socialization and their implications on youth. In particular, much attention has been paid to racial and ethnic socialization messages youth receive from their parents (Else-Quest & Morse, 2015; French et al., 2013; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). These studies have generally defined racial socialization as messages provided about potential for discrimination and bias (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009), whereas ethnic socialization has been generally defined as messages highlighting positive aspects of being a member of that particular group (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009) and teaching children about the history, culture, and heritage associated with their ethnicity (Else-Quest & Morse, 2015). In a study of parental ethnic socialization practice and adolescent ethnic identity development, researchers discussed how ethnic socialization places an
emphasis on passing down one’s cultural heritage, traditions, and customs to future generations as a means of perpetuating one’s culture (Else-Quest & Morse, 2015). Stein et al. (2018) defined racial socialization as teaching youth how to cope with racial discrimination, emphasizing racial equality, and acceptance of diversity and teaching caution of other racial or ethnic groups. Much of the research that examines racial and ethnic socialization does so in the context of Asian American (Atkin & Yoo, 2020; Atkin et al., 2018), Latinx (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009), African American (T. L. Brown et al., 2009), and adoptive families (Seol et al., 2016). These studies discovered that there are differences in how racial and ethnic socialization occurs across different racial and ethnic groups and found differences in how these socialization messages impact the individuals within the racial and ethnic groups. Research has found that there is a positive impact of ethnic socialization and a curvilinear relationship related to racial socialization.

**Impact of Racial and Ethnic Socialization on Youth and Young Adults**

When comparing socialization amongst African American, Latinx, and Asian American young adults, Liu and Lau (2013) found a link between racial and ethnic socialization and depressive symptoms, with the relationship being mediated by optimism and pessimism. Liu and Lau sampled 670 African American, Latinx, and Asian American young adults who reported that their families engaged in ethnic socialization held a more optimistic and less pessimistic outlook of the world. This more optimistic outlook was connected to a decrease in depressive symptoms. On the other hand, the same study found that higher levels of racial socialization were linked to less optimism and more pessimism, which, in turn, was correlated with higher symptoms of depression. The researchers explained that these finding supported the notion that placing an overemphasis on potential racial barriers may lead to individuals displaying emotions associated
with depression such as anger, distrust of others, and discouragement (Liu & Lau, 2013). This same study found that compared to their Asian American and Latinx peers, African American participants reported receiving racial socialization messages centered on preparation for bias. However, the study also found that compared to their African American and Latinx peers, the Asian American participants reported receiving more racial socialization messages aimed at the promotion of mistrust. The researchers did highlight that these particular findings should be interpreted with caution because other demographic factors (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status) may impact the particular messages that were given. Liu and Lau posited that the family’s financial income was correlated with preparation for bias and may account for these differences.

In a study with 90 African American, 224 Asian American, and 216 Latino American college students, researchers examined racial–ethnic socialization and its relationship with racial identity and ethnic identity (French et al., 2013). This study found that with Asian American and Latinx youth, a sense of belonging to their ethnic group was associated with positive personal feelings towards other members of their particular ethnic group, while the opposite was seen in African American youth (French et al., 2013). Researchers hypothesized that these differences indicated that while an individual could feel connected to the African American community, they may not necessarily have positive feelings towards other African Americans. This could perhaps be explained by the negative messages perpetuated in society about African Americans or the awareness of how some in society may view the African American community.

In addition to concerns about how individuals view themselves and whether they are liked by others, researchers have also looked at the impact of racial and ethnic socialization on how youth observe how society views their particular group. In a study on the impact of cultural socialization on youth, Rivas-Drake et al. (2009) found that discrimination from peers had a
negative impact on youths’ sense of self and their psychological well-being. This study used a sample of 308 youths (45% boys, 55% girls) with 19% self-identifying as Black, African American or of African descent, 12% as Puerto Rican, 9% Dominican, 28% as Chinese American, and 32% as White, Caucasian, or of European descent. In this study, the term cultural socialization was used interchangeably with ethnic socialization and ethnic pride (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). This same study found that discrimination from peers and adults had an impact on how the youth perceived their racial or ethnic group’s standing in society. Among Asian American participants, a sense of belonging positively contributed to the sense that others viewed Asian Americans positively (French et al., 2013). The researchers also found that African Americans showed the opposite relationship in that a greater sense of belonging contributed to a sense that African Americans are less well perceived by others in society. The differences seen across these racial and ethnic groups could potentially be explained by their different histories within the United States (French et al., 2013; Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014). These histories include the triangulation of different racial and ethnic groups against one another (C. J. Kim, 1999), when and how particular racial and ethnic groups arrived in the United States (Brown et al., 2018; Hopkins, 2010), and intergroup prejudices seen across the racial and ethnic groups (Gay, 2006; E. Kim, 1998; McClain et al., 2006).

Across Asian American, African American, and Latinx youth, having positive feelings toward other members of one’s group was associated with the ability to achieve a salient ethnic identity (French et al., 2013). Familial messages related to ethnic socialization are seen to be associated with higher racial and/or ethnic identity in adolescents, and this higher sense of identity has been seen to be a protective factor against peer pressure. A literature review of racial–ethnic socialization and adolescent development found that messages related to pride in
one’s history and culture have been associated with lower adolescent substance use, while messages related to racial socialization and mistrust of others were associated with greater adolescent substance use (Stein et al., 2018).

More research needs to be conducted on the impact of racial and ethnic socialization on youth from communities that are often not included in these studies. While more research in the last several years has focused on the experiences of Afro-Latinx individuals (Charles, 2021; García-Louis & Cortes, 2020), few studies (Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2020) have examined the impact of socialization messages and identity formation for these communities. Hordge-Freeman and Veras examined the socialization messages Afro-Latinx individuals received and how they shaped the formation of their identity. These authors conducted in-depth interviews with 94 self-identified Afro-Latinx participants for this study. Hordge-Freeman and Veras found that their participants rarely received socialization messages aimed at affirming their Blackness from family members, and most of the messages participants reported receiving from family members normalized colorism while negatively discussing features associated with being Black (e.g., skin color, hair texture, facial features). This study also found that participants reported receiving socialization messages from family members about encouraging them to identify with their Latinx ethnicity while remaining silent when it came to topics related to race or racism. These participants reported having to seek out affirming communities outside of the home (e.g., college or online spaces) so that they could explore the history of the African Diaspora and learn how to embrace this aspect of their identity (Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2020).

In addition to needing more research on individuals within the Afro-Latinx community, more research on racial and ethnic socialization also needs to be facilitated with Indigenous/Native American communities in mind. While there are studies that examine the
impact of culture and youths’ self-perception (Harman, 2017), the impact of media representation on how individuals within the Native American communities view themselves (Leavitt et al., 2015), acculturation levels of Native American youth (Garrett et al., 2009; Reynolds et al., 2012), and family socialization and the relationship between adolescent alcohol use (Urbaeva et al., 2017), there are few studies (Yasui et al., 2015) that focus on the impact of racial or ethnic socialization messages from family and how they impact how Native American youths navigate the world. Yasui et al. facilitated a study with 92 American Indian adolescents and their parents and utilized path analysis to examine the relationship with parental cultural socialization and socialization of coping with discrimination. The authors defined cultural socialization as “encompass[ing] both explicit and implicit parental practices that involve teaching children about their racial/ethnic heritage and history, pride and involvement in cultural practices” (p. 321). This study found that youth who reported higher levels of observing their parents provide these messages predicted low levels of depression and were also positively associated with their ethnic identity. The findings from this study highlight the importance of family socialization messages and how they can foster resiliency amongst American Indian or Native American youth.

**Racial Socialization**

There appears to be a curvilinear relationship in the effects of racial socialization. While low and high levels of racial socialization have been linked with negative school engagement, moderate levels of racial socialization have been linked with positive school engagement (Blackmon et al., 2016; Seol et al., 2016), serving as a potential buffer of their experiences with racism (Stein et al., 2018; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009), and have a positive impact on one’s self-esteem and psychological wellbeing (Stein et al., 2018). The literature (Stein et al., 2018)
suggests that moderate levels of racial socialization messages in conjunction with a balance of messages promoting cultural pride and strategies for coping can help provide youth with the skills to handle these situations. This curvilinear relationship may indicate that providing youth with too little or too much information about racial stereotypes and racism could have the opposite intended effect. In a sample of 90 African American, 224 Asian American and 216 Latinx American college students, French et al. (2013) measured racial socialization and ethnic identity exploration through multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) and found that African American youth reported receiving more racial socialization messages and engaging in higher levels of ethnic identity exploration than their Asian American and Latinx counterparts. The researchers highlighted that this finding supported the notion that the responsibility of preparing their children to cope with possible racism and discrimination is more central to African American parental socialization than their counterparts from other backgrounds. The additional racial socialization messages that African American youth reported receiving may provide them with the motivation to engage in more exploration of their cultural identities in comparison to their peers from Asian and Latinx backgrounds.

**Ethnic Socialization**

Else-Quest and Morse (2015) measured parent ethnic socialization practices among a sample size of 370 adolescents who identified as African American, Latinx, Asian American or White and with the use of multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and found that parents of African American youth similarly reported providing higher levels of ethnic socialization than Latinx, Asian American, and White parents. A socioeconomic status composite variable served as a covariate for this study (Else-Quest & Morse, 2015). These findings could indicate that the need to speak about racial discrimination and ethnic identity are
more salient in African American families in comparison to other racial and ethnic minorities in western countries (Else-Quest & Morse, 2015; Hughes et al., 2006).

Compared to racial socialization, ethnic socialization has been shown to be a moderator between racial discrimination and school belonging (Seol et al., 2016), been linked with positive regard for other members of one’s racial or ethnic group (French et al., 2013), have a positive relationship with adolescents’ grades (T. L. Brown et al., 2009), and have positive implications for psychosocial development (Hughes et al., 2006). Along with this, researchers suggest a relationship between racial and ethnic socialization and providing children with the skills to understand and regulate their emotions appropriately when they are in a racially biased situation (Dunbar et al., 2017). These findings indicate that emphasis placed on teaching youth about cultural pride and heritage can serve as a protective factor, while an emphasis on discrimination without coping strategies on how to potentially deal with this discrimination may prove to be detrimental, especially for boys (Hughes et al., 2006). As mentioned in previous research (Peck et al., 2014), Black parents may feel the need to provide more racial socialization messages to their sons because of how they believe society may view them as more of a threat. The results from Hughes et al. (2006) seem to indicate that only providing Black boys with messages about how they will face discrimination without providing ways to cope can be detrimental to how they navigate the world.

Among racial and ethnic groups, women and girls reported experiencing more ethnic socialization from their parents, while their male counterparts reported receiving more racial socialization from their parents (French et al., 2013; Hughes et al., 2006). These differences in messaging could potentially be explained by the expectation that women have the task of passing down familial and cultural traditions (French et al., 2013). The researchers from these studies
found that the female participants reported receiving more messages about cultural pride, cultural legacy, and the importance of being immersed in one’s culture, while their male counterparts reported receiving more messages about racial barrier awareness and struggles related to race. Another potential explanation could be that males across racial and ethnic groups are expected to face more discrimination than their female counterparts. It should be noted that when examining discrimination at the intersection of race, ethnicity and gender, the forms of discrimination and stereotyping may appear differently. For example, research has found that discrimination aimed at Black or Asian women may be rooted in objectification and hypersexualization (French, 2013; Hall & McCurtis Witherspoon, 2015; Nguyen, 2016), while discrimination aimed at Black or Asian men may appear to be different because the former is rooted in assumptions about being uneducated, fatherless, or a troublemaker (James, 2012), while the latter is rooted in demasculinization or being observed as a perpetual foreigner (Wong et al., 2012).

**Parental Factors**

**Immigration Status, Racial Identity, and Socioeconomic Status**

Parents’ immigration status, racial identity, and socioeconomic status have also been examined. Research has shown that parents who recently immigrated to the United States will engage in more racial–ethnic socialization messaging (Hughes et al., 2006), which may be attributed to families naturally engaging more in the practices and routines of their home country. This pattern was observed in studies with Mexican (Quintana & Vera, 1999; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004), and Chinese families (Cheng & Kuo, 2000). They also found that parents with higher income and education were more likely to provide their children with more racial and ethnic socialization (Hughes et al., 2006). This could be due to the ability of parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds to provide their children with activities that will foster this
communication, for example, reading books to children or taking their children places such as museums (Hughes & Chen, 1997). This same study found that across African American, Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Mexican parents, the greater attachment the parents have to their racial and/or ethnic identity the more likely they are to emphasize ethnic socialization messages. This may be credited to the salience of ethnicity for the parents but also due to awareness of the many negative depictions of their groups that their children may encounter (Hughes, 2003).

**Impact of Parents’ Experiences**

Parents’ own interactions with racial or ethnic discrimination has also been explored. Parents who experienced more frequent acts of institutional discrimination were seen to provide their children with more frequent preparations for racial or ethnic bias (Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014; Hughes et al., 2006). A difference was found for mothers who experienced interpersonal prejudice at work. African American and Latinx mothers who experienced interpersonal prejudice at work were observed to offer more ethnic socialization than their Chinese counterparts (Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014). The authors saw a potential explanation for this difference in the different experiences these groups have experienced in the U.S. African American and Latinx mothers may see these injustices as reminders that their children may experience discrimination, while the Chinese mothers in the study may attribute these injustices to being viewed as a foreigner (Hagelskamp & Hughes, 2014). Given that the Chinese mothers in the study were recent immigrants, there may have been an increased inclination to observe these injustices as being related to xenophobia. Hagelskamp and Hughes offered that second-generation Chinese mothers may interpret these injustices in a similar fashion as their African American and Latinx counterparts and observe them as being more related to race and ethnicity.
Racial and Ethnic Socialization and White Youth and Young Adults

Despite the various studies that indicate the impact that racial and ethnic socialization messages can have, little is known about how this process takes place regarding White youth (Loyd & Gaither, 2018). In a literature review of racial and ethnic socialization related to White youth, Loyd and Gaither have observed that most parents of elementary-aged White youth also expressed a colorblind ideology by being reluctant to mention how racism, stereotypes, and prejudice might impact their children's lack of interracial friendships (Hunter et al., 2012). Parents in this same study reported relying on the school context to teach their children about race and to provide opportunities for children to develop interracial friendships through potential intergroup contact at school.

