

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL STRONG
BLACK WOMAN SCALE

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The unique experiences of African American women are well documented through intersectionality research. Taking an intersectional framework, this study is designed to develop and initially validate a new scale, the Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale. The Strong Black Woman is characterized by strength, resilience, independence, stoicism, and caretaking. This schema is adopted by many African American women to combat negative racial stereotypes, born out of slavery and discrimination. The Strong Black Woman often neglects her own mental and physical health in order to care for others, and delays help-seeking behaviors. This has a negative impact on mental health. The strong Black woman schema has been measured over the years in several ways. However, most measures have neglected to address important cultural dimensions including faith, race, and femininity. The Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale integrates the characteristics of the Strong Black Woman and important cultural dimensions. Exploratory Factor Analysis resulted in the emergence of six factors: faith, stoicism, femininity, strength, independence, and caretaking. Consistent with research, faith and strength were significantly positively correlated with self-esteem, and negatively correlated with depression, anxiety, and stress. Stoicism was significantly negatively correlated with self-esteem, and significantly positively correlated with depression and stress. Results indicate no significant relationship between the factors of femininity, independence, or caretaking and the mental health measures. Consistent with intersectionality research, African American women and Caucasian women in the sample scored significantly different on four of the six factors of the Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale.

Key words: Strong Black Woman, Intersectionality, Femininity, Superwoman

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to the strong women in my life. To my daughters: Jordan, for teaching me what it means to be competent, dependable, and responsible – she is the only 14 year old I know who would wake up at 5:00a just to stay on track with the Thurmanator; Katelyn – for epitomizing independence and teaching me to never take things at face value, and to always question and analyze; Ashlyn – for showing what it means to be resilient, I will never forget when I really wanted to give up on this and on the house and you said “You can’t quit, Chamberlins don’t quit”; and to Austyn – for showing me what it means to be vulnerable and kind and that maybe, sometimes, it is okay to ask for help and it is okay to cry. Finally, I want to dedicate this to my mom – my original superwoman. I am so thankful for your leadership and the example you set on how to overcome adversity, but in the end to focus on the things that matter. Strong women, raise strong women, who raise strong women – thank you for setting the stage.

For this and so many other reasons, this topic of what it means to be a strong woman interested me. What was unique about this however, is how it spoke to me as a person who is passionate about social justice, cultural humility, and the current political climate where racism is of utmost concern. This topic fused two topics about which I am passionately interested, it was a “God” thing.

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List of Abbreviations

Strong Black Woman (SBW)

Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI)

Gendered-Racial Socialization Scale (GRSS)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRMS)

Stereotypic Roles for Black Women Scale (SRBWS)

Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS)

Belgrave Gender Role Inventory (BGRI)

Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale (MSBWS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The ideal of the Strong Black Woman (SBW) is epitomized by strength, resilience, caretaking, independence, and emotional suppression and may be internalized as a standard by which African Americans judge themselves and others (Belgrave, Abrams, Hood, Moore, & Nguyen, 2016; Davis, 2015; Robinson, Esquibel, & Rich, 2013; Etowa, Beagan, Eghan, & Bernard, 2017; Nelson, Cardemil, & Adeoye, 2016; Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2004; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West, Donovan, & Daniel, 2016). The SBW standard advocates psychological resilience but discourages behaviors that result in the likelihood of good mental health (i.e., self-care); it embraces traditional feminine roles including an outward expression of femininity and caretaking (i.e., maintenance of image) but calls for independence and self-reliance (i.e., I can take care of myself) and expects the modern African American woman to challenge the negative historical stereotype (e.g., socioeconomic marginalization) while embracing the attributions that perpetuate that same stereotype (Belgrave et al., 2016; Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Watson & Hunter, 2016). The internalization of these tensions, an endorsement of the SBW race-gender schema, is associated with self-efficacy, respect from others, and accomplishment, but also associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, self-esteem (Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2008; Versey & Curtin, 2016; Watson-Singleton, 2017; Watson & Hunter, 2015;), and a myriad of adverse health outcomes (e.g., breast cancer, high blood pressure, obesity, and stroke; Black & Woods-Giscombe, 2012; Etowa et al., 2017; Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017).

Background of the Problem

African American women have unique experiences related to the intersection of their social identities of being both African American and women. This section will briefly introduce the concept of intersectionality and the importance of using this lens to view African American women, and ultimately the Strong Black Woman (SBW) schema.

Intersectionality

In order to effectively research African American women, researchers agree a lens of intersectionality is necessary (Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012; Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Jones, Buque, & Miville, 2018; Davis, 2015; Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Hunt, 2013). African American women are subjected to both discrimination by virtue of being female, and racism by virtue of being Black. Intersectionality theory holds that African American females have unique experiences due to being both Black and female. Crenshaw (1989) was the first to introduce the concept of intersectionality, which looks at the compounding and unique impact of being multiply marginalized. The concept of intersectionality continually emerges in research with African American women (Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012; Davis, 2015; Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Jones et al., 2018; Lewis et al., 2013). Several researchers present intersectionality as a place where social identities converge (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Settle & Shields, 2018; Shavers & Moore, 2014). Research looking through the lens of an intersectional framework is essential to fully understand African American women, as the combination of being both female and African American produces unique effects (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012).

Racism.

As mentioned above, African American women are subjected to the discrimination

common to all women, regardless of race. However, African American women are also subjected to racism common to ethnic minorities. Issues of racism and discrimination have long plagued the United States, with historical roots in slavery. Racism is largely defined by the dominant societal group, where disadvantages are often inherited and normalized (Jones, 2002; Thomas et al., 2008). In the 1970s Pierce noted the emergence of microaggressions in daily interactions with minorities (Davis & Afifi, 2019; Davis, DeBlaere, Brubaker, Owen, Jordan, Hook, & Van Tongeren, 2015; Harwood & Hunt, 2013; Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Wills, 1977). These microaggressions have a negative impact on health (Lewis & Neville, 2015).

Femininity.

As intersectionality would suggest, African American women experience racist events in a similar way as African American men (Black & Woods-Giscombe, 2012; Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Jones et al., 2018; Davis, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013). Similarly, African American women experience sexist events as do women of other ethnicities. What it means to be a woman, or more accurately, feminine, is rooted in traditional ideology. Traditional femininity is defined by deference, submission, adhering to the feminine image, taking care of others, and emotionality (Levant, Richmond, Cook, House, & Aupont, 2007; Sumra & Schilacci, 2015). What it means to be feminine has changed over the years, and evolved to include less traditional roles. While the concept of what it means to be feminine has evolved and women have seen rights granted and pay equalized, women continue to face discrimination across multiple domains (Versey & Curtin, 2016). Chronic exposure to discrimination has a negative impact on self-esteem (Versey, & Curtin, 2016).

Davis, Levant, and Pryor (2018) discussed the uniqueness of African American

femininity and traditional femininity in relation to stress. While traditional femininity has its roots in European culture, African American femininity has its roots in slavery, where women were required to carry traditional masculine roles due to the absence of men (Belgrave et al., 2016). A primary example of research through the lens of intersectionality is the Strong Black Woman schema.

Strong Black Woman

The Strong Black Woman (SBW), often associated with the superwoman schema, is an African American female who embodies the attributes of strength, independence, and caretaking (Etowa et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2016; West et al., 2016). The superwoman is “all things to all people,” juggling multiple roles, and projecting high self-esteem (Sumra & Schillaci, 2016; Thomas et al., 2004; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010). However, The SBW schema has historical roots in slavery and the continued discrimination and racism endured by African American females (Nelson et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2004; Townsend, Thomas, & Jackson, 2010; West, 1995). The SBW schema formed in reaction to and rejection of the common stereotypes of African American women, including the Mammy (self-less caretaker), the Jezebel (the hypersexual woman), and the Sapphire (the angry Black woman; Nelson et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2004; Townsend, Thomas, & Jackson, 2010; West, 1995). While these negative stereotypes have historical roots in slavery, they persist today and have evolved to include the Welfare Queen, gold diggers, and baby mamas (Nelson et al., 2016; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010).

The SBW, as the name suggests, is characterized primarily by attributes related to strength (Davis, 2015; Thomas et al., 2004; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West et al., 2016). Related

to this attribute of strength is the ability to overcome adversity and be resilient, which is a critical component of the SBW (Belgrave et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2016; Nelson & Hunter, 2015). The SBW is also a woman who is highly independent, self-sufficient, and takes care of others (Belgrave et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2013). These expectations of the SBW are coupled with the expectation to maintain emotional control in order to avoid the negative stereotypes mentioned above.

SBW and Health.

The attributes of strength, resilience, independence, and caretaking are all positive attributes; however, research shows mixed findings regarding the effect of adherence to the SBW schema. Most researchers agree that the strict adherence to the SBW schema, to include emotion repressions, is related to delays in preventative medicine and decreased help-seeking behaviors (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015; Versey & Curin, 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2015; Woods-Giscombe', 2010). This is problematic as African American women report higher levels of stress, higher incidence of depressive disorders, higher mortality rates in breast cancer patients, and greater risk for hypertension (Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012; Greer, 2011; Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017; Sumra & Schillaci, 2015; Woods-Giscombe', Lobel, Zimmer, Cene', & Corbie-Smith, 2015).

Measures

Beginning in 1994, several attempts to develop measures of gender roles, masculinity, femininity, and the SBW schema that are culturally reliable and valid have been made. In his seminal cross-cultural analysis of the Bem Sex Roles Inventory (BSRI), Harris (1994) found that both African American men and women consistently, more equally endorsed traditional

masculine attributes (e.g., act as a leader, assertive, aggressive, competitive, independent, and self-reliant) for women than Caucasian respondents. Conversely, on feminine BSRI items, he found that African American respondents were inconsistent in their differential endorsement of those items for men and women from each other and from the Caucasian sample.

Konrad and Harris (2002) also evaluated the BSRI across cultures. Findings were consistent with Harris (1994) in that traditionally masculine traits are equally desirable among African American men and women. However, findings did suggest regional differences in the desirability of feminine and masculine traits.

Furthering the research on gender roles and the African American population, McGhee, Johnson, and Liverpool (2001) validated the Sex-Role Egalitarianism Scale (SRES) with an African American population. This scale was normed on Caucasians but found to be reliable and valid for African Americans, with no significant differences between the normed population and the African American sample population (Berkel, 2004). However, differences were found between men and women within the African American population. This is consistent with the findings from Harris (1994) regarding egalitarian gender role endorsement by African Americans.

While these efforts focused on gender roles, other attempts to measure constructs of the African American culture have also been made. This includes cross-cultural measures developed to assess masculinity in African American men (Norwalk, Vandiver, White, & Englar-Carlson, 2011; Doss & Hopkins, 1998) as well as negative stereotypes (Schwing, Wong, & Fann, 2013; Hewitt, 2013). The Children's Personal Attributes Questionnaire was also assessed for cultural validity (Thomson & Zand, 2005).

Several researchers have developed measures specific to the SBW schema (Brown et al.,

2017; Belgrave et al., 2016; Lewis & Neville, 2015; Thomas et al., 2004). Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight (2004) developed a scale to assess four African American women stereotypes: Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, and Superwoman and their relationship to self-esteem. Lewis and Neville (2015) also assessed aspects of the SBW in relation to microaggressions and sexist events. Belgrave and colleagues (2016) developed a scale assessing aspects of the SBW in relation to gender role beliefs. The most recent attempt by Brown, Blackmon, Rosnick, Griffin-Fennell, and White-Johnson (2017) developed a scale specific to African American women in relation to gendered racism, with culturally specific aspects such as faith, oppression, and sisterhood.

Each of the above-mentioned scales measured a specific aspect of the SBW schema, including gender role beliefs, microaggressions, and gendered racism. However, with the exception of Brown et al. (2017), none have accounted for faith, which is a prominent aspect of the African American community (Etowa et al., 2017; Greer, 2011). Additionally, the ethnocentricity of the items on two scales (Brown et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2004) diminish the construct validity as a comparison across groups is not possible. Therefore, a new scale assessing the SBW schema with culturally relevant constructs such as faith and traditional femininity is in order.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of the present study is to develop a strong woman measure that captures the multidimensionality of the gender demands for Black women without confounding racial language. That is, develop and test a set of items that are theoretically consistent with SBW stereotypy without explicitly identifying “Black” woman in the items or implicitly bringing to mind race-related imagery related to race-specific marginalization (e.g., instances of

discrimination).

This study takes a three-step analytical approach, and the research questions reflect that approach. The first research question focused on the development of a measurement that assesses the latent constructs and was accomplished using exploratory factor analytic techniques using an initial sample (n = 159). The second set of research questions focus on the relationship of the SBW subscales in that same sample of African American women and known theoretical constructs including self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and stress. Finally, the second sample was collected to assess the validity of the new measure comparing the African American sample with a Caucasian sample (n = 293).

Research Questions

The following research questions are explored in this study.

Research Question 1 - What are the latent constructs that emerge from a refined set of items derived from the test set of SBW items?

Research Question 2 – How are the latent constructs related to the following mental health concerns:

- a. How are the latent constructs related to depression?
- b. How are the latent constructs related to anxiety?
- c. How are the latent constructs related to stress?
- d. How are the latent constructs related to self-esteem?

Research Question 3 – Do Black women score differently on the SBW scales than a Caucasian sample?

Assumptions and Limitations

Several assumptions are made in the scope of this project. Due to the self-report nature

of this study, there are inherent assumptions. It is assumed that respondents are answering truthfully and are able to self-reflect accurately. We also assume that the items will measure what they are intended to measure (strength, independence, resilience, etc.). Qualtrics was used to recruit participants; the method of sampling is assumed to be representative of the general population.

