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It Takes a Village: Stories of Black Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Cherieda A. Washington
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Health

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Cherieda A. Washington

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

It Takes a Village: Stories of Black Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

by

Cherieda A. Washington

MS, Mississippi College, 2019

BA, Tougaloo College, 2016

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Counselor Education and Supervision

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

While several studies have reviewed the experiences of Black grandparent caregivers, there are limited sources that describe the stories of Black grandparents who are caregivers for their grandchildren and the challenges they face. Utilizing the concepts from Bowen family systems theory, the goal of this study was to explore the stories of Black grandparents who are caregivers for their grandchildren to discover preventive and enhanced counseling techniques for the next generation. Data were collected and analyzed from narrative inquiry interviews with six participants who were Black caregivers for their grandchildren in the state of Mississippi. After analysis of the data, four themes were identified: (a) strong and unwavering faith, (b) a sense of responsibility and obligation, (c) the importance of respect, and (d) ongoing challenges. The findings of this study further revealed what has worked for Black grandparents and assisted positive social change in grandparents' worldview of the challenges they face in raising their grandchildren while providing foundations toward developing firsthand and effective counseling interventions in family therapy and training for counseling professionals.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather, Papa, who is peacefully resting in heaven. I miss and love you so much. To my grandmother, Grandmama, who is presently alive and well, I will never forget how much you and Papa sacrificed to give my maternal sister and me a better one.

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Ephesians 5:28 states: In this way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. I would like to also express my gratitude to my loving husband who has been my listening ear, support system, and rock through it all. I will never forget how you stayed with me for countless nights just to support and encourage me until I got the job done.

To my family and friends, you all were the motivation to keep going throughout this process. To my mom, dad, and bonus mom, thank you for always encouraging me! To my grandparents, sisters, brother, and in-law family, you all have shown unconditional love throughout my doctoral experience, and I am beyond blessed to have such a strong support system! I appreciate all the prayers and guidance that has been

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study..... | 1 |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Background..... | 2 |
| Problem Statement..... | 5 |
| Purpose of the Study..... | 6 |
| Research Questions..... | 6 |
| Theoretical Framework..... | 6 |
| Nature of the Study..... | 7 |
| Definitions..... | 8 |
| Assumptions..... | 8 |
| Scope and Delimitations..... | 9 |
| Limitations..... | 10 |
| Significance..... | 11 |
| Summary..... | 12 |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review..... | 13 |
| Introduction..... | 13 |
| Literature Search Strategy..... | 13 |
| Theoretical Framework..... | 13 |
| Differentiation of Self..... | 13 |
| Triangulation..... | 14 |
| Nuclear Family Emotional Process..... | 15 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Family Projection Process..... | 18 |
| Multigenerational Transmission Process | 18 |
| Emotional Cutoff | 19 |
| Sibling Position..... | 20 |
| Societal Emotional Process..... | 20 |
| Literature Review..... | 22 |
| Traditional Role of the Black Grandparent..... | 22 |
| Value of the Grandparent–Grandchild Attachment | 23 |
| Spiritual and Religious Beliefs | 27 |
| Black Cultural Trauma and Paranoia..... | 28 |
| Stress and Trauma as a Caregiver..... | 33 |
| Fears of Death and Dying | 34 |
| Summary | 35 |
| Chapter 3: Research Method..... | 36 |
| Introduction..... | 36 |
| Rationale for Approach..... | 37 |
| Role of the Researcher | 39 |
| Research Questions | 40 |
| Methodology | 40 |
| Sampling Method..... | 40 |
| Participant Selection | 41 |
| Procedures for Recruitment | 41 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Data Collection | 42 |
| Instrumentation | 43 |
| Data Analysis Plan | 45 |
| Trustworthiness | 48 |
| Credibility | 48 |
| Transferability | 48 |
| Dependability | 49 |
| Confirmability | 49 |
| Ethical Considerations | 50 |
| Summary | 51 |
| Chapter 4: Results | 52 |
| Introduction | 52 |
| Research Questions | 52 |
| Setting | 53 |
| Demographics | 53 |
| Data Collection | 60 |
| Data Analysis | 62 |
| Theme 1: Strong and Unwavering Faith | 63 |
| Theme 2: A Sense of Responsibility and Obligation | 79 |
| Theme 3: The Importance of Respect | 91 |
| Theme 4: Overcoming Challenges | 96 |
| Evidence of Trustworthiness | 108 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Credibility | 108 |
| Transferability | 108 |
| Dependability | 109 |
| Confirmability | 109 |
| Results | 109 |
| Research Question 1 | 110 |
| Research Question 2 | 114 |
| Summary | 115 |
| Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations | 117 |
| Introduction | 117 |
| Theme 1: Strong and Unwavering Faith | 117 |
| Theme 2: A Sense of Responsibility and Obligation | 118 |
| Theme 3: The Importance of Respect | 119 |
| Theme 4: Ongoing Challenges | 119 |
| Interpretation of the Findings | 120 |
| Limitations of the Study | 123 |
| Recommendations | 124 |
| Implications for Positive Social Change | 125 |
| Conclusions | 127 |
| References | 129 |

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In previous endeavors, grandparent inclusion was considered a cultural value in the Black community, as well as something that was respected (Weaver & Schofield, 2015; Williams, 2020). The family and the village hold a high hierarchal positioning. Black grandparents also display a generalized cultural worldview of honor and dignity that is best represented as a sign of wisdom and significantly experienced with life (Brooks, 2017). When a family becomes dysfunctional or changed due to unfortunate circumstances or unforeseen events, it forces each family member to create new dynamics, form new family roles, and possibly reside in different households (Gürmen et al., 2017). Though previous research may have focused on the effects of the new dynamics for the family, there is a lack of research dedicated to Black grandparents who have encountered such change, specifically in the areas of low socioeconomic status (Bureau et al., 2020).

Within this study, I used a narrative inquiry approach to understand the stories of Black grandparent caregivers of their grandchildren. This study is meaningful as I explored the narratives of Black grandparents while focusing on their role as a grandparent and the meanings they developed through their lived experiences. The specific study targets individuals who are Black grandparents currently raising their school-age grandchildren full-time in the state of Mississippi.

This study contributes to what is currently known about Black grandparents with multigenerational families and the children they raise. The findings in this study can be

used to develop mental health professional developments, implement psychoeducational groups, enhance eclectic interventions in the counseling profession, and increase awareness within Black culture. The findings and applications will be discussed in Chapter 5. The sections of this chapter include background information of the phenomenon, the purpose of the study, research questions, the theoretical framework, and the nature of the study. In addition, the definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study are also discussed.

Background

According to Peterson (2018), there are about eight million grandchildren who live with their grandparents as full-time caregivers. Spira and Wall (2006) discussed challenges and concerns grandparents endure when they become full-time caregivers for their grandchildren, which may include discovering effective solutions for their grandchildren's well-being. This can result in multigenerational families providing long-term assistance or guardianship for the grandchildren (Williams, 2020). Some of the reasons may also include, but are not limited to, negligence and abuse, parental health challenges, incarceration, unemployment, substance abuse, and dual careers for parents (Lumpkin, 2008). According to Aughinbaugh (2013), 47.9% of Black married couples resulted in divorce within their first marriage and averaged about nine years of marriage total, which influenced the likelihood of multigenerational homes. In addition to these concerns, Black grandparents are more likely to take on responsibility as the primary caregiver than any other ethnic group (Spira & Wall, 2006). There are historical, social, and political variables to consider when serving this population. In comparison to other

populations, the grandmother is usually the primary caregiver (Cox, 2002; Gibson, 2014). However, there are limited studies that contribute to a gender specific analysis of grandparent caregivers for their grandchildren.

Within a historical context, Black families during the enslavement era were resilient and combative against breaking up the family unit (Genovese, 1976; Gutman, 1976; Walsh, 2006). In addition, slave trauma has been transmitted from previous generations (Chelst, 2009; DeGruy, 2005; Hill-Lubin, 1991). During the early years of the 20th century, numerous parents left the southern region where Jim Crow laws were prominent to find work and better livelihoods for their family in the northern states (Baer, 2022; Blythe, 2022; Frazier, 1939; Powdermaker, 1969). This results in grandparents taking full custody of their grandchildren while they became established through employment and financial stability. Today, many Black American families live in multigenerational households that enable the parents to have dual incomes, obtain advancements and careers with advancing their degree, and enable them to find different paths beyond their circumstances (Abolarin, 2020). Oftentimes, Black grandparent caregivers assist their children and respond to crises that may arise or dysfunction in the family.

As Black households transitioned from 1865 to 1965 within the United States, many changes took place that mirrored other cultures as families endured the end of the Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Industrial Revolution, segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement, among many other transitions (Chelst, 2009; DeGruy, 2005). This was a challenging and significant time for this population and several family

structures in Black culture, which established a combination of family members and the generations that were established (Nichols & Davis, 2021). As a result, this left grandparents to take on more responsibility (Hill, 1999). Around the 1980s, substance abuse, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the increase of incarceration restructured what the family unit looked like when compared to Black families during the post-slavery and segregation era (Clotney, 2012).

Although the multigenerational household is considerably less stressful for the family units when it comes to where their grandchildren reside, Black grandparents who are custodians for their grandchildren often have higher stress and financial challenges because of the challenges of social support in the community and potential stigma against their family (Martin, 2016). Simmons (2005) suggested many legal guardians are grandparents who tend to be female, older, potentially single, live in underserved areas, and have lower levels of education (Baker & Silverstein, 2008; Harnett et al., 2014). Simmons (2005) also mentioned this in comparison to custodian grandparents who have dual incomes and both the grandmother and grandfather in the home.

Additionally, many grandparent caregivers do not receive financial resources to assist with custodianship that was voluntary or based on obligation (Lumpkin, 2008). Harnett et al. (2014) concluded that grandparents described more stress in the role of a caregiver due to problematic child behavior and daily challenges of adapting to the newly acquired family dynamics. Sue and Sue (2015) reported there are fewer resources available for Black families in comparison to White individuals to meet the everyday needs of grandparents who potentially face challenges with chronic illnesses, mental

health concerns, grandchild behavior challenges, and informal support based on the basic needs of survival. Williams (2020) explained Black female caregivers are more likely to become single parents than any other ethnic group; in addition to the findings, Black grandparents constitute the lowest income population in the United States (Abolarin, 2020; Cox, 2002). Because there is an increase of in-the-home grandparents in the role of caregivers, the stories of Black grandparents need to be examined more thoroughly (Abolarin, 2020). Thus, reviewing the background information of the historical facts, challenges faced in society and within the family, and social injustice for Black grandparent caregivers, this creates a different beginning to an imperative story of how these challenges have affected their lives over time.

Problem Statement

The problem for this study was the lack of research to assist Black grandparent custodians for their grandchildren who have challenges with positively redirecting their lives with unforeseen levels of stress (Bowen, 2004; Cooley & Petren, 2020). Grandchildren may need to reside with their grandparents temporarily or permanently due to myriad placement issues with their biological parents. Depending on the relationship between parents and grandparents, Black grandparents who take placement may experience suppressed feelings and replace them with ineffective or destructive behaviors (Bureau et al., 2020). This study is meaningful because it promotes social change to revamp grandparents' experiences and bring light to what they face during custodianship. In addition, this study was aimed to assist with other ongoing issues such

as adjusting to their family dynamics, altered routines, and establishing more boundaries for themselves and their grandchildren (McGowen et al., 2006; Videon, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the stories of Black grandparent caregivers of their grandchildren. This study assists in advocacy for multigenerational families based on the rich experiences reported from the grandparents with preventive action, techniques, and intervention during custodianship. Thus, in this qualitative study, I sought to understand the experiences of the issues expressed from Black grandparent caregivers' perspectives.

Research Questions

The research questions for this qualitative study are as follows:

RQ1: What are the lived stories of Black grandparent caregivers raising grandchildren?

RQ2: What can counselors learn from the stories of Black grandparent caregivers to discover preventive and enhanced techniques for the next generation?

Theoretical Framework

Family systems therapy was developed by psychiatrist Murray Bowen who discovered the family system based on generational patterns established from present-day challenges within the home and created through the family as a subsystem (Bowen, 1978, 2004; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The purpose of Bowen's family systems theory is to discover healthier communication patterns between family members, mitigate harmful behaviors of the individual and family, and develop differentiation and interdependence

within the family unit (Halbur & Halbur, 2018; Nichols & Davis, 2021). Bowen systems theory establishes relationships within the family individually while allowing family members to work toward autonomy (Guerin & Pendagast, 1976). According to Bowen (1978, 2004), the family is composed of finding togetherness and individuality within the family unit. By utilizing the Bowenian approach, the family unit builds compassion for other family members, finds healthy balances between dysfunctional and harmful patterns, and learns the boundaries of other family members to create healthier daily living functioning (Nichols & Davis, 2021). Bowen (1978) also discussed challenges within the self because society thrives off other emotional responses rather than becoming proactive. Thus, Bowen (2004) concluded multigenerational challenges in present-day family systems can influence the autonomy and togetherness of the family (Nichols & Davis, 2021). Bowen (1978, 2004) established eight concepts that describe what the various patterns would look like in the household (Guerin & Pendagast, 1976; Halbur & Halbur, 2018; Kerr, 2017; Kerr, 2019; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Nichols & Davis, 2021): (a) differentiation of self, (b) triangulation, (c) nuclear family emotional process, (d) family projection process, (e) multigenerational transmission process, (f) emotional cutoff, (g) sibling position, and (h) societal emotional process (Halbur & Halbur, 2018).

Nature of the Study

The approach for this dissertation was narrative inquiry. This qualitative methodology was utilized to seek the stories of Black grandparent caregivers raising their grandchildren. Additionally, interviewing was the most appropriate method for data collection considering this study was aimed at understanding the firsthand stories of the

Black grandparent caregiver and understanding the present challenges they experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In previous studies, this data collection strategy has been utilized to discover other barriers in numerous phenomena (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Furthermore, utilizing narrative inquiry has assisted with providing quality information for positive social change in clinical practice, mental health paraprofessional settings, and effective individualized treatment planning for Black multigenerational families.

Definitions

Black: A racial identification of descendants who are African or African American (Sue & Sue, 2015).

Caregiver/Custodian: Primary and full-time guardian of a child (Cox, 2002).

Grandparent: An individual who has a child who gave birth to a child (Abolarin, 2020).

Multigenerational family: Families raised in one household with at least two adults from various generations within the family (Danieli, 1998).

The village: The influential individuals in the family or close family friends who assist with the overall development of a child (Brooks, 2017).

Assumptions

Within this study, I assumed the narratives from the participants' stories would provide rich and in-depth understanding of their stories as a grandparent and how their caregiving role evolved over time. I also assumed the current knowledge and research dedicated to multigenerational families could be integrated during the interview process. Additionally, assumptions centered on participants' ability to speak truthfully and based

on accountability for this study. I assumed participants would express their stories based on integrity and honesty for themselves and as caregivers for their grandchildren. Further, I assumed individuals who participated in the study appropriately and accurately reported their lived experiences and described how their experiences presently shaped them. I assumed participants would describe their stories of how they interpreted the meaning of their lives and how their role in the family has created these meanings. Lastly, I assumed the grandparents would share similar themes regarding educational challenges, multigenerational concerns, and needed assistance with finances to assist with their role as a full-time caregiver.

Scope and Delimitations

The delimitations for the study included possible generalizability, as the participants were Black grandparents living in the state of Mississippi and raising school-age grandchildren full-time in their homes. The participants were located throughout different counties in Mississippi. Considering the focus of the study included Black grandparents raising grandchildren, the results are limited and cannot be generalized for grandparents who identify as other races and ethnicities or who reside in another state or region.

Because qualitative research differs from numerical studies, the uniqueness and interesting factors of the phenomena are characterized by numerous aspects. First, empirical researchers seek to find the subjective lens from the population utilized rather than the truth (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This assists the researchers with finding the generality and findings of the observation geared toward social change. Another unique

aspect of qualitative research is the training of knowledge potentially required for the outcome. Considering this research requires a multilayered analysis of qualitative data, it does not consist of only closed-ended questions. Numerous participants had additional information that led to evidence-based results, and it was necessary to inquire more for better clarification until the results were interpreted clearly and successfully (see Chenail, 2010).