While there has been an increase in research regarding racial and ethnic socialization, most of these studies have been conducted with monoracial families in mind. It is unclear if the findings seen in these studies can be generalized to the experiences of multiracial children and adolescents. One has to consider that multiracial families have to negotiate how to engage in these conversations while respecting the various racial and/or ethnic backgrounds in the family (Atkin & Yoo, 2019). It is important to consider that parents of multiracial or multiethnic children face the challenge of preparing children to navigate an experience that they themselves are not truly familiar with. This could perhaps be said about transracial adoptive White families with adopted children of color. The process of racial and ethnic socialization may be complicated by the parents’ lack of first-hand knowledge and experiences of being a racial and/or ethnic minority in the United States (Lee, 2003). In a study involving Korean American adolescent adoptees and their White parents, O. M. Kim et al., (2013) found only one third of the families were able to constructively talk about racial and ethnic differences within the family. The authors
found that most families either downplayed or denied the importance of race and ethnicity in the family.

**Social Learning Theory and Socialization**

Social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the actions, beliefs, and emotions of others (Bandura, 1977). Bandura posited that individuals learn a great deal about society by observing and imitating how others around them navigate society. Past research (Morris et al., 2007; Parke, 1994) has examined the influence that family members had in helping children and adolescents learn about emotions and emotional regulation by observing how their parents express their emotions. Kramer (2014) also found that social learning is an important process in sibling relationships with children and that children are able to develop their knowledge of specific emotions, identify and/or recognize emotions, and distinguish emotions from one another and the socially appropriate expression of emotions.

Scholars (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2015; Lawson et al., 2015) have found that children gain gender socialization messages such as expectations for potential occupations and attitudes towards gender roles from observing the behaviors of their parents. From a social learning theory perspective, gender roles and how children develop gendered behaviors can be explained through modelling and learning from the observation of others (Hoominfar, 2021). Gender socialization refers “to the transmission of norms, behaviors, values, and skills necessary to be a successful women or men” in the society (Lawson et al., 2015, p. 27). Children receive most of their socialization messages from family members (Bandura & Bussey, 2004; Blakemore & Hill, 2008), peer groups (Leaper & Friedman, 2007), school (Wentzel, 2014), and social media (R. L. Collins, 2011), and these influences help children learn and develop an understanding of their role in society. Family members are considered to be the first and the most important individuals
who provide gender socialization messages to children (Bandura & Bussey, 2004; Blakemore & Hill, 2008). Parents’ attitudes and behaviors related to gender are important in how children form their gender identity, concept of gender roles, and attitudes towards gender (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2015; Leaper & Farkas 2014). Similar to racial socialization messages, Blakemore and Hill (2008) highlighted that parents may provide different gendered messages to their children depending on their gender. Lawson et al. highlighted that because of these messages that abide by gender roles, parents may have different expectations for their children to act in masculine or feminine ways depending on their gender. Considering the impact that family members can have on how children develop their gender identity and how they may behave as far as gender roles, more research needs to be done considering social learning and socialization messages from family.

**Family Projection and Multigenerational Transmission Process**

Bowenian family therapy focuses on patterns that develop in families in order to decrease anxiety (J. Brown, 1999). Of the eight concepts that make up Bowenian theory, family projection process and multigenerational transmission process discuss practices that can occur intergenerationally. Family projection process describes how children may develop symptoms when they are caught in the previous generation’s anxiety about relationships (Brown, 1999). Multigenerational transmission process discusses how patterns, themes, positions, or roles can be passed down from generation to generation via the projection from parent to child (Brown, 1999). Within this theory, anxiety is a mechanism of this generational transmission of both functional and dysfunctional family patterns (Benson et al., 1993). This transmission of familial patterns has been examined related to child maltreatment (Kors et al., 2020), emotional socialization (Leerkes et al., 2020), parenting styles (Neppl et al., 2020), substance use (Neppl et
al., 2020; Rothenberg et al., 2019), socioeconomic status (Ryabov, 2020), depression (Gotlib et al., 2020), trauma (Solomon & Zerach, 2020), violence (Antle et al., 2020; Black et al., 2010), attitudes towards committed relationships (Jackl, 2016; Weigel, 2007; Weigel & Weiser, 2014), and stress (Bowers & Yehuda, 2016).

From a multigenerational transmission standpoint, children may develop certain ideas about what to expect in romantic relationships by observing what is happening in their family of origin. Weigel and Weiser (2014) observed commitment messages communicated via family of origin and their impact on individuals’ attitudes towards committed relationships. People who reported observing their parents as intact and happy were found to be more likely to learn that romantic relationships are fulfilling, satisfying, and lifelong, while people who observed their parents to be conflictual or unhappy may associate relationships with being unhappy, being full of strife, and perhaps not permanent (Weigel & Weiser, 2014). When it comes to parental communication related to marriage and committed relationships, the influence of the family of origin has been observed in people’s perceptions of romantic relationships (Jackl, 2016; Weigel, 2007). Weigel studied individuals from families where the parents are still married and families where the parents are divorced and explored the messages young adults received from their parents. This study found that families where the parents are still married received more positive messages related to engaging in committed relationships. This study also found that people from families where the parents are divorced reported receiving more negative messaging about committed relationships.

Studies have examined how African American families discussed romantic relationships and dating with their teenage children (Akers et al., 2011; Harper et al., 2012). Harper et al. found that there were differences in messaging provided by parents. Specifically, young women
in the study reported being encouraged to communicate romantic interest passively, while the young men in the study reported being encouraged to directly approach individuals whom they were interested in. This difference in messaging could reinforce the belief that men are allowed to be active and aggressive in dating, while women should be passive in their dating approach. These messages that reinforce passive communication for women could potentially lead to adherence of behaviors that may inhibit sexual health (Fine & McClelland, 2006; Schick et al., 2008).

Akers et al. (2011) found that when it comes to parental communication on dating and relationships, parents seek to prevent their daughters from experiencing sexual abuse or emotional manipulation by partners and focus on instilling a sense of responsibility for their sons to be respectful to their romantic partner. A prominent theme seen in this study was the parents’ beliefs that self-respect and self-esteem are essential to their teenagers’ abilities to make good decisions in their dating relationships. Related to self-esteem and self-respect, there was also a gender difference in how parents discuss these topics. Parents felt that it was important that daughters have pride in themselves and display this to the outside world via their choice of clothing, friends, and romantic partners (Akers et al., 2011). Parents who participated in this study reported believing that daughters who were able to communicate that they valued themselves were less likely to be taken advantaged by others. Akers et al. (2011) also found that several mothers hoped that instilling a strong sense of self-respect in their daughters would help prevent them from repeating multigenerational patterns of unhealthy relationships such as becoming pregnant as a teenager or overly valuing material possessions.

Given that social media aimed at youth is inundated with objectifying messages (American Psychological Association [APA], 2007; Murnen et al., 2003; Starr & Ferguson,
2012) and that a relationship has been found between repeated experiences of sexual objectification and lower levels of sexual assertiveness (Franz et al., 2016), it is important to have a better understanding of how parents can counteract these effects through communication. Even though parents are competing with messaging from peers and the media, parental messages still have prominence in the development of adolescents and young adults (Epstein & Ward, 2008).

**Intersectionality**

Given that this study is aimed at better understanding the messages that are provided to Black women throughout childhood and adolescence, the inclusion of intersectionality is important in framing this research. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) highlights the importance of taking into consideration how one’s multiple social identities have impacted their past and present means of navigating throughout the world and how they may impact how they navigate their world in the future. It is important to reflect on how the intersection of race and gender has potentially impacted the explicit, implicit, and observational messages that the participants have witnessed or were provided from their family members. As mentioned previously, Black women and girls must contend with assumptions and stereotypes from those around them about how they will behave and what knowledge they possess, so it is very possible that the explicit and implicit messages they were given about their roles in various relationships may be impacted by these beliefs or categorizations. With these considerations in mind, social learning theory, multigenerational transmission process, and intersectionality provide the theoretical basis for this study.
Socialization and Interpersonal and Romantic Relationships

Studies have examined how racial and ethnic socialization can impact academic outcomes (T. L. Brown et al., 2009; Seol et al., 2016), psychosocial outcomes (Liu & Lau, 2013), and an individual’s view of themselves and others like them (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Stein et al., 2018); however, there have not been many studies that examined how racial and ethnic socialization messages have impacted adolescent and adult interpersonal, romantic, or dating socialization. Through communication, parents have the capability to instill in their teenagers and young adults the knowledge of sexual risk but also a sense of self-confidence surrounding their sexuality. Communication with parents and friends has been associated with an increased ability to communicate with their dating partners about topics such as condom use, birth control, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, and abstinence (Widman et al., 2013).

Communication Patterns in Socialization

In discussing romantic relationships with adolescents, few parents discuss sex-positive topics but instead highlight potential risks associated with sexual activity (Evans et al., 2019). Past studies indicate that parents are concerned with the possible long-term negative effects of being sexually active (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2006) and due to this, they express overall disapproval that their adolescents may be sexually active (Flores & Barroso, 2017). A difference was seen in communication patterns between mothers and fathers. Youth who reported higher quality communication with their mothers reported more safe sex competency, while those who reported higher quality communication with their fathers reported more positive emotional responses towards sex (Mastro & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2015). The authors suggested this
difference may underscore that different individuals play differing roles in informing young people’s thoughts and behaviors while in romantic relationships.

Differences by gender have also been seen in parental communication about romantic relationships. According to Evans et al. (2019), mothers of daughters were observed to communicate more about sexual risk topics than sex-positive topics than any other group (i.e., mothers of sons, fathers of daughters, and fathers of sons). The same study found that compared to fathers of sons, fathers of daughters communicated less about sex-positive topics. The authors suggest that these results show that parents are more likely to provide their daughters with information about sexual risk, and if they were to talk about sex-positive topics, they would more than likely do so with their sons. When parents discuss romantic relationships and topics related to sex in such a gendered style pattern, they may be reinforcing traditional sexual scripts that suggest it is appropriate for men to desire and pursue sex but that women should prevent sex from occurring (Evans et al., 2019). Studies have shown that daughters whose mothers began having conversations about sex at a young age and continued to have these conversations have better outcomes when it comes to engaging in safe sex practices (Booth-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1998; Coffelt, 2010). Literature has found that when daughters are able to speak openly with their mothers about sex, they are better equipped to develop their self-confidence related to sexuality as well as set healthy boundaries with their sexual partners (Afifi et al., 2008; Wilson & Koo, 2010).

**Generation or Immigration Status**

Another factor to take into consideration is generation or immigration status of the parent. Studies have examined acculturation levels and how they may influence parental messages. Studies on acculturation levels and parental messages proved to have conflicting results. In a
factorial analysis study conducted with 165 Asian American college students, J. L. Kim and Ward (2007) found that parents’ acculturation levels were unrelated to the overall information they provided their children regarding sex-related topics. However, it should be noted that these same authors found that parents who were more acculturated were perceived by their children as providing more messages of acceptance of premarital sex. Other research studies have examined the acculturation levels of the teens and young adults and how it impacted how they approached romantic relationships. In a study with 400 mother–adolescent dyads, Guilamo-Ramos et al. (2009) used structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the impact of acculturation on adolescent sexual behavior amongst adolescent-aged Latinx youth. They found that for adolescent girls, having higher levels of acculturation were associated with the perception that their mothers would be less approving of dating, which then led to lower probability of being in a romantic relationship, which, in turn, was associated with lower intent to engage in sexual behavior. It should be noted that the same study found that the opposite was true for the male adolescent participants. For adolescent boys, it was observed that higher acculturation levels served as a potential risk factor and were associated with stronger intentions to engage in sexual behavior (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2009).

While this study found that acculturation levels had an impact, other studies have found the opposite effect. Trejos-Castillo and Vazsonyi (2009) examined moderating factors in risky sexual behavior of first- and second-generation Latinx immigrant youth. In this ANOVA study of 2,106 Latinx immigrant adolescents, it was observed that there was no difference in the actual content mothers from both generational groups were providing their children when it came to topics related to sex (Trejos-Castillo & Vazsonyi, 2009). These same authors also found that there was no difference in the mean scores of risky sexual behaviors between the two
generational groups and that there were no main effects found for acculturation and risky sexual behaviors. While the exact role of acculturation and its impact on parental messaging and youth behavior is complex, it appears that it is a factor that should be considered and definitely needs to be further examined in research.

Conversations about Romantic Relationships in Communities of Color

In Latinx families, messages related to sexuality and romantic relationships tend to focus on honoring tradition, beliefs, and cultural values. These messages may be shared through stories about others or personal experiences (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001; Romo et al., 2002). In African American families, messages related to sexuality and romantic relationships tend to be more protective in nature. These messages typically emphasized moral reasoning for not engaging in sexual activity, the use of contraceptives, and the negative consequences of premarital sex such as pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (Fletcher et al., 2014). This same study found that the female participants recalled receiving more messages about abstinence and the need to be in a relationship than their male peers. In Asian American families, topics related to sexuality are considered taboo and are often not explicitly discussed (J. L. Kim & Ward, 2007). Calzo and Ward (2009) found that across racial groups, including Asian, Black, and Latinx youth, parental messages surrounding homosexuality were largely negative and included messages about bringing shame to the family, and violating moral, religious, and traditional expectations.

While there is a growing number of articles on this topic, there is still room for more research that focuses on communication found in Black families (Dennis & Wood, 2012; Nwoga, 2000; O’Sullivan et al., 2001; Pluhar & Kuriloff, 2004). Research has found that Black mothers typically do not plan to have discussions related to sexuality with their daughters and in some circumstances simply do not talk about the subject matter at all (Dennis & Wood, 2012;
Nwoga, 2000; O’Sullivan et al., 2001; Pluhar & Kuriloff, 2004). While more research needs to be completed on the intricacies of these interactions, some studies have found that these conversations are not taking place due to the mother’s discomfort around the conversation (O’Sullivan et al., 2001). Additional studies (Bastien et al., 2011) have found that other barriers to parent–child communication about sexuality include the conversations being authoritarian, unidirectional, consisting of vague warning instead of direct and open conversation, as well as how culture may impact one’s feelings of talking about these topics and a lack of knowledge on certain topics and communication skills that can be implemented.