This study is part of a more extensive study. Therefore, item responses may be influenced by other information collected. Furthermore, the respondents in this study are all married or in committed relationships. Research shows those who are in committed relationships have lower incidence of depression, anxiety, and stress (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). Therefore, relationships between the SBW factors and depression, anxiety, and stress may not be generalizable.

Definition of Terms

Intersectionality. Intersectionality, first introduced by Crenshaw (1989), is best understood in three parts. First, African American women experience racism, as do African American men. Secondly, African American women experience sexism, as do all women. Lastly, and central to intersectionality, African American women have unique experiences due to the intersection of these two social identities (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Hall, 2018; Warner, Settles, & Shields, 2018; Davis, 2015; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Crenshaw, 1989).

Traditional Femininity Ideology. Traditional Femininity Ideology refers to the adherence to traditional norms for women to be considered feminine. This includes ideas such being thin, deferent, emotional, and chaste (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Cole & Zucker, 2007; Levant et al., 2007).

Hegemonic femininity. Hegemonic femininity is the concept that society places more value, and therefore more privilege, on femininity that aligns with traditional femininity, which is based upon primarily European constructs of beauty and behavior (Cole & Zucker, 2007; Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018).

African American Femininity. African American Femininity refers to the unique feminine qualities of African American women, which emerged from slavery to include more traditionally masculine roles, due to the absence of men during times of slavery (Levant et al., 2007; Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018),

Gendered Racism. Gendered racism was coined by Essed (1991) to give a name to the specific racism and discrimination that African American women endure due to the intersectionality of being both African American and female. A subset of this idea of gendered racism is gendered racial microaggressions, defined by Lewis and Neville as “Subtle everyday verbal, behavioral, and environmental expressions of oppression based on the intersection of one’s race and gender” (p. 292).

Microaggressions. Microaggressions, originally introduced by Pierce (1970), are defined as “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges” which communicate derogatory messages to African Americans (Pierce et al., 1977, p. 65). This definition remains relevant in more recent research (Davis, DeBlaere, Brubaker, et al., 2015; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007).

Strong Black Woman. This term specifically refers to an African American woman characterized by attributes of strength, emotional-resilience, independence, and caretaking (Etowa et al., 2017; Belgrave et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West, Donovan, & Daniel 2016; Davis, 2015; Robinson et al., 2013; Thomas et al., 2004).

Mammy. The Mammy is a historical stereotype dating back to slavery. The Mammy is portrayed as a large, dark-skinned Black woman who is the loyal, selfless caretaker of the house. She is largely portrayed as asexual.

Jezebel. The Jezebel is a historical stereotype which emerged as justification for the sexual maltreatment experienced by female slaves. This woman is typically portrayed as a thin, light-skinned Black woman who is unable to control her sexual urges.

Sapphire. The Sapphire developed as a stereotypical image in the 1940s and 1950s, as a result of *The Amos & Andy Show*. She is the clichéd angry Black woman, portrayed as a medium build and medium-skinned, characterized by nagging, aggression, and emasculating behaviors.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. First, the development of this scale will be the first to incorporate the core constructs of the SBW schema, strength, independence, emotional resilience, and caretaking, with the relevant cultural considerations of faith and traditional femininity. Secondly, this study is important for clinical considerations. In assessing the relationship between the Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale and important clinical factors (depression, anxiety, stress, and self-esteem), important points for intervention will be revealed. Finally, a comparison between African American and Caucasian participants will provide insight into the validity of this measure across cultures, filling an important gap in the literature.

Organization of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter Two will explore the research related to the concepts presented above. Specifically, Chapter Two will take a broader look at the Strong Black Woman schema and the

results of adhering to the SBW schema. Additionally, attention will be paid to the issues of discrimination, racism, and gendered racism. Finally, Chapter Two will explore the attempts to measure the SBW schema and its related components.

Chapter Three will explore the methods of data collection and the development of the items on the new scale. Chapter Four will present the results from the analysis described in Chapter Three. Finally, Chapter Five will provide a discussion of the results in light of the research, and discuss the implications of the findings and direction for future research.

Chapter Summary

The Strong Black Woman (SBW) schema developed out of historical slavery and racism but remains relevant today. Adherence to the SBW schema produces adverse outcomes on both physical and mental health. The next chapter will explore the research related to those concepts and the necessity of a new scale to further the understanding of African American women and specifically the SBW.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to develop a comprehensive and culturally relevant measure for the Strong Black Woman (SBW) schema while also accounting for relevant cultural variables (faith and femininity). The SBW schema has been measured primarily in light of gender roles or in relation to discrimination and racism. With the exception of one study (Brown et al., 2017), all other attempts at measuring the SBW schema have neglected to address the role of faith or religiosity. Brown et al. (2017) developed a scale that addressed critical components of the SBW schema and the African American culture, but they failed to disassociate the ethnicity from those critical components (e.g., strength), making comparison across cultures impossible.

This chapter will provide the theoretical foundation for the formulation of a new scale to assess the SBW schema and include the relevant constructs of femininity and faith. This chapter will also review the relevant literature related to the SBW schema and explore the previously developed scales.

Intersectionality

African American women's experiences and the uniqueness of those experiences have been the focus of research for many years (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Jones et al., 2018). In order to fully understand the experiences of African American women, researchers agree a framework of intersectionality is essential (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Jones et al., 2018; Davis, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Black & Woods-Giscombe, 2012). This section will explain the concept of intersectionality and discuss the salient pieces of the intersectional framework to include discrimination, racism, and femininity.

Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality noting there are three parts to the

framework for African American women: African American women experience racism in a similar way as African American males; African American women experience sexism and sexist discrimination similar to other women; and African American women experience unique challenges due to the intersectionality of these two things (Crenshaw, 1989). That is, there is a main effect for race, a main effect for gender, and an interaction effect for race and gender. Intersectionality is “based on the concept that oppressive institutions within a society such as racism, ageism, sexism, and homophobia, do not act independently, but are instead interrelated and continuously shaped by one another” (Hall, 2018, p. 482).

Intersectionality theory refers to the place where social identities meet: an African American female, for example, is both Black and female (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018). Warner, Settles, and Shields (2018) note the importance of defining social identities in relation to one another, noting the qualitative differences that emerge as a result of the interaction. Therefore, the specific struggles African American females encounter should take this intersection of identities into account. African American women live in different worlds; one with shared racial and cultural identities and another with different intersections of race and gender (Davis, 2015). While Crenshaw (1981) originally developed the intersectional framework to be specific to African American women, other researchers have expanded this to include other areas of marginalization. Black Feminist Thought also sees the importance of intersectionality, noting the importance of considering a class in the intersection of race and gender (Shavers, & Moore, 2014). Warner et al. (2018) indicated the importance of intersectionality within feminism, formalizing and supporting the feminist thought “the personal is political.” Thomas et al. (2008) similarly agree, noting the need to look at race, gender, and class simultaneously; the effect is cumulative. Similarly, Warner et al. (2018) warned against

“pop bead metaphysics,” where identities are viewed as separate, like beads on a necklace.

Ghavami and Peplau (2012) analyzed the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity by testing three hypotheses to ascertain if there was a unique effect of gender and ethnicity and not simply an addition of one to the other. Furthermore, the researchers assessed stereotypes to determine their basis, which they hypothesized were largely determined by the dominant group within the stereotype. In other words, the stereotypes for women are based largely on Caucasian women, and the stereotypes for ethnicities are largely based on the men within those ethnicities (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012). Similarly, Warner et al. (2018) noted the relationship of African American women’s identities to the dominant within the subgroup. In other words, African American women are not afforded their own identities; they are subjected either to the dominant identity of African American men within African American culture or the dominant identity of Caucasian women within femininity. The Ghavami and Peplau (2012) study was the first to simultaneously test gender, ethnicity, and the combination of the two. Warner et al. (2018) later assert that identities are interdependent and not additive, consistent with Ghavami and Peplau (2012).

Of the three hypotheses proposed by Ghavami and Peplau (2012), support for the intersectionality hypothesis, the ethnicity hypothesis, and the gender hypothesis was found for all. Thus, gender and ethnicity combined produced unique elements; stereotypes of cultures were more similar to the stereotypes for men of that culture, and cultural stereotypes of women are most similar to those of Caucasian women and least similar to African American women (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012).

Racism

The unique experiences of African American women are evident through the research on

intersectionality. One important aspect within the intersectional framework is racism. Jones (2002) defined racism as follows:

Racism is a system. It is not an individual character flaw, nor a personal moral failing, nor a psychiatric illness. It is a system (consisting of structures, policies, practices, and norms) that structures opportunity and assigns value based on phenotype, or the way people look. And what are the impacts of this system? It unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities (p. 9).

Jones (2002) also notes the harm racism does to human potential. Racism, by its nature, suppresses the abilities of a particular group. This naturally causes the talents, abilities, and expertise of the group to be discounted or depressed (Jones, 2000, 2002). In a similar way, Robinson and colleagues (2013) also noted the social natures of racial definitions developed to fit the needs of the dominant group. These findings are consistent for the African American women in Ghavami and Peplau's (2012) study.

There are different facets to racism, including institutionalized (or structural), internalized, gendered, microaggressions, and colorism. Institutionalized racism is "defined as the structures, policies, practices, and norms resulting in differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by 'race'" (Jones, 2002, p. 10). Institutionalized racism are often systems that have become normative and at times these practices are legal (Garcia & Sharif, 2015). One need only think back to the Jim Crow laws to see an example of legal, institutionalized racism, or New York City's "Stop and Frisk" laws. Other examples of institutionalized racism can be seen in education, employment, health care, and criminal justice, where sometimes disadvantage is inherited simply by virtue of location (Bailey, Kreiger, Agenor, Graves, Linoes, & Bassett, 2017; Garcia & Sharif, 2015; Jones, 2002). Jones (2002)

describes it as being most “evident as inaction in the face of need” (p. 10).

Another facet to racism is internalized racism, which is “acceptance by members of the stigmatized ‘races’ of negative messages about our own abilities and intrinsic worth... characterized by our not believing in others who look like us, and not believing in ourselves” (Jones, 2002, p.11). Internalized racism ironically can act as a buffer to the effects of racist experiences (Thomas et al., 2008).

Unsurprisingly, those who have internalized these racial stereotypes idealize the White culture and fear of being “found out” as unintellectual or not belonging. Internalized racism also is linked to low self-esteem, symptoms of depression, distress, anxiety, and can lead to divisiveness in the African American community (Graham, West, Martinez, & Roemer, 2015; Mouzon & McLean, 2016; Thomas et al., 2004). Furthermore, Thomas et al. (2004) noted those who internalize racist beliefs and stereotypes worry they will be judged based on those stereotypes. Ironically however, the individuals with internalized racism exhibit behaviors consistent with these aforementioned stereotypes, and as a result, unwittingly conform to the stereotypes they are trying to avoid (Graham et al., 2015).

Microaggressions.

Racial tensions in the United States have escalated over the last several years, coming to a crescendo in the form of police brutality, shootings, retaliation, protests, and general controversy; all of which is perhaps due to secondary continual exposure to psychologically harmful microaggressions experienced across a multitude of settings (Davis, DeBlaere, Brubaker, et al., 2015). The term microaggression was originally coined by Pierce et al. meaning “subtle and stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges” which communicate negative, harmful messages to African Americans (1977, p. 65). Sue et al. (2007) similarly defined

microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273).

Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, and Huntt (2013) assessed African American female college student’s coping mechanisms when faced with microaggressions. The researchers sought to find areas of strength and fortitude. This qualitative study used a framework of intersectionality to explore the experiences of African American women. Coping strategies in three categories emerged for these women when confronting microaggressions: resistant coping, collective coping, and self-protective coping.

Resistant coping strategies included using one’s voice as power, and resisting White standards of beauty. Using one’s voice as power included the process of advocating for one’s self and speaking up. Interestingly, this coping often perpetuates the stereotype of the “angry Black woman.” One specific coping strategy in resisting a predominantly Caucasian standard of beauty involved African American women wearing their hair naturally. The collective coping strategy included leaning on one’s support network, noting the importance of sisterhood and community within the African American culture. Self-protective coping strategies included becoming a Black superwoman and engaging in multiple roles. Another self-protective coping strategy included becoming desensitized and escaping. Researchers also found a theme where women made conscious choices about whether to confront the gendered racial microaggressions (Lewis et al., 2013).

Colorism.

Colorism refers to the varying colors of skin in the African American community. Historically those who have more closely resembled White people have been afforded more

privileges (Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010). This same concept is seen in the colonialization of Africa and during times of slavery. West (1995) confirmed the impact of colorism, indicating that those with lighter skin are afforded more opportunities for advancement and are perceived as more successful; this is also reflected within the African American community (Monk, 2015). Demonstrative of intersectionality of gender and race; at the same time that light-skinned African Americans were perceived as more desirable, light-skinned African American women have historically been stereotypically associated with hypersexuality in the form of the Jezebel archetype (Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010; West et al., 2016).

Gendered Racism.

As mentioned previously, the unique experiences of African American women are best viewed from an intersectional framework. Part of this process is understanding the experiences unique to African American women, which includes gendered racism and hegemonic femininity.

Gendered racism, coined by Essed (1991), refers to the specific racism and discrimination endured by African American women (Jones et al., 2018, Thomas et al., 2008). It is a way of looking at the discrimination African American women experience through the lens intersectionality, and thus gendered racism provides a more complex understanding of the racism African American women endure, where sexism and racism ‘narrowly intertwine and combine into one, hybrid, phenomena’” (Essed, 1991, p. 31).