Limitations

Narrative inquiry provides in-depth information of phenomena, which suggests a researcher needs an overall understanding of the stories being told without prior judgments or biases (Kim, 2015). A limitation of this study was the likelihood of a participant describing the present-day concerns rather than the early onset of challenges. The data relied on participants' recollections of the stories being described for their lives, and Ravitch and Carl (2021) recommended to inquire the questions of concern either during the follow-up interview, asked in a different way and time during the interview, or to ask for clarity from participants. Additionally, the data were subjective, rather than objective in comparison to quantitative research, based on the perspectives of the researcher (Burkholder et al., 2020; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With the information collected by the researcher, the stories expressed by the participants were not interpreted mathematically and were based on a personal perspective rather than empirical results (see Kim, 2015).

Significance

The information communicated from the grandparents regarding their experiences as a caregiver is beneficial to assisting the counseling profession, paraprofessionals, and community support services with the resources voiced. Without the adequate amount of research conducted to help enhance the experiences of this phenomenon, areas of growth explained by these caregivers would continue to exist, and Black grandparents would likely continue to endure hardship from the many challenges expressed in previous research (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Through this study, I sought to discover gaps in research and create positive social change for Black culture. Providing awareness for Black grandparents will help reduce future recurrence of existing challenges (Thomas et al., 2009). Thus, the implications of this research are to validate the experiences of Black grandparents while finding enhanced interventions of what is needed for the next generation of caregivers based on the stories shared within this study.

Within this study, I aimed to seek, understand, and interpret the stories that were influential for Black grandparents who are primary caretakers of their grandchildren and identify the various themes and nuances of their experiences in daily life. This understanding would assist me in determining effective and appropriate counseling interventions, as well as identified challenges, strengths, cultural needs, and specific issues from the grandparents' lens. In addition, this study aimed to be proactive in nature to assist Black grandparents in mitigating ongoing challenges to support grandchildren's needs as they transition into adulthood. As a result, they may be less likely to have their

adverse childhood experiences affect them and continue to positively redirect future generations of family lineage (Bowen, 2004).

Summary

In Chapter 1, I provided the introduction and overview of the problem, methodology, and the significance of this study. In addition, this chapter included background information of Black grandparents raising their grandchildren with rewards and challenges of how they view their role as the grandparent and themselves as an individual. In this study, I examined the various considerations of Black grandparents and the stories that may occur through the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors within their lives leading up to grandparent custodianship. In Chapter 1, I sought to provide background information of Black grandparents and various rationales of full-time guardianship. Particularly, Black grandparents living in the state of Mississippi are identified for this study in need of support for positive social change efforts and targeted counseling interventions and techniques.

Chapter 2 will include an exhaustive review of current research and techniques supported from Chapter 1. Chapter 3 provides a review of the methodology that was utilized in this study. In addition, Chapter 3 includes participant information, data analysis, and data collection. Chapter 4 will report what was discovered from my research, and Chapter 5 will discuss the implications for future research regarding this phenomenon in the counseling profession.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Influential research includes discovering the answers to difficult questions, bridging the gap in challenging circumstances for individuals, and being an advocate for underserved populations (Kim, 2015). There is a large amount of research dedicated to the impact of grandparent guardianship in the Black community. However, the impact of the Black grandparent caregivers' stories has been provided with generic interventions that do not provide an individualized experience to assist this phenomenon (Williams, 2020). Chapter 2 conveys the history of the Black culture, highlights the family constructs throughout the centuries, and pivots to present-day concerns for older-aged adults.

Literature Search Strategy

During the search for background information, I utilized the Walden University Counseling and Psychology Library Database, Journal of Family Psychology, and VISTAS Online. The keywords used were *African American, Black, Bowen family systems, Attachment Theory, custody, grandparents, custodian, caregiver, qualitative, narrative inquiry, role, grandchildren, old age caregivers, Black trauma, slavery trauma, and stories*.

Theoretical Framework

Differentiation of Self

Murray Bowen (1978, 2004) established differentiation of self as the tenet of Bowen's family systems theory. The concept of differentiation of self refers to the

emotional maturity of not being triggered or responding irrationally to emotional pressures (Nichols & Davis, 2021). It also expands on the maturation of an individual's personal intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions with the ability to respond well, even while faced with anxiety and fears (Taubman-Ben-An et al., 2013). Findler (2014) concluded there are negative results of grandparents raising grandchildren with regard to their experience of grandparenthood, social support, level of self-differentiation, family cohesiveness, stress, and posttraumatic growth. Thus, a differentiated person is likely to advocate for themselves, respectfully interpret someone else's feelings toward a situation, and find healthier ways to discuss the differences in challenges if need be (Fogarty, 1976).

On the contrary, if an individual is undifferentiated, the family member will likely respond to emotional pressure irrationally or be more dependent on others (Nichols & Davis, 2021). Bowen (1978) discussed that an undifferentiated individual would likely be more responsive to others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward them rather utilizing their self-awareness and autonomy. In addition, an undifferentiated person may find it difficult to control their individuality, because of anxiousness of what others may think or feel about them (Taubman-Ben-An et al., 2013). They may inquire about other opinions, repeat what others may feel about them, ask others about what they believe they should do, and repeat what others have stated about them (Nichols & Davis, 2021).

Triangulation

Bowen described the family unit as being unstable under stress, which may be difficult with triangulation present in the household (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Triangulation

occurs when a member of a family interjects with two other members within the family (Bell et al., 2001; Bowen, 2004). Usually, this unhealthy pattern occurs when the two members are under stress, which is like utilizing an unsolicited mediator in the family (van Dijk et al., 2022). Because the family dyad can become unhealthy, the third party is the influential member who can be appropriately or inappropriately mediating stressful circumstances or challenges (George, 2011). Because of the conflicts triggered by unhealthy triangulation patterns, triangulation can also cause underlying stress with members in the family (Ramos & Ramos, 2022).

Nuclear Family Emotional Process

The challenge within the nuclear family's emotional process develops based on four basic relationship patterns that govern the family unit: (a) marital conflict, (b) dysfunctional spouse, (c) impairment in one or more children, and (d) emotional distance (Bowen, 1978). Because an individual's beliefs and norms within the family system influence the patterns and routines, they also play a major part in the system's emotional functioning (Halbur & Halbur, 2018). Considering the four basic concepts developed negatively based on family tension and stress related concerns, the reaction and the stress is dependent on family encounters, how the family reacts to stress, and the family's overall connectedness with family members outside the home and social connections. The higher the level of stress, the higher the chances family members may develop stress-related symptoms as well (Bowen, 1978, 2004).

Based on Bowen's theory regarding marital conflict, if there is increased tension between the relationships, anxiety is prominent within the family (Bowen, 2004). The

couple may focus on behaviors their spouse may not be doing for them rather than what they like about each other. In addition to the marital conflict concept, the spouse may attempt to control the other individual, and both may be resistant to efforts being attempted (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Bowen (2004) also discussed how the level of the differentiated individual is a process within the nuclear family emotional process, as well as how the spouse within the marriage must be confident enough through stress, mitigation of anxiety, and projection in one another (Klever, 2021). When spouses are struggling with differentiation of self, there is an increased likelihood of intensity within the marriage, which can also lead to stressful feelings and behaviors that influence the rest of the nuclear family (Shenaar-Golan & Lans, 2023). The process of how the undifferentiated spouse handles stress determines how the family conveys their reaction to stress (Kurşuncu & Sümer, 2021). Because the nuclear family's emotional process is a development within itself, the patterns of the multigenerational reactions to stress or crises either hinder or help to decrease or enhance the family experience (Alzoubi, 2016, Berk, 2017).

When considering this function in one spouse, this looks very similar to marital conflict patterns. The difference in marital conflict and dysfunction in a spouse is the result of one spouse being dominant or controlling the other, which creates the atmosphere of the spouse who is being controlled being dependent on the other (Kurşuncu & Sümer, 2021). This dysfunction may be prominent with physical illness, emotional or behavioral concerns, and social support challenges (Nichols & Davis, 2021; Owoo, 2017). The overly dominant-functioning spouse may accept the role without

complaining or advocating for themselves. The specified challenges within the marriage may not affect the children, but they are likely to provide unhealthy patterns for the children's ongoing development of life patterns in the role of a caretaker or guardian (Berk, 2017).

Considering some families have children who are diagnosed with some level of impairment, the spouse or parent may focus on their anxieties of one or more of the children within the family (Findler, 2014). The worrying and stress may be excessive, and possibly, the parent or guardian may have a negative viewpoint of the child with their specific needs. The parent may also focus on the child more than their spouse or anything else regarding themselves, which may also increase chances of an undifferentiated self (Bowen, 2004; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Thus, the parent focuses on the child, and the child may become more reactive to the parent's needs. This challenge influences the child's differentiation from the rest of the family and may increase the likelihood of inappropriate behavior within the home or in social settings (Berk, 2017; Kerr, 2017).

Emotional distance is a concept utilized within the family unit that may look like distancing each other to reduce the level of anxiety or stress but may create a risk of being too isolated from the family. Bowen (2004) reported this specific concept is one of the most universal coping mechanisms for the nuclear family, and if utilized inappropriately or in an unhealthy manner, this could harm the spouse or children in the home or long term. It causes the family to be more separate rather than connected, and the individual who is avoiding family connectedness may try to avoid the person altogether (Ungvarsky, 2022). In addition, family members could avoid participating in

family activities or functions, substance abuse, concerns with illness, or desiring physical distance altogether (Berk, 2017; Halbur & Halbur, 2018; Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Family Projection Process

During the family projection process, the parents transfer the stress of their personal or marital challenges to the child. The projection process increases the chances of vulnerability to negative symptoms regarding their functionality (Nichols & Davis, 2021). Because children inherit numerous problems through the behaviors and interaction of their parents, the problems they are influenced by can likely increase the relationship sensitivities within the family unit (Berk, 2017). This may look like increased needs of attention or intolerance of their undifferentiated self. Because of the heightened rationale that their child's sensitivities are present within the family, the behavior increases anxiety within the relationship system. If the parent believes the child has low self-esteem or has anxieties establishing their differentiated self, the parent may utilize techniques to increase their self-esteem and differentiation (Nichols & Davis, 2021). Although the parent believes this may be helpful for the child, creating this dynamic results in dependency of the parent to receive words of affirmation, which could become problematic during the child's early stages of adulthood (Berk, 2017; Bowen, 1978).

Multigenerational Transmission Process

Throughout the multigenerational transmission process, Bowen (1978, 2004) concluded that, in the nuclear family, usually one child is more differentiated than the other in the projection process. This is created throughout the differences displayed across various generations through the family unit. Transmission occurs through

conscious and unconscious learning and teaching throughout connectedness and relationships (Baker, 2017). Throughout the combination of family members actively displaying their behaviors, moods, and attitudes throughout the relationships, the multigenerational process is contingent with the levels of differentiation of self for all family members. Although the relationship patterns develop throughout the years, Butler (2015) explained people tend to select significant others with similar levels of differentiation of self that matches their personal self-esteem levels. Thus, highly differentiated families have stability within the family unit and positively contribute to society, whereas undifferentiated families are usually chaotic and the individuals within the family system display high dependency levels (Brooks, 2017).

Emotional Cutoff

Emotional cutoff implies the various emotional processes between the individuals and the nuclear family or between the multigenerational challenges left unresolved. This method explains the way family members may express their emotions or reactive attachments to their parents, grandparents, or extended family members (Bowen, 2004; Lim & Lee, 2020). Considering people may have unresolved attachments to certain family members, emotional cutoff explains how the family members may display their emotions rather than communication to solve issues (Peleg & Peleg, 2023). The lower the level of differentiation, the higher the chances of attachment within the family. Some of the cutoff methods utilized by family members are physical distance, being uninvolved with family members who live in proximity, or living in the home of the cut-off family member who is emotionally unavailable to them (Shenaar-Golan & Lans, 2023). Bowen

(1978) also explained emotional cutoff could be utilized by a family member to provide separation, boundaries, or withdrawing from hurtful situations. The family member who emotionally cuts off another family member could possibly be avoiding the relationship they desire or need but have not discovered a meaningful solution to heal the unresolved hurt (Nichols & Davis, 2021).

Sibling Position

Bowen (2004) adapted Walter Toman's research on sibling position into his family system theory, which concluded sibling positioning may predict common features in the family emotional unit (Bowen, 1978; Butler, 2015; George, 2011; Toman, 1992). Additionally, Bowen (2004) indicated that the older sibling of the family may take on more responsibility easily or is the primary nurturer of the other siblings, while the younger sibling may not take on leadership roles or responsibilities (McHale et al., 2012; Sulloway, 1996). Children who grow up without any siblings may be more resilient, self-confident, and more likely to be differentiated than other peers (Bowen, 2004). Further, Bowen (1978) theorized that when individuals marry a spouse with similar sibling positioning, it increases the chances of producing a healthier and more fulfilling relationship. On the contrary, couples who marry spouses with opposing sibling positions are likely to be unhappy, undifferentiated, and have higher levels of stress (Sulloway, 1996).

Societal Emotional Process

The societal emotional process involves environment influences the family emotional thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Because society has rules and expectations

set in place, the social norms and rules are created for the group rather than the individual (Bowen, 2004). This concept enhances the individual's autonomy and independence to make effective and appropriate decisions for themselves. Differentiation of self within the society emotional process creates increased levels of emotional maturation for the individual (Nichols & Davis, 2021). On the other hand, the more codependent the family is on societal expectations, there is a decreased likelihood of the family's ability to make decisions that are most appropriate and effective for the family to continue healthy functionality (Kerr, 2017).

During the 1960s, Bowen discovered juvenile court systems established the delinquent child as the victim rather than providing fair punishment (Bowen, 2004; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The consequences of their actions were possibly decreased in hopes of providing a second chance to the delinquent child, which did not assist with frequent offenders in the legal system. The court systems deemed the parents as *bad parents* and assisted the delinquent offender with numerous interventions (Kerr, 2017). In addition, consistent regression was triggered by anxiety within the family unit in numerous households. This caused individuals to attempt to relieve the anxiety of those affected rather than looking at the long-term effects of reducing punishments for delinquent children (Ungvarsky, 2022). As a result, it increased crime within communities, consistent family problems, and ongoing segregation between various racial groups (Paniagua, 2014). The concept of cultural forces implicates how society may function and the adaptability to the challenges that are faced within a given time (Sue & Sue, 2015).

Literature Review

Traditional Role of the Black Grandparent

In Black culture, the grandparent is usually the matriarch of the family and community (Williams, 2020). Gibson (2014) noted the grandmother is usually the primary grandparent who takes on the caregiver role. Because many Black multigenerational households are maintained by experienced parental figures, the grandparent usually provides primary or secondary assistance to the parent (Thomas et al., 2019). The role as the grandparent caregiver is significant because in certain situations, the grandparent may feel obligated to assume responsibility of being the custodian to avoid the grandchildren resulting in the state's custody (Thompson et al., 2019). Clotey (2012) found grandparents face numerous challenges with their mental health and wellbeing, such as legal aspects, financial issues, health-related problems for the grandparent and grandchildren, education concerns for the grandchildren, and the unforeseen concerns with the future for their grandchildren. In certain circumstances, the grandparents will also assist the biological parents or guardians to intervene with parental guidance (Bertera & Crewe, 2013). According to Lee and Blitz (2016), if the adult children and grandchildren live in a multigenerational home, the grandparent is usually head of the household, which is based on experience, stability, and life-altering circumstances (Dell & Appelbaum, 1977; Peterson, 2018). The grandparents assume the responsibility as primary caregiver, and there are newly acquired routines, potential fatigue, and decreased time for self-care to take into consideration (Abolarin, 2020). There is almost little to no assistance from outside family members to assist with the

caregiving process, and grandparents must adjust to the new family dynamics (Martin, 2016; Paniagua, 2014).