Sutton et al. (2014) examined factors that appeared to improve parent–child communications concerning topics related to sex. These researchers found that factors that improved the effectiveness of communication between parents and children included opportunities for joint parent/child sessions, providing sexuality education to parents, taking developmental and/or cultural considerations and allowing for opportunities for the parents to practice newly developed communication skills with their youth (Sutton et al., 2014). Interventions (D’Cruz et al., 2015; Santa Maria et al., 2015) were facilitated to increase and improve parent–child communication related to providing education on sexual health. Santa Maria et al. found that parent- or caregiver-based intervention programs geared towards increasing family communication, providing the caregiver with education on puberty/overall sexual health, and helping identify skills parents can use to talk about sex and sexual decision making had a significant impact on caregivers feeling more comfortable having these conversations with their teens. This study found that participants were 68% more likely to report an increase in communication with their teens and 75% more likely to report an increase in their comfortability to explore these topics than their counterparts in the control groups.
D’Cruz et al. (2015) asked parents and their youth (ranging from ages 11 to 14 years) about what factors they thought would be helpful in the design of an educational game aimed at increasing their ability to discuss sexual health as well as their knowledge of risky sexual behaviors. This study highlighted how a game based on this information would provide families with a structured means of beginning to have these conversations and providing both parties with this necessary information. The participants of the study reported feeling that they would want the following components to be accessible in a potential educational game: concrete educational content (e.g., providing education on puberty, sexual behaviors, STIs, non-romantic and romantic relationships, negotiation and decision-making skills); communication factors (e.g., role-playing simulations to improve decision-making and understand potential consequences and skill building to improve parent–child communication); and gaming strategies that would keep both parties engaged (e.g., game level to be less than 45 minutes, personalized avatars, and games that accommodate the youth’s gender). D’Cruz et al.’s (2015) study provided insight into the fact both parents and teens recognize and want to have conversations related to these topics but perhaps need a means of doing so that will help then decrease potential discomfort while also providing both parties with the education and skills to have these conversations.

This study addressed a gap in literature where the researchers were able to develop a better understanding of the messages that parents or family members are providing their Black daughters as they relate to their roles in romantic and interpersonal relationships. From exploring the messages that the participants reflect on, the study gathered additional information on topics that parents or family members feel comfortable discussing but also topics that daughters would have wanted to hear more information pertaining to. In addition to exploring the messages that parents and family members provided these participants, this study also provided
recommendations for how to increase parents’ (and other family members’) comfortability to engage in the topic areas that the participants would have wanted more information on.
CHAPTER III

Method

This study utilized grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2014) to gain an understanding of racial and ethnic socialization messages that Black women received regarding their roles in interpersonal and romantic relationships. This study analyzed the data gathered for possible codes or categories that are seen in explicit and implicit messages and conversations Black women had with their family members. The study focused on messages that the participants received from their family members and examined how these messages have impacted their feelings about themselves and how they are expected to navigate social relationships.

Research Design

This study operated from both a constructivist and critical–ideological paradigm (Levitt, 2015; Ponterotto, 2005) and explored the realities of the participants in order to gain an understanding on how participants make meaning from their lived experiences (Ponterotto, 2005). A semi-structured interview guide was utilized, and this placed the interaction and conversation between the researcher and participant at the center of the study (Ponterotto, 2005). Through the interview, the participants and researcher created the data and research codes necessary to fulfill grounded theory requirements. The findings could potentially be utilized in clinical or educational capacities for those working with Black women, girls, and their family members.

The study also utilized certain aspects of a critical–ideological paradigm (Kemmis et al., 2014; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). This research was conducted with the understanding that there are historical and societal power dynamics that place Black women in a vulnerable position due to their status in two marginalized communities. It also operated on the assumption that
given Black women’s and girls’ positionality in society, parents and family members would have more than likely expressed messages to these individuals about how their race and gender may impact aspects of their lives. Possible ways that these messages may have been conveyed include highlighting how others’ assumptions about Black women and girls may influence how others may assume they will behave. These assumptions could be related to stereotypes that paint a picture of how society perceives Black women and girls to operate in interpersonal and romantic relationships. The current study could potentially be a stepping-stone in an attempt to counteract certain negative stereotypes to which this particular population is susceptible.

The research questions were as follows:

A) What racial and ethnic socialization messages did young Black women receive in childhood and adolescence regarding expectations of their roles in interpersonal and romantic relationships?

B) How did these racial and ethnic socialization messages impact them through young adulthood?

These questions were chosen in order to further understanding and insight into the experiences that Black women have with racial and ethnic socialization specifically related to their roles across relationships. The current research questions allowed for a better understanding of how these messages can impact one’s development and expectations of relational roles in young adulthood. They also provided additional knowledge about what parental messages were supportive or unsupportive in the progress of understanding or conceptualizing one’s role.

Participants

In order to ensure homogeneity amongst participants while also allowing for a wide array of experiences, the following inclusion criteria were taken into consideration: (1) participants of
the study were women who self-identified racially as Black. Participants of the study self-identified ethnically as African American, African, Afro-Latinx, Caribbean, Caribbean American or any identity across the African Diaspora; (2) individuals who were multi-racial or “mixed” were eligible to participate in the study as long as they self-identified as being a member in one of the aforementioned groups; (3) participant ages ranged from 18 to 30 years; (4) all participants needed to have graduated high school or received their GED equivalent and be English speaking. This age range was chosen to account for the ability to reflect on one’s past experiences and to take into consideration a range of what was considered young adulthood. The requirement of a high school diploma or GED equivalent was due to recruitment being heavily emphasized in higher education settings or organizations. Participants needed to be English speaking due to demographic questionnaire and interview questions being in English. Data saturation was determined when there appeared to be no new additional codes or information seen in the data related to the research questions (Guest et al., 2006).

Participants were between the ages of 20 and 30 years ($N = 19; M = 25.26$ years) and had all either completed their undergraduate education or were currently obtaining their bachelor’s degree. Eighteen of the participants were located throughout different regions of the United States (i.e., Northeast, Midwest, Southeast), while one participant reported currently being in Europe for her graduate education. Sixteen of the participants identified as heterosexual, two identified as pansexual, and one identified as bisexual. All of the participants identified as Black women; however, when asked specifically about their ethnic identity, participants’ responses varied between specific countries in the Caribbean, specific countries in Africa, multiple or mixed ethnic identities, “African American” and/or “Black.”
**Method of Data Collection**

This study utilized Skype interviews to gather data on the topic. All of the interviews were conducted via Skype to ensure uniformity in the interview process. Benefits to using Skype for this study included reaching a wider demographic of eligible participants from various parts of the country and being able to save time that would otherwise be spent traveling to and from a designated meeting place.

The audio and video recordings were recorded using the program Evaer, which is a program that records Skype video calls and provides a visual and audio recording of the call. However, participants’ names and any identifying information were not used in analyzing the results. The video recording of the interviews was stored separately from the de-identified transcripts. The primary researcher transcribed the data, and all data were stored on a password-protected USB drive and kept in a secure, locked location. Only the primary researcher and her advisor had access to the data. The results of the study were presented in professional conferences and in the future may be written about in academic journals; however, no identifying information was or will be reported.

**Procedure**

This study was reviewed and approved by Seton Hall University’s IRB Board (see Appendix A). This study was marketed to potential participants via flyers and posters throughout various organizations on college campuses (e.g., Black Student Union, Educational Opportunity Fund, and organizations created specifically for Women of Color). Specific social media groups that are created by and for Black women (e.g., Black Women PhD on Instagram) were utilized as a means of recruiting 15–20 participants. Participants were recruited by contacting leaders of these organizations, and the leaders were asked to forward the information about the study to
potential participants who may meet the inclusion criteria for this study. Additionally,
participants were recruited via the researcher’s social network by requesting individuals to
forward the information about the study. Individuals who have a pre-existing professional and/or
personal relationship with the researcher were excluded from participating in the study.

Interested individuals were asked to complete the demographic questionnaire (see
Appendix A) to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria for the study. Prior to scheduling and
conducting interviews, participants signed an informed consent for audio and video recording for
later transcription. Interviews were conducted via Skype and were audio and visually recorded
for transcription at a later date. The interviews were semi-structured in format relying on open-ended questions that prompted participants’ recollections and elaborations of the topic. The
research paradigm allowed for the participant to choose the direction of the conversation. Each
interview was transcribed and then analyzed.

A semi-structured, in-depth individual interview protocol (see Appendix B) was used to
allow for participants to share their experiences of racial and ethnic socialization messages
received from family members. Individual interviews were used for this study because they
helped the researcher to gather the participants’ personal history, experience, and understanding
of their past that they may or may not have explored. The interview protocol questions were
created based on a review of literature on Black girls’ and women’s experiences of racial and
ethnic socialization messages and how they have impacted these individuals’ sense of self.

Analysis of Data

This study utilized grounded theory to analyze the data. Grounded theory (Charmaz,
2014) is a method of inductive analysis that seeks to find out the meaning that participants
attribute to their lived experiences. Grounded theory looks to observe concepts that have
emerged from the participant’s interview and use these concepts to create categories or codes that help to provide a framework to better understand that concept being studied (Charmaz, 2005, 2014; Fassinger, 2005). Using grounded theory allowed for the researcher(s) to attempt to gather an understanding of the participants’ understanding of the particular event or experience of interest. For this study, an initial round of coding was conducted to identify codes and categories. Throughout the analysis, constant comparative analysis was used in order to allow for continuous refinement of codes as more and more interviews were analyzed. The study used both a second coder and an auditor to confirm that the codes were present in the interviews and transcripts. The second coder and auditor were doctoral students within a counseling psychology PhD program.

**Qualitative Analysis**

Based on social learning theory and the theory of intersectionality, special attention was given to explicit, implicit, and observational messages that participants were provided from their family members. This involved asking appropriate follow-up questions throughout the individual interviews related to messages and observations related to romantic and interpersonal relationships and the intersection of being a Black woman. It also included interpreting the data using factors associated with social learning theory (e.g., the impact of observing parents’ behaviors), intersectionality (e.g., how messages may have been provided with both the participants’ race and gender taken into consideration), and Bowenian family therapy (e.g., relational patterns that are passed down from generation to generation). Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) was used to analyze the qualitative data. Grounded theory was implemented to provide a detailed analysis and understanding of a participant’s experience of a given area of interest.
The study utilized Charmaz’s (2014) guidelines for data analysis when utilizing grounded theory. The first step of grounded theory used in this study was to engage in initial, line-by-line coding with initial memoing of the data about what aspects of the participant’s experience stood out and potential reactions that this writer may have had. This step included strategies such as breaking the data up into their component parts and comparing the data with the other transcripts. In the next step, focused coding was used to evaluate the codes that appear more frequently amongst the initial codes and/or have more significance than other codes. This type of coding compiled and highlighted the codes that emerged from the analysis. After focused coding was conducted, axial coding, or deciphering how the categories relate to the subcategories, was then completed. Axial coding helped to explain and explore the different dimensions of a particular category in order to provide coherence in the analysis.

Throughout the analysis, I was aware of the possibility and actively attempted to avoid forcing the study’s data into preconceived codes or categories based on previous experiences. The coding team and I engaged in reflexivity in order to safeguard against this with the use of memoing and bracketing as well as having the team be composed of a second coder and auditor to ensure the codes and categories that were highlighted were seen in the data and not unduly influenced by my experiences and preconceptions.

**Quality and Trustworthiness**

Similar to their quantitative counterparts, qualitative studies have certain requirements and standards to uphold as far as credibility. This study attempted to maintain its integrity and trustworthiness in a variety of instances. The integrity of the study involved the researcher(s) making decisions that best support the application of research methods (Levitt et al., 2017). Grounded theory analysis was chosen given the emphasis this form of research analysis places
on examining the meaning that the participants make on their lived experiences with regard to the given topic. This corresponded well with the study given the goals of the study were to examine the racial and ethnic socialization messages Black women received from their families about their roles and expectations for interpersonal and romantic relationships. The trustworthiness of this study was accomplished by gathering data from a participant group that provided a rich understanding of the subject matter and access to a variety of experiences within the population (Levitt et al., 2017). This was accomplished with the process of data saturation and seeking to have participants with a variety of experiences related to the research topic.

Along with integrity and trustworthiness, self-reflectiveness was also important in the credibility of the study. Fidelity is improved when researchers are aware and open about how their own perspectives may impact data collection and implement strategies to limit this influence (Levitt et al., 2017; Morrow, 2005). Bracketing and the use of a self-reflective journal (Levitt et al., 2017; Morrow, 2005) was used throughout the research study. These were used as a means of keeping a record of reactions, biases, and insights that may come to light (Morrow, 2005). The current study also included strategies in the data gathering process such as asking for clarification and taking the stance of naïve inquirer (Morrow, 2005). These strategies are especially helpful when the researcher is a member of the population being studied. Triangulation or the use of multiple methods or data sources (Carter et al., 2014) was also used to improve credibility and reliability of the research and findings (Golafshani, 2003). Investigator triangulation was applied with the use of literature review, the data from the interviews, observations throughout the interviews, the information from the demographic questionnaire prior to the interview, the use of reflective journaling, and the use of an auditor as well as a
coder. These methods allowed for confirmation of the findings in the transcripts and brought multiple perspectives to the study (Denzin, 1978).

The decision to operate from both constructivist and critical–ideological paradigms highlighted that the focus of the study is to understand the unique experiences of these women as well as utilize the results from the study to better serve this population considering the sociohistorical context and the power dynamics at hand. Constructivist–Interpretivist paradigm operates from the stance that reality is constructed in the mind of the individual, rather than from one external entity (Hansen, 2004; Ponterotto, 2005). Researchers operating within a constructivist–interpretivist paradigm have the goal of understanding the experiences of another from the point of view of those who actually live those experiences (Ponterotto, 2005; Schwandt, 1994, 2000). The meaning of these lived experiences may be hidden and need to be brought to the surface through deep reflection (Schwandt, 2000). This reflection can be seen in the interaction of the researcher–participant dialogue that allows for both parties to construct findings from their interaction with one another (Ponterotto, 2005). Critical–Ideological paradigm operates with the goal of disrupting and challenging the status-quo (Ponterotto, 2005). A basic belief of a researcher utilizing critical–ideological paradigm is that the constructed lived experiences are mediated by power relations related to the social and historical contexts (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). While both constructivist–interpretivist and critical–ideological paradigms take into consideration how one’s reality is impacted within a social–historical context, the critical–ideological paradigm places more of an emphasis on power relations and using the research as a means to emancipate oppressed groups (Ponterotto, 2005).

While the findings from this study provided better insight into the lived experiences of the women interviewed, they also served as a means of understanding how family members and
helping professionals can empower Black women and girls to persevere against the negative depictions that society has of them. The results of the study provided additional awareness of what is helpful and what hinders Black women and girls from having a positive sense of self regarding their roles in interpersonal and romantic relationships despite the counter narrative they might receive from other sources. Since the study operated from both of these paradigms, the interview questions provided the participants the ability to reflect and make meaning of their experiences while also discussing how these lived experiences were impacted by the power dynamics seen in society. This study also implemented the use of member checking in the form of sending the participants the transcribed version of the interview and allowing the participants to add additional comments if needed. This allowed participants the opportunity to provide additional information and correct any misinterpretations. Finally, this study maintained its fidelity in that I was able to reflect on how my personal experiences and, in particular, my status as an in-member impacted my analysis of the data.