In their qualitative study with faculty of color, Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson (2018) noted an underrepresentation of African American women in academia. Three broad areas of gendered racism emerged from this study: tokenism, exclusion, and in(visibility) (Warner et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2013). Tokenism is when individuals are underrepresented, yet are used

to represent a commitment to diversity. This often results in pigeonholing faculty of color to work on equity and racial diversity projects. One participant stated, “They just want the carcass, because, on the inside, they want us to be White middle class” (Settles et al., 2018, p. 6). Faculty of color also reported feeling alienated in multiple ways including socially, professionally, and academically (Warner et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2013).

Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight (2008) explored gendered racism and its relationship to distress and coping. Utilizing the Revised Schedule of Sexist Events (RSSE), researchers assessed whether African American women have experiences perceived as gendered racism. Results indicated African American women overwhelmingly experienced what they perceived as gendered racism. In particular, women in the service industry (91.3%) reported experiencing gendered racism. However, these experiences are not limited to the service industry; African American women reported experiencing gendered racism from supervisors (69.9%), teachers/professors (70.8%), helping professionals (75.5%), and strangers (90%). In general, the African American women in this study also experienced sexual harassment including inappropriate jokes (71.8%) and general disrespect as a Black woman (85%; Thomas et al., 2008).

Thomas and colleagues (2008) also explored the relationship between gendered racism and distress, noting a significant positive relationship between gendered racism and psychological distress. They were surprised by the persistence of the distress, even in the presence of positive coping mechanisms. Gendered racism has a “pervasive” effect on psychological distress even in the presence of coping mechanisms, consistent with research conducted by Woods-Giscombe’ and colleagues (2015).

In 2010, Szymanski and Steward also examined the correlation between African

American women's experiences of gendered racism and distress. The researchers compared the experiences of Caucasian women and African American women experiencing sexist events.

Findings suggest the greater the number of experienced or perceived discrimination, the higher the levels of psychological distress, consistent with Thomas and colleagues (2004).

Additionally, the greater the number of perceived racist events was positively correlated with sexist events. This notion supports the concept of gendered racism and intersectionality; the disadvantages are compounded (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012). However, one of their hypotheses was that the intersection of the racist and sexist events would account for variance beyond the main effects of each of these constructs individually. However, this was not the case. The sexist events were related to distress beyond any racist events. The researchers postulated this could be a result of internalized racism acting as a buffer, and as a result of sexist experiences, occurring across domains and cultures (Szymanski & Steward, 2010).

Hegemonic Femininity.

A unique concept relevant to the intersectional discussion of African American women is hegemonic femininity. Hegemonic femininity illustrates the gendered racism African American women endure. Hegemonic femininity refers to an assumption that the norms of Caucasian femininity is superior to femininity related to African American women. This includes privileges and rights being awarded to those who adhere to norms of hegemonic femininity (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018). Hegemonic femininity works to help maintain inequality (Levant et al., 2007). Black women have both accepted certain aspects of traditional femininity and challenged others. African American women have historically held roles in conflict with traditional femininity, but place greater emphasis on appearance than Caucasian women (Levant et al., 2007).

Femininity

As mentioned Hegemonic femininity is related to the belief that Caucasian feminine norms are superior to those of African American women. These feminine norms are rooted in Traditional Femininity Ideology. Traditional Femininity Ideology (TFI) is defined as “an individual’s beliefs about the appropriate roles and behaviors for women under patriarchy” (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018, p. 821). Those who ascribe to TFI, often measured by Femininity Ideology Scale (FIS), believe that women should adhere to stereotypic images and activities, with importance placed on being thin and beautiful. TFI adherents are patriarchal, with women required to defer to their male committed partner. TFI prizes purity, chastity, motherhood, and nurturance. Finally, TFI expects women to be emotional, but not necessarily logical (Levant et al., 2007; Davis, Levant, Pryor, 2018). Cole and Zucker (2007) similarly note the “benchmarks of femininity” being feminine appearance, traits, and traditional gender role ideology. Similarly, Levant and colleagues (2007) indicated there are five factors associated with traditional feminine ideology: stereotypic image and activities, dependency and deference, purity, caretaking, and emotionality. Levant et al. (2007) postulated that men endorse traditional feminine ideology because it serves to uphold current gender power structures.

Alternatively, Sumra and Schillaci (2015) identified common constructs of femininity: the alpha female, the career woman, the soccer mom, the domestic goddess, the slut, and the superwoman (Ward, DiPaolo, & Popson, 2009). These constructs became prominent after the Second World War when more women entered the workforce. However, the superwoman construct is perhaps the most prolific construct in scholarly literature (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). These less traditional gender role attitudes are associated with mental wellness, enhanced relationship quality, and positive educational and career outcomes (Jones et al., 2018).

African American Femininity.

Femininity is a multifaceted concept, but Davis, Levant, and Pryor (2018) asserted that “African American women’s femininity ideology is not the same as those of White women, although they share some commonalities” (p. 822). One of the major differences is the origin of the gender roles and identities for African American women. African American women’s roles are rooted in slavery and segregation. African American women had to adapt to the absence of males and therefore took on multiple gender roles (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Levant et al., 2007; Thomas et al., 2004).

The multiple roles African American women garner is evidenced in the endorsement by African American women of more androgynous gender identities (Belgrave et al., 2016; Berkel, 2004; McGhee et al., 2001; Harris, 1994). Additionally, gender role ideologies for African American women highlight strength, independence, and resilience. While African American women score similarly on the Bem Sex Roles Inventory (BSRI) femininity scale as other ethnicities, African American women endorse the masculinity scale more than other ethnicities (Belgrave et al., 2016). Levant et al. (2007) similarly agree, noting that African American women have not traditionally been held to traditional feminine stereotypes, due to slavery where the women typically were forced to take on both masculine and feminine roles to cope. Understanding what feminism means to a diverse population is important; in one study (Levant et al., 2007), Black women highly endorsed the importance of appearance in line with traditional feminine ideology, but also highly endorsed feminism. These two factors were positively correlated for African American women, but they were not for Caucasian women, indicating feminism may be different for Black and White women. Largely in reaction to the negative

stereotypes emerging from the atrocities of slavery, the injustice of segregation, and continued oppression of African American women, the Strong Black Woman (SBW) schema has emerged.

Strong Black Woman

The Strong Black Woman (SBW) is characterized by strength, resilience, caretaking, independence, and emotional suppression. This schema has emerged as a reaction to the ingrained racism and discrimination experiences of African American women. This schema is unique to African American women in its development out of and rejection of negative historical stereotypes. There are outcomes related to the adherence of the SBW schema that are both negative and positive.

While there are apparent differences in African American women's experiences and other women's experiences, there are also commonalities. West et al. (2016) pointed out the common denominator of strength in both the superwoman schema and the Strong Black Woman schema. Additionally, each schema places value on independence and caretaking.

Nelson and colleagues (2016) assessed African American women's perception of the SBW schema; the participants differentiated between the SBW and superwoman schemas and likened the superwoman to that of a superhero. In other words, participants viewed the superwoman schema as unrealistic and unattainable (Nelson et al., 2016). However, the researchers noted the similarities between SBW and Superwoman, stating these schemas are "simultaneously strong, independent, and caring" (West et al., 2016, p. 393). SBW is found primarily in research in the United States. However, Etowa and colleagues (2017) found the SBW schema to have an international reach, with indications of the SBW schema in Nova Scotia.

Historical Roots of Strong Black Woman

As noted above, there are similarities between the superwoman and the Strong Black Woman (SBW). A superwoman is someone who “does it all, and does it well.” According to Sumra and Schillaci (2015), there are four components of the superwoman schema: increased concern with physical appearance, heightened interest in maintaining satisfactory interpersonal relationships, striving to maintain a level of independent achievement, and successful performance across many diverse roles (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). Similarly, Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, and Jackson (2010) defined a superwoman as being able to do it all, as successfully multitasking, and able to “be all things to all people.”

Some researchers use the concept of the Superwoman and the SBW interchangeably (Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2017; Thomas et al., 2004). However, most agree that these concepts are unique (Etowa et al., 2017). One of the primary differences between the SBW schema and the superwoman schema is developmental history. The SBW schema developed over time as a reaction and protection against the negative stereotypes depicted in culture regarding African American women. African American women were historically portrayed in three primary archetypes: the Mammy, the Jezebel, and the Sapphire. These caricatures are one-dimensional and reinforce negative stereotypes.

Mammy.

One of the stereotypical views of the Black woman is that of a Mammy. Historically, a Mammy was portrayed as a large, dark-skinned Black woman who acted as the caretaker of the house during times of slavery (Thomas et al., 2004). The Mammy was selfless and put the needs of others first. Hattie McDaniel in *Gone with the Wind* (1939) perhaps most famously portrays this in popular media. Another depiction of Mammy in popular media is in the advertisements

for a popular brand called Aunt Jemima. This advertisement has changed over time but was originally portrayed by a former slave (Jewel, 1976).

The stereotype of the Mammy was so pervasive that an organization known as the Daughters of the American Confederacy put forth a proposition to Congress for a statue of a Mammy to be built, honoring the loyal slaves (Johnson, 2005; West, 1995). Thomas et al. (2004) assessed the contribution of the Mammy stereotype on women's self-image. Internalization of the Mammy stereotype is linked to negative self-images (Thomas et al., 2004). The Mammy is seen as a selfless, loyal caretaker of the home, but she is also depicted as asexual (Nelson et al., 2016).

Jezebel.

In contrast, a second stereotype, the Jezebel, is depicted as hypersexual and unable to control her urges (Townsend, Thomas, & Jackson, 2010). The Jezebel is portrayed as having lighter skin and long hair; a stark contrast to the Mammy (Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010). Jezebel, or the "bad Black girl", is typically a more petite woman with straighter hair, a narrower nose, and lighter skin. This stereotype is often a bi-racial person, who has more traditionally Caucasian features (West, 1995).

The term Jezebel has broad historical roots in the Bible, where a princess named Jezebel seduced and married the king of Israel, manipulating him into committing heinous acts. This term has continued to be used throughout history to symbolize one who is manipulative and seductive. In African American history, a Jezebel is seen as highly sexual, seductive, and unable to control sexual desires (Nelson et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2004). This depiction of the Jezebel has roots in the sexual exploitation seen in slavery. This stereotype of the African American woman was used as a justification for White masters' sexual relationships with slaves

(Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, Jackson, 2010; Thomas et al., 2004).

While history shows women from all ethnicities have been victimized, as mentioned above, the portrayal of Black females as overly sexualized was used to justify the sexual maltreatment of slaves. Additionally, African American women being portrayed as highly sexual and animalistic effectively dehumanized the African American woman during times of slavery. These stereotypes have persisted and evolved (Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010).

The Jezebel stereotype, when internalized, can result in two extreme reactions: an embracing of the hypersexuality, or a rejection of the sexual self. The former is often used to manipulate, and the latter results in shame (Thomas et al., 2004; West, 1995). This image reinforces the sexual exploitation of African American women (West, 1995).

Sapphire.

While both the Mammy and the Jezebel represent characterizations originating in slavery, a third stereotype emerged in the 1940s and 1950s known as the Sapphire. A Sapphire is an African American woman who is seen as hostile; the prototypical angry Black woman (Nelson et al., 2016). Sapphire was a character from a radio and television show called *Amos N' Andy*. In this show, centered on an African American couple and extended family, the character of Sapphire is an emasculating woman (*Amos N' Andy*, 1951; Thomas et al., 2004; West, 1995). The primary role of Sapphire was to emasculate Amos; she was loud, nagging, and aggressive (Thomas et al., 2004; West, 1995). Thomas et al. (2004) note that Sapphire was the “master of verbal assaults” (p. 429). Physically, this stereotype is a contrast to both the light-skinned Jezebel and the dark-skinned Mammy. Sapphire was a medium build and a medium brown (West, 1995).

This stereotype impacts the expression of emotionality, with two polar reactions. Either heightening the emotions and resulting in women expressing their anger as a defensive posture for vulnerability, or resulting in the repression of emotion in order to avoid this stereotype (West, 1995). Similarly, Thomas and colleagues (2004) found that internalization of this stereotype can cause either repression or over-expression of anger.

Current Stereotypes.

Current African American women stereotypes are consistent with the previously mentioned Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire. In addition to these stereotypes, another one has emerged — that of the welfare queen. The welfare queen is someone who is lazy and dependent upon others (Nelson et al., 2016). These stereotypes are continued in modern music in the form of “gold diggers, video vixens, and baby mamas.” This venue for perpetuating stereotypes is highly influential on inner city/urban youth who may view exploitation of their sexuality as a permissible and viable option for upward mobility (Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010).

Attributes of Strong Black Woman

While the Strong Black Woman schema (SBW) is not equal to Mammy, Sapphire, or Jezebel, its roots are consistent in many ways. Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel have roots in slavery, but they are relevant (Thomas et al., 2004) because much of the SBW schema is a reaction to long-held perceptions, popularly epitomized in the original stereotypes. For example, unlike these previous stereotypes, this schema can be viewed positively and is not inherently negative (West et al., 2016). The SBW schema counters images are that African American women are “dominant, aggressive, sexually promiscuous, rebellious, rude, and loud” (Thomas et al., 2004).