As cultural tradition holders, grandparents provide stability for multiple generations within one household (Videon, 2002). Though previous literature highlights how grandparents may possibly suffer based on low socioeconomic status or lack of support, they are also a safe place to protect the Black family unit, as well as the ongoing tradition (Bertera & Crewe, 2013; Clotney, 2012; Peterson, 2018). Thompson et al. (2019) reported some of the challenges of grandparents taking custodianship of the grandchildren result from the grandparent being a gatekeeper, while Sue and Sue (2015) explained the cultural aspect is due to the grandparent maintaining the family business within the household. In some circumstances, trauma may have been carried from generations prior to the grandparents' existence, as well as circumstances they have gone through before experiencing grandparenthood (Brandt, 1978). Thus, in a multicultural construct, the grandparent is not only a guardian to the grandchildren, but a literal and metaphorical guardian to the entire family (Bertera & Crewe, 2013).

Value of the Grandparent–Grandchild Attachment

As previously discussed, Black grandparents tend to seek togetherness and closeness within the family. Attachment theory suggests children have more positive outcomes of upbringing if they are around a consistent caregiver (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1958; Halbur & Halbur, 2018). John Bowlby (1958), who is the founder of this theory, suggested children's emotional bonds are essential, which are created from birth from the caregiver. Attachment established with an emotional and physical

caregiver increases the likelihood of survival and is viewed as an evolutionary and continuous process (Berk, 2017). Lim and Lee (2020) reported children who formed early childhood bonds with their caregivers and received comfort and care were more likely to survive until young adulthood. In addition, Martin (2016) concluded that when the grandparents were more self-reflecting, expressive of thoughts and feelings, and making their grandchild's needs a priority, the relationship improved. If the child does not receive adequate forms of security from a caregiver or an influential person in their life, this challenge can potentially have a negative outcome throughout later years of life, specifically in early onset of adolescent years (Berk, 2017; Halbur & Halbur, 2018). Though Bowlby (1958, 1959) suggested attachment is mostly seen during the infancy stages between the mother and infant, Wilcox and Baim (2016) conducted a longitudinal study that sought to look at the development of the infants and caregivers until the child turned about 18 months old; the authors concluded attachment happens in stages rather than just early infancy. In addition, Nwokeji (2009) concluded the grandchild and grandparent form a mutual and reflective relationship among each other. Thus, influences seen in attachment in children often develop from not having a consistent caregiver, which may also include traumatic events unless the child is provided with a quality caregiver (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).

Wright (2010) discussed the importance of the concepts of security, formed by William Blatz, and attachment, which conveyed early childhood development can vary between children. The author mentioned how Ainsworth refined Bowlby's (1991) foundations of attachment theory and created extensions that reported infants need secure

caregivers, but anxiety from the attachment can create additional concerns as well.

Wright (2010) summarized the needed aspects of creating atmospheres for children to develop inner strengths and problem-solving styles that eventually develop the overall concept of security for the child. In Blatz's theory of security, he suggested there were four stages of development: (a) immature dependent security, (b) independent security, (c) mature dependent security, and (d) pseudo-security (Wright, 2010). Immature dependent security refers to ensuring the child feels safe in the newly acquired placement in the preschool setting, which means the organization of the floorplan, time, staff, play areas, and teacher-child relations are essential to developing the foundations of security. The major aspect of independent security suggests teaching strategies, behaviors management, and teacher-child communication is imperative to assist the child to learn for themselves during this transition. Additionally, Bowlby's (1958, 1959) early infancy development was essential to the overall process. However, the psychometric properties of middle childhood and adolescent years were not further evaluated after the early childhood years (Jewell et al., 2019). Wright (2010) concluded these techniques of the child learning to have security can be assisted by the teachers in the process; however, these cannot be the sole factors of the child learning for themselves on how to create bonds and interactions with others. The goal for grandparent caregivers is to teach the child how to be functional and responsible in developing relationships and accept the consequences once rules have been set in place within a new environment with attachment figures and stability (Berk, 2017; Bowlby, 1958, 1959). When grandparent caregivers can retain control of the way they react to emotional circumstances that arise,

as well as creating the needed bonds with the grandchild, the family becomes an improved functioning unit (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Wilcox & Baim, 2016).

Effective, impactful, and consistent early childhood development for the grandparent caregiver is essential considering they are one of the first educators for the child (Berk, 2017). The caregiver is responsible for teaching the child how to regulate their own behavior overtime (Oron et al., 2021). Because the early childhood stages are focused on learning how to develop healthy routines and relationships, it can often be misguided through assumed practices (Lee & Blitz, 2016). For instance, Oron et al. (2021) expressed if a mother attempts to feed their child amid playtime and the child cries or becomes emotional, the focus is usually directed to solving the issue at hand, which is an educational misconception in parenting while creating routines and mother-child personal growth. Erik Erikson's development stage during the first two years of the child's life, which is trust versus mistrust should also be considered during the early stages of childhood (Berk, 2017). With the proper relationship between the primary caregiver and the child, it promotes a healthy approach, which will likely encourage the child to obtain knowledge from the caregiver considering the higher levels of security and trust (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). On the contrary, if the child does not trust the caregiver, it creates a control approach, which provides fear in the child and results in the child potentially not feeling safe (Bowlby, 1958). This could be later displayed in children's behavior and security (Wright, 2010). If the child is secure with their primary caregiver's attachment, it will assist in developing healthy and close relationships with their peers. However, if the attachment is insecure, the child may possibly create

controlling hierarchical dynamics with their peers (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowen, 1978). Thus, attachment and security does not derive from a smaller aspect of a theory during infancy, but it is developed through complexity into later childhood, adolescent, and adult years (Oron et al., 2021; Wilcox & Baim, 2016).

Spiritual and Religious Beliefs

In Black households, the church is typically an important consideration for clinical practice (Abolarin, 2020). For many Black grandparents, they were raised in the church because they were provided different opportunities, social support, leadership from elders and pastors, financial guidance and assistance, cultural appropriation, and political influence (Paniagua, 2014). In most cases, Black Americans consider the sermon that is usually given by a pastor or preacher assist them throughout their daily living functioning (Boyd-Franklin, 2006; Jones-Smith, 2018; McAuliffe, 2013). Specifically, Black grandparents tend to utilize the church for social support and crisis intervention when desired as well as needed (Nguyen et al., 2016). Because pastoral counseling has been heavily influenced in the Black church, pastors are trusted members in the community and tend to build rapport with the family based on the spiritual guidance between man and God (Abolarin, 2020; McCain, 2016). Spirituality is highly considered and recommended when providing mental health services for Black multigenerational homes because of the knowledge and wisdom that is retrieved from previous generations (Gaw, 1993).

Black Cultural Trauma and Paranoia

Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome

Posttraumatic slave syndrome was identified by Dr. Joy DeGruy (2005) regarding the previous and experienced multigenerational trauma that has been ongoing for centuries of slavery, which continues throughout the Black community based on current injustices, institutionalization, and microaggressions. It is also described as the discriminatory and prejudiced influences that have been carried over from multiple generations (Danieli, 1998). DeGruy (2005) explained during the early 1600s, Africans were held captive and taken to North America to be bought, sold, and utilize for financial profit, which was also known as chattel slavery. This psychological trauma presented throughout the Black community consistently activates and traumatizes individuals who suffer from posttraumatic slave syndrome (Franklin et al., 2006). While many grandparents were not enslaved, they were born during the era of segregation laws, experienced traumatic behaviors against them, or enslaved family members while they were alive (Chelst, 2009; Mims et al., 2005). Based on the epigenetics of Black multigenerational families, the physiological influential factors were passed down from one generation to the next (Berk, 2017; DeGruy, 2005; Tollefsbol, 2017).

The Tuskegee Experiment

Black families are also reluctant to accept prescribed medication as well. This trauma is based on the Tuskegee experiment that was in 1932, which was unethically conducted on 600 Black men in Macon County, Alabama to see the effects of syphilis (Brandt, 1978). At the time, syphilis did not have a known cure and was utilized on

mostly sharecroppers who had likely never been to a doctor before (Washington, 2006). Out of the 600 men that were utilized in the study, 399 were injected with syphilis into their bloodstream; the other 201 participants, the control group, were free from the disease (Brandt, 1978). All participants were monitored by health care professionals and provided with placebos with no cure (Brandt, 1978). By 1947, the recommended cure for syphilis was penicillin, but the participants in this study were still not provided the accurate treatment based on consultation with physicians to not provide them with adequate care (Washington, 2006). The Tuskegee Institute, which is now called Tuskegee University, only tracked the effects of syphilis and left hundreds of Black men blind, presenting with psychotic features, or dead from the effects of syphilis. This deadly experiment continued into the mid-1960s but was later mentioned by an investigator about the unethical procedures conducted (Brandt, 1978). In 1972, a reporter published the story and left Blacks outraged from the injustice practices conducted on the 600 Black men participants, which finally forced the study to end (Washington, 2006). By the end of the experiment, more than 120 participants died, over 40 of the participants' spouses were diagnosed with syphilis, and at least 20 children contracted the disease during birth (Brandt, 1978). As a result of the inhumane treatment the participants received, there was small compensation for the families who were involved, and new laws to protect human subjects were developed (Babbie, 2017; Brandt, 1978; Waites, 2004; Washington, 2006). In 1997, former President Bill Clinton formally apologized to the United States in attempt to rebuild the trust and of the Black culture (Harter et al., 2000).

Based on the conclusions of the Tuskegee experiment, many Blacks developed a paranoia and mistrust with vaccinations, prescriptions, and public health officials (Norris, 1992). Although this is not the only study that included Blacks in unethical procedures, the mistrust and beliefs of physicians have impacted Black generations for centuries (Morris, 1996). The protection and hesitation with Black individuals are based on lack of representation in the medical field in comparison to white Americans, which has been passed to various generations within the family (Sue & Sue, 2015). Black individuals have expressed how the public health is designated to assist society, but still fails to do so with lack of assistance and understanding of the presented trauma in the healthcare field (Nichols & Davis, 2021). Just from this experiment alone, Blacks are likely to be confused to trust health officials, disappointed and traumatized on how they were previously treated, indecisive of medical treatment, and reluctant to receive assistance from government officials (Mims et al., 2005; Morris, 1996).

Jim Crow Laws

Jim Crow laws were named after the anti-Black white supremacist, Jim Crow, and reigned between 1877 through the mid-1960s (Baer, 2022). Jim Crow laws were created as a series of laws that regulated Blacks in their daily functioning (Blythe, 2022). The belief Jim Crow established was that whites will always be superior to Blacks and never will be equal based on social economic status, sexuality, intelligence, morality, and hierarchy (Baer, 2022; Sue & Sue, 2015). Jim Crow laws, which were also called *Black codes*, excluded Blacks from the same equalities as Whites, which resulted from the Plessy v. Ferguson U.S. Supreme Court case in 1896 (Baer, 2022). The verdict was Jim

Crow laws could create equal but separate opportunities for Blacks that included but are not limited to facilities, transportation, restaurants, jobs, in public bathrooms (Hswen et al., 2020). In addition to the inhumane treatment from Black codes, fines were placed in public facilities this separated Blacks and whites from utilizing the same resources in public places (Chelst, 2009). If Blacks disobeyed the Black codes or accused of behaving in an opposing manner that contradicts the law of the land, they were sometimes hung to their death with nooses as punishment and utilized to set an example to the Black community (Brandt, 1978). Jim Crow laws remained in place until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was established, which was created almost a century after slavery was abolished (Franklin et al., 2006).

The emotional stress that the Black community previously encountered has been tied to Jim Crow laws and the mistreatment of the equality provided since the late 1800s, even if they were not born (Brandt, 1978). Black individuals fear government officials have hidden agendas and only assist because it is a legal obligation of constitutional rights (Mims et al., 2005; Morris, 1996). In relation to mental health treatment, there is a concern if a mental health provider would adequately understand the needs and provide the same rights and assistance as White individuals (Washington, 2006). Because of the paranoia that Blacks have previously endured, microaggressions are still utilized based on injustices as well (Fryd, 2010; Sue & Sue, 2015). Some grandparents, who were likely children during the Jim Crow era, were taught to survive physiologically and psychologically to avoid harmful or fatal discriminatory behaviors of White supremacists (Baer, 2022; Blythe, 2022).

Baby Boomer Generation

The baby boomer generation consists of individuals who were born between 1946 through 1964 (Berk, 2017). The term baby boomer was established around the end of World War II, and the spike in the population increased to about 70 million babies in the United States alone (Berk, 2017). After the Great Depression and World War II, many families were likely increasing their household size and started families because their finances were potentially balanced. In addition, after the late 1940s and 1950s, there was an increase in wages and salaries, as well as businesses increasing labor with the enhanced variety of products that were being sold by consumers (Knickman & Snell, 2002). The individuals who are considered baby boomers make up many of the world's population, especially in the United States (Barletta, 2007). Baby boomers were born around the end of World War II and are considered one of the economically influential generation of individuals (Wilson, 2012). Many baby boomers are reaching retirement age and face some of the key challenges, such as quality of life, financial considerations, and health concerns (Ekdahl et al., 2010).

Because this is the longest living generation throughout history, baby boomers have been considered on the forefront of the work force (Morrow-Howell & Gehlert, 2012). Baby boomers were also the first generation to become eligible to retire in the government, which differed from their parents who were members of the greatest generation (Brokaw, 2004; Padala et al., 2021). The official age for retirement for many of the individuals in the baby boomer generation is age 65, and individuals who were

born during this era have lived longer than any other generation (Knickman & Snell, 2002; Morrow-Howell & Gehlert, 2012; Robine et al., 2007).

In addition to living longer and potentially facing financial challenges, the retirement fund may be shorter considering they are outliving the funds that are provided (Lee & Blitz, 2016; Robine et al., 2007). They also lived through the Great Recession, which was a difficult challenge for them for their retirement savings and Social Security (Knickman & Snell, 2002). This resulted in a lot of baby boomers facing challenges of working longer and not retiring at the age of 65 as intended. It also meant these individuals felt it was imperative to find a part-time or full-time job that was less straining for them and engage in work that was sometimes harmful to their health (Rogers, 2021). Considering some baby boomers have health issues, Black baby boomers may experience health challenges that include but are not limited to obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular issues, and high cholesterol (Cox, 2002; McGowen et al., 2006).

Stress and Trauma as a Caregiver

Grandparents are likely to be born in the baby boomer generation, and their present ages range from 59 and 77 years. According to McGowen et al. (2006), grandparents have reported they tire easily because of their older age, and they are frustrated considering their task is more exhaustive to parents with older age. In addition, McGowen et al. (2006) found grandparents who had full custody of the grandchildren displayed lower satisfaction and success scores. The qualitative results reported grandmothers felt (a) fatigued to parent in their 50s, (b) their health issues intervened in

their parenting styles, and (c) they had less time for themselves and their partners (McGowen et al., 2006). Their changes in regimens have altered how they view grandparenthood and have less time to indulge in self-care and privacy (McGowen et al., 2006). In addition, if the grandparent is married or has a significant other, they lack quality time with their spouse considering additional duties have been assigned (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). Grandparents have also mentioned their boundaries have become more complicated and often a demanding task to complete daily. In many cases, the grandparent may have to endure things such as loss, grief, resentment, and guilt (Martin, 2016).

However, some grandparents have expressed the rewards that come with grandparenthood and full-time guardianship. Some grandparents mentioned there is more reward and motivation and raising grandchildren rather than stress. Some have reported their health has drastically improved considering they have a purpose to live and maintain healthy diets (Cox, 2002). By discovering positive attributes and rewards of Black grandparent caregivers, this highlights what previous literature has discussed with redirection on positive considerations than solely viewing experiences through a negative lens (Findler, 2014).

Fears of Death and Dying

Black grandparent caregivers often worry about who will take care of their grandchildren in the event they die or their children, which are their child's parent, may die as well (Martin, 2016). These grandparents often worry about if their grandchildren will be well-taken care of after they pass away in consideration of the current challenges

of finances and consistent custodian stability (Clotney, 2012; Kahana et al., 2002).