**Researcher Reflexivity**

Given that the study is qualitative in nature, it is important that the researchers involved have an understanding of how their identities and experiences may potentially impact how they approach the analysis of the data (Berger, 2015).

I am a 30-year-old Black and Latina, cisgender, heterosexual, middle-class woman. Given that I am an in-member to the group that is being studied in this particular research study, I needed to be cognizant of the unique challenges that come with being an in-member. One of these challenges included participants not fully elaborating on their lived experiences on the assumption that they and I have had similar, if not exact, experiences as one another. Another possibility was that there may have been some underlying competition between the researcher...
and participant given their status of being within the same group. This could perhaps have been seen in differing accomplishments or level of education. Along with these two possible challenges, I was also aware that there were possible advantages to being a member of the population being studied. One of these advantages was that the participants may feel more at ease discussing the topic with me given both of our statuses of being in-members. Along with feeling more at ease, I could have been at a greater advantage to understand the nuanced ideas or concepts related to the population. As an in-member, it was important to consider where the participants were in their identity development and to reflect and/or bracket off my experiences while acknowledging any biases and assumptions that could have occurred before, during, and after interviews.

My own experiences related to socialization messages from family included a heavy emphasis on the risks associated with entering a romantic relationship (e.g., teenage pregnancy and “bringing shame” to the family) and the use of family members as “warning stories” for how I should not behave. I did not recall any messages explicitly given to me related to sex-positive education, and there was always the underlying implication that women are not allowed to navigate romantic relationships in the same capacity as men. Related to being a Black and Latina woman, there were many messages about the assumptions and stereotypes that may be placed on me and how this awareness meant I had to be vigilant in my relationships across settings. Related to my interpersonal relationships, this meant being mindful of the images that others have of Black women and Latinas and having to always prove that I did not embody the negative stereotypes associated with both. This also meant being constantly told that I had to be twice as good to get the same recognition or acknowledgement as my non-Black peers or friends. Related to my romantic relationships, this meant being aware of the sexualization of both Black and
Latina women and being told that if you engaged in behavior that justified that sexualization, then negative consequences that may occur were often blamed on the woman.

Since I am an in-member, I also included the use of bracketing or considering ideas that might interfere with or possibly misguide the data collection (Levitt et al., 2017; Morrow, 2005). These could have been related to being aware of differential treatment because of race and gender and attempting to overcompensate with more effort, an emphasis placed on talking about risks related to romantic relationships, the use of family members as cautionary tales, and the emphasis of blame placed on the woman. To safeguard against my own personal experiences impacting the analytic process seen in the interviews and transcripts, I used an auditor to help confirm that the findings were truly seen in the data and not an assumption on my part. In addition to these strategies, I also used reflexive journaling or memoing throughout the process, considered how the relational dynamics between myself and the participant may have impacted the data that were obtained, implemented open-ended questions, and asked the participants to consider what has not been asked throughout the interview.

Throughout the coding and analysis process, the use of journaling and memoing after transcriptions and initial coding was important in order to consider how my positionality and personal biases may have impacted the development of codes and categories. I found that in my memoing, I made many mentions of feeling connected and having a bond with the participants as they shared their experiences, particularly with participants who spoke about wishing they had more conversations with their families and how the lack of these conversations placed more emphasis on what outside sources provided. Due to my similar experiences to many of the participants, I sought to be deliberate about ensuring that the codes and categories that were
created were explicitly seen in the various quotes from the participants in order to safeguard from my own experiences from interfering.

The second coder for this study was a 38-year-old heterosexual, cisgender woman who identifies as biracial African American and Japanese. The second coder was enrolled in her fifth year in a counseling psychology doctoral program, located in the Northeast region of the United States. Her research interests center on exploring identity development among Black Asian Americans, and she is currently facilitating a qualitative study on experiences of hypersexualization specifically among Black East Asian women. She has a strong interest in examining the experiences of groups within the African Diaspora, and this is her second venture working with the researcher as a coder.

The auditor was a 27-year-old bisexual, cisgender woman of English, Irish, and German descent. She also was enrolled in a fifth-year counseling psychology doctoral student at a private university in the Northeast region of the United States. Her research interests focus on LGBTQIA+ concerns and the intersectionality of social identities, including race, gender, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation. She is currently conducting a qualitative study regarding cisgender bisexual women’s experiences passing as heterosexual and their impact on identity development and feelings of validity.

When working with the second coder, we facilitated a virtual meeting to discuss the thematic coding and any differences we may have seen or noted throughout the process. During this meeting, the second coder and I explored how some axial codes could be subsumed under other codes and how some axial codes may be better suited with another selective code. During this discussion, the second coder encouraged me to explain in greater detail how the quotes from the participants highlighted or suggested the specific theme. In addition, the second coder also
encouraged me to explain and explore the use of specific wording on certain codes to ensure that the theme was grounded in the participants’ quotes and not how I perceived the quotes. For one particular theme, this writer and the second coder worked to re-word the theme to ensure that this writer’s own experiences were not impacting the analysis process.

When working with the auditor, we also facilitated a virtual meeting to review the specific quotes I chose to emphasize the codes of the study. During this meeting, the auditor and I spoke about the suitability of the chosen quotes and whether the quotes were adequate representations of the theme at hand. The auditor also provided their perspective about whether the chosen quotes indicated the codes that were created in the coding process. I incorporated the auditor’s comments by selecting the quotes that provide the reader with the most explicit understanding into the experiences that the participants were discussing in the interviews. In addition to meeting with the second coder and auditor, I also made revisions with my mentor to address the accuracy and simplicity of the titles of the selective and axial codes.
Chapter IV

Results

The first research question asked participants what racial and ethnic socialization messages they received in childhood and adolescence about their expected roles in romantic and interpersonal relationships. Five selective categories emerged from the interviews based on the first research question: 1) expectation to put others’ needs before their own, 2) the importance of financial independence, 3) prioritizing the needs of male romantic partners, 4) hiding and/or downplaying sexuality, and 5) successfully managing work relationships. Within these selective codes, 10 axial codes were observed based on analysis of the data. The second research question explored how these racial and ethnic socialization messages impacted them through young adulthood. Based on this research question, there were three selective codes that were seen in the transcripts: 1) long-term impact of racial and ethnic socialization by family members, 2) desire for more nuanced conversations with family members, and 3) the realization of wants and needs within relationships. Within these three selective codes, there were also nine axial codes seen throughout the transcripts.

Expectation to Put Others’ Needs Before Their Own

Throughout the interviews, most of the participants discussed various messaging they received from family members with the expectation that they were to put the wants and needs of other individuals before their own. Several of the participants highlighted how this messaging provided them with the idea that their role across different relationships was to be “strong” and to have an obligation to others but not necessarily to themselves. The following three axial codes explore in more detail the messaging the participants received.
Message to Adhere to “Strong Black Women” Narrative

Six of the participants reflected on receiving explicit, implicit, or observational messaging about being expected to adhere to the narrative of the “Strong Black Women” when it comes to their relationships. Iris, a 25-year-old from the Southern region of the U.S. who self-identified as Black, heterosexual, and reported being raised Catholic, reflected on how while there are positive aspects of being strong in these relationships, this narrative also can have a negative impact:

I mean, whew, the strong part. The bad strong and the good strong. The I’m not going to cry in front of people, I’m not going to tell nobody, what we have been told is strong but is not per se strong. Just coming from the Black community and being a Black woman, just being told you don’t cry in front of people, you don’t try to complain. You get whatever you need to get done, being able to work multiple jobs or one job and taking care of the kids, doing all of these things was the strong part that I saw. You know pushing through the next day, getting everything done, not letting your worries break you down. Even though sometimes you need to cry and stuff but like, I don’t know, that’s the kind of strong that I got. Which I know is not healthy because, child, I got older and I’m like oh, got to cry. “Oh you’re my actual friend, so I know that I can cry” or I’m not about to act like I don’t got issues. I got issues…I’m going to cry.

Iris’s quote reflects her observations of the Strong Black Woman narrative that she saw amongst the female family members in her life and how it impacted how she believed she needed to be in her relationships. This quote reflects a sentiment seen amongst participants where they recognize that always being strong in their relationships is not healthy and that at times it is
important to be vulnerable. Danielle, a 25-year-old from the Northeast region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American, heterosexual, and reported not identifying as religious or spiritual, reflected on observing the women in her family adhering to the idea of being strong and witnessing how it made it very difficult for them to express themselves or ask for help.

I think growing up, I used to think I grew up in this family of warriors, right? These women were super strong, they did things however they did them and we didn’t die in the process. As I became an adult, I was like y’all all need therapy because something is wrong. Everybody is all sad and angry but nobody knows how to show it and how to express it...

In this quote, Danielle discussed how her perception of being “super strong” changed as she became older and that now she sees the potential negative consequences that come from being expected to strong all of the time. This quote explores a code that was seen in other participants’ interviews where they were able to reflect on how the expectation and messaging of being a Strong Black Woman may have limited the women in their lives.

“Black Women Do Everything…For Everybody. All the Time.”

Thirteen of the participants discussed receiving or observing messages about being expected to prioritize the needs of others at times at the expense of themselves. Tessa, a 29-year-old from the Southeast region of the U.S. who self-identified as Black/USA-born African American, bisexual, and who reported incorporating African spirituality and Buddhism, reflected on expectations she felt were placed on Black women not just in a familial context but throughout society:
But when it came to the culture and the heritage outside of us being hard workers um and I got the message that Black women do everything. That was the culture heritage that I got, that we do everything. That we do everything. For everybody. All the time. And not just within our families, like the world would end if it wasn’t for Black women.

This quote emphasizes a code in which participants felt the pressure to tend to the needs of others across a variety of settings. Tessa noted that in addition to being expected to be a hard worker, there is also the expectation to be the figure who assists others when needed as well. Jennifer, a 26-year-old from the Midwestern region of the U.S. who self-identified as American Black and Haitian, heterosexual, and reported identifying as Buddhist, highlighted her observations of the women in her family prioritizing others’ needs at times before their own:

…and the same thing goes for my grandma. I feel like her relationship with my grandfather was very complicated and involved a lot of like emotional pain for her and I think like despite all of that, she was like “I have to do all of this for him”, “I have to like cook dinner”, “I have to like take him here.” So she would still very much doing things despite like feeling like shit basically. I just perceived my grandma having a lot of responsibility um to others but not necessarily herself. Which I think is true for my mom too. Having a lot of responsibility for others but not really for herself.

Jennifer’s quote reflects a sentiment that participants discussed where they felt that the expectation to do for others was so strong that it even supersedes their obligations to themselves. This speaks to the direct and observational messages that were provided that there is an expectation to prioritize others before oneself.
The Importance of Financial Independence

Six of the participants discussed receiving messages from family members that they needed to be able to support themselves financially even if they are in a romantic relationship. Michelle, a 25-year-old from the Midwestern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American, heterosexual, and reported identifying as spiritual, reflected on messages her mother provided to her about being financially independent:

I think that growing up finances might have not been as good so I think my mom, there was a slight um “oh you need to make sure you have your money but you also need to make sure your husband has his money and he’s able to support you” this and that. There’s something around money that I may not necessarily agree with the messages I received growing up. There’s also “[Participant’s name], you should always have safe money. You should always have a stash of money that your husband doesn’t know about in case something happens, you should have that money to be able to save yourself or get yourself out of that situation” and that inherently isn’t a bad thing in the sense of like it’s a reality of things.

Messages that were provided about financial independence focused on being able to support oneself in the event that something negative happened in their romantic relationships. While a majority of participants reflected on being provided messages about being service-oriented in romantic relationships, it appears that family members were also cognizant of providing messages about being financially independent in the event that they needed to be able to support themselves.
Prioritizing the Needs of Their Male Romantic Partner

Another common theme throughout the interviews was messaging that centered on the (expected) male partners’ wants or needs. While not all of the participants identified as heterosexual, the messages they identified from family members assumed that the participants would be involved in a relationship with a male-identifying partner. Several of the participants reflected on messaging they were provided that encouraged them to “shrink” themselves or where the emphasis of the messaging was on their male partners’ pleasure, desires, and needs and largely ignoring the considerations of the participants themselves.

Be Submissive and Shrink Self

Thirteen of the participants discussed messages they were provided or observed that encouraged them to take on roles in their romantic relationships where they were submissive or where they had to not fully display their personality. Lauren, a 24-year-old from the Northeastern region of the U.S. who self-identified as Black, Puerto Rican, and Salvadoran, pansexual, and reported identifying as spiritual, reflected on how these messages to shrink herself led to her feeling that she had to be overly accommodating to the male partners in her life:

I feel like it’s- it’s reflected a lot in a lot of ways because sometimes I wouldn't understand like “why am I accommodating myself so much? Like changing so much, accommodating myself to this guy and his interests” like and I would never feel it. I just feel like “oh, I'm being nice” or “I'm being like laid back.” I feel like that message was also expressed to me heavily. To be chill and to be laid back. I feel like that message was definitely like relayed but um yeah it's like whenever I'm dating a guy I'm so chill and so laid back that it's like things just started to get out of control like that I'm not completely myself in my relationships with guys
and because I dated a girl and when I dated a girl and when I’m with a girl, I’m more myself, like completely myself. But when I’m with a man, I’m just like—like a watered down version and I don’t know like maybe like a trophy wife. Like “here to support you and be here for you and take care of you and love on you” but there’s not much more depth than that and I feel like it’s definitely reflective of like my relationship with my dad because I cannot, like I cannot act up or express myself or start crying or get angry. It’s just like “stop crying, stop crying, stop crying” and then it’s like yes I just— I’ve just adjusted that that's how my relationship with men go.

Naomi, a 21-year-old from the Northeastern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American, pansexual, and agnostic, reflected messages she received from her mother about how she would have to behave in order to maintain a relationship:

So my mom like she was very submissive and um she kind of taught me that Black men really like um submissive women instead of the ones who are outspoken and goal oriented and driven. So she taught me that to keep the peace, you kind of had to stifle who you are instead of being who you were…

In regard to how they were expected to navigate romantic relationships, participants reflected on how the messages about being submissive specifically impacted their dynamics with men in romantic relationships. Participants discussed how messages informed them that if they wanted to pursue a romantic relationship with a man, there were aspects of their personality that they would either have to change or not be able to display.
**Expectation To Be in a Service-Oriented Role in Romantic Relationships**

Twelve of the participants discussed receiving messages from family that emphasized that they should be engaging in a service-oriented role in their romantic relationships. Christina, a 25-year-old from the Midwestern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American and Nigerian, heterosexual, and reported identifying as Christian, reflected on how she was provided messaging with the expectation that she needed to learn these skills in order fulfill this role for her future partner: “…but very strict on the women and not the men. You have to be the best person in the school and the cleaner and the cook so you can serve your husband one day.”