As mentioned above, the SBW schema seems to combat each of these negative stereotypes (Nelson et al., 2016). Where the Mammy is weak and dependent, the SBW is strong and independent. Where the Jezebel is unable to control urges, the SBW is resilient and strong-willed. Where the Sapphire angrily expresses emotions, the SBW suppresses her emotions. In a study conducted by Nelson and colleagues (2016), participants characterized the SBW schema in five ways: Independent, Caretaking, Hardworking and High Achieving, Overcoming Adversity, and Emotionally Contained. Participants in Etowa and colleagues' (2017) qualitative study conducted in Nova Scotia indicated the SBW is someone who cannot afford to be ill; is capable of doing everything; is self-sufficient; has faith in God; is caring, nurturing, a hard worker, and has a strong will. However, most participants did not see the schema as a choice, but rather a result of racism where they had to be strong, and this continues today (Etowa et al., 2017).

One of the primary constructs of the SBW is independence. The SBW is expected to be independent with the ability to be self-reliant and work through difficult situations (Nelson et al., 2016). Independence was also an emerging theme in the SBW schema in a study conducted by Belgrave et al. (2016).

The SBW is also responsible for caretaking (Nelson et al., 2016). It is important to note that in the African American community, caretaking often goes beyond the nuclear family to include extended family and various networks of friends. Robinson and colleagues (2013) found this is relevant today because "Black women are more likely than Black men to be socialized to remain part of the community rather than focus on individual success" (p. 67). Belgrave et al. (2016) also highlighted the role of caretaking in the SBW schema. This research found that both the perceived and assumed responsibilities for taking care of and providing for the well-being of others was key to African American women (Belgrave et al., 2016).

The SBW is characterized by being hardworking and high achieving. The idea behind this aspect of the SBW schema is that African American women have to prove themselves and do more than their counterparts (Nelson et al., 2016). Robinson et al. (2013) found similar themes in a qualitative study of African American female undergraduate students. They further expound on this by noting the prevalence of the African American female being the “only one” in the class and having the pressure of speaking for the entire race. Participants in this study note the need to be more prepared than other students in order to combat negative stereotypes about affirmative action and other prejudicial stereotypes already discussed (Settles et al., 2018; Warner et al., 2018).

The fourth characteristic of SBW schema found by Nelson and colleagues (2016) is that of overcoming adversity and being resilient. SBW are expected to persevere in the face of often daily struggles. Researchers also note the resiliency and triumph expected of SBW for surviving (Nelson et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2015). Similarly, agency which reflects the belief that one can do what is required and needed when needed emerged in the SBW schema (Belgrave et al., 2016).

Finally, SBW are expected to be emotionally contained (Nelson et al., 2016). This is in contrast to the Sapphire who is loud and aggressive. One set of researchers notes that the SBW is expected to be silent in the face of struggles (Watson & Hunter, 2015), further confirming the theme to be private and keep emotions at bay (Nelson et al., 2016). Belgrave et al. (2016) saw a similar theme emerge in their research, calling it impermeability.

Outcomes of SBW

As noted, unlike the negative stereotypes of the Mammy, the Jezebel, and the Sapphire, the SBW schema is not inherently undesirable. It is, however, a reaction and defense against the

negative stereotypes above. Research of the outcomes and effects of the SBW schema on the mental health of African American women is varied. Some researchers note positive outcomes and characteristics (Shavers & Moore, 2014), while others note the negative impacts of the SBW schema (Versey & Curin, 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2015) particularly on health (Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012). However, many recent researchers note both the positive and negative outcomes associated with the SBW schema (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Watson-Singleton, 2017; Nelson et al., 2106; Robinson et al., 2013)

Positive.

As discussed above, understanding the implications of the SBW schema on African American women is complex. Shavers and Moore (2014) found the SBW schema may contribute to African American women's persistence in academia even in the face of obstacles. Watson-Singleton (2017) found the SBW is linked to agency and self-efficacy in the face of stress, while Davis and Afifi (2019) noted the SBW promotes unity within African American women.

Negative.

The SBW schema has some positive outcomes, however, there are some adverse outcomes associated with the SBW schema as well. One negative outcome seen cross-culturally is the negative impact of the superwoman schema on self-esteem. Thomas and colleagues (2004) noted the detrimental effects of internalizing the superwoman schema of both Caucasian and African American women. Internalization is the process by which a person attributes the cause of the discrimination to herself (Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). Thomas et al. (2004) indicated this internalization can lead to a "façade of high self-esteem, which when cracked reveals anxiety and low self-esteem" (p. 430).

The SBW is focused on agency, and it has been linked to negative outcomes including depression and anxiety, and health-related concerns (Watson-Singleton, 2017). The SBW schema seems to perpetuate a dearth of support for African American women, due to the value placed on being independent, strong, resilient, and emotionally impermeable. This causes women to reject or not seek emotional support from their family and friends (Watson-Singleton, 2017). In agreement with other research (Nelson et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2015), it is noted that the focus of strength can impede emotionality and vulnerability (Davis, 2015). Nelson et al. (2016) pointed out the strength of the SBW schema, but note that it comes at a price of seeking and receiving help. In a qualitative study by Etowa et al. (2017), one participant stated, “There’s nothing super about being superwoman... trying to be all things to all people, striving to do everything for everybody, is not only physically, mentally, and spiritually draining, the pressure is such a killer, it fractures the emotional equilibrium” (p. 389).

It seems there is a threshold where SBW can be beneficial, but past that point it is detrimental to African American women’s mental health, wellness, and ability to seek and receive services (West et al., 2016). As noted in the previous paragraphs, SBW is a paradox. It may be a positive form of coping and a protective factor, or it could be a negative form of coping and predictive of poor mental health (West et al., 2016). Davis and Afifi (2019) agree that the SBW is more complex than the other stereotypes of African American women. The strength in the SBW is not pathological and is not necessarily healthy, but it is operative. Davis (2015) wrote, “The SBW is a mythical image of strength that distorts the experience of Black American women’s daily existence at the bottom of two hierarchical structures of gender and race” (p. 23).

SBW and Health

Hall (2018) found that African American women experience stress and discrimination differently than Caucasian women, and it affects their well-being differently. African American women experience higher mortality rates at younger ages from stress and stress-related diseases (Hall, 2018; Lonmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017). Etowa et al. (2017) noted the toll the SBW schema takes on African American women, indicating the weight is heavy, with these women expected to be the backbone. Some of the participants in this qualitative study indicated the SBW schema is a non-human view, with some indicating they were “tired of being strong... (and) need to feel human.... Don’t want to be strong anymore” (p. 387). However, in this same study, the participants refuse to admit they are in need or are stressed (Etowa et al., 2017). Woods-Giscombe’ and colleagues (2015) reported on the importance of understanding the various kinds of stress African American women endure, including network stress, personal stress, and stress related to racism.

Network Stress

One type of stress that is particularly salient for African American women, taking into account the African American culture, is network stress. Including network stress when conceptualizing stress for African American women would provide a more comprehensive picture of the stress these women encounter (Woods-Giscombe’ et al., 2015). Given the constructs of the SBW schema, which include a connection to the community and extended family, “network stress” seems an essential piece (Woods-Giscombe et al., 2015). Given the broad familial network characteristic of the African American community, and the vital role African American women play in this social network, examining network stress is important. Interestingly, women reported more stress related to their network than personal stress (Woods-

Giscombe' et al., 2015). However, network stress was reported as just as “bothersome” as personal stress (Woods-Giscombe, et al., 2015). Sumra and Schillaci (2015) confirm the importance of considering network stress as the highest level of perceived stress; particularly in the role of caregiver. This seems consistent with the SBW schema and the cultural aspects of the African American community.

Personal Stress

As with any population, SBW are also subject to personal stress. African American females who internalize the SBW schema seem particularly susceptible to personal stress, as core components of SBW are independence and caretaking. Thus, according to Etowa et al. (2017), those with the SBW schema do not look after themselves properly, which has an adverse effect on health. Single mothers, regardless of employment status, report the highest level of stress (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). Similarly, divorced women also experienced higher levels of perceived stress than married women (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015).

Stress Related to Discrimination.

Perhaps one of the most significant areas of stress for African American women in particular, is stress related to discrimination. The negative impact of stress on health is well documented (Etowa et al., 2017; Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017). Stress related to racism and discrimination is part of this larger dialogue across cultures (Colen, Ramey, Cooksey, & Williams, 2018; Woods et al., 2015). Similar to racism, discrimination is experienced in multiple ways (interpersonally and systematically), and is a form of oppression resulting in “wear and tear” on the health of those impacted (Ong, Williams, Nwizu, & Gruenewald, 2017; Versey & Curtin, 2016).

Discrimination, which is stressful, initiates the arousal of the stress-response system

(Versey & Curtin, 2016). This is particularly true for those who endure chronic discrimination. Specifically, chronic discrimination and stress have negative effects on cardiovascular functions, increased smoking, high fat diets, and fewer hours of sleep (Sims et al., 2016; Versey & Curtin, 2016). Versey and Curtin (2016) also noted the effect of discrimination on self-esteem and self-worth. Accordingly, how discrimination relates to feelings of self-worth is the link between discrimination and negative health symptoms (Mereish, N'cho, Green, Jernigan, & Helms, 2017; Versey & Curtin, 2016).

Discrimination may “reshape views of one’s self, sense of self-worth, and heighten sensitivities about larger group differences and system inequalities” (Versey & Curtin, 2016, p. 100). Versey and Curtin (2016) looked at the impact of discrimination on emotional states including functionality and depression. Two pathways were hypothesized: Self-evaluation is critical to health; therefore, if the evaluation of the self is poor (due to discrimination), it follows that health would also be poor; and discrimination increases awareness of structural inequalities (Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017; Versey & Curtin, 2016). Conversely, high self-esteem acts as a buffer and a mediating factor; however, the very nature of discrimination reduces feelings of belongingness, which is related to positive self-esteem (Versey & Curtin, 2016). In a similar fashion as discrimination, gendered racism has a similar impact on stress levels, with gendered racism being related to chronic stress (Greer, 2011).

Tensions of the Strong Black Woman Schema.

Watson and Hunter (2016) discussed the impact of the SBW schema more in terms of tension than stress, noting specific tensions resulting from SBW. The dichotomy of the SBW has been discussed in previous studies (Davis & Afifi, 2019; West et al., 2016); this study looks to understand the tensions the SBW schema creates. As an example, women feel forced to

choose one demand over another, most often at the detriment to the self (Watson & Hunter, 2016). These researchers take a more holistic view of the SBW; not a good or bad perspective (Watson & Hunter, 2016). Three tensions emerged in this study and will be described in the following paragraphs.

The first tension is for the SBW woman to “be psychologically durable yet do not engage in behaviors that preserve psychological durability” (Watson & Hunter, 2016, p. 442). In other words, the SBW is to show strength in difficult situations, but seeking help, or at times, even discussing struggles equates to weakness. Woods-Giscombe’ (2010) similarly discussed SBW and this tension, stating “that they must be outwardly strong, suppress emotion, and not accept help from others” (Woods-Giscombé, 2010, p. 64).

A second tension which emerged in this study was to “be equal yet remain oppressed” (Watson & Hunter, 2016, p. 443). This tension draws on the requirement of strength in the SBW. However, in order to be strong, a person would need to endure some kind of discrimination or event that elicits this strength. Therefore, while being strong often results in more equality, in order to be strong, one would have to experience inequality. In order to be accepted or perceived as the SBW, there has to be a struggle in order to have credibility.

Finally, a third tension emerged to “be feminine yet reject traditional feminine norms” (Watson & Hunter, 2016, p. 445). This is the juxtaposition of independence and caregiving. Participants felt they had to choose between independence and thus the ability to properly care for others, and dependence as a traditional feminine norm. This was particularly true with romantic relationships. One participant indicated this might be a reason that African American males date outside of their race. African American women are too independent for men who need to be needed (Watson & Hunter, 2016).

SBW and Health.

The negative impacts of tension and stress on health are well documented (Hall, 2018; Lonmire-Avital, & Robinson, 2017). Small amounts of stress are shown to be protective, but chronic stress (such as stress in relation to discrimination) is linked to negative health outcomes (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). Therefore, the tensions and stress associated with SBW are also related to negative health outcomes and even help-seeking behaviors. Stress is particularly detrimental when stress becomes distress. Distress comes when stressors are not handled in healthy ways (Woods-Giscombe' et al., 2015). In the Woods et al. (2015) study, both personal and network stress were correlated with distress. Furthermore, according to this study, stress-related health outcomes are common in African American women (Woods-Giscombe' et al., 2015). This correlation seems in alignment with the stress and strength hypothesis proposed by Black and Woods-Giscombe (2012), "specifically, the strength hypothesis suggests that these stress reactions may be aligned with a 'Strong Black Woman' ideal in which Black women are expected to demonstrate resilience, self-reliance and psychological hardiness in the face of stressors and life demands" (p. 3).

SBW and Mental Illness.

Another particularly relevant relationship to assess is that of SBW and mental illness. This is particularly important given the combination of emotional suppression, independence, and caretaking inherent in the SBW schema. This unique combination of attributes decreases the likelihood of SBW engaging in help-seeking behaviors, which has a negative impact on mental health.

One study looked at the SBW schema in relation to specific symptoms of mental illness. Longmire-Avital & Robinson (2017) compared Black and White women in relation to criteria

for Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), Persistent Depressive Disorder (PDD), and perceived stress. Black women were more likely to meet the criteria for both MDD and PDD.

Additionally, African American women reported higher levels of perceived stress (Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017). Approximately 20% of White women met the criteria for MDD, while approximately 50% of Black women in the sample met the criteria. This is a significant difference which the researchers attributed to the unique stressors that African American women endure, including perceived racism (Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017). Greer (2011) confirmed race and gender discrimination are correlated with adverse psychological symptoms, consistent with other research (Sims et al., 2016; Mereish et al., 2017).