Because many grandchildren may have experienced abuse or neglect (Martin, 2016), it is common for grandparents to experience anxiety as they age. According to Waites (2004), very few grandparents have a succession or protective plan in place for their grandchildren after they die. In some cases, the Black grandparent may avoid telling the grandchildren if they have health-related issues considering they may be fearful or anxious as well (Clotney, 2012; Kahana et al., 2002).

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the Bowen family concepts that tie into the Black family unit. In addition, I examined the role of the grandparent, the essentialism of healthy attachment bonds between the grandparent custodian and grandchild, and historical factors of Black cultural trauma and paranoia of mental health services. In Chapter 3, I will address the methodology of how Chapter 2 establishes the tone of how the stories of Black grandparent caregivers can effect positive social change.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The experiences of Black grandparent caregivers are influenced by various factors from their environment, traumatic experiences, and how they view the world. The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to discover the stories of Black grandparents raising their grandchildren. For this study, interviewing was most appropriate, considering this methodology was to understand the personal and social history of the grandparent as a caregiver and an individual (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Vogt et al. (2012) mentioned it is also appropriate to utilize an observational or exploratory design that corresponds with the desired study and provides enlightenment of newly acquired results. In addition, narrative inquiry seeks to understand the personal and social worldview of the grandparents through in-depth and continuity of their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

Kim (2015) explained that narrative inquiry is a qualitative methodology designed to construct the story of people's lives learned through change and continuity. Narrative inquiry is utilized as a tool to convey the narrations of individuals chronologically and organize the experiences as they are told. Throughout previous studies, this data collection strategy has been utilized to discover other barriers needed from numerous phenomena (Kim, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). My objective was to provide quality information to effect positive social change in counseling clinical practice, mental health settings, and evidence-based treatment planning for Black families. To further assist Black culture, narrative inquiry provides an additional touch point for grandparents to allow their voices to be heard beyond what has previously been researched with their rich

stories (Kim, 2015). By studying the stories of Black grandparent caregivers, I sought to examine and discover the experiences of how their family dynamics and relationships within the family emotional unit affected the overall role and experience of a grandparent caregiver.

Rationale for Approach

Narrative inquiry requires a researcher to obtain in-depth information from historical patterns and interviewing participants (Kim, 2015). In addition, narrative inquiry is an acceptable approach to gain understanding and knowledge of experiences. Examining the cultural patterns and trends within the Black community is exceptionally unique to what is needed to compare the information already obtained and presently reported (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Narrative inquiry is based on historical, social, and experiential constructs while discovering how people encounter their lives and their changes through time within trends (Kim, 2015). Previous evidence-based approaches allowed for deeper, vivid interviews with the participants. However, many theoretical approaches are not catered to specifically assist Black culture through lived experiences (Sue & Sue, 2015). Rudestam and Newton (2015) stated that narrative inquiry requires background information and current knowledge of the phenomenon being studied is not only necessary but is one of the most effective approaches for this qualitative method. Though there is a concern regarding the limitation it may pose for participants to study, narrative inquiry is essential to incorporate a more person-centered approach for the Black community. Specifically for the voluntary or involuntary caregiver, this approach allows the grandparent to voice what interventions work well for them or what evidence-

based counseling techniques and interventions are recommended to be enhanced (Kim, 2015). Thus, narrative inquiry provides a guide for the interviewing process to better understand the experiences that have and are currently taking place for positive social change.

In search of discovering the most effective qualitative study, the following were considered: (a) case study, (b) ethnography, (c) grounded theory, (d) narrative inquiry, and (e) phenomenology (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Quantitative methodology was not considered for this study because it would lack the richness and in-depth information needed through interviews (Tipton, 2020). For this study, narrative inquiry was the most appropriate approach for a better understanding of the familial, institutional, social, and cultural context that influences and shapes the individual (Kim, 2015). Utilizing a case study approach for this study was inappropriate because it heavily relies on my interpretation of what the data consist of and has limited reliability and validity (Burkholder et al., 2020). An ethnography approach would have been difficult considering long spans of observation are needed and participants may be reluctant to be examined for numerous hours (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Though grounded theory was a considerable approach, there are no specific guidelines or rules to follow to identify various categories when interpreting the results of the interviews (Babbie, 2017). Within the realm of a phenomenological study, presenting the findings and analyzing the data for this study would potentially lack transferability for other cultures (Acklin, 2021). Thus, the Bowen family systems approach aligned appropriately with narrative inquiry for this study because it served as the advocacy needed for Black grandparent caregivers and

their stories. In addition to these theoretical and research approaches, narrative inquiry aids in exploring how their interaction within the family unit influences their current physical, social, mental, and financial health.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I did not have any personal relationships with the participants (Babbie, 2017). Any biases, judgments, or subjective views toward this phenomenon were reviewed and researched prior to interviews (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This included ensuring the personal reflections of the participant were absent during the data collection process, not including participants with a conflict of interest, and being aware of a specific perspective toward the phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). During the interviews, I remained conscious, competent, and aware of my cultural views, values, and risks of countertransference (ACA, 2014; Strickland, 2017). In addition, I allowed participants to respond to questions in the interview without my influence or perceptions from their stories.

A consideration prior to the study was the potential challenge of countertransference (ACA, 2014) considering I am a Black woman previously raised by my grandparents during my childhood and adolescent years. This experience shaped my passion toward helping Black grandparents in the local community gain more access to resources and therapeutic interventions. Because of what I have witnessed, as well as what I have found in the research regarding the lack of resources and other assistance for both grandparents and grandchildren, this study is relevant to bring awareness,

accessibility, and social change to support this type of family structure (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Kim, 2015; Sue & Sue, 2015).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study include the following:

RQ1: What are the lived stories of Black grandparent caregivers raising grandchildren?

RQ2: What can counselors learn from the stories of Black grandparent caregivers to discover preventive and enhanced techniques for the next generation?

Methodology

Sampling Method

Nonprobability, also called qualitative sampling and purposive sampling, was the most appropriate method for gathering the participants' experiences and perspectives (Teddle & Yu, 2007). This type of sampling is utilized to discover a specific feeling, thought, or behavior that exists in a studied phenomenon. There are numerous techniques to collect data for nonprobability sampling (Walden University, Center for Research Quality, 2015a). Burkholder et al. (2020) stated utilizing an interviewing approach provides a likelihood of receiving quality feedback and responses that can expand the justification of the results desired. Interviews also allow the incorporation of how and what questions, which include open-ended answers with individualized experiences and perspectives.

Participant Selection

During the data collection process, Cline (2021) recommends at least six participants to include in a narrative inquiry exploration, while Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained no more than 10 participants are necessary. Thus, this narrative exploration included six participants who told their stories through rich and in-depth interviews. Participants were considered for an interview if the grandparent was currently the primary caregiver of their grandchild at any age until the grandchild's completion of high school or completion of a General Educational Development (GED) examination. The participant was required to identify as Black, African American, or a descendant of African culture with no exclusion of gender. There was no age requirement to participate in this study and income was not a consideration. The participants were required to be a resident in the state of Mississippi and a caregiver of a grandchild who primarily resides in their home. Participants who did not meet all the inclusion requirements were not allowed to participate in the study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Procedures for Recruitment

Babbie (2017) explained the importance of appropriately identifying the phenomenon needed for research. After I received approval from Walden University's Institutional Research Board (IRB), I consulted with individuals within different communities in Mississippi for assistance to share information with potential participants who met the criteria. I also contacted a few churches and agencies that assisted with services for older adults and multigenerational homes. I also shared on social media to locate potential support groups for grandparents raising their grandchildren.

Data Collection

It is appropriate to conduct in-depth interviews when large amounts of data are being collected from a participant regarding their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and experiences (Babbie, 2017). Understanding boundaries and limits in a qualitative interview can guide the session to remain ethical and respectful for the interviewee (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Thus, in this study, it was most beneficial to conduct in-depth interviews to collect more personal data that assists participants who may not want to reveal their identity, gaining a deeper comprehension of their experience with narrative inquiry.

Interviews consisted of a phone call or in-person meeting in consideration of location, comfort, and accessible means of communication for the participant. I had an interview guide during the interview session, which included an agenda and time that was planned throughout the session to provide structure. This guide included the following: (a) review with the participant the purpose of the study prior to beginning the interview, (b) ensuring they understand their right as a participant mentioned in the consent form, (c) time allotted to answer any questions the participant has before and after the interview, (d) a list of questions to assist the participant in a better understanding if they are unclear of a particular question, and (e) that a 1 to-2 page summary of the results would be shared to the participant with a phone call or email (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This was helpful to remain organized and to ensure participants understood the questions asked and that I appropriately understood the data collected (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

During the interview, an audio recorder was utilized to record each interview. I brought a notebook to the interview to record any details or notes expressed by the participant. The electronic files that were recorded and transcribed were stored on my password-protected computer and backed up on a password-protected flash drive (see Walden University Center for Research Support, n.d.). The research procedures were provided as an electronic copy through email and verbally explained to the participant during the follow up. The data collected and participants' information are anonymous in this study, and participants were named with pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality and privacy (Kim, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Any information shared by the participants that may have revealed their identities was not provided in the study for confidential concerns (ACA, 2014). Only I reviewed the raw data.

Instrumentation

For my study, interviewing was most appropriate to reveal the current experiences and unforeseen circumstances of Black grandparents. The need for qualitative interviewing in the field of psychology was established to branch other instruments of qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Throughout previous studies, this data collection strategy has been utilized to discover other barriers needed from numerous populations. Interview questions that are open-ended and provide elaboration from the participant are more essential to effective data (Burkholder et al., 2020). Open-ended (e.g., what and how) questions were provided throughout the interview to expand on the openness needed from the participants, which provided enhanced responses for substantial data. The structure of how the interview questions were created was

researched and reviewed through evidence-based approaches prior to the interview process (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Kim, 2015). During the interview, a questionnaire guide was utilized to maintain the structure of the interview. During three interviewing processes, guided questions periodically appeared throughout the session for more clarity and individualization from their experiences (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Thus, information was acquired from evidence-based interview questions developed from the perspectives of the participants (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

These interview questions were asked during the interview:

1. What is the definition of “family” to you?
2. How is the relationship between you and your grandchild?
3. What generational patterns are you noticing while raising your grandchild?
4. When you and your grandchild have conflicts, how do you resolve the issue together?
5. When you received primary guardianship of your grandchild, how did that affect your outlook on grandparenthood?
6. What was the reason you received full custody of your grandchild?
7. How do you feel society views your role as a Black grandparent caregiver?
8. What challenges do you currently face as a full-time caregiver for your grandchild?

9. Based on how you were raised, what are some of the things you will continue to do as a caregiver that you were taught as a child?

10. In what ways do you plan to teach your grandchild how to maintain healthy relationships within the family unit?

Data Analysis Plan

In qualitative research, coding, categories, and themes are utilized to simplify and individualize the data being collected. Each one serves a purpose and should be considered through identifying each phenomenon (Braun, & Clarke, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These techniques assisted with the comprehension of the themes that will be discussed and explored (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Data were analyzed utilizing the six-step thematic process to identify the codes, categories, and themes from each transcribed interview (Braun, & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017): (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) generating codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining meaning to themes, and (f) writing the results.

Once each interview was complete, the transcription software, Otter.ai, was utilized for transcription. The first step required reviewing each transcript for accuracy and looking at the holistic approach of first impressions, which was interpreted thoroughly more than once. Braun and Clarke (2006) mentioned the importance of the researcher familiarizing themselves with the interview and transcription of the research conducted. Becoming familiar with the raw data allows the researcher to interpret the meaning and story of the individual more intimately (Kim, 2015). In addition, becoming familiar with the data assisted in creating a summarization of those stories and create

potential codes that assisted throughout the duration of the data analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Secondly, consistent phrases, words, ideas, and experiences were hand-coded with words or phrases and established labels (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). With coding, the researcher places a label on the meaning-bearing unit that is being described. Coding provides a shorter name for the structure or idea that is being researched to be simplified into a few words, a sentence, or a phrase, which describes the different ideas mentioned (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). During the coding phase, I interpreted large amounts of data collected into smaller chunks to determine meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Because the study was conducted with an inductive approach, the participants were, and still are the authors of their lives, and the codes do not have any outside influences of preconceived concepts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Kim, 2015). In addition, I conducted open coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006) without establishing any codes before beginning this process. The codes that needed modification were completed during the coding process.

The third step included providing similar codes and patterns into generated categories to prepare the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Categories involve providing the codes into classifications that describe what the phenomenon is being studied. Because a theme can be utilized to capture the significance of the codes, they were utilized as a guide to fit codes into themes. In addition, I analyzed the participants' responses from the interview questions to the relevance of the research questions and organized them into themes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Cline, 2021).

The fourth step included defining each of the themes and ensuring accuracy for representation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which provided names for the phenomenon being studied and being described within the study. A theme can also be viewed as an external identification of what the categories and codes are referencing (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). During this step, I reviewed and made the necessary modifications and corrections to ensure the relevancy towards the research questions. I reviewed the data categorized to each theme and revised to ensure the data supports the theme without cluttering (Kim, 2015). If a certain code did not work well with a theme, I created sub themes to capture a better understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Once the themes were finalized, the fifth stage required definite names for the themes, as well as defining them to better comprehend the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). During this phase of thematic analysis, the themes identified the true essence of what the themes were about and how they were defined based on the rich stories told (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, I explained how the subthemes intertwine to the main theme and compared how the other existing themes compared to one another (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

In the final step, the analysis process was described, summarized, and provided clarity on how the analyzed data answered the research questions with the main points (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While I wrote my conclusion of the findings from the data, I verified and conveyed significance of the findings by relating the results to my research questions. This also provided evidence of data saturation and ensuring there was no other information needed to be collected with additional participants (Acklin, 2021).

Trustworthiness

Credibility

Clandinin and Connelly (2004) mentioned it is important for the researcher to be familiar with the phenomenon being studied. As the researcher of this study, I have experience working with this phenomenon and assisting with advocating, providing community support, and family sessions. I have also observed multigenerational families in the home as a licensed mental health therapist to discover how they interact with each other, as well as conducted mental health assessments for Black individuals and families. Because of the need of substantial validation and prior comprehension of what the phenomenon needs, the literature for this study provided a richer evidence-based approach beyond just my understanding of the Black community (Kim, 2015). Thus, it was appropriate for an audit trail as a reflective commentary (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to document any analysis found initially, as well as the analysis that may have changed before concluding with my results. In addition, I had debriefing sessions with my chair and methodologist to ensure my role as the researcher did not conflict with my role as a mental health counselor (Burkholder et al., 2020).

Transferability

The rich description of a phenomenon provided additional understanding and meaning to readers, which required the needs of transferability in the research (Kim, 2015). Transferability was determined if the utilization of a measurement remained the same and the measurement can be exemplified over time in other studies (Drost, 2011; Golafshani, 2003). The process of transferability for this study included research from

various other studies regarding the number of participants, data collection methodology, and the time span of which the findings were established (Chenail, 2010; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This study included several rigorous efforts to ensure stories of Black grandparents raising grandchildren were analyzed through their experiences, the process of data collection, analyzing the findings, and comparing the results (Acklin, 2021). The research findings interpreted were aimed to find new meaning and proper representation for the phenomenon (Babbie, 2017).

Dependability

The quality of a research design was essential to the experiment, as well as dependability to evaluate the results of the study desired (Burkholder et al., 2020). Considering dependability measures the truthfulness of the research being conducted and describes the accurate representation of the studied subject (Golafshani, 2003), this method was utilized to guide the research design. To ensure dependability for this study, I conducted a dependability audit trail with my chair and methodologist to ensure the data collection process is dependable (Acklin, 2021). In addition, the results were summarized and reviewed to confirm the truth in the participants' stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Cline, 2021; Golafshani, 2003).