Francine, a 25-year-old from the Southeastern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American, heterosexual, and Christian, reflected on explicit messages provided from her grandmother about what is expected of women when they are in a romantic relationship:

...the expectation of kind of being very submissive. Like being making sure you’re cooking, cleaning, that really came from my grandmother. She talked about that a lot. Like “this is what you do as a woman.” Even if she wasn’t saying it directly to me, she would be like talking about other people if they weren’t doing their wife duties, that’s what she would consider those to be.

Receiving these direct and indirect messages provided participants with an understanding of how they were expected to behave as women and how people’s perceptions of them may be impacted if they do not engage in these behaviors.

**Hiding and/or Downplaying Their Sexuality**

Many of the participants explored messages they received that focused on minimizing their emerging sexuality as well as concealing their body from others. Several of the participants
discussed how these messages impacted how they viewed dating, their own bodies, and other topics related to sexuality.

**Dating and Sex Are Taboo**

Seven of the participants reflected on messages they were given that depicted dating and sexuality as being taboo. Serena, a 28-year-old from the Southwestern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American, heterosexual, and Christian, reflected on messaging she was provided about the “good girl” image and how individuals who do not subscribe to these ideals are viewed in a negative light:

> It was kind of just like “don't do it” and that was sort of or like “don't do it. Good girls don't do it” and that was like the end of that conversation. I think my dad definitely thought it, I just don't think he was comfortable talking about sex with his daughter. So we didn’t. It wasn't really talked about with extended family but I think it was expected the way in which some of my family members and I think like members from church would like talk about me about like “oh she's such a nice girl” and all these things and I think some of that was an undertone too of like “…and she's not out here doing all these wild things” or stuff like that wasn't necessarily said but I feel like they meant it. Yeah, it's like they had another person in their mind or another picture and they were like contrasting me to this other woman I guess or other girl depending on what age I was...I mean I think it's like a little uncomfortable, especially as I got older because it was like “oh I was friends with some of those “other girls” and like I didn't necessarily think that they were bad people” and I think it would have been helpful to have had some conversations with older people that I looked up to as opposed to like peers, you
know. So people who have sort of had the lived experience that. I wasn't finding things out with my peers.

Tessa described both explicit and implicit messages she was provided about dating, which were exclusively related to how she should not behave and the negative consequences that may occur:

Don’t be a hoe, don’t be out here f-cking, don’t be out here sexually active. Don’t talk to a whole bunch of people, don’t talk to a bunch of different boys and even if you are just talking to them or just dating them, you know, don’t do that either because they’re going to lie about you and make it seem like you’re sexually promiscuous. That’s what they mean when they say “don’t be fast.”

Messages provided about sex and relationships were focused on what actions the participants should not engage in and did not provide guidance or communication on how they could maneuver through this developmental period or that this aspect of life is normal. The quotes highlight how the messages provided to participants were more focused on how their actions will impact how others perceive them instead of how the participants can develop an understanding of what they want in their dating or romantic relationships.

Messages About Covering Up Body and Not Exploring Sexuality

Seven of the participants explored messages they received that heavily encouraged them to lean into modesty when it came to sexuality. Edith, a 25-year-old from the Southeastern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American, heterosexual, and Christian but reported growing up Pentecostal, reflected on how the messages she received impacted her ability to trust herself when it came to sexuality:
…sexuality was very punished, or at least certain aspects of sexuality were very punished in my community and my extended family, but there was still a sense that like you can’t trust yourself. I don’t know. There was a sense of like you can’t trust yourself because of your sexuality and we as people are very sexual and boys want that. It was a mix of those kinds of things um verbally said to me or implied. Um I definitely grew up in a Pentecostal church, I don’t know if you know much about that but there’s a lot of rigidity around the way that you appear going to the church so you have to dress super modestly and so I couldn’t wear skirts that were shorter than my knees.

Pearl, a 20-year-old from the Midwestern region of the U.S. who self-identified as Ghanaian, heterosexual, and Christian, explored explicit and implicit messages she received from her mother about what others may assume about her if she did not cover up her body:

…I think my mom’s greatest fear is that they’d see you as voluptuous. They might see you as sexual because I was one of the only kids who had like a huge butt and my aunties and my mom would comment on it all of the time…So my mom was just worried that I was going to stick out in that way… so they were like “make sure you cover up. we don’t want them to see you as you’re going to be a loose girl”…

Family members provided these participants with messaging about utilizing clothing as a way to downplay their bodies being perceived as overly sexual. Participants cited these messages as ways of protecting the participants from the potential consequences of others perceiving them as hypersexual due to their bodies.
**Successfully Managing Work Relationships**

Many of the participants reported receiving messaging from their families about how to successfully navigate their interpersonal relationships. The participants explored messages related to being expected to work harder than their peers, the value of education, how to navigate microaggressions or stereotypic assumptions, and the importance of being respectful, polite, and mindful of their tone and outer appearance.

**Needing to Work Harder Than Peers**

Nine of the participants reflected on messages they received from family members about expecting to have to work harder in comparison to their peers. Venus, a 27-year-old from the Northeastern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American/Black, heterosexual, and Isese, spoke about messages her parents gave about going above and beyond what was expected of her particularly in the realm of education:

> Definitely with education which I feel like is a common theme but certainly like your grades have to be the best because you're going to get below the best. So that was kind of like a understood standard. Or anything that you submit or do, it has to be like checked over like 3,000 times because they're going to be looking at you with a different lens. So just I guess certain stuff like that especially like going into work. Like you don't go to work on time you go to work before time because you don't want to seem lazy or anything like that. So definitely things like that.

Tessa reflected on messages she received from her parents about being expected to work harder than her peers and how these messages impacted how she approaches work and career related topics:
It was a lot of “you’re going to have to work harder than everybody.” I would say that was more so the constant message. It was more so associated with my work ethic and how people are going to perceive you um and how that can impact your trajectory in life… It’s let me know that if I want to venture out entrepreneurially, I’m still going to have to hustle harder. People aren’t just going to be out here, looking to invest and give me capital in the same sense that they might be for non-Black people.

Family members provided participants with messages about needing to maintain a higher standard than their non-Black peers in work-related relationships. Specifically, participants were given messaging that this higher standard was needed in order to counteract the stereotypes or assumptions others may have of them.

*How to Navigate Microaggressions or Stereotypes*

Six of the participants recalled messages they received from family members about how they can maneuver through microaggressions and stereotypes particularly in work relationships. Some of the participants differed in the specific messages that their parents provided in that some of the family members provided messages to “be numb” when it came to microaggressions while other family members provided messages detailing how the participant could advocate for themselves in these situations. Georgia, a 27-year-old from the Southeastern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American, heterosexual, and as a Follower of Christ, discussed messages she received from family to not “waste your energy” when it comes to microaggressions in the workplace:

Yeah uh well specifically from my mom… I guess I learned to be numb to certain microaggressions, for example, because of her experiences and her being like “oh
don’t, you’re wasting your energy” um those kind of messaging…I guess it’s like related to this messaging of “keep it moving because we don’t have time for that” and just thinking about how that translates to being in school or work spaces where it’s just like I don’t have time to necessarily be upset that Jimmy made me feel some type of way because I need to focus and prove myself as somebody worthy of being at the table and somebody else won’t have that same cognitive experience that I’m having and it just takes so much time and energy away from what I should be paying attention to as far as the lecture that I’m sitting in on… that sort of messaging of like numbing yourself and letting stuff roll off because there’s no time to deal with that. There are bigger fish to fry because you need to prove yourself and you need to make the grades and keep your eyes focused on the target because as a Black woman there’s just kind of no room for that and it’s kind of just ironic because of all of this extra weight and processing stuff going on like you would think that we would need time to just sort of sit and unpack like what the heck is going on or why is this person saying that thing but it’s just like actually you don’t have time for that at all because you need to keep it moving so I guess it’s just like that inner battle during those small moments throughout the day where it’s just like “suck it up because you don’t have time.”

Serena spoke about messages her family provided about how to speak up and advocate for herself in the event that she needed to:

Like what were some of the specific things they told me to do? Um see so I guess they always impressed upon me like this importance of like having a good name, right? Like your name is your reputation. That's everything and so if you have this
...good name and you have this good reputation then when you come and bring these issues up to let's say like a supervisor, they’re more likely to be like heard and so I was pretty much always told you know “work hard, do good work” and then when you see something happen or if you see something happen when you bring that up like it's a greater chance I guess that something will come out of it. So whether that's going up to a boss and saying you know “hey I've been noticing XY and Z practices might differentially affect this group of people” or “hey I noticed that you know I've put in to be promoted three times and haven’t gotten it but there's been three other people in the office who have been here for shorter periods of time than me and whom I have the same qualifications and they've been promoted and so I'm just curious like why is that so or what's going on or I have concerns” and if need be to say like “I think there might be some bias going on against me.” So yeah they didn't stray from calling it, they believe in calling it what it is but just like I said picking your battles wisely and knowing when is like the appropriate time and sort of having your pitch ready, I guess.

The messages about how to navigate microaggressions in academia or career settings highlighted the two approaches that emerged: being “numb” to microaggressions or how to advocate for themselves in the face of these experiences. When it came to which approach parents or family members provided participants, it appears that it depended on how that particular family member navigated their own experiences of microaggressions in the work setting.
The Importance of Being Respectful, Polite, and Mindful of Tone and Outer Appearance

Eleven of the participants discussed receiving messages from family members about being aware of how others may perceive their tone and outer appearance and the importance of being viewed as respectful and polite. Beatriz, a 24-year-old from the East Coast region of the U.S. who self-identified as Ghanian, heterosexual, and Christian, recalled messaging she received about the importance of being respectful and polite and conducting herself in a certain way:

You know, conduct yourself in a certain way. Make sure you’re always being respectful and polite to your teachers. Make sure that you’re always shooting for A pluses, you know? Work very hard to get to the top. So I think that’s what prompted those kind of conversations.

Iris reflected on messages she received from family members aimed at increasing her awareness of how people may perceive her tone:

Well I am loud and being loud and that being considered ghetto and also being loud, and I’m very, I’m a passionate person and I can be mad but also that being taken in the wrong way. Like my mom saying like you may be passionate but people be taking it as angry, you know? People can take it as anger, even if that’s not what you’re giving off. People just don’t know you. But like conversations about that like just being mindful of the way that you put stuff is not always the way that people will receive you. That’s not per se wrong that they didn’t receive you the way that you put it out, but that’s just something that you have to recognize, because that’s people are going to receive you and you can correct it
and you may have to correct them or correct the situation but more so like that kind of messaging.

Messages about the importance of being aware of how others may perceive them serve as a means to go against potential expectations for how they will behave in non-romantic relationships. Iris’s quote highlighted how these messages forced her to be more aware of how she naturally is and how this aspect of herself can perhaps be viewed by those around her.

**The Value of Education**

Six of the participants reported receiving messages that emphasized the importance of an education. Willow, a 24-year-old from the Northeastern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American, heterosexual, and agnostic, reflected on messages she would receive from her grandmother about how education would help with earning respect:

My grandmother would always tell me because of being a woman and being Black you know there’s a lot- not a lot- she always told me that education was key. It was more like this is the path you need to go because once you have your education, they can’t take your education from you. So uh my parents were very big into higher education and getting qualified in order to earn respect that way.

Messages focused on the importance of school highlighted how furthering one’s education and qualifications could help the participants with how they navigate through their work relationships.
Long-Term Impact of Racial and Ethnic Socialization by Family Members

Fourteen of the participants in the study highlighted the different ways that the familial messages they received impacted how they view and maneuver through their various relationships.

Learning to Navigate Relationships on Their Own

Eight of the participants reported feeling that they felt that they had to learn how to navigate and engage in relationships through their own experiences. During her interview, Jennifer reflected on feeling that she had to learn from her own experiences about how she would want to interact with people that she was romantically interested in:

Like I feel like when I was a teenager, I just wished that we talked more about relationships like I’m just out here trying to figure it out…I wanted romantic relationships a lot when I was a teenager but I don’t know if how I went about it, like I feel like if I had a kid, right? I would feel that I would not want them to go about it the same way that I did and have specific conversations with them about like their worth and how to interact with the people that they are interested in.

In reflecting on their experiences in navigating romantic relationships, participants discussed how the lack of messages caused them to “figure it out” on their own. Jennifer’s quote reflected how she would want to provide her own children with messages and conversations about romantic relationships, so they do not repeat her past experiences of learning about relationships solely through experience.

Lack of Messages Leading to Relying on Observations and Messages from Outside Sources

Eleven of the participants discussed how the lack of explicit and implicit messages from family members led to them relying on observations they had of family members or messages
that they received from individuals outside of the home. Danielle reflected on how she had to receive messages about a crucial developmental stage she was encountering from an outside source and questioning why she was not receiving these messages from family members:

For example, when I first got my period, I didn’t even know what it was. I didn’t know what was going on, I was throwing away all of these panties because I was like what the heck is going on with my underwear and it wasn’t until I went back to school and I was wearing a skirt and a teacher saw it. A Black man teacher and he sat me down and he was like “this is what this is.” And I thought that was amazing and I appreciate him but it was like why couldn’t my mother tell me this?

Beatriz reflected on how since she did not feel comfortable having conversations with her family, she sought out messaging and validation from a friend’s parent:

...and so I actually gained a lot of validation from this one girl that I was friends with, her mom, I would talk to her mom about a lot of things like I’m not getting asked to the school dance and like I feel like I’m over looked and having her mom talk to me about why that is. Like I’m having a hard time um well her daughter would more so complain that “it’s just me and [participant’s name]. [Participant’s name] and I are friends but we aren’t part of a group, we aren’t part of a clique” and then having her mom sit us down and talk to us about that like “you don’t need a clique. So far as you have each other that’s what is really important but I also understand that at this age, you guys needs a clique and you guys want your girls’ groups and want to get all dolled up with your girls and take pictures and go to football games with.” So she would validate that a lot. I remember that around
age 12, 13, 14 that’s when I would like go to my friends’ moms and get validation and go to them about just navigating the issues that happen in high school. I wish that I could just talk to my parents about that but they just didn’t understand. They just didn’t understand that.

These quotes highlighted that parents or family members did not always provide messages to participants; they felt the need to rely on messages from outside sources. Both of the participants mentioned above indicated that they would have wanted to be able to have these conversations instead with their parents, but they were not provided the opportunity to do so.