Interestingly, the relationship between stress and depressive symptoms is consistent among races. If anything, it is slightly higher for European American women than African American women. However, African American women report higher levels of stress, which then correlates with higher levels of depressive symptoms (Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017). In order to fully understand this phenomenon, Longmire-Avital & Robinson (2017) subscribe to a model where health is socially determined. This is referred to as Social Determinant of Health (SDH), which would say the differences in health are not biological but social. As such the “social determinant of health includes access, availability, socioeconomic status, and social norms, such as discrimination and racism” (p. 65). Etowa et al. (2017) also ascribe to the social determinant of health model. This model would also say health status is due to structural racism and inequalities (Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017).

SBW and Physical Illness.

As discussed above, delaying help-seeking behaviors has a negative impact on mental health; this is also true for physical health. In alignment with the tensions created by the SBW

schema discussed above, Black and Woods-Giscombe' (2012) assessed the factors behind African American women delaying screening for breast cancer. Breast cancer rates are highest amongst African American women, and the stage at first detection is the latest for this group and has the highest mortality rates "at any age and any stage" (p. 1). Black and Woods-Giscombe' (2012) believe the delay in breast cancer screening is a result of SBW and strength behaviors that prevent African American women from seeking help, thus negatively impacting their health (Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012).

Black and Giscombe' (2012) conducted focus groups to determine why these breast cancer screenings were delayed. Participants did not view this delay as a result of being a superwoman, but more in that they did not have a choice. According to the focus groups, "there isn't the 'luxury' to sit down and take care of yourself" (Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012, p 6). Researchers indicate the preventative care necessary for early breast cancer detection is likely not even on the woman's radar as the priority is caring for others (Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012).

Coping.

As noted several times, the SBW schema values independence and strength. Therefore, seeking help and engaging in preventative type care is decreased in the SBW due to the emotional suppression. African American females are less likely to seek help than European American women, even those who are insured and do not have economic barriers (Watson & Hunter, 2015). The caregiving component of the SBW often means the woman will care for others while postponing or neglecting their needs and practicing self-care (Woods-Giscombe' et al., 2015). Sumra and Schillaci (2015) reported that married women experience the lowest levels of stress, while single and divorced women report the highest levels of stress. These results seem

to highlight the importance of social support in coping with life stressors. In a similar fashion, socioeconomic status and level of education did not moderate the relationship between personal and network stress and distress (Woods-Giscombe' et al., 2015).

While the SBW is less likely to seek help and more likely to be stressed, SBWs do engage in various methods of coping. In a study conducted by Davis and Afifi (2019) assessing the strengths of Black women friends, outcomes indicated that supportive discussions between African American women about racial microaggressions is a common coping mechanism. However, results also indicated that these discussions negatively impacted African American women's relationships with Caucasian women; these discussions which can lead to degradation of other groups can consequently lead to decreased relationship satisfaction with those outside of their cultural group (Davis & Afifi, 2019).

Etowa et al. (2017) noted the importance of culturally specific coping mechanisms. Results from this study indicate that spirituality and faith, as well as a sense of community and sisterhood, are important coping mechanisms. While Greer (2011) did not find coping strategies a significant moderator between discrimination and psychological symptoms, there were common coping mechanisms in the African American community, including seeking guidance from elders and using prayer rituals (Greer, 2011).

Strong Black Woman and Faith.

In a review of faith and ethnicity, Musgrave, Allen, and Allen (2002) report faith as an important factor in stress management for African American women and Hispanic women. Similarly, Newlin, Knafl, and Melkus (2002) found faith to be prominent for African Americans to include guidance, coping, and peace. In their focus group study, Banks-Wallace and Parks (2009) found faith to be an integral part of African American women's lives. Since times of

slavery, the church and belief in God have been important cultural components for African Americans. Mattis (2002; 2002), in two qualitative studies, found an emergence of resilience for African American women who espoused a belief in a benevolent God, where the African American women in her sample believed in their ability to overcome and find meaning. Similarly, Henderson (2016) found a sample of African Americans found meaning and increased life-satisfaction through religious involvement. Contrary to the SBW characteristics of stoicism, emotional expression in the African American church is valued (Mattis, 2002). Religious coping, such as prayer, consultation with clergy, and attending religious ceremonies are positively related to self-esteem and negatively related to depression, anxiety, and stress (Hays & Aranda, 2016; Lucette, Ironson, Pargament, & Krause, 2016). However, Chatters et al. (2017) found while African Americans had more interactions with clergy, they were less likely to seek help from clergy for serious problems.

Measures Related to Gender Roles and SBW

Given the negative impact of the SBW on both mental and physical health, understanding how to measure the SBW is vitally important. A culturally relevant and accurate measure will provide points of intervention for clinicians and provide a deeper level of understanding for those working with African American women. As noted, intersectionality is an essential factor when discussing multicultural issues among African American females. Additionally, understanding African American femininity from an intersectional framework is vital. Over the past 25 years, researchers have sought to measure cultural differences in the understanding of femininity and masculinity. Most of these measures are focused on gender roles, African American masculinity, and racism.

Gender Roles Measures

In one of the most comprehensive reviews of gender roles, Harris (1994) used the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) in order to determine if the BSRI was a culturally relevant measure of masculinity and femininity. The BSRI was normed on a Caucasian sample; Harris set out to determine if this measure was also valid for African Americans and Hispanics. In this study, Harris (1994) recruited 3000 participants, with 500 men and 500 women from each of the studied cultures (Anglo, African American, Hispanic). Results indicated while the measure was valid and reliable for the Caucasian population, it was slightly less so for the Hispanic population, and results for the African American population were significantly different.

In the African American population, the masculine items were inconsistent among female and male respondents. For example, the African American men rated the following items as more desirable for men than women: ambitious, analytical, has leadership abilities, and individualistic. However, African American women in the sample did not rate these items as more desirable for men than women. Similarly, African American women rated the following items as more desirable for men: acts as a leader, aggressive, competitive, defends own beliefs, makes decisions easily, and willing to take risks, while African American men did not rate these items as more desirable for men. These results indicate while the BSRI is valid and reliable for a Caucasian population, and at least somewhat reliable and valid for Hispanics, it is not valid for the African American population. African American men and women tend to endorse masculine traits equally across genders (Harris, 1994).

Konrad and Harris (2002) also evaluated the BSRI with an African American population. Results from African American men and women did not endorse the majority (with the exception of two) of the 20 feminine items as more desirable for women. In contrast, Caucasian men

endorsed 7 of the feminine items as more desirable for females. The Caucasian and African American women, with the exception of the masculine item, did not endorse the masculine traits for men only. Consistent with Harris (1994), African American men and women seem to have similar views regarding the desirability for masculine traits across genders (Konrad & Harris, 2002).

The Sex-Role Egalitarianism Scale is also used to assess gender roles. McGhee, Johnson, and Liverpool (2002) analyzed the cultural validity of the SRES, consistent with previous research (Harris, 1994; Konrad & Harris, 2002). Findings suggest African American men and women have more egalitarian views of gender roles than Caucasians. Berkel (2004) also examined the SRES with an African American population. Consistent with findings by McGhee et al. (2002), women in this sample also endorsed more egalitarian views of gender roles. Both McGhee et al. (2002) and Berkel (2004) found this measure to be a valid and reliable instrument that can be used with African Americans.

Other Cross-Cultural Measures

In addition to gender roles assessment and measures, there are several other measures with cross-cultural significance. Doss and Hopkins (1998) used the Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS) to assess masculine ideology across Anglo, African, and Chilean American cultures. In this scale, which measures respondents' evaluations of how men should act, two components were consistent across cultures: hypermasculinity posturing and achievement. In a similar fashion, Norwalk et al. (2011) examined the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) to assess its validity across cultures. Findings suggest this instrument is a universally valid instrument, with two scales with differential ratings between the European and African American samples. These are largely explained by institutional racism and culturally

negative attitudes toward affectionate behaviors in men.

A common thread seen in assessing masculinity in African Americans is in relation to negative stereotypes. Schwing and colleagues (2013) developed an instrument to assess stress in African American men related to racism and negative stereotypes of African American men. Hewitt (2013) also developed an instrument measuring stereotypical gender roles in African American males. Her results indicate a correlation between stereotypical roles and internalized racism. Finally, Thomson and Zand (2005) evaluated the cultural suitability of the Children's Personal Attributes Questionnaire with an African American adolescent population and found this instrument to be culturally valid and reliable.

Strong Black Woman Measures

Thus far the measures discussed have primarily centered on either gender roles or African American masculinity. However, several researchers have attempted to develop scales to assess the Strong Black Woman Stereotypes. The Stereotypic Roles for Black Women Scale (SRBWS) is a scale developed to measure the stereotypical images of Black women, described in detail above: Mammy, Sapphire, Jezebel, and Superwoman (Thomas et al., 2004). Thomas et al. (2004) asked about the relationship between these stereotypic images and self-esteem. Findings suggest a significant negative relationship between the Mammy and Sapphire scales and self-esteem. Results also indicate a negative relationship between the Superwoman and the Jezebel stereotypes and self-esteem, but not significantly so.

The Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRMS) was another attempt to measure constructs within the SBW (Lewis & Neville, 2015). The GRMS was developed to measure microaggressions and developed to be used explicitly with Black women. The scale consists of four factors related to African American women including assumptions of beauty and sexual

objectification, silenced and marginalized, strong Black woman, and angry Black woman. This scale was measured in relation to sexist events. Findings suggest further evidence for the unique experiences of African American women in alignment with previous research about gendered racism (Greer, 2011; Waston & Hunter, 2016; Settle et al., 2018), noting the unique contribution of sexist events separate from the racial microaggression experiences.

Belgrave et al. (2016) saw the need for a culturally relevant and valid measure, and therefore developed a measure of gender role beliefs of African American women. This scale consisted of two primary factors: agency and caretaking. These scales are consistent with the literature regarding African American femininity and the SBW schema. The agency scale consists largely of items related to strength and resilience, while the caretaking factor consisted of items related to support and connection, all of which are common in the SBW schema.

Brown et al. (2017) identified a lack of measures to assess the gendered racism African American women experience as a result of being multiply marginalized, and developed the Gendered-Racial Socialization Scale (GRSS). This scale consisted of nine factors all consistent with previous research regarding African American femininity, gendered racism, and the African American culture. This scale was the first one examined that included a spiritual or faith component, known to be particularly salient for the African American community (Etowa et al., 2017; Greer, 2011). Additionally, this scale specifically addressed features unique to the African American community such as sisterhood and oppression.

While each of the scales mentioned above has promise, there are some inherent issues. Thomas et al. (2004), Lewis and Neville (2015), and Belgrave et al. (2016) developed measures to assess various aspects of the Strong Black Woman schema and African American women's experiences. However, these attempts to measure the SBW left out relevant cultural

considerations including faith, and took a primarily unidimensional view of the SBW, limiting the assessment to gender roles. Brown et al. (2017) took a more comprehensive view of SBW to include a more holistic view of the SBW. However, this scale along with the Thomas et al. (2004) scale contained items that are inherently ethnocentric and contained racially charged language. The ethnocentricity of the scales limit the construct validity as no comparison across groups is possible.

The purpose of this study is to develop a multidimensional, valid scale to assess the SBW schema that includes culturally relevant constructs such as faith and traditional feminine ideology, while also accounting for the central factors of the SBW schema: strength, independence, resilience, caretaking, and emotional suppression. Additionally, given what is known about African American women's higher incidence of stress, depression, and anxiety, and the delay in help-seeking behaviors for SBW, the relationship between these factors will be assessed. Finally, in order to address the discriminant validity, a comparison of Caucasian and African American respondents will be conducted.

Chapter Summary

In order to understand the complexities of African American women's experiences, a framework of intersectionality must be used (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Jones et al., 2018; Davis, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012, Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012). The influences of both racism, sexism, and gendered racism on the development of the SBW is undeniable. African American women must combat current and historical negative stereotypes that have proliferated for years. A primary way African American women have done this is through the employment of the Strong Black Woman schema. This schema is comprised of independence, caretaking, resilience, emotional suppression, and strength (Etowa et al., 2017;

West et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2016). While this schema is not inherently unhealthy, strict adherence to the schema has negative effects on both the mental and physical health of African American women (Longmire-Avital & Robinson, 2017; Sumra & Schillaci, 2015; Woods-Giscombe' et al., 2015; Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012; Greer, 2011). The review of the literature revealed a need for the development of a culturally valid scale to measure the SBW with neutral verbiage that includes relevant cultural considerations (Brown et al., 2017; Belgrave et al., 2016; Lewis & Neville, 2015; Thomas et al., 2004).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This chapter will focus on the validation of the Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale (MSBWS). This new scale was developed to address the constructs of the SBW and important cultural considerations. The proposed nine dimensions of this scale will be assessed for validity and relationships between these dimensions; relevant mental health concerns will also be evaluated. Finally, to assess the discriminant validity of the instrument, the responses from the African American female population and the Caucasian female population will be compared. This chapter will explain the selection criteria, item creation and dimension structure, as well as other instruments used in the data collection process.

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to develop and initially validate the MSBWS. This study will use an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to identify the latent constructs of the proposed MSBWS, and the relationship of the constructs to the items will be explored.

Selection of Participants

Recruitment of participants was done through a Qualtrics panel. Qualtrics offers a paid service to recruit research participants; this service was utilized. The population recruited consisted of both African American women and women of other ethnicities. In order to have a large enough sample, Qualtrics was asked to guarantee at least 150 African American women participants. The participants were recruited for this present study, as well as a larger study. Other than age (at least 18 years of age), the only exclusion criteria was that the women were required to be in a committed relationship.