Confirmability

During the process of interpreting the raw data, confirmability was imperative for this phenomenon. For this study, I conducted member checks to ensure the data were interpreted in the correct way from their stories after the data were analyzed (Acklin, 2021; Burkholder et al., 2020). This technique allowed the respondents to confirm or

verify the details needed that were misinterpreted or left out by the research (Kim, 2015). In addition to member checks, I reached out to the participants through e-mail or a phone call to follow-up on the findings of the raw data with a one to two-page summary. After the interpretations of the transcription were conducted, I concluded the analysis process with the revised summaries and proceed by writing the results of the research findings (Burkholder et al., 2020; Chenail, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality Assurance

A potential ethical concern that could likely harm a qualitative research experiment is the lack of anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity protects participants' privacy and identity (Burkholder et al., 2020). According to the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014), the researcher has the responsibility to apply the guidelines applicable towards ethical research practice. Burkholder et al. (2020) explained a way to remain competent in this area is to not request any information that could reveal an individual's identification. By including anonymity and confidentiality in qualitative research, this allowed the participants to be amenable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Another effective consideration of the interviewing process was the participants' willingness to answer questions (ACA, 2014). Because a person-centered approach for each interview is one of the most important aspects to consider (Babbie, 2017), respecting the participant and their choice to answer or decline a question was essential with building rapport. If a participant declined to answer a question, it would have been

inappropriate to probe questions and negate their wishes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Thus, understanding the boundaries and limits prior to the interview assisted with ethical considerations and maintains respect for the participant (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Informed Consent

According to the ACA Code of Ethics (2014), information regarding participants is to remain confidential and there should be necessary procedures to protect participants' confidentiality. To prevent this ethical concern, consent forms were emailed to the participants and confirmed with I consent by the participants (Babbie, 2017). In addition, personal information that could reveal the identity of specific participants was not included in this study (ACA, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Vogt et al. 2012).

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the research design and rationale for the approach. In addition, I have discussed the role of the researcher and research questions. I have included the methodology regarding the population and sampling procedures, participation of participants, and data collection. I have discussed the instrumentation and data analysis regarding individual interviews in visual data. I have discussed the trustworthiness of the research, as well as ethical considerations regarding confidentiality assurance and informed consent.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe the findings from this qualitative narrative inquiry study that conveys the stories of Black grandparents raising their grandchildren in the state of Mississippi. As highlighted in the exhaustive literature review in Chapter 2, many Black grandparents become full-time caregivers for their grandchildren due to parental challenges, mental illnesses, and unforeseen circumstances. In this study, six participants expressed their motivation to persevere through substantial challenges while being full-time caregivers; these participants also discussed insights about how they maintain themselves as individuals. Data were effectively analyzed through the lens of inductive reasoning and thematic analysis, both of which are congruent with narrative inquiry (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, Bowen family systems theory was used as the theoretical framework to establish the purpose of the research and interview questions, which will be thoroughly discussed as well. In this chapter, I have included the following: (a) research questions for the study, (b) the setting, (c) the demographics, (d) data collection, (e) data analysis, (f) and evidence of trustworthiness regarding credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In addition, I will also provide the results from the data collection, the results of the study, and the summary.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the lived stories of Black grandparent caregivers raising grandchildren?

RQ2: What can counselors learn from the stories of Black grandparent caregivers to discover preventive and enhanced techniques for the next generation?

Setting

During the recruitment process, I reached out to various agencies, school administrators, and mental health professionals in the state of Mississippi. I conducted face-to-face and over-the-phone interviews to meet the needs of each participant. Three participants preferred to meet face-to-face because it provided a more intimate environment. Three participants requested phone interviews due to challenges with meeting in person. With all participants, I spent a few minutes before each interview providing informed consent, clarifying the process, and building rapport.

Demographics

There was a total of six participants included in the study, but 10 participants inquired and were interested in the study overall. Of the four potential participants who were not interviewed for this study, two were willing to be a part of the study. One expressed concern regarding me personally knowing the grandparents or the grandchildren in a local school district and did not want to compromise the grandchildren's and mother's identities. In addition, the other two potential participants dropped from proceeding in the study due to unforeseen events in their personal lives. This study includes a total of five women and one man with various background stories. To maintain confidentiality, I provided pseudonyms that were not based on their first or last names but were created with each grandparent based on personal preference and my suggestion. I ensured the pseudonyms created for each participant would not be

identifiable. All participants expressed diverse stories from their experiences and demographics, such as gender, generational patterns, age, and preferences of how they raise their grandchildren. The participants are as follows: (a) a 76-year-old married woman, (b) a 58-year-old married woman, (c) a 60-year-old married man, (d) a 58-year-old single woman, (e) a 65-year-old married woman, and (f) a 53-year-old married woman.

MarPar1 is a 76-year-old married woman who is currently raising a 6-year-old grandson and a 4-year-old granddaughter. She was the oldest participant for this study, yet she has the youngest grandchildren of all the participants in the study. She mentioned she understands there is a generational gap and difference in patterns between her older grandchildren versus the ones she is currently raising in the home. She received full custodianship of her grandchildren because she wanted to allow the mother of her grandchildren to establish a better career, as well as allowing the father to create a more established income and work schedule. She expressed she has made a lot of sacrifices raising her grandchildren, but as a Christian woman, her faith motivates her to continue and persevere. She also noted there are times when she has challenges with self-care and multitasking, which exhausts her because of the age difference and physical concerns of older adulthood. MarPar1 expressed:

There's about a 25-year difference in [my eldest and youngest grandchildren], but they have so much of the same trait, even though they come from two different [maternal] parents. I'm from the older generation. You got a 4-year-old that now can't tell you what's going on, how to operate a tablet and can actually show you

what to do. And, of course, it has its advantages and disadvantages. I used to love the travel, and everything has been put on hold. So, they changed everything that I was doing for me. And putting them first in my life. The other grandparent [maternal] who still works, and I'm able to get some relief. So, I take advantage of that mental freedom at that time. I'm able to attend church on the regular basis, and I take them with me.

DejPar2 is a 58-year-old married woman who is currently raising her 14-year-old grandson. She expressed she has a great relationship with her grandson and raises him to be a respectful young man and to live with integrity. She explained that although she has chronic health issues, she puts her faith in God to give her the strength for her daily functioning. She also noted she learned from experience that talking to her grandson is more effective for her when they need to have a heart-to-heart conversation. She mentioned she is currently raising her grandson because her daughter is in medical school and wants her to finish without any unnecessary distractions. DejPar2 expressed:

My grandson and I have a good relationship. I can ask him something, and he'll tell me stuff that he doesn't even tell his mom. So, we got a good relationship. I am big on respect the way my parents were. You know, if I tell you do something, you do it, and you're going to respect me; there's no talking back. I have to be responsible for him, and I have to make sure that, you know, one, that I am working, that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing to take care of him 'cause it's not an easy fix. I sent my daughter off to college and my house was empty. Then one month later, after my daughter was in college, she came home to tell me

she was pregnant. So that was like another child for us. It was hard, but we made it work. I am a child of God, and I know that anything God puts on you is what he knows you can handle, and He let you go through stuff for a reason.

CoJPar3 is a 60-year-old married man who shared that the relationship with his 14-year-old grandson is a bond like never before. He explained he sees a lot of his characteristics in his grandson and cherishes their relationship. He described himself as a hard-working grandfather and wants his grandson to see how much he does for him while providing for the family. He noted that he makes him accountable for his behaviors if he does something inappropriate and provides hard punishment because he learned in the same manner. CoJPar3 reported his life significantly changed when he began raising his grandson, and he gives honor to God for giving him the strength to do so. CoJPar3 expressed:

It's like I have another son. Yeah, we bond together all the time. We do things together all the time. He goes with me. He works with me. He's just like the second son that I never had. I can see myself in him because he loves to do what I like doing. And he's an outgoing person, and he's willing to learn a lot of things that young kids, you know, might be outside playing in the street somewhere. It's hard punishment as far as when you do something wrong. And he understands that. I don't spare the rod on him. It's the only way he's going to learn. I'll make sure he gets an education, make sure he follows in the right direction, and make sure he doesn't get with the wrong crowd, because all of that right there will change your life in a second.

FSeePar4 is a 58-year-old single woman raising 11-year-old and 8-year-old grandsons. She expressed that she has a great relationship with both grandchildren, and they return the favor by taking care of her as well. She says she has chronic health issues that may prevent her from feeling her best, and her grandsons provide motivation and a purpose to continue to maintain healthy practices. FSeePar4 has been their caregiver since a few weeks after their birth, and she has had financial and legal challenges, but she always put her grandchildren as a priority in her life rather than her own. She said she does not handle stress in the most appropriate manner, and she easily gets stressed out, but she grounds herself as a Christian woman while praying for better days to come.

FSeePar4 expressed:

I'm different. When they called me to get my grandchildren, I said, okay, and I got them. Even though, you know, I put my life on hold, but I was supposed to, because of my grandchildren. Everybody tells me how proud they are that I'm taking care of these boys. They say, "I'm so proud of you because you keep them boys ready." I really don't go nowhere 'cause I'll be here with these boys. I'm a very emotional person. I can see people that I don't know, if they cry, I start crying. I don't even know what's going on. They all spoiled; I got 'em like that just because my mother spoiled us. They know they grandma, she be there, she was there for all 'em. Whatever kind of sports they play, I was right there. I done been in an abusive relationship. I've done been through some stuff in my life. I could really tell you some stuff about me. There's a lot of stuff I've done been through, but I just keep on praying.

SamPar5 is a 65-year-old married woman raising a 16-year-old grandson. She explained she never swore at her children or her grandchildren but has learned over time that effective communication and honesty is essential with familial relationships. She mentioned the importance of respect and how it is nonnegotiable for anything less. She explained that she has been living in the state of Mississippi since her later adolescent years; she is not a U.S. born citizen and shares a lot of cultural experiences with her grandchildren. She also noted that she became a primary caregiver for her grandchildren when her grandchildren's mother, her daughter, passed away due to a fatal accident. She mentioned how she relies on God for all her decisions and plans and does not feel bad for having full custody of her grandchildren. She also explained that she and her husband have been going through numerous behavioral challenges with their grandson, but they just want him to get through school and be at peace. SamPar5 mentioned:

When you can have peace in the family, it's a great thing. Love and peace for me, even though in every family, we know there's some type of dysfunction. Every family has a dysfunction. When you can find peace in the midst of all storms, and still love your family and go on, it's okay. I never swore at my children. I don't have a hard time because I'm a no-nonsense person. Things that my daughter allowed I did not allow. You couldn't talk back to me. In Jeremiah, the word of God tells us that I know the plans I have for your life. And, see, God already knows the plans that he has for our lives. I grew up in a home with a very strict person. She was not my mother. She was not related to me. I had a rough childhood coming up. And I made myself a promise that if I ever had kids, I

would not allow them to go through what I went through as a child. And I've always kept it at the back of my mind. I wanted them to feel safe. I do get sad sometimes. It breaks my heart to know that the more I try, it seems like the worst [my grandson] get, [he doesn't] appreciate the things that I do for [him. He doesn't] appreciate it. My husband is so easygoing. He is so lovable. He loves his grandkids. And for him to say to me, I am just trying to get him through school. What does that tell you? He's stressed out as well.

BoyMomPar6 is a 53-year-old married woman raising a 16-year-old grandson, a 15-year-old granddaughter, and a 9-year-old grandson. She expressed the importance of teaching them how to communicate effectively within the family unit and showing a sense of responsibility and obligation to each other regardless of the situation. However, she also explained to her grandchildren that it is normal for emotional cutoff after exhausting all possibilities of communication without disrespecting family members and friends. She emphasized the importance of her grandchildren, knowing she can always be a liaison for whatever support they need or desire because she wants to help them through anything in life. She mentioned she has normal life challenges, but raising her grandchildren is not as demanding because she has more experience and knows how to handle certain situations in comparison to when she was raising her own children. She noted her grandchildren are an extension and continuation of when she was raising her own children since they were born. She further explained the importance of raising her children actively in the church and teaching them about how praying to God will help them through stressful and anxiety-related circumstances. BoyMomPar6 expressed:

Family to me is being supportive and just loving all the people that love back. No matter what, you know, you're family, because you're blood and came from God. All of us came from the same, you know, people that we have to stick together and love our family because don't nobody love you like your family. We talk it out. We have a little, you know, a talk thing, especially with that granddaughter. Grandchildren are so different because you're not so hard on your grandkids. I don't know what it is. My children tell me, 'Oh, what happened to your tough parenting?' I give authoritarian parenting, but grandparents can make you like, Jell-O with the heart. You can't raise your voice at them, but you'll be trying to talk to them. You're more loving as a grandparent, much more loving. Loving as a parent, but as a grandparent, you just really don't see much wrong with your grandkids. Instead of all this hollering, let's just be the parents. So, be gentler. When we raised our own, we were learning also, but then, when you're a grandparent, you know because you've been there.

Data Collection

I began recruiting participants in the Jackson, Mississippi area, as well as surrounding cities and throughout the state. I also reached out to a few community centers within the state of Mississippi and spoke with various pastors who served predominantly Black families. The interview locations and type of interview, whether it was in person or over the phone, were arranged in various locations which depended on the convenience of the participants. All three in-person interviews were done at a church in a private room or office area. The churches chosen were not their church of worship to

assist with mitigating challenges of their privacy, and it was inquired before doing so.

After the third interview was completed, I utilized a transcription service to transcribe all data. Once I completed the final interview with the sixth participant, I began coding the information. There were not any unusual circumstances that negatively impacted the experience during the data collection process or any crises to report. I chose to utilize a semi-structured interviewing technique and open-ended questions to engage and provide more in-depth dialogue with a participant. Each participant was notified through email with the consent form and the instructions if they wanted to proceed or wished to opt out of the study. All participants who participated in the study communicated through email and replied that they consented to the study.

I reviewed the consent form, utilization of pseudonyms, and purpose of not including identifiable information in the study prior to beginning the interview with each participant. I also explained that if they expressed anything during the interview that would identify who they were and compromise confidentiality, it would not be included in the results for the study. Each interview was composed of questions to better understand the lived experiences of Black grandparents raising grandchildren in the state of Mississippi and to learn the effective techniques that work well for the grandparent. The length of each interview varied from 25 minutes to 45 minutes. All interviews were logged on to a voice recorder while recording different verbal and nonverbal communication styles, including, but not limited to laughing and crying.

Data Analysis

As the qualitative researcher of this study, I utilized an inductive approach to create codes and themes from large amounts of raw data and provided summaries. With the utilization of thematic analysis, I established the relationship of the research questions, interview questions, and the stories expressed by the participants to develop the overall structure and meaning behind these stories. While I utilized the inductive and thematic analysis approaches, I began to develop codes, themes, and subthemes to better answer the purpose of the research questions and interview questions.

After I transcribed all interview data, I familiarized myself with each interview by reading over my notes and listening to the audio recordings. I also ensured that I summarized the transcripts after listening and reading each interview at least twice. After I familiarized myself with the data, notes, and audio recording of each interview, I hand-coded the transcriptions based on an inductive approach and what the data were conveying. After careful consideration and revisions of codes, I created themes and subthemes catered to what was expressed through lived experiences of the participants. These codes were based on the rich stories provided by the participants rather than creating the codes or having an assumption prior to conducting the study. The first theme established was strong and unwavering faith with the subtheme of authoritarian parenting. The second theme established was the sense of responsibility and obligation. The third theme established was the importance of respect. The fourth theme established was overcoming challenges.

Theme 1: Strong and Unwavering Faith

During each interview, all participants discussed the importance of having a relationship with God, building their spiritual welfare, and teaching it to their grandchildren. The description for this theme can be conveyed from how the grandparents find their strength from God and the Bible regardless of their current or unforeseen circumstances. All the participants mentioned the importance of teaching their grandchildren to remain firm in their faith in God, which emerged into unwavering faith. They also utilized evidence on how they raise different children with Biblical perspective. Many of the participants used their rationale to chastise them with sparing the rod, which gave a different approach to their purpose to teach them about morals and values in the family unit. Their faith in God is strong because every time one of the grandparents discussed their challenges, trials, and tribulations, God was the overall center and focal point for overcoming their challenges. Each grandparent also explained how their faith is unwavering because without God, none of the things that they have endured or conquered would not have been possible without God and the teachings in the Bible.