*Feeling that Messages/Observations Have Led to Having Difficulty Asking for Help*

Six of the participants expressed during their interview feeling that the messages and observations they received have influenced their ability to ask for help from others around them. Venus reflected on implicit messages and observations she encountered where she witnessed family members being unable to confide in one another about familial issues or situations where they needed help. While Venus acknowledged that being autonomous has its positives (e.g., allowed for to be more self-reflective and self-sufficient) she also discussed how these messages and observations led to her being overly self-reliant and having a hard time with expressing herself and being vulnerable as well:

I feel like it’s impacted me - it’s made me more self-reliant but at the same time, it’s kind of been my downfall when not knowing when to ask for help or not feeling comfortable asking for help. I think it’s made me- another good thing- it’s made me sit a lot with myself and things that go on with me but it hasn’t necessarily helped me convey them to other people. Which I’m trying but…I
don’t know. It just makes you very guarded…and not saying that in our society that doesn’t serve a purpose, but it can definitely be- when you’re guarded with everybody and don’t know who to let your guard down with, that just leaves you in a space of isolation…and not having anybody really know you. It’s hard.

While observations and messages about being self-reliant have positive implications, Venus also discussed how messages about being overly self-reliant can lead individuals having difficulty being vulnerable in their relationships when needed.

**Desire to Have More Nuanced Conversations with Family Members**

Most of the participants in the study expressed wishing that they were able to have more conversations about a variety of topics with their family members. These topics ranged from how to navigate predominantly White spaces, hearing more about their family members’ experiences in non-romantic and romantic relationships, being provided messages beyond the expectation of taking on the caregiver role, and having the space or opportunity to discuss their developing sexuality and how to maintain healthy sexual and romantic relationships.

**More Conversations About Race and How to Navigate Predominantly White Spaces**

Seven of the participants expressed wishing that they had more messages with their family about how race may impact their experiences and how to navigate through predominantly White spaces. Georgia reflected on how her parents might not have had the specific words to speak to the experiences she may encounter as a Black woman:

> Um just having the verbiage to explain certain things or to think about why certain things affect me the way that they do when it comes to race and just experiences that I’ve had as a person who has been in school forever and dealing with a different kind of racism sometimes where it’s just like I don’t even know
what I don’t know but I know that this is not right. And I don’t even know how to explain it and that kind of frustration it hits different I feel like because I’m not equipped to handle this but it’s so wrong. And I don’t think that neither one of my parents have the verbiage to really explain. Um I know just being in the classroom and some of the discussions and the things that I have learned it would just go over their head regardless. But to be able to navigate those discussions with the lens of somebody who is a lot more information instead of just learning something for the first time and then also having to do my history because I didn’t necessarily get it growing up and just the extra work of that because it wasn’t necessarily poured into me. And I don’t think it’s my parents’ fault at all, I just think that sometime you’re just worried about paying your light bill and who has time to talk about systemic racism.

Amy, a 27-year-old from the Northeastern region of the United States who self-identified as Caribbean/West Indian (Trinidadian), heterosexual, and being a Seventh Day Adventist, spoke to wishing she had more conversations with her family about the specific experience of being Black in the U.S. and how this experience is different than in other parts of the world:

I guess I would’ve, it would’ve been helpful to have more of a focus on the actual Black part of it versus the immigrant part of it. Um because I think there are separate challenges that are presented between those two groups, right? Like immigrants have their own set of challenges but being a Black woman in America also has a different set of challenges. So I think having more of a that focus um and in realizing that even though they haven’t dealt with that much in growing up
in Trinidad that being in America that does present more of the Black/White sort of issues.

In reflecting on their past experiences, participants were able to discuss that they would have wanted more specific conversations or messaging about being Black in the United States. The quotes above reflect that while participants would have wanted more of these messages, they also acknowledge potential barriers to their parents or family members engaged in these conversations.

More Opportunities to Talk About Developing Sexuality and Healthy Romantic Relationships

Thirteen of the participants discussed in their interviews that they wished they were provided the space and opportunity to have open conversations with their family members about their emerging sexuality and what a healthy romantic relationship would look like. Iris discussed how she felt that she was definitely given messages about being strong but would have preferred to also have messages about how to be vulnerable in her relationships:

So the strong part, oh I got that part. But I guess being able to, I don’t know, I guess I needed more of them being vulnerable of showing how they let a man kind of love on them once they were able to find love or find a healthy love because you can find love but it’s not always a good love or a healthy love. So more of that. More information on how to be vulnerable and how to let someone love you in a healthy manner and in a good way.

Naomi expressed feeling that her mother provided her with the basic information that she felt she needed but she did not provide with an opportunity to further explore this aspect of her identity:
No, she um she wasn’t um she would give like the basics of certain things but she would never get into anything like intricate. We never really had like the birds and the bees talk. It was mostly just like be calm for now just so you can get out. So it’s like “here’s what you need to know for now and then the world will teach you about the rest.” Which kind of really sucked because your mom is supposed to be the one to kind of cuddles you but also makes you realize the real world but yeah. She wasn’t really adamant about a lot of that.

Participants explored how they would have wanted more opportunities to have open conversations about romantic relationships with their family members. These quotes highlight the desire participants had to receive messages about what is a healthy romantic relationship and confirmation that exploring romantic relationships is a normal and expected part of young adulthood.

**More Messages About Family Members’ Experiences in Relationships**

Five of the participants reported wishing that they heard more about the experiences their family members had in their romantic and non-romantic relationships. Francine discussed how she would have wanted to hear more about her family’s experiences as a way of learning from their experiences and applying it to her own understanding of what a healthy relationship looks like:

In my family, we have a lot of unhealthy relationships but like no one talks about them like even my aunt, she’s been divorced a couple times but it’s no one is having a conversation. I’m not expecting for your business to be put on front street, but just being like these are the lessons that I’ve learned, this is what makes a healthy relationship, this was not healthy in my relationship, and I think
specifically from my uncle, it would’ve been helpful to get a male perspective um on what a quality guy is in that arena and kind of like how men think especially because I did not grow up with my father.

Serena expressed wishing that she was able to get more education related to sexual topics from an adult that she felt she could trust:

Yeah I think both. So I want to hear about like you know how did they handle making that decision of when they you know maybe felt ready to have sex with their romantic partner or so. I guess we technically got like safe sex stuff from school so we weren’t an abstinence only state and I did get like that education I guess but it could have been reinforced by like someone else who I trusted in my life, who was older.

Olivia, a 30-year-old from the Southeastern region of the U.S. who self-identified as Non-Hispanic Black, heterosexual, and Christian, explored the possibility that family members may have some shame with being vulnerable about their experiences across their relationships:

We don’t equip people with the tools to be successful. Yeah I think um it really does people a disservice now and I think a part of that is just pride and not wanting to be perceived as we didn’t make it or oh my goodness, we are not cut out for it but I think a lot of the times we- we go through things in silence and we don’t share with people and I think of a lot of the pain and a lot of the agony and a lot of the pain that we face is just because we didn’t share with anybody that could’ve had some knowledge to share with us.

Participants indicated that they would have wanted to hear more about family members’ experiences in relationships as a way of learning how to navigate their own.
While participants acknowledge that they would have wanted these messages from family members because these are adults they can trust, they also recognized that there may underlying factors as to why family members feel that she cannot or should not engage in these conversations.

**Desire for Messages About Prioritizing Oneself**

Seven of the participants reported wishing that they had conversations with their family members about their role beyond just being a caregiver for others and prioritizing themselves. Several of the participants also wished that they received messages about their relationships being reciprocal in nature. Tessa expressed this notion in her interview:

> Other than just we have this superhero kind of thing where we just do everything for everybody. Um I guess that would be a message. That I don’t have to be everybody’s superhero. The only superhero I need to be is for myself.

Naomi spoke to not wanting to stifle her emotions and experiences for another individual and not wanting to adhere to the Strong Black Woman narrative when it is detrimental to her:

> Like just you’re doing your best. Make sure you’re heard. Don’t stifle your feelings for the other person. Don’t be someone else because if you’re not honest with that person they’re going to like someone else that isn’t you. Um don’t feel like you have to be someone else’s crutch. Don’t feel like you have to be the supporting character. You’re a person too and you deserve the same help that you want to give other people…A lot of times my sisters would get mad or I would get mad and I would say that I’m tired of being the stereotyped Black friend or being like the stereotype Black women in any kind of aspect of life. Like if- you can’t be too angry. You have to be sassy and like you have to be a strong Black
woman and that kind of like dehumanizes the way that Black women are perceived...Yeah and it kind of sucks because it kind of ties into like the motherly role of Black women or like them caring for other people over themselves. It sucks because that’s how society has always like brought us up too. You have to be everyone else’s mother and friend before you can be like the mother and friend for yourself. You have to be that for someone else before you can do it for yourself.

This axial code suggested that participants would have wanted to receive more messages beyond what they could do for others and more about how they should be sure to take care of themselves as well. Participants were able to reflect on how the expectation to prioritize others left little room for themselves and would have wanted to receive messages about making space for their needs and wants more.

**Realization of Wants and Needs Within Relationships**

Many of the participants expressed utilizing the messages and observations they were given to decide what aspects they would like in their current and future relationships. This included having more equal dynamics in their romantic relationships and incorporating more self-love and/or self-care in their relationships with others.

**More Reciprocity in Relationships**

Thirteen of the participants discussed wanting to go beyond the expected role of caregiver and having more reciprocity when it comes to their relationships. Francine reported having conversations with her mother reflecting on the tendency for Black women to self-sacrifice in an attempt to fulfill the caregiver role and how she can begin to take into consideration how she can make changes to break these habits:
...but I will say that as I got older, the conversation started to shift more about how as Black women we have a tendency to (sigh) self-sacrifice. That started to be the conversation more as I like entered 19, 20, early twenties up until now, that was the conversation. Especially with my mom, we talk about that often about how Black women in our relationships, particularly with Black men, we do self-sacrifice. We make sure they are taken care of, we try to take on the world. Um that was more so the line of conversation that I have with my mom still currently and how not to subscribe to that, how to do it differently. How to break those generational curses within our own families.

This axial code indicates participants’ desire to receive messages from family members about not repeating patterns observed in previous generations when it comes to being self-sacrificial. It also speaks to wanting more guidance and communication about how can they not continue these patterns from previous generations.

**Incorporating More Self-Love and Self-Care in Their Relationships With Others**

Fourteen of the participants expressed throughout their interviews wanting to incorporate more self-love and self-care when it came to their relationships with others in their lives. Pearl stated in her interview that she would want to provide a younger version of herself with more messages about self-love and making sure she is prioritizing herself when it comes to her decisions:

I would definitely tell her one thing that she is beautiful and it doesn’t matter what like um other people specifically men, boys um think. I would tell her it’s not necessary to try to please a man in a romantic relationship and non-romantic relationships. I think that I have come like me right now, I care too much about
what other people think. So I would definitely tell my younger self to like focus on yourself. Don’t worry about what other people think. Um if you do things, do it for yourself. Do it for yourself and like although I’m listening to what other people, people are going to talk or give you these messages, just make sure you are taking the valuable lessons from them. I don’t know if I’m making sense with that last part but just take the valuable lessons from what you hear. Not everything you hear, you have to digest. I feel like that. Yeah, but yeah I would definitely tell her that she is beautiful.

Kathy, a 23-year-old from the Northeastern region of the U.S. who self-identified as African American and Trinidadian, heterosexual, and reported not being religious or spiritual, spoke to seeking reciprocity in her relationships as a form of self-care.

… and so you know just being there for everybody but then often it’s not reciprocated but now because I’m trying to be more conscious of it, if I feel like that’s happening then I will bring it up or I will just completely cut it off… It could just be some odd historical meaning that Black women are expected to be everything for everyone but then it’s like when we need that support, where is it?... And that’s not everyone, like my friends I know that I can always get that support back and that’s why I’m very selective with whom I choose to give my time to, you know? I want things to be reciprocated. Like I don’t want to just be the one doing all of the giving and then I don’t get anything back in return. Um but yeah sometimes it happens and when I notice it and when I notice it, I’m like “okay bye.”
Participants explored how moving forward, they want to implement more positivity and boundaries when it comes to their relationship in order to ensure that they are taking care of themselves.
Chapter V

Discussion and Future Research

The purpose of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding about the socialization messages that young Black women received from their family members about their roles in both non-romantic and romantic relationships. Guided by social learning theory, Bowenian family therapy and intersectionality theory, the present study aimed to focus its attention on the impact of explicit and implicit messaging that is passed through generations and observational learning that occurs between children and their family members. Nineteen Black women ranging from 18–30 years of age ($M = 25.26$ years) participated in one individual interview, and throughout this interview, the participants were prompted to reflect on their experiences throughout childhood and adolescence and the ways that certain messages were transmitted from different family members. The analysis resulted in eight overarching selective categories that described what messages their families provided them and how these messages have impacted how they have and are currently navigating adulthood. These selective categories included the following: (1) expectation to put others’ needs before their own, (2) advised to be independent and be able to support themselves financially, (3) emphasis focused on male partners’ wants or needs, (4) messages about hiding and/or downplaying sexuality, (5) messages about how to navigate and succeed in non-romantic relationships, (6) impact of messages on navigating relationships, (7) desire for more conversations with family, and (8) realizing what aspects they want or do not want in their relationships. This chapter will discuss the implications of the results, limitations of the present study, and future areas of research.
Overview of the Results

Examining the familial messages that Black women received is important when psychologists and researchers consider the impact that these socialization messages can have on an individual’s self-esteem (Stoke et al., 2020; Thomas & King, 2007), perceived gender roles (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2015; Lawson et al., 2015) and expectation for future relationships (Jackl, 2016; Weigel, 2007). This study sought to better understanding the socialization messages provided to Black women and girls and how these messages potentially go on to impact how these women view and encounter their various relationships. This study also added to the literature related to racial and ethnic socialization messages and their impact on the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. Much of the literature that examines racial and ethnic socialization is cross-sectional in nature (Jones & Neblett, 2017), while this study sought to examine how messages provided in a previous developmental period have impacted how they navigate adulthood.

Connecting Findings to Previous Research

The results from the study and the many axial codes associated with messages about work relationships indicate that family members felt more comfortable speaking with the participants about their non-romantic relationships over their romantic relationships. These results coincide with past literature (Bastien et al., 2011; O’Sullivan et al., 2001) that indicated that parents do not feel comfortable or that they have the correct information to have these conversations with their children and teens. When examining the conversations parents did have with their daughters about romantic relationships, the messages were mostly aimed at encouraging the participants to take on the role of the caregiver and to counteract the assumption that they are hypersexual. The findings from the study suggested that participants often received
messages that they were expected to engage in the role of caregiver role and consider the wants and needs of others. Some of the participants reflected on how some of these messages appeared to be either explicitly or implicitly passed down through generations, which supported previous studies (Jackl, 2016; Weigel, 2007; Weigel & Weiser, 2014) that examined the impact that generational messages can have on how future generations view relationships.