Demographics

This study used standard demographical questions to include, age, gender, relationship

status, religion, education, employment status, and ethnicity. For full demographic information, please see Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Demographic Information

<i>Total - N</i>	<u>African American</u>		<u>Caucasian</u>	
	159		293	
	<u>Range</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>M</u>
<i>Age</i>	18-66	39.7799	19-80	42.5939
<i>Educational Background</i>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
No schooling completed	3	1.9	0	0
Less than high school	6	3.8	4	1.4
High school diploma or equivalent (e.g. GED)	43	27.0	115	39.2
College Freshman	11	6.9	23	7.8
College Sophomore	8	5.0	25	8.5
College Junior	5	3.1	5	1.7
College Senior	4	2.5	4	1.4
Trade/technical/vocational training	33	20.8	36	12.3
Bachelor's degree	33	20.8	64	21.8
Master's degree	8	5.0	13	4.4
Professional degree	3	1.9	3	1.0
Doctorate Degree	2	1.3	1	0.3
<i>Annual Income</i>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Under \$10,000	20	12.6	15	5.1
\$10,000-\$19,999	11	6.9	16	5.5
\$20,000-\$29,000	18	11.3	41	14.0
\$30,000-\$39,999	24	15.1	43	14.7
\$40,000-\$49,999	23	14.5	25	8.5
\$50,000-\$59,999	18	11.3	37	12.6
\$60,000-\$69,999	7	4.4	35	11.9
\$70,000-\$99,999	16	10.1	46	15.7
Over \$100,000	22	13.8	35	11.9
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Protestant (e.g. Methodist, Baptist, or some other Non-Catholic Christian denomination)	35	22.0	67	22.9
Catholic	4	2.5	50	17.1
Christian (Non-Denominational)	70	44.0	93	31.7
Mormon	2	1.3	4	1.4
Jehovah's Witness	5	3.1	2	0.7

Muslim	1	0.6	2	0.7
Jewish	1	0.6	5	1.7
Buddhist	3	1.9	6	2.0
New Age/Wiccan	20	12.6	7	2.4
None	18	11.3	38	13.0
Other	35	22.0	19	6.5
<i>Relationship Status</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Monogamous Dating Relationship	38	23.9	35	11.9
Married/Life Partner	121	76.1	258	88.1

Measures

In addition to the collection of standard demographic information, several measures were used in this study to include the newly developed Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale (MSBWS), the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), and the Belgrave Gender Role Inventory (BGRI).

Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale

The Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale (MSBWS) was developed to measure the salient features of the SBW constructs, as well as dimensions related to culture, including faith, femininity, and race (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Jones et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2017; Etowa et al., 2017; Davis, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013; Black & Woods-Giscombe, 2012; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Thomas et al., 2004; Jones, 2002.) As expounded on in Chapter Two, the SBW is characterized by strength, independence, resilience, caretaking, and emotional suppression (Settles et al., 2018; Warner et al., 2018; Etowa et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2016; Belgrave et al., 2016; Watson & Hunter, 2016; West et al., 2016; Davis, 2015; Robinson et al., 2013; Thomas et al., 2004). Therefore, the items selected in reference to the SBW naturally address these attributes.

After a thorough review of the literature, 65 items were formulated by a small research

team of two African American women, one Caucasian male, and one Caucasian female. These items were included as part of a larger study. Participants were asked to respond to the items on a seven-point Likert scale from “not at all like me” (1) to “extremely like me” (11). These items are representative of dimensions, with six related to the SBW schema and four related to cultural considerations.

Dimensions Related to SBW.

As mentioned above, the item creation for the MSBWS was founded upon the literature reviewed. This scale can be broadly divided into two categories: dimensions related to SBW, and dimensions related to cultural. The dimensions related to SBW include: strength, independence, competence, caretaking, stoicism, and resilience. For full information regarding the SBW dimensions and their respective items, please see Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
Dimensions Related to SBW

<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Source(s)</u>
Strength - <i>accepting responsibility to be strong and displaying assertiveness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am assertive • I am able to stand up for myself in all situations • I have been told that I am aggressive • I have to be strong no matter what • Being weak is not an option • I take pride in being a strong woman 	Watson & Hunter (2016) West, Donovan, & Daniel (2016) Davis, (2015) Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight (2004)
Independence- <i>self-reliance, avoidance of being weak or needy, and possessing interpersonal savvy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am the only one who can do what I need done • No one will get things done for me • I have to make things happen for myself • I can only depend on myself • I can handle things by myself, make my own money, and I consider myself financially independent • I do not have to depend upon others • I do not need a man/partner to accomplish my life goals 	Etowa, Beagan, Eghan, & Bernard (2017) Nelson, Cardemil, & Adeoye (2016) Belgrave, Abrams, Hood, Moore, & Nguyen (2016)
Competence – <i>hard working,</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am capable of achieving anything I set my mind to 	Settle, Buchanan, & Dotson (2018)

<i>ambitious, educated, and high achieving</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have to know how stay two steps ahead of everyone • Others view me as a hard worker and would want me on their team • I can do anything anyone else can do • I must work hard to achieve my goals • I must be the best at all I set out to do • I am confident, I strive for excellence in all things • I take pride in being a strong woman • I am sophisticated and capable of managing well in diverse situations, professionally and personally 	<p>Warner, Settles, & Shields (2018) Nelson, Cardemil, & Adeoye (2016) Robinson, Esquibel, & Rich (2013)</p>
<i>Caretaking – caring for others; being dependable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is my duty to be there for everyone • I have to show people they can count on me • I sacrifice my needs for others • I am always available to help • My family knows they can count on me • I am everyone’s personal counselor • I spend time working when I could be sleeping 	<p>Etowa, Beagan, Eghan, & Bernard (2017) Belgrave, Abrams, Hood, Moore, & Nguyen (2016) Nelson, Cardemil, & Adeoye (2016) West, Donovan, & Daniel (2016) Robinson, Esquibel, & Rich (2013) Levant, Richmond, Cook, House, & Aupont (2007)</p>
<i>Stoicism - emotionally contained, silent, lacking vulnerability, and being emotionless</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I must hide my emotions • I can’t let people know my real feelings • No one wants to hear how I feel • Being vulnerable is a sign of weakness • I don’t like people to see me cry • I deal with my feelings by myself 	<p>Etowa, Beagan, Eghan, & Bernard (2017) Nelson, Cardemil, & Adeoye (2016) Watson & Hunter (2015) Woods-Giscombé (2010)</p>
<i>Resilience – overcoming adversity, breaking barriers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People view me as having it all together • I don’t let things break me • I am a fighter • I can overcome any situation • I fight to win 	<p>Etowa, Beagan, Eghan, and Bernard (2017) Belgrave, Abrams, Hood, Moore, & Nguyen (2016) Nelson, Cardemil, & Adeoye, (2016) Nelson & Hunter (2015)</p>

Dimensions Related to Culture.

The cultural dimensions are related to faith, feminism, and race. These dimensions emerge in the literature as relevant for the African American community. Please see Table 3.3 for further information regarding these dimensions and their corresponding items.

Table 3.3
Dimensions Related to Culture

<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Items</u>	<u>Source(s)</u>
Faith- <i>view of God and the importance of faith</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My faith is a top priority • I pray often and ask God for guidance • I believe God will help me through anything • My faith will get me through anything • I would describe myself as a God-fearing woman • God is important to me • If my faith is strong my problems will disappear 	Brown, Blackmom, Rosnick, Griffin-Fennell, & White-Johnson (2017) Etowa, Beagan, Eghan, & Bernard (2017) Greer (2011)
Femininity/Beauty - <i>Traditional Feminine Ideology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important for women to be ladylike at all times • I have to be a lady at all times • There are certain things that women just don't do, say, or wear • It is important for women to be graceful • I believe in traditional male/female roles • It is not appropriate for a woman to show too much skin • My appearance is important to me • What others think of my appearance is important to me • I spend a lot of time on my hair and makeup • Inner beauty is more important than outer beauty • Too much makeup is a sign of insecurity • I like to stand out in the crowd 	Davis, Levant, & Pryor (2018) Levant, Richmond, Cook, House, & Aupont (2007) Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight (2004)
Racial Identity – <i>racial and ethnic identity, racial pride</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending time with other people of my ethnicity is important to me • I feel disconnected and out of place in a large group of Black people • I feel disconnected and out of place in a large group of White people • I am proud of my ethnic heritage 	Jones, Buque, & Miville (2018) Davis (2015) Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Hunt (2013) Black & Woods-Giscombe' (2012) Ghavami & Peplau (2012) Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight (2004) Jones (2002)

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale -21.

To assess depression, anxiety, and stress, the DASS-21 will be used with participants. The DASS-21, is a 21 item scale and is a valid and reliable scale. The DASS-21 distinguishes well between symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress (Antony, Bieling, Cox, Enns, & Swinson, 1998). Additionally, this instrument is shown to be valid across cultures (Oei, Sawang, Goh, & Mukhtar, 2013; Norton, 2007).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) will be used with participants to assess levels of self-esteem. The RSE is a widely used, 10-item scale used to measure self-esteem. It has been translated into 28 languages, and used in a multitude of countries (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). This scale was originally normed using adolescents, but has since been found to be valid with adults (Shevlin, Bunting, & Lewis, 1995).

Research Procedures

Data Collection

Approval was granted through the institutional review board of the university prior to any data collection. The items described above in the newly developed MSBWS, along with the DASS-21, and the RSE were administered and collected through the use of Qualtrics. The purpose of the study was explained through an informed consent.

Research Questions

The following research questions are explored in this study:

Research Question 1

What are the latent constructs that emerge from a refined set of items derived from the test set of SBW items?

Hypothesis 1 – The latent constructs that emerge will be consistent with the SBW research to include strength, independence, competence, caretaking, resilience, stoicism, and the culturally relevant themes of faith, femininity, beauty, and racial identity.

Null hypothesis: The latent constructs that emerge will not be consistent with the SBW research and the culturally relevant themes.

Research Question 2

How are the latent constructs related to the following mental health concerns?

- a. How are the latent constructs related to depression?

Hypothesis 2a – The latent constructs of strength, independence, competence, caretaking, resilience, and stoicism will be significantly negatively related to depression.

Null hypothesis: The latent constructs of strength, independence, competence, caretaking, resilience, and stoicism will not be significantly positively related to depression.

- b. How are the latent constructs related to anxiety?

Hypothesis 2b - The latent constructs of strength, independence, competence, caretaking, resilience, and stoicism will be significantly positively related to anxiety.

Null hypothesis: The latent constructs of strength, independence, competence, caretaking, resilience, and stoicism will not be significantly negatively related to anxiety.

- c. How are the latent constructs related to stress?

Hypothesis 2c – The latent constructs of caretaking and stoicism will be significantly positively related to stress.

Null hypothesis: The latent constructs of caretaking and stoicism will be not significantly positively related to stress.

- d. How are the latent constructs related to self-esteem?

Hypothesis 2d – The latent constructs of caretaking and stoicism will be significantly negatively related to self-esteem.

Null hypothesis: The latent constructs of caretaking and stoicism will not be significantly negatively related to self-esteem.

Research Question 3

Do Black women score differently on the MSBWS scales than a Caucasian sample?

Hypothesis 3 – Black women and White women will score differently on the MSBWS, with Black women scoring higher on all factors.

Null hypothesis: Black women and women of other ethnicities will not score differently on the factors of the MSBWS.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data gathered from the Qualtrics participants will be uploaded into the IBM SPSS version 25 software platform. Data will be reviewed for incomplete information or surveys. Additionally, data will be screened for any outliers. Outliers will be analyzed and excluded if necessary.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) will be used to analyze the items and determine factors associated with the MSBWS. Items with 0.4 or greater, using the common factor method, will be retained. Items with factors less than 0.4 will be removed. Consistent with recommendations for items hypothesized to be correlated with direct oblimim (Oblique) rotation will be used (Bandalos & Finney, 2010). In order to understand the relationship between the

factors and items, analysis will first look at the structure coefficients, then the pattern coefficients. In oblique rotation, each item is credited with shared variance in the factor; the sum of the squared structured coefficients will be examined for each factor.

Once the pattern and structure coefficients and the item correlations are analyzed, factors will be identified and named. Information regarding reliability and validity will be given. Additionally, external validity will be evaluated as it relates to the factors' fit with the research. Cronbach's alpha will be used to assess internal validity. Factors will be retained at eigenvalues greater than 1.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the initial development of the MSBWS and provided evidence for the item creation and the respective dimensions. Information was also provided regarding the scales used to assess self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and stress; all mental health concerns for African American women. Finally, information was provided regarding the proposed statistical procedures and research design.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to develop an initial scale to measure salient features of the Strong Black Woman schema, while also taking important cultural considerations into account. Having a multidimensional understanding of the Strong Black Woman will provide opportunities for increased understanding for educators and administrators, and points of intervention for clinicians. Analyzing this scale will provide data for validation of the instrument, as well relationships to important mental health symptoms. This data will be helpful for clinicians in understanding the unique characteristics of the Strong Black Woman.

Data Screening

A sample of 452 women was obtained through a Qualtrics panel. Of this population, 159 were African American women, and 293 participants were Caucasian. Data from the survey information was screened for outliers and inconsistencies. Upon initial screening, none of the African American respondents endorsed the item “I do not believe there is a God and I cannot say that I have ever believed in a God.” Therefore, in order to ensure the comparability of the populations, Caucasian women who endorsed this item were eliminated from the study. This resulted in 21 Caucasian women being removed from the study.