MarPar1 discussed the importance of a routine with going to church, as well as how generational patterns are heavily influence from the generations mentioned in the Bible. She also explained that because of the generational concerns that she has endured, she sees a lot of things that has happened in her family that were presented in the Bible. She also utilizes church as a means of self-care and to sharpen her purpose in life through her faith. MarPar1 said:

Because the last two are very young, and there's about a 25-year difference in their ages. But, surprisingly, they have so much of the same traits, even though they come from two different parents. Well, one parent is different. So, genes are strong. The DNA is strong. It's strong and it carries and can pick up four generations according to the Bible. Yeah, the sins of generations can go back for years. I'm able to still attend church on a regular basis, and I, uh, take them with me most of the time when they're not when they're here on the weekend.

DejPar2 expressed that it is important to teach her grandson how to flee from temptation and understand the Bible has expressions of how to get through life, which she tries to teach him daily. She also stated things that she has gone through has happen for a reason and she does not want to question why because she has full trust in what God has promised her. She explained the importance of all her children and grandchildren being brought up in the church because she wanted to ensure that they had a firm foundation when they ventured off into young adulthood. She explained her spiritual life is a necessity to get through her challenges and circumstances. She also explained the Bible explains the importance of withholding information about good news you have as an individual with exceptions to the Bible teachings. DejPar2 said:

I am big on we do not go to the store if we don't have any money because that's one thing she taught us, there is no sense in talking about, you know, a lot of people say they go window shopping, well you (her grandson) are going window shopping at home. Because if you go to the store, you are going to see something you want. And if you don't have any money, then you're tempted to steal.

I'm a child of God and I know that anything God puts on you is what He knows what you can handle, and he lets you go through stuff for a reason. And sometimes because people who don't go to church or people who do go to church, every, everybody is looking at somebody. And so, maybe what I'm going through, somebody else will be going through it tomorrow. And if they see that I weathered the storm and I went through it, then they'll be able to go through it. And I'm a firm believer that I don't care what I go through, if I've got Jesus with me, everything going to be okay. And I tried to bring him up and going to church really all my grandchildren just pounded with all of us going to church because I wanted them to get that foundation.

So, even if they do get old or get grown, you know something is still going to bring them back to church and so that's what I tried to do with all of them. Kindness will take you a long way. So, I'm big on that. And then don't let the left hand know what the right hand is doing. And I never understood that. And I'd be like, oh, they're just saying something. But then I realized that's a scripture in the Bible. You're not supposed to let everybody know what you got going on. You're only supposed to tell people what God has done for you. And then you're supposed to be able to spread the good news, which that Jesus came, died, was born, and he's sitting on the right hand of his father. That is what you're supposed to do. But if you know that you are about to buy a house, you're not supposed to tell everybody your business. Because you don't know. Well, I'm a firm believer too what God has for me is for me, but everybody doesn't need to know your

business. You have to know the people that you can talk to and the ones you can't.

CoJPar3 mentioned he prays daily for himself, his grandchildren, his family, and all the challenges he may face. He mentioned there is not a day that goes by that he does not pray, because he provides some guidance. He mentioned the importance of God, what he stands for, and how he has been a confidant for him and his family. CoJPar3 said:

Without Him, I can't do it. I pray. Pray. Pray. Every day. Not once a day. Every day. There are a lot of black people these days already in a bad category that not being successful in life holds them back. Everybody got a chance to make it in this world if they only believe in the man above. If they keep their head on their shoulder and believe it's a God and understand what it's all about, then they'll make it.

FSeePar4 explained her relationship with God is one the most important and imperative relationships she has. She mentioned because of God, He truly has blessed her with her grandchildren. Although she goes through health and financial challenges, she still trusts God with all her concerns. She also mentioned she does not regret anything, but instead, she still prays through it all. FSeePar4 said:

I'm a, uh, blessed grandma to have them in my life. Cause they keep me motivated. And they love me. And I love them, and you know, I don't know what I would do without them. it was bad when I was dating, and I know I wasn't going to marry. I said no. They were abusive. I done been in an abusive relationship. I done been through some stuff in my life. I could really tell you

some stuff about me. But I guess everything that I've been through, I, this how I say, that I can help somebody else that's going through something because I've been through that. There's a lot of stuff I done been through. But I just keep on praying because God is my BFF (best friend forever). That's what I say. My BFF.

SamPar5 described her experience and relationship with God as someone that she cannot make it without. She mentioned she had a foundation in her early childhood years with her relationship with God and has had one ever since. She also mentioned that she knows that God has plans for her in life and she will forever trust Him with them. She also expressed that she wants to ensure that her grandson understands to stay away from tempting behaviors or people that may be inappropriately influential. She mentioned although she received full guardianship over her grandchildren due to an unforeseen, fatal event, she still understands that God had a purpose in reason why they are with her and wants her grandson to understand that as well. SamPar5:

I don't feel bad because I'm glad to know that I was in a position and was able to do it by the grace of God, because I would have hated for them to be in the system. A lot of people, from what I hear, they feel, and they think that I'm just this wonderful person. You know, I'm so good, I'm this, I'm that, but like I told them, it's not me, it's God in me. Because if I did not have the Lord, if I didn't know God, I would not have had those children. And I could honestly say that if I did not know the Lord. I would have been going on with my life. Mm hmm. Because if I didn't know him, you understand what I'm saying? I asked my grandson do you blame God for taking your mother? At first I did, but I don't. I

say, are you sure? I said, because you quit going to church. You don't want to go to church. I said, what is your reason? He says because y'all make me; y'all makes me go and I don't want to go. I said, even, but you can't live this life without God. You need God. I say, do you pray? I said, because I need you to pray and ask God to take away your lying tongue. I said he would do that for you. Well, I already told him that he's going to have to pray. He's going to have to see God, and at the same time, he's going to have to come to the realization that his mother is gone and she's not coming back, and that he has to move on with life. He has to, you know, think of good things. You understand? And I told him, I says, I'm going to tell you right now, I says, you cannot do right with a do wrong mind. And I said, right now your mind is wrong. The woman that raised me, I had to go to church. I don't care where there was a tent revival, we were there. You understand me? I was not allowed to wear pants. I couldn't go to any school parties. When, in Jeremiah (29:11), the Word of God tells us that I know the plans I have for your life. And see, God already knows the plan that he has for our lives. Don't matter how good. How bad it seems to us. Always remember, God has our best interests at heart. He sure does. And I had to sit back one day, and I had to tell my kids, I thank God for the woman that raised me. You understand, I have no animosity in my heart towards her. But to be wrapped up, tied up, entangled up, no ma'am because I know you don't mean me no good because the Bible says you should shun the very presence of evil. And if you know that something is not good for you, why be a part of it? If you know somebody doesn't mean you no

good. And that's, that's the way I am. You understand? I love, I give, I do. But when you cross that line, even though I know God shows us grace and mercy every day, I can still show you grace. I can still give you grace. But I can keep it at a distance. So, you don't know the path that God has for your life. And one thing I believe is that He knows, you know, we say, well, I can't bear this. God knows how much you can bear. And you don't know, but He does. You know, the rough patches that you come up with sometimes just, you know, it just sets you, puts you in a space. But then a few minutes later, you're fine. But you get over it. You can't stay there.

BoyMom6 described she has a good relationship with her grandchildren and believes that it is appropriate for her to incorporate her relationship with God to her children. She also explained God placed her and her husband as full-time caregivers for a reason, and what God has in store for her is meant for her to receive. She also mentioned the importance of praying through challenges in life because she has conquered challenges through prayer and teaching her grandchildren the same will migrate potential feelings of anxiety and depression. BoyMom6 said:

I'm active in church. Yeah, they go, they've been doing it since birth. So, it's, you know, that's just continuation of life with them also. And they, you know we're a family and that we know about prayer because even in the school, they'll come to me when they have a test or something because we've been doing it since pre-K. They come to me like especially state tests and I'll grab hands and we close our eyes and we say, I pray. So, yeah, spiritually and church family knows that, you

know, these, these are our babies and that's who they are seeing growing up.

That's who they've been seeing with us all their lives from growing up, from us carrying them as own babies to now with them being teenagers. They come to me like especially state tests, and I'll grab hands and we close our eyes, and we say, I pray. So, yeah, spiritually and church family knows that, you know, these, these are our babies and that's who they are seeing growing up. That that's who they've been seeing with us all their lives from growing up, from us carrying them as own babies to now with them being teenagers. As a black grand, what I want them to know is it's okay to have to continue to parent, even though your kids are grown. It's okay that you are in this role because it's for you. What God has for you it is for you, and only you, and don't listen to other outside people and what they have to say because that is their opinion, that is not your life that was planned for you.

Authoritarian Parenting

Some of the participants discussed the importance of authoritarian parenting to be incorporated while raising their grandchildren, which is a Biblical principle of not sparing the rod. They want their grandchildren to learn how to effectively communicate while teaching them how to communicate, as well as understand they still love them even when they are upset. Other participants, on the contrary, have a nonnegotiable clause in their home that trust should be built on their experience in life and not to ask any questions because they would not purposely lead them in the wrong direction. In addition, one grandparent communicated that she learned from experiences that she wants to teach her

grandchildren how to communicate other than spanking them because it is not as effective as teaching healthy commutative strategies.

MarPar1 communicated during the interview that she was raised by her parents with certain expectations and consequences, she felt that it would also serve its purpose in her household as well. She mentioned during the interview that her younger grandchildren, who she is currently raising in the home, have a 20-25-year difference, and they process things a lot differently than the older grandchildren. She also communicated that she provides a negative reinforcement and takes away different things that they like using, such as electronic tablets, television, and games. She teaches responsibility through requiring chores because she wants them to be self-sufficient and not co-dependent. MarPar1 said:

“They” get upset about certain things and will go off and shut down instead of opening up and being responsive. They shut down and sometimes you have to be authoritative in order for them to obey, like a takeaway, well take away and spanking because I do believe in spanking. I’m from the older generation so I do spank...and, uh, they know that. And, um, and I did it to both. The old, the, the older generation and the younger generation (of grandchildren) that I have now. So, like I said, it’s 20-25 years difference. And, um, but the older ones can remember. That this person doesn’t play. So, they understand. They understand. And when, um, I’ve had enough. Then, um, at this point I’m trying to teach them how to, uh, be productive with me in helping me to clean up their, their playthings or their paperwork or when they’re finished that we all put it up together and put

it back in place. And, um, so it's a continuous job. It's continuous. And I always try to make everything we do a learning experience. Because it's something to be learned every time. New words, new tasks. Uh, explaining what it may be, if we go outside, we, we love the outside, and, uh, teaching them about animals and birds, and we build bird cages, they've had gardens, they, uh, we go to the playground, um, uh, just, we go to the water and do things, so whatever there is, we try to make a learning experience out of it.

DejPar2 communicated she believes in authoritarian parenting when they have difficulty learning how to communicate to each other, especially family. Because of past challenges that she has gone through due to violence in the family, she mentioned fighting with family is nonnegotiable, and as a result, her grandchildren will receive a whooping. She also reported that because family is love, disagreements and arguments will be handled in a loving and appropriate manner rather than in conflicts. DejPar2 said:

Now, if you want to say certain things, you can say certain things, but one thing I don't put up with is you talking about one another, and you're not going to fight. Because if you grow up fighting as a child, you're going to grow up as an adult fighting. And when you get grown, people have to get out of the way. Because people bring knives, guns, and everything else. I taught them, we are not going to do that. My other grandson (who does not live with her) and my grandson (who lives with her), would always come and tell Nana, they're fighting down there, and I would go down there. Whoever is fighting is going to get a whooping, and I talk to them, don't do that. So, they have grown up now, they don't hardly even

argue with each other. And I, and I'm sure they might be on the phone, you know, when they are playing their video games, but for us, when we get together, you never hear them argue. They're on the game, playing about the game, or they out there playing basketball, because I told them this is going to be a house. Where we come, we love, and if we can't get along if you can't get along then you can't be here. Because one thing, I'm not going to do is try to stop nobody, and I had a grandmama die trying to stop my two cousins from fighting. And I said, and I will never, ever want that to be me. So, I've always had in my mind, you aren't going to fight. Anybody who wants to fight, they are going to keep that mess out there in the streets.

CoJPar3 expressed the importance of love as receiving punishment. He stated it may be difficult for the grandson to understand in the moment, but as he grows older and more mature, he will comprehend his grandfather just wanted to help him. This grandfather wants him to be mindful of the friends he surrounds himself with keeps while receiving adequate education and learning environment. He also communicated that when he was growing up, he did not talk back to the authoritative individual or his parents because it was deemed disrespectful. When he provided evidence of why he punishes his grandson, he mentioned he refers to the Bible on not sparing the rod, which means he does not hold back on providing feedback and correction when necessary.

CoJPar3 said:

Well, it's just hard punishment. It's hard punishment as far as when you do something wrong. It's a consequence behind that. And he understands that. And I

don't, I don't spear a rod on him. It's the only way he's going to learn. Because I learned the same way and to make sure he gets an education, make sure he follows in the right direction, make sure he doesn't get with the wrong crowd, because all that right there would change your life in a second. So, if he stays on track of doing that right there, I think he'll be successful. Well, you got so many obstacles out there that, you know, you got people, instead of being a leader, they're more of a follower. And you, and you end up following somebody going the wrong way, and that's not good. So, you've got to basically stay in control of that path and not get on the wrong side of that path.

FSePar4 expressed during her interview while she was growing up, there was no such thing as talking back when she was told to do something. She felt that spanking her children previously and currently, her grandchildren, does not always resolve the issue, but she does try other methods. She also mentioned though she received physical punishment when she was growing up, she wants to be able to talk to her grandchildren about things they do wrong or the takeaway method. If these techniques do not work, she will result in their punishment by giving her grandchildren a whooping. FSeePar4 said:

When I was growing up, we didn't talk back. Even though you tell them something and they mumble it, you get knocked on the floor. That's why I don't like that smart mouth. Cause like I tell them, I do all I can for you. I, you know, whatever they want, I gives it. I'm not going to have that disrespect. Because they know I can't whoop them like I, uh, could do. Now my middle child, their mama, she always got to be down because she had a smart mouth. But she's still got a

smart mouth. I whooped my daughter one time. I don't have no problem with her. But, you know, I was, um, I'm her mama. And if she does something that, you know, I don't like, I talk to her. She's going to *hoop and holler* and all that kind of stuff. You try to tell her something, she *hoop or holler* and all that kind of stuff. He going to get his, he going to get this butt tore up, or we going to talk about it, but it depends on what the matter is. I talk to him because I don't like to whoop them, because you whoop them, it really isn't helping nothing. I talk to him, or I put him on a punishment. I take his phone, tablet, and games and stuff like that. I'm not going to spank him baby, I'm whoopin'. You're too big for a spanking. You can't talk back, you can't say nothing, and you can't sit around grown folks or nothing. Yeah, if I tell them that I'm on the farm or whatever, they'll, they'll leave out while I'm talking. We are not going to be talking about nothing. I just let them stay in here. You know, not, nothing major, but we just talk and talk.