Messages participants received about how to navigate non-romantic relationships, particularly relationships at work, were influenced by how the particular family member engaging in the conversation has handled these relationships in the past. It appeared that for parents who had previously chosen to not acknowledge microaggressions in the workplace, the messaging was centered around having “bigger fish to fry” or encouraging the participant to “put their head down” in order to get through the situation. For parents who believed in acknowledging potential microaggressions, the messages were centered on providing the participants with the tools to advocate for themselves and how to do so in a manner that would be deemed professional. For work and professional relationships, it appears that the messages parents provided impacted how participants felt they could maneuver within these situations and whether they felt they had the space or opportunity to advocate for themselves.

The results of this study also reflected how parents provided their daughters with messages aimed at the intersection of their race and gender. Gaining a better understanding of the impact of observational learning and messaging passed down through generations also provided insight into how stereotypes of Black women’s roles also impacted some of the messaging that was provided to the participants. The messages aimed at putting others’ needs before their own appear to lean into the expectation for Black women to fulfill the role of the Superwoman (P. H. Collins, 2000; Hall & McCurtis Witherspoon, 2015), the Mammy (P. H. Collins, 2000; West,
1995), and Strong Black Woman (Harris-Lacewell, 2001; Woods, 2013; Woods-Giscombé, 2010; Young, 2018) for those around her even if it may be detrimental to her own well-being.

The messages aimed at encouraging participants to downplay or not display their sexuality appear to be aimed at counteracting the expectation for Black women to fulfill the role of Jezebel (P. H. Collins, 2000; Hall & McCurtis Witherspoon, 2015). These results highlight that while parents are aware of the potential negative impact and implications that may occur when one is being associated with the Jezebel stereotype, there is less understanding about how the expectation to fulfill the Superwoman, Mammy, or Strong Black Woman trope can also be harmful. The Superwoman stereotype (Thomas et al., 2004) correlates directly with the Strong Black Woman archetype that portrays Black women as strong, self-reliant, nurturing, resilient, and resistant to being dependent or vulnerable to psychological or physical challenges (Harris-Lacewell, 2001; Woods, 2013; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Past literature has been critical of the Superwoman and Strong Black Woman stereotypes and the potential impact that these categories can be detrimental to Black women. Boyd (1997) stated:

Messages like “you’re a strong black [sic] woman” come from the heart but leave us in the emotional bind of believing we always have to be strong or else we’ve failed. Being strong all the time is a burden that doesn’t leave us much room to be human.

While messages about adhering to the Superwoman or Strong Black Woman trope may appear to be a positive message, in actuality it does not allow Black girls and women the space and opportunity to be able to consider their own wants and needs when it comes to their lives.

Along with parents or family members perhaps not recognizing the negative impact of being expected to be “strong” all of the time, it appears that there is less of an understanding of how encouraging their daughter to take on the subordinate, constantly nurturing and self-
sacrificial role of the Mammy (West, 1995) could also have a negative impact on how they see their roles in relationships. Boyd-Franklin (1991) explored how these expectations for Black women to juggle the responsibilities of others as well as their own may leave individuals feeling that they have to choose between meeting the needs of others or establishing their own boundaries and sense of independence.

It was interesting to find in the results that even though many of the participants received explicit or implicit messaging about the expectation to fulfill the Superwoman role, many of these participants were also challenging or debating whether this role was helpful because of the observations they witnessed amongst the relationships around them. This navigation of deciding which messages to implement in their own lives reflects a theme that has been seen in past literature. In a study conducted by Winchester et al. (2021) that examined the impact of gendered racial socialization on Black adolescent girls’ mental health, the authors observed that many of the participants went through a period of “reconciliation” where they were “unlearning these messages (to the extent to which they were internalized) and repairing the negative mental health consequences (p.7).” The authors of this study suggested that when parents or family members provide Black girls and teens with positive and empowering messages about Black womanhood, this can aid in the “unlearning” of negative gendered racial messages that girls and teens are obtaining from other sources.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

The results have provided additional information for the theoretical frameworks utilized for the study. Past literature has examined and spoken to the strength and importance of family networks in Black families and how this can impact the family projection process through many generations (Boyd-Franklin, 1987). Boyd-Franklin (1987) explored how Bowenian family
therapy is a relevant framework when it comes to the consideration of Black families given the following two strengths: providing strategies for exploring extended family dynamics and providing a theoretical framework that can be useful in generating hypotheses about family dynamics. Bowenian family therapy operates under the creation of a family genogram in order to gain an understanding of intergenerational relationships and how emotional issues are viewed within the context of the family (Boyd-Franklin, 1987). This study provided additional nuance to the literature pertaining to Bowenian family therapy and the impact that the multigenerational transmission process can have on Black families. When utilizing family genograms, it will be helpful for parents and other family members to consider the messages and observations they encountered from previous generations and consider if these are messages that they wish to continue providing to future generations. Having parents and other family members consider how the messages and observations from previous generations impacted how they view relationships may reinforce the importance of generational messages and the mindfulness they should use when providing these messages to their young ones.

The results from this study provided additional context for the manner in which implicit and explicit messages are passed down from generation to generation and how it can impact how younger generations of Black women view their roles across society. When considering the multigenerational transmission process and how messages are passed down from generation to generation, the familial messages discouraging sexual exploration and encouraging adhering to the caregiver role may have served as a means that previous generations found useful and necessary in order to traverse through society safely. While this armoring (Edmondson Bell & Nkomo, 1998) of previous generations of Black women and girls was used as a means of counteracting the stereotypical images of the Jezebel, it also left little room for the individuals to
make themselves a priority and to consider their own needs in addition to the needs of those around them. In providing their daughters with these messages about engaging in self-sacrificial and overly caring roles, parents appear to be unknowingly reinforcing the Mammy trope that is expected from Black girls and women in their relationships with those around them. When providing their daughters with agency for their romantic relationships and their sexuality, the findings from the study indicate that while parents and family members appear comfortable providing messaging focused on male partners’ needs or wants, they either feel uncomfortable or unaware of how to provide messages to their daughters about their developing sexuality or how to have a healthy romantic relationship. Instead, parents and family members appear to feel more comfort providing messages about how not to behave in hopes of their daughters not being perceived as hypersexual. What is interesting about the results of this study is that many of the participants discussed being aware of the nature of these messages being passed down from generation to generation but also were able to reflect on how these well-intended messages also had negative potential consequences. The findings from the study and the theoretical frameworks used throughout highlight the importance of considering both the direct messaging that families provide their youth but also the observations that youth will obtain from observing the actions of their family members.

The results from this study also provided additional information to previous literature related to social learning theory. From a social learning theory perspective, many of the participants went beyond the explicit and implicit messaging they were provided and discussed how their observations of how these messages impacted the women in their lives also played a significant part in their determination of what aspects of the messages they would like to adhere to and which they would not. The findings emphasized that even if parents or family members do
not provide direct messages, younger generations are constantly observing and attempting to make sense of the behaviors and actions of older generations. For this particular study, this was seen in how participants who were not provided direct messaging reported relying on observations of the women in their lives to gain understanding about how they would be expected to engage in their romantic and non-romantic relationships. This finding from the study emphasized past literature (Bandura et al., 1961; Goubert et al., 2011; Kempster & Parry, 2014) that has explored how observing others can potentially impact one’s actions and behaviors. These findings should also emphasize to parents and other family members that even when they are not providing these messages directly, the younger generation are still obtaining observational messages about how they will be expected to behave in society.

Desire to Have More Nuanced Conversations with Family Members

A major finding from the study was that most of the participants would have wanted more messaging and conversations with their family members about a wide variety of topics related to sexuality, development, relationships and how these topics would be impacted by the intersection of their identity. The fact that so many of the participants discussed that they would have wanted more conversations with their family members about a variety of topics indicates the power of generational messages and the desire that participants had to be able to receive these answers from the adults in their lives instead of having to seek out messages from outside sources or through their own experiences. These results support past research (Epstein & Ward, 2008) that indicates that while there are other competing factors that may influence youths’ decision-making and how they view themselves, the messages parents provide are still helpful and useful in teaching teens and young adults how to navigate different relationships and the developmental obstacles that come with them.
The results of the study should highlight to parents and family members that even though there are competing sources providing younger generations with messages of how they are expected to behave in society, parental and familial messages still have an impact on youth. The results of this study provide support that parents and family members should utilize this impact that they can have on younger generations in order to provide their youth with the information that would allow them to determine how they would like their roles in different relationships to be. With this in mind, parents and family members should also be aware of how their youths’ identity as Black women may impact the messages they are receiving from other sources. Participants of this study confirmed past literature that reported outside sources such as social media, TV, movies, or non-familial relationships provided messaging that Black women and girls engage in stereotypical behaviors such as being overly aggressive, emasculating, or being hypersexual (P. H. Collins, 2000; M.L. Collins et al., 2015; French, 2013; Hall & McCurtis Witherspoon, 2015). Participants within the study reported throughout their transcripts that they would have wanted more messaging about how the intersection of their identity would impact how they navigate their relationships and society. It would be helpful for parents and other family members to include in these conversations how being a Black woman may come with certain expectations and/or assumptions and provide their daughters with strategies for how to maneuver these experiences so they do not feel that they are going through the situation alone.

**Implications for Theory and Practice**

In addition to providing more detailed insight into the messages parents and family members provide to young Black women, participants in the study provided guidance for several potential recommendations for how to improve conversations amongst family members and their daughters. These recommendations are as follows.
Empower Parents

The results from this study indicated that participants felt that parents and family members did not feel comfortable enough to engage in these conversations with them. It is important to inform parents of the impact that having these conversations can have on their daughters. It is also important to remind parents that their daughters not only want to have these conversations but, in fact, wish they engaged in more conversations about romantic relationships, navigating predominantly White spaces, and the importance of self-care with their family members.

Provide Parents with Information

Helping professionals can provide parents and family members with psychoeducation on age-appropriate and healthy sexual development and romantic relationships. They can also provide parents with communication tools and skills that will be useful in providing this information to their youth throughout conversation. If possible, it would also be helpful to provide parents with space and opportunity to practice engaging in these conversations in order to increase their comfort with the topics and utilizing the communication skills they were taught.

Explore Discussion Prompts

Encouraging parents to utilize a variety of techniques to begin these conversations such as using situations that would allow conversations to be prompted (e.g., watching a particular TV show or movie that their youth is interested in) and bringing up topics related to romantic and interpersonal relationships to their daughters. Research on the use of social media when it comes to engaging teens about topics related to overall health has found that it can be an effective tool to provide information about health-related
topics (Plaisime et al., 2020; Yonker et al., 2015). While more research needs to be done with this mind, parents can use these pop culture references from social media or other platforms to engage their youth and begin to have these conversations.

**Parents’ Experiences Matter**

Helping professionals can encourage parents and family members to speak more about their personal experiences as they relate to relationships. Participants indicated they wanted to know more about their family experiences so that they could learn more about romantic and interpersonal relationships and how to navigate them. This may also open lines of communication and allow them to feel more comfortable speaking about what they are experiencing.

**Understanding Impact of Messages**

Helping professionals can provide parents with an understanding of the impact of only providing messages about taking on the caregiver role. Helping professionals can encourage parents to provide additional messages about the importance of self-care and prioritizing their wants and needs when appropriate.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations obtained from the findings of the study highlight aspects that the participants indicated would have been helpful as they were determining how they wanted their roles across relationships to be. These findings speak to the importance of providing parents and family members with the necessary information in order to feel comfortable having these conversations with their youth (Bastien et al., 2011; D’Cruz et al., 2015; O’Sullivan et al., 2001; Santa Maria et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2014). As a result, a short parent guide was created to help empower parents to have these conversations with their children and adolescents (Appendix E).
This guide is designed to provide family members with a starting point for these conversations, and they should be modified for each individual given the uniqueness of each situation. The results from this study confirmed previous literature (Bastien et al., 2011; O’Sullivan et al., 2001; Sutton et al., 2014) that indicated that parents did not feel comfortable or questioned if they had the information needed in order to have these conversations with their teens. One implication for clinical practice that was observed from this study is the need to increase parents’ comfortability with the knowledge surrounding these topics and in their ability to communicate this information to their youth.

The second implication from the findings incorporates the multigenerational transmission process (J. Brown, 1999) and the social learning theory framework (Bandura, 1977; Hoominfar, 2021) that was used for the study. By providing parents with psychoeducation related to healthy and age-appropriate relationship and sexual development, helping professionals would be able to potentially impact the messages that family members are directly providing to the teens in their lives as well as the observational messages that family members provide. Providing family members with a better understanding of how these messages can impact their youth along with the tools on how to embark on these discussions may, in turn, lead to family members feeling more comfortable to have these conversations while being more cognizant of what messages they should or perhaps should not be providing. This could also potentially increase family members’ awareness of how their own behaviors may be impacting how younger generations see their roles in these relationships.

The recommendations above can be helpful in informing the work of helping professionals, such as psychologists, social workers, family therapists, or parent educators, on how to improve the communication with their teenage daughters as it relates to discussing their
roles in relationships and how to navigate these relationships. The results provide a better understanding of what topics daughters would have wanted to hear more from their parents and gives additional support to the impact that parental messaging can have on the development of teens’ and young adults’ identity and sense of self. These recommendations provide a better grasp of how helping professionals can improve the communication between family members and their teen daughters during this critical time in their lives. The results from the study also suggest the need for additional supports or resources for parents (e.g., books, parent seminars, parent support groups) that can remind parents of the importance of their role in socializing and developing their teens’ perceptions of their roles in relationships but also provide parents with the tools for how to start these conversations and engage their youth. As the participants discussed in their interviews, when they were not provided the messaging or space to explore these topics, they would seek out answers from outside sources. Giving parents the skills to create a space where they can have these conversations with their teens and young adults will not only allow for an improved parent–child relationship but also offer the youth a safe space with a trusted adult where they can develop their understanding of their roles in relationships.