Participant Demographics

Demographics of the participants were presented in Chapter Three; please see Table 3.1 for more details. Additional information was also collected in regards to belief in God, how often religious services are attended, and number of years married and number of times married. Accordingly, a significant portion of both the African American and Caucasian women in this participant pool overwhelmingly believe in God (African American: n=150; 94.3%; Caucasian: n=244; 83.3%). Similarly, a large portion of African American and Caucasian women in this

sample regularly attend religious ceremonies each year (African American: $M=27.7547$; Caucasian: $M=17.5870$; see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1
Further Demographics

	African American	Caucasian
<u>Item</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>M</u>
How many times have you been married?	1.87	2.18
How long have you been married to your current spouse in YEARS (leave blank if never married).	9.96	12.49
About how often do you attend religious services each YEAR?	27.75	17.59
<u>Item</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
I believe there is a God.	94.3	83.3
I sometimes believe there is a God.	3.1	12.6
I used to believe there was a God but do not anymore.	2.5	4.1

As mentioned previously, part of the exclusion process included participants being required to be in a committed relationship. Therefore, the participants were all in relationships or married. See Table 4.1 for more information regarding the participants' marital status.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done through the use of IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. Data was screened for outliers and inconsistencies, resulting in the removal of 21 participants. An exploratory factor analysis was done to identify any weak or cross-loading factors. The data was then reviewed for correlations between the factors and other relevant measures.

Principal Axis Factoring of the Initial Item Battery

The initial scale development of the MSBWS included 63 items, with 9 proposed dimensions. These 63 items were assessed to analyze factorability. Of these 60 items, 32 items were correlated with one another at greater than .4. Due to no extreme violations of normality, Maximum Likelihood (ML) extraction with oblimin (oblique) rotation was used. The original ML kept all factors having an eigenvalue of at least 1. All items kept had an absolute factor loading of at least 0.4. The weakest-loading items were iteratively removed on any of the factors that had cross-loadings less than 0.4 as a means to refine the instrument and decrease noise. The scree plot suggested six meaningful factors that consisted of 32 items together (see Table 4.2). All of these factors are expected to be positively correlated with the MSBWS subscales.

Table 4.2

Final Factor Structure (Pattern Matrix) Maximum Likelihood (ML) Extraction Factor Analysis with Oblique Rotation

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	r^2
	Faith						
My faith is a top priority.	.936						.88
I pray often and ask God for guidance.	.913						.83
I believe God will help me through anything.	.871						.76
My faith will get me through anything.	.824						.68
I would describe myself as a God-fearing woman.	.801						.64
God is important to me.	.764						.58
If my faith is strong, my problems will disappear.	.477						.23
	Stoicism						
I must hide my emotions.		.913					.83
I can't let people know my real feelings.		.831					.69
No one wants to hear how I feel.		.693					.48
Being vulnerable is a sign of weakness.		.585					.34

Table 4.2

Final Factor Structure (Pattern Matrix) Maximum Likelihood (ML) Extraction Factor Analysis with Oblique Rotation

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	r^2
I don't like people to see me cry.		.564					.32
I deal with my feelings by myself.		.516					.27
Femininity							
It is important for women to be ladylike at all time.			.908				.82
I have to be a lady at all times.			.879				.77
There are certain things that women just don't do, say, or wear.			.810				.66
It is important for women to be graceful.			.710				.50
I believe in traditional male/female roles.			.667				.45
It is not appropriate for a woman to show too much skin.			.637				.41
Strength							
I am capable of achieving anything I set my mind to.				.826			.68
I strive for excellence in all things.				.800			.64
I am confident.				.631			.40
I take pride in being a strong woman.				.623			.39
Independence							
No one will get things done for me.					.841		.71
I am the only one who can do what I need done.					.797		.63
I have to make a things happen for myself.					.705		.50
I can only depend on myself.					.651		.42
I can handle things by myself.					.466		.22
Caretaking							
It is my duty to be there for everyone.						.933	.87
I have to show people they can count on me.						.661	.44
I sacrifice my needs for others.						.563	.32
I am always available to help.						.543	.29

MSBWS Factors

Factor 1: Faith. This factor consisted of items assessing the participants' view of faith and God. Of the original seven original items, six items were retained. The item accounting for the most variance (.88) indicated faith was a top priority. This subscale has a high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$).

Factor 2: Stoicism. This factor consisted of all six of the originally proposed items. These items were related to emotion suppression, with the item having the highest correlation "I must hide my emotions." This factor has a high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$).

Factor 3: Femininity. This factor originally consisted of 12 items related to beauty and femininity. Of those 12 items, six items were retained. The highest correlated item on this scale was "It is important for women to be lady like at all time." This subscale has a high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$).

Factor 4: Strength. This factor arose from two proposed dimensions: strength and competence. Items from these scales had significant cross-loadings. The dimension of strength originally consisted of six items, and the dimension of competence consisted of nine items; after analysis four total items were retained. The highest correlated item was "I am capable of achieving anything I set my mind to." This subscale has a high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

Factor 5: Independence. This factor consisted of items related to being highly capable and reliant on herself. Of the original seven items, five items were retained. The item with the highest correlation was "No one will get things done for me." This subscale has high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$).

Factor 6: Caretaking. This factor consisted of items related to caring for others and being dependable. Of the seven items originally proposed for the caretaking dimension, four items were retained. The highest correlated item was “It is my duty to be there for everyone” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .82$).

Research Questions

Research Question 1

The first research question was addressed above with the latent constructs that emerged from the items through an EFA. The final scale consisted of 32 items, with six factors: faith, stoicism, femininity, strength, independence, and caretaking. The hypothesis was supported in that the factors which emerged were directly related to the literature. However, not all of the proposed dimensions emerged as factors. Competence, resilience, and racial identity did not emerge as salient factors.

Research Question 2

In order to answer Research Question Two, a correlational analysis was conducted. Research Question Two consisted of several parts. First, it was hypothesized that the latent constructs would be significantly negatively related to depression. In partial support of this hypothesis, strength was significantly negatively related to depression. However, independence and caretaking were not significantly related to symptoms of depression on the DASS-21. Consistent with research, stoicism was positively related to depression. While not hypothesized, but consistent with research, faith was negatively related to symptoms of depression.

The second hypothesis in relation to Research Question two, was that the latent constructs would be significantly negatively related to anxiety. In a similar pattern as depression, both strength and faith were significantly negatively related to symptoms of anxiety

on the DASS-21. No other factors were significantly related to anxiety on the DASS-21.

The third hypothesis for Research Question Two was that the proposed dimensions of caretaking and stoicism, which both emerged as factors, would be significantly negatively related to stress. This hypothesis was not fully supported; stoicism was significantly related to stress on the DASS-21, but caretaking was not.

The fourth and final hypothesis for Research Question Two was that the emergent factors related to caretaking and stoicism on the MSBWS would be significantly related to self-esteem. This hypothesis received partial support with the factor of stoicism being significantly negatively related to self-esteem. Caretaking, however, was not significantly related to self-esteem on the RSE.

Table 4.3 Pearson *rs*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	.403**	-.250**	.130	.532**	-.003	.074
DASS-Depression	-.335**	.247**	-.124	-.291**	.025	-.024
DASS-Anxiety	-.273**	.104	-.006	-.288**	-.019	-.040
DASS-Stress	-.372**	.171*	-.156	-.287**	.008	-.079

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 3

In order to answer Research Question Three, results from the African American sample and the Caucasian sample on the MSBWS were compared. It was hypothesized that African American women and Caucasian women would score differently on the dimensions of the MSBWS. This hypothesis was partially supported. Consistent with the hypothesis, African American women and Caucasian women scored differently on the faith, femininity, and strength factors of the MSBWS. However, the factors of independence, stoicism, and caretaking were

closely aligned with African American and Caucasian women. See Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Independent sample t-test for African American means and Caucasian Means on the MSBWS

MSBWS Factors		<i>M</i>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		African America n	Caucasia n		
SBW ₁	Faith	9.19	7.32	-6.293	<.001
SBW ₂	Stoicism	6.87	6.91	.197	.844
SBW ₃	Femininity	7.38	5.83	-5.436	<.001
SBW ₄	Strength	8.83	7.97	-4.232	<.001
SBW ₅	Independence	7.22	6.76	-2.073	.039
SBW ₆	Caretaking	8.17	8.20	.457	.648

Pearson rs were performed to assess the relationship of the factors to one another with African American women and Caucasian women. For both African American women and Caucasian women, there was a significant positive relationship between faith and all of the other factors except stoicism. The factors of femininity, strength, independence, and caretaking were all significantly positively related to one another for both African American women and Caucasian women. However, the factor of stoicism showed evidence of significant differences between African American women and Caucasian women. For Caucasian women, stoicism was significantly related to femininity, while this was not the case for African American women. Conversely, stoicism for African American women was significantly related to strength, but this was not the case for Caucasian women. While the majority of the relationships were statistically significant in similar ways for African American women and Caucasian women, the level of significance varied. This suggests similar relationship patterns for African American and Caucasian women on these factors, with differences in meaning. Further discussion of these

results follows in Chapter Five.

Table 4.5 Pearson *rs*, Means, and SDs

	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) SBW-Faith	1	.003	.580**	.185*	.117*	.260**
(2) SBW-Stoicism	-.043	1	.138*	0.092	.312**	.280**
(3) SBW-Femininity	.529**	.083	1	.155**	.119*	.191**
(4) SBW-Strength	.547**	.166*	.334**	1	.481**	.437**
(5) SBW-Independence	.205*	.526**	.224**	.386**	1	.383**
(6) SBW-Caretaking	.245**	.298**	.255**	.430**	.377**	1
Caucasian M	7.28	6.93	5.80	7.96	6.75	8.19
African American M	9.20	6.83	7.39	8.80	7.20	8.08
Caucasian SD	3.31	2.30	2.93	2.03	2.21	2.03
African American SD	2.12	2.45	2.67	1.98	2.15	1.86

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

NOTE: Caucasian coefficients are in the upper diagonal, and African American is in the lower diagonal

Chapter Summary

A sample of 452 participants, 159 African American, and 293 Caucasian women was used in this study and part of a larger study. An exploratory factor analysis (ML) with an Oblique rotation (Direct Oblimin) was used in order to determine the factor structure for the newly developed MSBWS. The final scale consisted of six factors: faith, stoicism, femininity, strength, independence, and caretaking. As hypothesized, the factor structure was reflective of the literature reviewed.

A correlational analysis was conducted to answer Research Question Two to assess the relationship between the emergent factors and items on the DASS-21 and the RSE. The hypotheses for this research question were partially supported with several factors related to depression, anxiety, stress, and self-esteem.

The final hypothesis indicating African American women and Caucasian women scoring differently on the MSBWS was supported. There were clear differences between the scores for African American women and Caucasian women, but there were some consistencies in the pattern of relationships between the constructs. This was especially true for the caretaking and independence factors. Further discussion of these results follows in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is rooted in intersectionality, which looks at the intersection of social identities for African American women, who are multiply marginalized (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Jones et al., 2018; Davis, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012, Black & Woods-Giscombe', 2012). Negative stereotypes of African American women have developed out of slavery and discrimination (Johnson, 2005; Nelson et al., 2016; Sumra & Schillaci, 2015; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010; Thomas et al., 2004; West, 1995). In order to combat these negative stereotypes, a Strong Black Woman schema has emerged consisting of attributes including strength, resilience, caretaking, independence, and emotional suppression.

In addition to the constructs of the SBW schema, there are salient cultural factors for the African American community; this includes faith, femininity, and racial identity (Belgrave et al., 2016; Berkel, 2004; Harris, 1994; Hays & Aranda, 2016; Henderson, 2016; Lucette et al., 2016; Mattis, 2002, 2002; McGhee et al., 2001; Newlin et al., 2002). The newly constructed Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale was developed out of this body of literature to measure aspects of the Strong Black Woman schema and important aspects of the African American culture. The previous chapter provided findings from the EFA, correlational analysis, and independent t-tests. This chapter provides further discussion about these findings, implications for clinicians and counselor educators, limitations of the study, as well as suggestions for further research.

Summary of Findings and Implications

Participants were recruited from a Qualtrics panel consisting of 452 women. Through data analysis, 21 participants were removed in order to ensure comparability of groups. The

final sample consisted of 159 African American women and 272 Caucasian women. All of these women were in committed relationships. The African American sample was between the ages of 18 and 66, while the Caucasian sample was between the ages of 19 and 80. Most of both samples had at least some college (AA = 67.3%; C = 59.2%), were protestant or non-denominational (AA = 66%; C = 54.6%) and made over \$30,000 annually (AA = 69.2%; C = 75.3%). Three research questions were included as part of this study; these questions are discussed below.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked what the latent constructs of the newly developed MSBWS were. Using EFA, six factors emerged including faith, stoicism, femininity, strength, independence, and caretaking. Originally, nine dimensions were postulated as potential factors. The three proposed dimensions that did not emerge were competence, resilience, and racial identity. One possible reason why competence and resilience did not emerge is that the items on these dimensions were both closely related to strength, and therefore did not emerge independently. Consistent with Belgrave et al. (2016), the strength and competence could have collapsed, representing more self-efficacy or agency. Racial identity did not emerge as a salient factor either. One possible explanation is that the items did not accurately measure the construct of racial identity. There were only four items on this dimension, and they related largely to feeling comfortable around other ethnicities.

Research Question 2

The second research question related to how the factors of the MSBWS related to relevant mental health items. As already discussed, not all of the proposed dimensions of the MSBWS emerged. However, of the six that emerged, four were specific to SBW: stoicism,

strength, independence, and caretaking. These factors will be evaluated in relation to mental health constructs below.