SamPar5 discussed the importance of not sparing the rod on her grandchild because it is mentioned in the Bible, which is something that she utilizes daily; however, it did not conclude she wants to physically punish her grandson with a whooping, though. She mentioned she utilized spankings when she was raising her child, but now she tries to utilize the rod method by trying to talk to her grandson and teach him various techniques without examples of her own upbringing. She also mentioned she never utilized vulgar language with her children while implementing healthy ways of raising her grandchild. This grandmother also stated she noticed before her daughter passed away that she watched her spare the rod on her grandson, which caused more damage considering she

does not accept certain behaviors in her household. As a result, this was a challenging transition for the grandchildren to be held accountable and to a higher standard in her household. During the interview, she also verbalized how lying is something that is unacceptable for her in the home, and they could work through the situation only if he tells the truth no matter what it is. SamPar5 said:

My kid says mom you have really changed, but the thing that I looked at they were raised by my daughter and her raising was totally different to mine you understand what I'm saying? You see things that she (her daughter) allowed I did not allow you couldn't talk back to me. That was a *no no*; my children never did if I said, no, that was it. You couldn't ask your dad. You couldn't ask me why. I say no, you know? But you've got some people philosophy that you don't have to whoop a kid for a kid to mine. Spoil the child. I will not tell you. They have spoiled him. They have spoiled him. She did when she was alive. And then the sisters them did after she died. When I first got them, it was hard. Because even if I scold him, they will get angry. Yes, ma'am. Yeah! I try my best to talk to him. The other night, I went out in the room, and I said to him, I says, I says, I would prefer for you to tell me the truth. And whether I go off or whether I say (to my grandson), you know better, you shouldn't have done that. I said, first, when I didn't know how you was going to react, I said it does not matter. You still come to me, and you still tell me the truth. Worry about the consequences later. But don't tell me a lie. I said, because when you tell one lie, you got to tell another one to cover it up. I never swore at my children. Yes, they got a spanking when I

felt that it was needed. But at the end of the day, it was for their own good. And they told me that if I was not as hard on them as I was as a mom, they don't know where they would be today. I think I gave him too much lead-way. And I take responsibility for that. It's like, it's like I couldn't get to the place where I needed to be hard because like my kid says mom you have really changed, but the thing that I looked at they were raised by my daughter and her raising was totally different to mine you understand what I'm saying? You see things that she (her daughter) allowed I did not allow you couldn't talk back to me. That was a *no no*; my children never did If I said, no, that was it. You couldn't ask your dad. You couldn't ask me why. I say no, you know? But you've got some people philosophy that you don't have to whoop a kid for a kid to mine.

BoyMom6 explained when she was first raising her children, there were a lot of mistakes that she made it felt she was harder on her children than her grandchildren. She mentioned now she tries to talk to her grandchildren because she understands she does not have the raise her voice or yell at her grandchildren to get them to do appropriate things. She also mentioned just talking with her grandchildren is more important because she wants to teach them how to effectively communicate with other people when they are upset. Furthermore, she mentioned because she has more experience raising her grandchildren than raising her own children, she knows better, and she considers herself wiser because of it. BoyMom6 said:

Grandchildren are so different because you're not so hard on your grandkids. I don't know what it is. My children tell me, "Oh, what happened to your tough

parenting?” But I’m still, you know, I get the authoritarian parenting, but Grandparents can make you like, Jello with the heart. It’s just, you know. You can’t raise your voice at them, but you’ll be trying to talk to them. You’re more loving as a grandparent, I’ll put it like that. You are more, much more loving. Well, loving as a parent, but as a grandparent, you just really don’t see much wrong with your grandkids. And I don’t know why, but they can do no wrong. You know, you try to be the, uh, solution to all their little problems. Be like, okay, well, we’re going to do this this way. Okay, well, we, you know, instead of all this hollering, let’s just be the parents, you know. So, be gentler. I guess because we’ve been, uh, when we raised our own, we were learning also, but then when you’re a grandparent, you know, because you’ve been there. We talk it out. We have a little, you know, a talk thing, especially with that granddaughter. When she gets mad, I just walk out, give her time. And then she goes, “Granny, why would you be mad at me? Because you were acting brand new to a situation or so.” You know, I told her the other day, “Go in there and wash them dishes.” So, I went to my room and by the time I came out, the dishes had been washed, so, you know, we just, you don’t have to yell at me as a grandchild, and I learned that, and all other grandparents know the same thing. We also hear from our kids, why you didn’t get on to them like the other ones, because I know better now, I know how to, uh, parent more than yelling.

Theme 2: A Sense of Responsibility and Obligation

Many of the participants discussed the importance of a sense of responsibility and obligation while involving familial aid in their time of need. The explanation of responsibility that emerged from the data was their duty to take accountably on behalf of their grandchildren's parents not being able to do so. The participants explained the significance of being there for their family because it is no one else's responsibility other than theirs. The participants mentioned they would rather sacrifice their needs and desires rather than passing their grandchildren into the state's custody when they feel it is only their responsibility and obligation to do so. All the grandparents shared different stories and experiences of what they feel is necessary for them to support their family. Overall, the participants felt a sense of responsibility and obligation because it is important for the grandchildren to feel supported.

MarPar1 discussed the importance of being with loved one, which it may not necessarily align with bloodline, but with the people you share reciprocity of caring and loving one another. She described showing support through giving up her freedom and livelihood by taking a caregiver role for her grandchild so her daughter could finish school and establish her career. She also mentioned that her grandchildren's father's inconsistent and long work schedule is one of the reasons for taking on the responsibility of primary guardianship. She also discussed the significance of enhancing her family's generational pattern because if they do not receive intervention before her grandchildren have their own children, there will be a continuation of what custodianship looks like when they have grandchildren. MarPar1 said:

Family to me is being with people that you love and having communication, understanding, and caring and being there for them all the time in times of good times and times of bad times, whenever there is a need that you're there for them, I consider that being family. Not just from birth. It doesn't have to be by birth of that individual or within that bloodline. It can be, um, someone that's being cared for, uh, as a part of the family that lives in the same household. And that being their father, their mother, or grandparent. For whomever it is that they're living with. That gives them guidance and, um, responsibility. Most of all, love. That's what I consider as family. So, love, bloodline, non-related bloodline. Mother and dad are not together and so mother was trying to get a career and therefore I helped. I'm helping to help her get that career so that she can maintain in the future and be a full-time mom. Like I said, school for her, and, um, trying to establish a career, and then working full time. Um, not being able to supply the daily necessary functions that a parent should have. Um, not that they don't want to, but the relief has been able to help her to focus. So that she can make that type of living. Um, that we would desire for the kids. The job is, is a, is also a challenge. Because of the working schedule. For both, and for him. His schedule is very lengthy, um, from midday to midnight to sometime after midnight. So, um, and hopefully sometime in the future, uh, these challenges will be resolved or eased. So that, uh, one or both can, can take on the full responsibility that we're making for them now. So then as they say, the old saying of the village, it takes a village to raise a child, especially in a black family. But, um, and if you can't get

that support, then the child suffers. Society suffers. It just has a domino effect.

And that's another reason why we wanted to take on the kids. And do as much as we could while we could physically. So, we are trying to give them the best foundation that they can have at this point.

DejPar2 reported while she struggled about the thought of her daughter who just got into college was pregnant with her grandchild, she took the responsibility to raise her grandson as if he were her own. She mentioned she got mixed feedback from others because it was stated numerously that she should force her child to withdraw from college to raise her child rather than staying in school. However, this grandmother chose to help her while she finishes her education. She mentioned one of the major reasons why she loves unconditionally and supports her family because she had her first child at the age of 16 years old. In addition, she also expressed that she wants her family to see her as more than just a caregiver, but someone who you can depend on regardless of the situation and how they are affected by it. This grandmother provided traumatic and encouraging generational experiences, present insight, and future goals of how she wants to further support her family. DejPar2 said:

Well, it was a lot because then you know that you are responsible for this child's welfare, eating, sleeping, everything that he needs. You know, you know that, hey, I have to be responsible for him and I have to make sure that you know, one, that I'm working, that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing to take care of him because it's not an easy fix. Because his mom couldn't take care of him.

Well, how because we wanted her to be able to go on and finish school because

we could have made her drop down and say hey, this is your responsibility, but I wanted her to know that now you have a reason to go to school so that you can be able to take care of your son as well as yourself. So It was a hard decision, because a lot of people told me, you know, I should just make her drop out and let her see how hard it is, but I said, I'm her mom, and I love her, and I want the best for her, so I'm going to keep pushing for her to go to school, and you know, she's always wanted to be a dentist, she talked about being a doctor when she was a young child, so I still wanted her to follow that dream, so I just knew, hey, it's just another child, and I'm going to have to step up and do what I have to do, because I love him and I love her, yeah. And one thing I taught them all is, we don't fight, and if any of the grandchildren argue, then they know they're going to get in trouble. Now, if you want to say certain things, you can say certain things, but one thing I don't put up with is you talking about one another, and you're not going to fight. Because if you grow up fighting as a child, you're going to grow up as an adult fighting. And when you get grown, people must get out of the way. Because people bring knives, guns, and everything else. I taught them, we are not going to do that. My other grandson (who does not live with her) and my grandson (who lives with her), would always come and tell Nana, they're fighting down there, and I would go down there...and I had a grandmama die trying to stop my two cousins from fighting. You're not going to fight as children because you all should love each other, you should get along, and it should be y'all against them out there in the streets. I was 16 going on 17, my son, 19, and then my

youngest daughter four years later. But I just want them to know that I am big on family, I am big on family getting along, and I feel like if anybody should get along, it should be the family. So, I know that there's no peace out there in the world, but when you come home and I tell my children and grandchildren, this is your peace here. You all (her family) should be able to come in and do just as you want to and enjoy. Sit down, laugh, have fun, talk, play games, do all of that. And I'm big on that. And I want people to know that anybody is coming to my house. You came and you didn't want to leave because I tried my best to make it a peaceful place where you enjoyed coming. And that's all I wanted for my children and grandchildren; when you come to Nana's House, and I'm dead and gone, you can say that you enjoyed yourself, that you had love there. The pantry (in her home) is like a grocery store because I want them to whatever they want, whatever they like, I want them to be able to come here and know that if they want to go upstairs and watch a movie or whatever snacks they want, and they will tell you, they leave here with grocery bags, with a Walmart bag full of snacks. They have a Walmart bag, and they go upstairs and watch movies. Everybody says they can't wait to come over here. I just want it to be a happy place. Happy memories and just a little taste of what love is from now.

CoJPar3 expressed that receiving primary guardianship of his grandson was like having another son of his own. He mentioned he loves the fact that he can spend time with him and feels that he will enjoy it in the same manner as him. He explained because his daughter is currently in school, he feels that he and his wife can provide the assistance

his grandson needs rather than his mother considering she doesn't have the time to fully dedicate to him. While I listened to his lived experiences, I recalled the passion I heard in his voice, how proud he was to have fun with his grandson, and how much he truly adores him in his presence. CoJPar3 said:

It's like I have another son. Yeah, we bond together all the time. We do things together all the time. He goes with me. He works with me. He's just like a son that I never had. The second son that I never had. I'm his granddaddy. And I can see myself in him because he loves to do what I like doing. It didn't affect me because we were so close that I treated him like a son instead of a grandson.

Because I always wanted somebody, you know, like, they like what I like, and I didn't force it on them. And he just picks it up and I love every minute of it, you know, you know, it, it doesn't bother me that he lives here with me. Well, the main reason why he's got, he's living with us is because of his mom going to school, and for her to go in while she's in school, I think we're more responsible for him so she can get what she needs. That's the reason why we, he's here. You know it's nothing outside that I do that'll make people think that I'm not a good grandfather because I treat him right, I do things with them, so, what are the grandparents supposed to do? Well, family is sticking together and growing old, growing old and making sure that everybody's okay and just being as a family like a provider.

FSeePAR4 expressed the importance of making her grandchildren her main priority, and to always protect and serve them. She stated her grandchildren are her

motivation to keep going, and specifically, wants her grandsons to always know what love feels like to them. She mentioned she understands that they had a rough upbringing during the early years, which they may not be able to recall because they were so young. This grandmother also communicated that the type of love that she has for her grandchildren is unconditional because she wants her grandsons to grow up and learn how to fix their relationships with their family without waiting too long. She expressed that she would rather take the responsibility of raising her grandchildren rather than allowing the state of Mississippi to receive custody of them instead because she loves her grandchildren so much. Furthermore, she reported that because she is so involved in their lives that she wants to physically, emotionally, and financially support her grandchildren that live in the home, as well as the ones who live with their parents. During the interview, she was proud and very passionate about how well she takes care of her grandchildren. Another consideration of this particular response is to see the dialogue and relationship that she shares with her grandsons. During the over-the-phone interview, her grandsons walked in the room and began crying because she was speaking about her health and how she sometimes falls. Her eldest grandson mentioned to this grandmother that the youngest grandson was crying because he does not like hearing stories about her falling and gets emotional every time he thinks or hears about it. FSeePAR4 said:

Love, uh, me protecting them, uh, and a lot of patience and respect and, and to be there for one another, to help each other instead of trying to put them down and talk about them, help them because you don't know what people are going through these days. From the children to the grandparents. Uh huh, yes. I have

some of those, that's why I have family. I mean, friends that we call sisters, and when I say they are there for me, they are there for me. They (her grandsons) both give me hugs and tell me that they love me. That's the 11-year-old. And he hates when I fall. He gets mad when I, when I call him, and I tell him I fall. Like, when I'm sick, he's not going to leave my side. I've had him since he was 2 months. (Speaks with eight-year-old) Grandson, what are you crying for? (11-year-old) He is crying. (FSeePAR4) Grandson! He's feeling emotional. I don't know what to say. You know, I had the eight-year-old since he was one. I got him when he was with his grandparents and grandma and her boyfriend, and they broke his leg and messed up his pancreas and something else. They almost killed him. I'm different. When they called me to get my grandchildren, I said, okay, and I got them. I don't know what I would do without them. They keep me going. Even days when I'm not feeling good like now, they keep me going. Even though, you know, I put my life on hold, but I was supposed to, because of my grandchildren. Everybody tells me how proud they are that uh, I'm taking care of these boys, these young ones. They say you keep them boys dressed; you keep their hair nice. They say, I'm so proud of you because you keep them boys up. They kind of, all, from my kids to my grandkids, to my great grandkids, they all spoiled. Even when I'm sick, if they got a game, like my granddaughter plays sports and stuff, and my oldest grandson play for a team. Uh, you know, I would try to go, but, if I'm too, too sick, if it's too hot out there, and I know it's too hot out there for me, I won't go. But my daughters and granddaughter, will film it and stuff. Mm-Hmm. Because they

know their grandma, she be there, she was there for all 'em. Whatever kind of sports they play, I was right there. I got 'em like that just because my mother spoiled us. I tell them that, you know, with their brothers and sisters. And cousins. You're not supposed to fight each other. You're supposed to get along with them. You know, you don't fight your family. You fight the outsiders. But I don't want them fighting at all. Cause there's so much stuff that be happening. So, I tell them they're supposed to love each other. While, you know, I talk to them. They're going to have to work it out. Mm-Hmm, and you're not going to take all week going to handle it the same day. The same day, within that same hour right then and there. And y'all not going to walk away mad. Y'all got to fix it. You never know what might happen. You, you walk away and leave and go somewhere, then something happened, then you about to pass out because you should've, shouldn't have never been doing it in the first place.

SamPar5 discussed family support involved her taking on the responsibility of a full-time caregiver because she loves God, and if God assigned her the role in taking care of her grandchildren after the death of her daughter, it will be done. She also stressed the importance of with love and peace look like within a family unit, especially knowing that what she teaches her grandson is based on what she was taught when she was growing up. This grandmother also mentioned that love also looks like sacrifice, in which she did because she wanted her grandchildren to have a better life and I feel like her and her husband's home were also theirs too. SAmPar5 said:

The definition of family is, I would say love, love, joy, you know, peace. When you can have peace in the family, it's a great thing. Love and peace for me, even though in every family, we know there's some type of dysfunctional. Every family has a dysfunction. Don't get me wrong. When you can find peace in the midst of all the storms and still love your family and go on, it's okay. It's all right with me. I would say that I have a good relationship with all my grandkids. I don't have a hard time because I'm a no-nonsense person. I don't tolerate nonsense and I'm very vocal about it. And sometimes I come across to them like I'm mean. But in the end, they love me because they know within their hearts that I don't mean them no harm. I, you know, I just want the best for them. I was too strict, but I had to do what was best for my house. And with him, I think his mother dying and when I first got them, I think I was more like, what's the word I want to use? I wanted them to feel safe. I wanted them to feel that even though their mom is gone, I'm not going to mistreat them. When my daughter died, me and my husband, we'd already got rid of our house. We were living in a two-bedroom apartment. Happy go lucky. Just the two of us. I probably still would have been working. I've always I have one daughter that says, Mom, don't you get tired of picking other folks' kids up? I said, no, because I've always had this thing in the back of my mind. You treat everybody right. And if you can treat someone else's kid right, when you're not around, if something happens to you, somebody will treat your kids right. I've always felt that way. Mom has enough love to share.