Limitations

Given the inclusion criteria of the study, specifically surrounding the education of the participants, multiple factors such as socioeconomic background of originating neighborhood, parental education status, and influence of peer group may have affected how the participants made sense of their particular experiences. While data factors such as sexual orientation, education level, and socioeconomic status were collected in the demographic information, these aspects of the participants’ identities were not as deeply examined as the intersection of the race and gender due to this study specifically focusing on the potential messages participants received
because of their race and gender. Given this study’s goal of gaining an in-depth understanding of the experiences of these specific participants, readers should take care to not overgeneralize the results from this study to all Black families. This study did not take into consideration the impact that these and many other factors might have had on the messages that were provided and how they impacted how the participants view themselves in relationships. For example, depending on the participant’s socioeconomic status and the education level of their parents, the participants might have been provided more-or-less explicit information about how Black women are viewed in society and how to handle these expectations. Parents with higher levels of education may feel more comfortable having these conversations because they feel that they have the vocabulary to take part in these discussions. Depending on the parents’ socioeconomic status, they may also have been able to seek out support from helping professionals on how to have these conversations with their youth.

Another factor that two participants in the study mentioned was how LGBTQ+ relationships were either perceived as taboo or not discussed at all by family members when the conversation of relationships occurred. While three of the participants did not identify as heterosexual, the familial messages related to romantic relationships were provided under the assumption that the participants would be engaging in heterosexual or heterosexual passing relationships. Being provided messages specifically about engaging in heterosexual relationships could potentially have impacted how the participants in the study viewed their roles in their romantic relationships. In addition to socioeconomic status, education level, and sexual orientation, the regional differences of the participants are other factors that must be taken into consideration for how they may have impacted the messages provided from family members. There is a possibility that depending on the participant’s region of the United States, their parents
and family members may have provided them with more or less messaging about adhering or rejecting certain expectations for romantic and non-romantic relationships. Another factor that could have impacted messages that were provided to participants is the impact of skin color or shade range amongst individuals who identify as Black women. Even when examining the stereotypes placed upon Black women (P. H. Collins, 2000; M.L. Collins et al., 2015; French, 2013; Hall & McCurtis Witherspoon, 2015), there are underlying impacts of colorism associated with several of the tropes (e.g., “Jezebel” trope being placed on individuals who have lighter complexions or “Mammy” trope being placed on individuals who have darker complexions).

Future studies may more closely examine how these additional identities may impact the specific messages that parents and other family members provided their youth as they relate to the intersection of their identity and the relationships in their lives.

Another potential limitation to this study is this writer’s position as an in-member. Given that this writer and participants both identified as Black women, this may have led to participants feeling that they did not need to expand upon their experiences with the assumption that both parties went through the same lived experiences. While this writer attempted to gather enough details from participants about the nuance of their experiences, there is always the possibility that there were some assumptions of similar experiences, which may have prevented further elaboration. Due to this writer being of African American and Nicaraguan descent, there is a possibility that there were nuanced differences in the messages this writer was provided and the messages that participants from different regions of the African Diaspora were provided.

Another possible study limitation is that while all of the participants identified as Black women, the participants did come from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds. Factors such as emphasis placed on being an immigrant in the U.S. and cultural norms related to talking about
romantic relationships could potentially have impacted the messages that parents felt comfortable providing their children. Many of the participants spoke to how some of the messages they received were ingrained in their culture, and while the cultures across the African Diaspora have some overlap, there are also plenty of differences that could have impacted the specific messages and/or expectations that participants received. For example, Black American parents might have felt the need or were more comfortable providing racial socialization messages about the obstacles their children may face due to being Black in the United States. Conversely, parents from the Caribbean, Latin America, or various African countries might feel the need to provide more messages related to ethnic socialization that would emphasize the nuances of their specific culture and histories.

**Directions for Future Research**

Future research could aim to understand the barriers that prevent these types of conversations from happening, improve parents’ comfort in having these conversations, and provide parents with the psychoeducation needed to discuss these topics with their youth. Researchers and practitioners could create and facilitate workshops aimed at helping parents speak to their teenage daughters about navigating through interpersonal and romantic relationships. Future researchers could examine the impact of implementing the abovementioned recommendations and observe the impact that having these conversations may have on how these young women view themselves in their romantic and interpersonal relationships. The results of the study also indicated that family members felt more comfortable providing messaging about work-related relationships as opposed to romantic relationships. Due to the lack of messages about romantic relationships, many of the participants highlighted feeling that they had to avoid engaging in potential stereotypical behavior when it came to romantic relationships.
Future studies could examine how parental messaging and guidance related to navigating romantic relationships could impact participants’ sense that they are avoiding engaging in stereotypical behavior.

Also, this study exclusively sought out female identifying participants; however, future studies could replicate this study to determine what messages parents are providing to their sons with regards to romantic and interpersonal relationships. A minor theme that was seen in some participants’ transcripts was their feeling that the messages they were provided differed from the messages provided to their male counterparts. It would be interesting to compare what messages parents are providing to their sons and to examine what might be the cause for these potential differences.

The results of this study indicated that many of the participants relied on direct or observational messages from their mothers or female family members when it came to developing their sense of their own roles in romantic and non-romantic relationships. While the results indicate the importance of the mother–daughter relationship in the development of these expectations, many of the participants reported wishing they received more messages from family members in general about how to handle relationships. One of the participants explicitly mentioned that she would have wanted messaging from male family members to get a better perspective of relationships. While the mother–daughter relationship is clearly important, future researchers should not exclude fathers in further studies. Future studies can explore the impact of providing fathers with the psychoeducational tools to engage in these conversations with their children across the gender spectrum.

As previously mentioned, while this study collected data related to factors such as socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, education, generational status, relationship status, and
regional origin, the primary focus was on the messages provided to participants at the intersection of race and gender. Future researchers could look to examine how these additional layers of identity impacted the messages that were provided and how individuals may internalize or incorporate the messages that they were provided. While this qualitative study sought to gain a deep understanding from a smaller group of participants, perhaps a quantitative study with a larger sample size could be conducted to gain further insight into how additional factors also impact what messages are given. Factors such as socioeconomic status, parental education, and regional/geographic differences could impact whether more racial or ethnic socialization messages were provided to a certain subgroup and perhaps gain a better understanding of why certain subgroup groups were provided different messaging than others. In addition to considering these other aspects of one’s identity, another study could also examine the potential differences in how participants were racially socialized in their families and the messages they were provided about confronting and coping with racism. Future researchers could also conduct quantitative research examining the impact of socialization messages focused on romantic relationships and how they relate to self-esteem, self-worth, and well-being. This possible study could further the selective codes seen in this study related to the long-term impact of these socialization messages and the realization of wants and needs within relationships.
References


https://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2011.619449


https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2011.11777218


https://doi.org/10.1080/00377996.2014.948607


https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945914539794


Collins, R. L. (2011). Content analysis of gender roles in media: Where are we now and where should we go? *Sex Roles* 64(3), 290–298. [https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9929-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9929-5)


https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797614533968


https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684318825439


Dennis, A., & Wood, J. (2012). ‘We're not going to have this conversation but you get it’: Black mother–daughter communication about sexual relations. *Women's Studies in Communication, 35*, 204–223.


Directions in Psychological Science, 29(2), 174-179.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721420901590

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpain.2010.10.001


https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-009-0180-1


https://doi.org/392. doi:10.7709/jnegroeducation.82.4.0382


https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-01-2012-0016


https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-008-9245-7

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.11.004


https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480706297853


https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2013.843148


https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000484


Appendix A

October 13, 2020

Jessica Elliott  
Seton Hall University  

Re: Study ID# 2021-132

Dear Ms. Elliott:

The Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled, “The Impact of Racial and Ethnic Socialization on Young Black Women’s Role in Interpersonal and Romantic Relationships: A Qualitative Study” as resubmitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study’s approval as exempt. If your study has a consent form or letter of solicitation, they are included in this mailing for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OTR  
Associate Professor  
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Phyllis Hansell, EdD, RN, DNAP, FAAN  
Professor  
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board
Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age:

2. Ethnicity (examples: Italian, Japanese-American, Jamaican, etc.):

3. How would you identify yourself racially?
   
   ___Asian
   ___Black
   ___Latina/o
   ___Middle Eastern
   ___Native American
   ___Pacific Islander
   ___White
   ___ Other. If this option, please explain:

4. Gender?

5. Sexual Orientation?

6. Which region of the country is your program located (example: Northwest, Southeast, etc.)?

7. Are you currently partnered?
Appendix C

Interview Guide

1. How often would you say family members spoke to you about racism or the barriers you may face because you are a Black woman?
   a. What kind of message did you receive?
   b. Who did you get these messages from?

2. How often would you say family members spoke to you about the values, culture and history associated with being a Black woman?
   a. What kind of message did you receive?
   b. Who did you get these messages from?

3. Can you remember any specific messages you received from family members regarding how others may perceive or expect Black women to act in romantic relationships?
   a. What kind of message did you receive?
   b. Who did you get these messages from?

4. Can you remember any specific messages you received from family members regarding how others may perceive or expect Black women to act in their interpersonal relationships or their relationships with friends, coworkers, peers, or acquaintances?
   a. What kind of message did you receive?
   b. Who did you get these messages from?

5. What led to these discussions?
   a. When did these discussions come up? How old were you?

6. How did you perceive your family’s tone during these conversations?

7. What did you take away from these conversations?
8. How did you feel in these conversations?

9. What do you remember most from these conversations?

10. How have these conversations impacted how you see yourself in romantic relationships?
   a. How did these conversations impact you as a young adult?

11. How have these conversations impacted how you see yourself in interpersonal relationships?
   a. How did these conversations impact you as a young adult?

12. What messages would you have wanted to receive from your family members regarding these topics?

13. What messages did you receive from messages the media, your friends, siblings, teachers, mentors, or other people who not part of your family?

14. If you could speak to a younger version of yourself, what messages would you say?

15. Is there anything you would like to say that we have not talked about?
### Appendix D

**Table 1**  
**Participant Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sexual orientation</th>
<th>Religious/Spiritual orientation</th>
<th>Region of the U.S. they are from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Caribbean/West Indian (Trinidadian)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist (Christian)</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatriz</td>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>East coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina</td>
<td>African American/Nigerian</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Cis and heterosexual</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Christian (non-denominational), grew up Pentecostal</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francine</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Follower of Christ</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Raised Catholic, more so Christian or non denomination</td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>American Black Haitian</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Midwest/South (Kentucky)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>African-American &amp; Trinidadian</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>Black, Puerto Rican and Salvadoran</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pansexual</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>spiritual</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Pansexual</td>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>non-hispanic Black</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearl</td>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serena</td>
<td>African American, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Black/USA-born African American</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>Non-Christian melting pot of African spirituality (e.g., Ifa, Yoruba, etc.) and Buddhism</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>straight</td>
<td>Isese</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix E

### Table 2
*Selective and Axial Codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selective Codes</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Expectation to put others’ needs before their own | a) Messages to adhere to “Strong Black Woman” narrative  
|                                                   | b) “Black women do everything…For everybody. All the time.”                  |
| 2. The importance of financial independence        | a) The importance of financial independence                                  |
| 3. Prioritizing the needs of male romantic partners | a) Be submissive and shrink self  
|                                                   | b) Expectation to be in a service-oriented role in romantic relationships    |
| 4. Hiding and/or downplaying their sexuality        | a) Dating and sex are taboo  
|                                                   | b) Messages about covering up body and not exploring her sexuality           |
| 5. Successfully managing work relationships         | a) Needing to work harder than peers  
|                                                   | b) How to navigate microaggressions or stereotypes                          |
|                                                   | c) The importance of being respectful, polite, and mindful of their tone and outer appearance |
|                                                   | d) The value of education                                                   |
| 6. Long term impact of racial and ethnic socialization by family members | a) Learning to navigate relationships on their own  
|                                                   | b) Lack of messages leading to relying on observations and messages from outside sources |
|                                                   | c) Feeling that messages/observations have led to having difficulty asking for help |
| 7. Desire to have more nuanced conversations with family members | a) More conversations about race and how to navigate predominantly White spaces  
|                                                   | b) More opportunities to talk about developing sexuality and healthy romantic relationships |
|                                                   | c) More messages about family members’ experiences in relationships          |
|                                                   | d) Desire for messages about prioritizing oneself                           |
| 8. Realization of wants and needs within relationships | a) More reciprocity in relationships  
|                                                   | b) Incorporating more self-love and self-care in their relationships with others |

134
Appendix F

Figure 1.

*Parent Guide*

**Speaking to Your Teen About Romantic Relationships**

**Messages Matter**
What messages did you receive as a teen about romantic relationships? How did you observe family members navigate their own romantic relationships? How did these messages and observations impact how you see romantic relationships? These are potential questions one should ask themselves when considering the messages they want to provide their children about romantic relationships. Messages about how we are expected to behave in relationships can be passed from generation to generation, so it is important for parents to consider how these messages have impacted past generations and if these are messages they would like to continue passing along to their youth.

**Remind Yourself that Dating and Romantic Relationships are a Normal Part of Young Adulthood**
While entering the dating world and learning how to navigate romantic relationships can be scary, nerve-racking, and stressful for both adolescents and parents, it is also an important and normal aspect of development during this time period. Acknowledging that this is a normal part of your teen’s journey into young adulthood will validate your child’s experiences and give them comfort in knowing that they are not alone during this time of growth.

**Practice Communication Skills**
Pay attention to how you are communicating your thoughts and beliefs with your youth. While teens may not share everything with their parents, we want to try to build towards a relationship where adolescents will feel inclined to join these conversations. It is important to consider the different ways we communicate from the actual words we say (verbal communication), to our body language (nonverbal communication), to the tone in our voice while we speak (paraverbal communication). We want to give off the idea that we want the best for our youth, that we have tools that may be helpful during this time, and that above all else, we are here if they want to explore these topics more.

If you do not feel comfortable beginning the conversation with your child, it may be helpful to utilize other means such as TV shows or social media that you know your teen uses. For example, if you know that your child watches particular TV shows about teenage characters and their experiences through high school, it might be helpful to ask to watch the show with them. Sharing in this experience would allow for you to get a better understanding of the messages your teen is getting from outside sources and to provide clarification on themes or subject matter that, perhaps, are being displayed in an exaggerated manner. This would allow you the opportunity to begin the discussion with your child about their roles in romantic relationships.
**Your Voice and Experiences Matter**
Some parents may feel that their voice doesn’t matter to their teens when exploring topics about dating and relationships. While there are other sources (such as friends or social media) giving your child or teen information about this part of their life, your voice still matters. While this may be a stressful time for you as a parent, it also is a difficult time for your adolescent and in these moments of strain, it is helpful for them to be provided some guidance and support from adults that they trust and whom they know have their best interests in mind. Having these conversations and sharing about your own experiences in romantic relationships will help your teen learn more about what they want from their own relationships and may make them feel more comfortable speaking about what they are going through.