Caretaking was not significantly related to any of the mental health constructs, including depression, anxiety, stress, and self-esteem. This is inconsistent with previous research which reported caretaking as the most stressful activity for women in their sample (Etowa et al., 2017; Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). However, this could be due to the sample in this study being in committed relationships, consistent with research showing those in committed relationships had the lowest stress levels (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). Independence also was not significantly related to any of the mental health constructs. One possible explanation of this is because independence was highly correlated with all other constructs on the MSBWS. Therefore, perhaps this construct may have implications for mental health, but not independently.

Strength, however, was significantly related to all of the mental health constructs, at the .01 level. This is consistent with previous research (Davis & Afifi, 2017; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Watson-Singleton, 2017). Interestingly, strength was positively related to self-esteem, and negatively related to depression, anxiety, and stress. This would indicate, again consistent with previous research, that there are positive outcomes related to the SBW schema (Thomas et al., 2004). Strength was negatively correlated with depression; this is consistent with previous research regarding the positive aspect of the strength characteristic in the SBW.

Stoicism was significantly related to mental health constructs. Similar to Watson and Hunter (2016), the emotional suppression component of SBW was significantly positively related to both stress and depression. Additionally, stoicism was significantly negatively related to self-esteem. This is consistent with findings by Woods-Giscombe' (2010), who found when the mask of stoicism is removed, the fractured self-esteem of the SBW is revealed. This is also

consistent with research showing that those who internalize this aspect of the SBW schema are less likely to seek help and to admit they are struggling (Woods-Giscombe et al., 2015).

The two remaining factors of femininity and faith were not considered in the original hypothesis. However, faith was significantly related to all factors on the MSBWS at the .01 level. Faith was positively related to the RSE and negatively related to all aspects of the DASS-21. This is consistent with previous research regarding the importance of faith as a coping mechanism for the African American community (Etowa et al., 2017; Henderson, 2016; Mattis, 2002, 2002; Newlin et al., 2002).

Research Question 3

Consistent with the intersectional framework of this study, African Women and Caucasian women scored differently on all of the factors of the MSBWS. The factors of faith, femininity, independence, and strength were significantly different. This is consistent with the logic employed when adding the dimensions of faith and femininity to this scale as important factors for the African American culture (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Etowa et al., 2017; Henderson, 2016; Levant et al., 2007; Mattis, 2002, 2002; Newlin et al., 2002; Thomas et al., 2004). Interestingly, while stoicism and caretaking were somewhat different between African American women and Caucasian women in the sample, they were not significantly different. This is consistent with research about the superwoman schema, which is a cross-cultural phenomenon characterized by resilience and caretaking (Nelson et al., 2016; West et al., 2016). However, this schema is also epitomized by strength, which was significantly different. This suggests a similar pattern between the SBW and the Superwoman, but to varying degrees.

Further analysis showing the correlations of the factors on the MSBWS for both the Caucasian and African American sample revealed similar patterns as described above. Faith for

both samples was significantly related to all other factors on the MSBWS except stoicism. However, the significance level was higher for the African American sample than the Caucasian sample. This is consistent with research about the unique role of faith in the African American community (Etowa et al., 2017; Musgrave, Allen & Allen, 2002; Newlin et al., 2002).

In a similar fashion, caretaking was significantly related to all factors on the MSBWS for both the African American sample and the Caucasian sample, but to higher levels for the African American sample. The higher level of significance is consistent with the SBW schema and framework of intersectionality (Etowa et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2016; West et al., 2016).

Femininity was significantly correlated on all factors for Caucasian women in the sample, and all factors except stoicism for the African American sample. This is consistent with the research about African American femininity, indicating the unique experiences and roles of African American women (Belgrave et al., 2016; Berkel, 2004; McGhee et al., 2001; Harris, 1994).

Unsurprisingly, strength was significantly related to all other factors for the African American sample, and all factors except stoicism for the Caucasian population, which is again consistent with the Superwoman and SBW schema (Sumra & Schillaci, 2016; Thomas et al., 2004; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands, & Jackson, 2010). Stoicism being significantly related to strength for the African American sample is logical, considering the emotional suppression component of the SBW schema (Belgrave et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2013).

These results show a similar pattern of relationships for both African American women and Caucasian women, but these patterns have more significance and higher levels of significance for the African American sample, than the Caucasian sample. These patterns and

levels seem consistent with intersectionality research, showing the unique experiences for African American women (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Hall, 2018; Warner et al., 2018; Davis, 2015; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Crenshaw, 1989).

Implications for Counselors

The review of the literature showed a pattern of African American women being more prone to symptoms of mental illness such as depression, anxiety, and stress; yet, these same women are less likely to seek help (Etowa et al., 2017). The results from this scale reveal important areas for interventions for clinicians working with African American women.

First, solely from the review of the literature, it is vitally important that clinicians understand African American women from an intersectional framework and acknowledge their multiply marginalized status (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Hall, 2018; Warner et al., 2018; Davis, 2015; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Crenshaw, 1989). It is also important for clinicians to recognize the negative stereotypes of African American women and engage in self-reflection to assess whether these stereotypes are influencing care (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Warner et al., 2018).

Secondly, consistent with previous research faith is a very important aspect of the African American community (Banks-Wallace & Parks, 2009; Henderson, 2016; Mattis, 2002; Newlin et al., 2002). As mentioned previously, the faith factor was negatively related to all aspects of the DASS-21. This reveals an important point of intervention for the African American community. Religious coping strategies such as prayer, consultation with clergy, and attending religious ceremonies, are important for the African American community; results from this study are consistent with previous findings (Chatters et al., 2017; Hays & Aranda, 2016; Lucette et al., 2016). Furthermore, faith was the highest loading factor of the MSBWS; this solidifies the

understanding that faith is important for African American women.

Another important finding for clinicians is the role of strength in the MSBWS. Strength is a central component of the SBW schema; one that is positive. The negative relationship of strength with the constructs of the DASS-21 is consistent with the agency factor on the BGRI (Belgrave et al., 2016). Women who believe themselves to be strong and capable are less likely to experience symptoms related to depression, anxiety, and stress (Watson-Singleton, 2017). The findings regarding self-esteem are inconsistent with previous literature, which found negative relationships between factors of the SBW schema and self-esteem (Thomas et al., 2004). One possible explanation is that the population is a highly religious sample, and faith has a moderating effect on self-esteem. Another possibility is strength on this scale is more representative of agency or self-efficacy, which have a positive impact on self-esteem (Afari, Ward, & Khine, 2012).

Finally, clinicians should note the positive relationships between stoicism and depression and stress. This is important as those women who endorse emotion suppression are more likely to experience symptoms of depression and anxiety. Clinicians should encourage African American women to reduce behaviors related to emotional suppression. Similarly, stoicism is negatively related to self-esteem, which provides insight for clinicians who counsel African American women who are not emotionally expressive. Additionally, the continued task to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help is necessary.

Implications of these findings highlight the seemingly competing outcomes associated with the SBW schema. This is consistent with more recent research noting the positive and negative outcomes associated with adherence to the SBW schema (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018; Watson-Singleton, 2017; Nelson et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2013).

Implications for Counselor Educators and Administrators

In reviewing the literature, several things emerged as relevant for counselor educators and administrators. The call for diversity in higher education and other settings is ever present. CACREP standards directly address the need to recruit and retain diverse faculty and students (CACREP, 2016). In order to retain faculty and students of color, understanding the unique experiences they have is important.

The review of the literature consistently found faculty of color report discrimination, including tokenism and exclusion, and are underrepresented in academia (Warner et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2013; Settles et al., 2018). This is important for administrators to be aware of and not pigeonhole faculty into researching only topics related to diversity and equity. Additionally, encouraging collaboration and comradery between faculty of color and Caucasian faculty is important (Settles et al., 2018).

The findings related to the MSBWS are salient for administrators as they highlight the differences between African American and Caucasian women. Understanding the differences will provide insight for administrators in African American faculty. Additionally, understanding the role administrators and fellow faculty have historically had in the gendered racism African American women experience is an important point (Settles et al., 2018).

This same insight is beneficial for counselor educators as well. It is important to address and encourage cultural awareness in counseling ethically. Specific CACREP standards are addressed by increasing the knowledge of African American women, their help-seeking behaviors, and the role of faith in the African American culture. This study speaks specifically to those things, including

The effects of power and privilege for counselors and clients, help-seeking behaviors of diverse clients, the impact of spiritual beliefs on clients' and counselors' worldviews, and strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination (CACREP, 2016, p. 11).

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, it is assumed that the items of the newly developed MSBWS measure the dimensions proposed. While these items were developed in relation to the literature, this remains an assumption and is an area of future research. Secondly, the selection of the participants in this study is a limitation; in particular, the fact that the participants are all married or in a committed relationship. According to Sumra and Schillaci (2015), women who are single or divorced experience higher levels of stress. The participants all being in a committed relationship could have resulted in less stress on the DASS-21, and therefore impacts the generalizability of the results.

A third limitation is the self-report nature of this data. All of the items on the survey were self-report items, therefore there is an assumption that the participants were truthful in their responses and that they understood the questions being asked of them. Additionally, the items on this survey included statements that require self-reflection, it is assumed that participants were able to properly and accurately reflect on the items and answer accordingly.

Another limitation and assumption of this study is that the other instruments utilized in the study measure what they intend to measure. This includes the DASS-21, and the RSE scale. These scales all have research that shows they are valid and reliable instruments. Additionally, they are shown to have cross-cultural significance as well. However, as with the MSBWS, it is an assumption that these scales accurately measure depression, anxiety, stress, and self-esteem.

Another limitation is the Qualtrics panel used to recruit participants. It is assumed that this panel would recruit a diverse sample, keeping in mind that diversity is more than ethnicity. There is some doubt as to the diversity of this sample, due to the highly religious information reported by participants. Additionally, recruitment from the Qualtrics panel assumes access to the internet and possession of, or access to, computers. Therefore, this would naturally exclude those who do not have access to the internet or computers. Finally, considering this study is an initial development and validation of the scale, the scale's validity and reliability while strong, are based only on this initial sample and need further testing to verify these findings.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study are multifaceted, with implications for measuring the SBW schema as well as clinical interventions. Future research should focus on the validation of this scale through a Confirmatory Factor Analysis. While the six factors that emerged were reliable and valid, further testing is needed. Additionally, correlations between the six factors and the mental health constructs need further testing to include a population that is more diverse. Additionally, these correlations should be compared cross-culturally to assess validity. Additional refinement of this scale may be in order. Two of the factors, strength and competence, seemed to collapse into one factor perhaps more representative of self-efficacy. These items should be evaluated to determine if self-efficacy is a better representation.

An intersectionality framework provides further insight into areas for future research. While there is some debate about what constructs are to be included in intersectionality, Crenshaw (1989) would say intersectionality should only apply to African American women. However, this concept has been expanded to include other intersections of social identities (Shaver & Moore, 2004; Thomas et al., 2008). Further research about this scale could include

examining more intersections of identities. In particular, the intersection of race and class would provide some additional insight into potential confounding variables.

Following this line of thought, additional research with this scale with women of other ethnicities could provide unique insights. Very little research has been conducted with Hispanic populations, particularly women. Utilizing this scale with women of other ethnicities would provide further insight into the unique experiences of minority women. Expanding this research to other women who identify as Black, and other marginalized women, but do not have the history of American slavery, can also provide further insight into the SBW schema. This will also help delineate between the impact of historic slavery and discrimination.

Another area of potential future research is with women of all races. While the results from the scale showed different scores for African American and Caucasian women, there were some similar patterns. As mentioned above, using this scale with women of other minorities would provide insight into concerns about racial discrimination, utilizing this scale to understand interactions between gender-related discrimination and women's patterns of relating can provide additional insight.

A final area of intersectionality that could be important for further research is in relation to faith and religion. As noted earlier, faith emerged as a very important factor for African American women in this sample. Understanding how faith impacts the other constructs on the MSBWS would provide further information on potential interventions. Additionally, having a population that is more religiously diverse could provide unique insight into potential mediating factors.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the summary of the findings from Chapter Four, implications for

clinicians and counselor educators, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research. There were three primary findings related to the research questions. First, through EFA six factors emerged on the MSBWS, all related to the literature. Secondly, there were several statistically significant correlations between factors on the MSBWS, the DASS-21, and the RSE. Third, consistent with intersectionality, African American women and Caucasian women scored differently on the MSBWS. Implications from the correlations were examined in light of clinical considerations. Additionally, information for counselor educators was presented in relation to the CACREP standards. Future research on this scale is needed, including Confirmatory Factor Analysis and further item analysis. Additionally, further analysis is needed with a more diverse population.

Summary of Study

After an investigation into the Strong Black Woman schema and the relevant research, a gap was found in how this schema has historically been measured. Each of the previous attempts either excluded relevant cultural factors (faith or femininity), or included racially charged language. Therefore, the Multidimensional Strong Black Woman Scale was developed to address this gap. Participants were recruited through a Qualtrics panel resulting in 452 participants; after screening 431 participants were included.

Through EFA, six factors emerged to include faith, strength, independence, femininity, stoicism, and caretaking. Results indicated strong correlations between all of the factors on the scale. Additionally, results from the correlational analysis revealed positive correlations between the factors of faith and strength on the depression, anxiety, and stress and significant negative relationships on self-esteem. This revealed important points for interventions for clinicians. Consistent with intersectionality, African American women and Caucasian women scored differently on this scale; this provided evidence for intersectionality and the need for a multidimensional scale that includes cultural considerations. This study has broad implications for intersectionality research, research related to the Strong Black Woman, femininity, and multicultural awareness.

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