BoyMomPar6 mentioned love is spending time with family, even if they are not considered to be related to each other. She also communicated family support involves raising her grandchildren because she has the financial means to do so, and she refuses to ask for Child Protective Services to get involved in her family matters. She also considered during the interview that although sometimes she does not feel like doing things with her family and she may want to have herself, she still sacrifices her grandchildren's needs before her own. Furthermore, this grandmother also provided family support with other family members in mind and helps with them as well. Overall, her priority is ensuring her family is well-taken care of and teaching her grandchildren how to have effective family relationships even if they have hurt them in the past or decide to only be on cordial terms. BoyMomPar6 said:

The definition of family to me is being supportive and just loving on the people that move back. And, just taking care of, you know, like we were told when we were growing up that it was seven of us stick together. No matter what, you know, your family, because your blood and pain from God, all of us came from the same, you know, people and that we have to stick together and love our family because don't nobody love you like your family. And, that we, you know, we know that, and let them know that we're here for you all. You know, anything for emotional support, you know, mental, anything, you know, physical, whatever you need, you know, you can always call on us. To be, you know, to be there and to help with anything, any issues you have, if you can't come to grandma, you can come to granddad and talk to either one of us, but just know that, you know, the

issue, whatever you have is getting resolved. And with us becoming the sole, you know, parenting of them. It's just like us parents and again, but we are grandparents. They like to move around, so it keeps me young, and it keeps us active. Like tonight, we're going out. I don't want to go, but it's a family thing that we do now. So, physically, I just keep going. But since we've got them, you know, we know we have to you know, nurture them and just be their support and them with finances, it's just like, it's just like continual raising of your own, you know You got to put food, clothes, and shelter on them because you got to be there for them Emotionally, you know, so it's just that it's continuation of parenting. I would much rather have my grandkids living with us, which we provide food, clothes, shelter, uh, finances and everything for them. That for them to be a product of child protective services or foster care. When we have the room because our kids have grown and gone, and we have everything that they would need to be normal. You see what I'm saying? So why let them be a product of a system when they can be, when they are family? So that's what my first sentence was, that family, we stick together, we love on each other unconditionally because, like I said, it's just like a continuation of parenting. I mean, we do have our times when we're stuck, but like I said, this is a family and a team effort with me and my husband. If, you know, I can't do it, he can do it. You know, a tag team thing that's going on with us. If he can't do it, I can do it, or we work around a schedule where somebody can, you know, be there to do whatever needs to be done with the grandchildren. I just want to let them know to be open, and, uh, talk

it out, have morals and values, how to treat other people, and just to let them know to be open, uh, and, uh, talk about it. And if it doesn't work, then you can just move on and it's okay to let go family members. Just as well as it's okay to let go of friends because sometimes you do grow from family members and it's okay, but you can continue to be cordial. You don't have to kiss up, but you can be cordial and speak and you know and just be cordial. There's no sense in having arguments and stuff because we can't agree to disagree.

Theme 3: The Importance of Respect

Each grandparent discussed the importance of respect in various nuances, which included (a) demanding respect, (b) taking care of their family, (c) providing for their family, and (d) expressing their love and support with redirected behavior when the grandchildren do something deemed inappropriate. A few grandparents described the importance of loving each other in the family even when they are wrong. Other grandparents mentioned it is imperative to learn how to repair relationships at an early age while they raise their grandchildren, and to teach them family members are one of the first encounters of what healthy relationships will look like before they enter adulthood. The importance of respect, family, support, and self-love provided significant meaning to how they express their love to their grandchildren. They want their grandchildren to respect them considering they have experience of parenting their own children while ensuring they have the best education. The participants want their grandchildren to understand the importance of respect, how it benefited the grandparent while growing up, and how it will benefit the grandchild throughout their lives.

MarPar1 discussed the importance of respect because when she was growing up as a child, she was required to take care of materialistic items that she was given because they did not receive a lot because of financial challenges. She also explained that many things created and established were built with better material, which she feels she appreciates even more. She also expressed the importance of the value of money because it is much more than the amounts that she appreciates, which she wants her grandchildren to understand, and respect as well. MarPAR1 also communicated the importance of cherishing what she and her husband have worked for because it could be given away easily, if not considered. Furthermore, this grandmother reported she wants her grandchildren to respect their mother and father, regardless of the custodial challenges that they are having. MarPar1 said:

I would say, um, in my day and time, you know, we were not able to get a whole lot. Um, so whatever you had, you did take care of them, of course. And another thing is that things were built much more, uh, in a better material list, materials than you have now. So, once you got it, it was made of steel, so you didn't have to worry about it going to tear up. So, but, you know, it's teaching them the value of money. And teaching them the value of what is being given to you is given to you out of love. We just went through that with Christmas. That, um, you know, the real reason for Christmas is to celebrate Jesus' birthday. That's what we believe and that's what we teach. We do provide and give a lot, um, um, physically, uh, materialistic things, but we also try to make them, uh, understand that it's not an easy come by. Um, that you have to earn it, uh, and not just get it. And if you

don't, um, take care of it, then somebody else may get what you have, who may appreciate it more. So, if you don't take care of it, then, uh, we may have to give that to someone who will take care of it. Uh, and just because it's yours doesn't mean that you can keep it either. You know, even though you're not with your parents, they're still your parents. Without your mother or your father, you wouldn't be here. And, um, the relationship is still extremely good, even though I am the primary giver. But, uh, the relationship between the parents and the children are still excellent. Um, there is no denial of the relationship. So, they, uh, constantly taught about love for their mother, their father, their grandparents, I mean, their other (maternal) grandparents. And, um, that, uh, you respect them as, and respect all adults. We try to teach them that. In more ways than one. Mm hmm. And, um, if there's a desire that they want to go, then there is no denial to go and be with them.

DejPar2 mentioned her role in revealing what respect means for her is seeing her as a grandmother who gave her child and grandchild a better life by any means necessary. She explained in various ways that she sacrificed her own life and freedom to take care of her grandson, which she is not complaining, but she understands the sacrifice was something that she wanted to make. She also noted she wanted to ensure that her child and grandchild respected her throughout the process. She expressed that although she enjoys and loves her grandson, she cannot see herself doing it any longer than she must consider, and her daughter will graduate from medical school soon. She mentioned because respect looks differently, she hopes that her family can see the respect that she's

taught throughout the years to her grandchild because to get respect, you must give it.

Also, considering this grandmother reported because of the assistance she provided throughout her daughter and grandson's life, respect was conveyed in various forms of sacrifices, how you treat people, and dedication to a greater purpose, which was allowing her daughter to finish school and primarily taking care of her grandson in the process.

DejPar2 said:

I am big on respect the way my parents were. You know, if I tell you do something, you do it and you're going to respect me, there's no talking back. There's no thinking you going to fight me or bow up at me or anything like that. So, the same way my momma did with us is kind of like what I'm doing with him. I see there's light at the end of the tunnel, but could I do this another five ten years? No, I could not because I think now that I see with my daughter getting herself together, graduating, being able to take care of herself and her son now, I'm able to do other things that I've wanted to do that I had to put on the back burner because of spending money to help take care of him. So yeah, emotionally, I am great; now if he was younger, if I was younger and or if I knew...well, if my grandson was younger and I knew that I had probably about another 10 years with this, I don't think I could do it. I hope that because, you know, being so young (58), you know, because most grandparents, when they start to be grandparents, they like 60 and 70. But that wasn't the case for me. But I hope that they saw a person that stepped up and did what they had to do...and did it with dignity and because I wanted to. So, I try to teach them that, um, you know, the same thing

that my parents taught me is to, um, treat people the way you want to be treated. Even if they don't treat you that way, you still treat them the way you would want to be treated. And that way, therefore, when you lay down at night, you can go to sleep at night because you know you did nobody wrong. I think I will continue to be big on respect. Respect your elders. And, um, kindness will take you a long way. That's one thing my grandmama taught us.

CoJPar3 communicated the demand of respect with a similar perspective that was conducive with MarPar1's response. Regardless of he and his wife raising their grandson, he explained his grandson must respect his mother by any means necessary. He also noted that whenever his grandson disrespects his mother, it was something that he strongly disagreed with and deemed unacceptable. He explained although his mother is not available to be a full-time caregiver for her son because she is in school, it still is not an excuse and he will not tolerate the disrespect of his grandson's mother. CoJPar3 said:

Well, the last time he got in trouble with me was, uh, was with him and his mom, he disobeyed his mom. He disobeyed his mom, and I didn't like it. And so, I just told him that, you know, hey, if you can't respect your mom, then we're going to have to do something about this. And so, I told him that. And uh, he just, well, he just said, well, I understand granddaddy. I said, but no, you don't understand. I said, because if you understand, you wouldn't be keeping on doing it, you know. So that's what I told him.

Theme 4: Overcoming Challenges

The theme of overcoming challenges can be defined as the grandparents continuously going through various trials within their lives and striving to overcome their challenges. During their interviews, the participants shared stories of challenges regarding health, emotional, and financial concerns. Some of the grandparents mentioned that they go through challenges, and instead of making themselves a priority, they put their grandchildren first. Other participants were transparent regarding their concerns and how difficult it was they were still experiencing their challenges. The interviews consisted of various questions that inquired about their specific challenges such as (a) mental health, (b) physical health, (c) spiritual needs, (d) and emotional concerns. While these concerns developed insightful answers, some of the participants mentioned there are financial strains as well.

MarPar1 discussed she specifically encounters physical and emotional concerns. She reported she is an older grandparent raising younger children with a large age gap, which puts a strain on her mental wellness and overall well-being. She also expressed that she finds free time whenever she sends them to school or when her husband assists her when she needs that space for self-care. Other times, she reported that she still goes to church and takes the children with her, but overall, she struggles with her mental health and wellness. She also noted how cultures in various countries have multigenerational homes where the grandparents, their children, and the grandchildren live together, but in her situation, she lives with her husband, which presented as more difficult and challenging for her. MarPar1 said:

I used to love to travel. And, uh, a world traveler. And everything was, has been put on hold. So, that changed everything that I was doing for me. And putting them first in my life. Uh, especially for the last two. The last two, um, I'm, you know, retired. And the first two (grandchildren), I was working. So, our relationship was mostly on the weekends. Um, in which I would get them, you know, almost the entire weekend. But with the, um, with this, this pair, uh, they're with me all the time. Every day. So, I'm picking up from school, I'm helping with homework, and so, it's totally different. It has made me put a lot of things on hold. Any kind of social life. Cause basically I'm tired. Sometimes it's very challenging and um, when the demand is so strong and when it's so continuous. I have to, um, go to the bathroom, close the door, lock it, of course they don't, you know, still, you know, and so, uh, but I do try to get that, that, uh, mental time in, and, um, so when time is available, um, from um, the other grandparent who still works, Um, I'm able to get some relief. So, I take advantage of that, uh, mental freedom at that time. And a lot of times I'll try to get them in bed early. Um, you know, especially on school nights and get them in bed early and then I have a down time for me. for about an hour to two hours before I go to bed. I'm able to still attend church on a regular basis, and I, uh, take them with me. Most of the time when they're not when they're here on the weekend. And health wise, I'm getting older. I'm in my mid-70s. And, um, I have had some challenges with COVID, um, longevity, long haul issues. I have coped with them. I try to maintain my, my body, um, in a physical way, um, and I do exercise some, but not as much

as I used to. Um, so I don't, I don't think about myself when they're around. I mostly, when they're in school, rest and do minor chores. And, uh, you know, sometimes, uh, or when they are here and it's a full day and no school. Well, you know, I'll lay down and take a nap. But, uh, yeah, I would say that it is different, um, and it's very challenging physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, in every way, it's challenging, um, and in some societies, um, not in, not so much in this country. Especially in, uh, Asia and, uh, some European countries. The elderly stay in the house with the mother, father, and children so they can be that buffer. Whereas in America, it's more the grandparents are put away. So, they're not there to be that, that helper for the, for the parents. My parents helped me out when I had (younger) children. I was in school, I was working, and full time. And so, I needed that extra help. And so, both grandparents were there for them, for me, for my children. And so, I saw how much it helped me. So, there, I'm helping my grandkids parents. A lot of sacrifices have to be made financially and having patience. Everything that a parent would have to go through, the grandparents have to go through it double, in my opinion, because of the age difference. And I would say that when God made this world, and made man and woman, and when you are productive, especially for the woman, uh, that age cut off. That means you don't need to have any kids. Because your days (of full-time caregiving) are over at that point, so to speak, you know. And, um, so that's why it's a good thing that if I were, if my husband and I are working together with this because he may give me a rest after I've done so much and then let me go off into my quiet space and

then we take turns because one needs to be available in every direction because of things that happen.

DejPar2 explained her challenge is going through chronic health concerns, specifically with cancer. She also stated because she has encountered many challenges for herself, she does not believe that she could do it if her grandson was younger or if she was older. This grandmother explained because she was initially a grandmother in her 40s and that was difficult for her to process as well. She also stated the financial concerns of ensuring that he is well taken care of how to put a strain on her throughout the years, but she gave honor to God stating she was able to do it. Another thing that was considered in this grandmother's story was that she and her husband considered taking care of her grandson while her daughter goes to school. She reported that because she wanted her daughter to have a better future, she put her life on hold to ensure her grandson had everything he needed and desired rather than making her daughter struggle, which is something to consider. DejPar2 said:

I mean, you know, groceries, clothes, shoes, everything are high. And when my grandson was first born, me and um, his other grandparent paid for his daycare. You know, until he got ready to go to school. So, you know, somebody stepped, you know, we all just stepped in and did what we had to do. I sent my daughter off to college and my house was empty. So, me and my husband thought we were just going to do what we wanted to do. We ate at 5:30, and we were in bed by 6:30 and then one month later after my daughter was in college, she came home to tell me she was pregnant and I was like, really? Are you serious? So, that was a

big shock because I didn't think that would be her because I know, you I mean, she had so much gone on that I didn't think she would come and tell us that, but she did. So, you know, we had to deal with it and all that stuff and, you know, her pregnancy, throwing up, all that stuff, baby shower, just the whole thing, you know, that we knew that she didn't have a job. So that was like another child for us. It was hard, but we made it work. Um, I think I was in my forties. Yeah. And that's not the norm for grandparents. Yeah. You're waiting on people. When you think, yeah. Yeah. When you think when you just got everybody out the house. You're waiting at least 10 years or something, you know, you want to enjoy just that but that wasn't the case. Health wise, um, for me I'm doing. I think now with having cancer it has, um, you know, I don't think I could do this, you know, to be trying to take care of him. Because that, that is a lot. And so, I think if I had to, um, do the stuff that I was doing when he was younger, like helping to get him to daycare, or picking him up, or doing this, or doing and cooking, I mean, you know, when you work, you come home, you've got to cook, you've got to clean, wash clothes, do all that. I don't think I could do that for my health the way my health is now, but now I don't have to worry about that because now he's self-sufficient.

CoJPar3 explained he does not have many challenges raising his grandson.

However, while analyzing the data, this participant was specifically worried about making sure that he was a provider for his family in all nuances, as well as ensuring he is physically healthy. He also expressed taking care of his family was not necessarily a

challenge, but it was something that he assured he did daily so they would not have to worry about it. CoJPar3 said:

Um, I would say the financial part because groceries are high school costs is high anything that's concerning my grandson that he needs for his money wise, that's expensive. Along with all the other bills that you have. So, I think that would be the only thing. Well, the only challenges I have really been making sure my family is well taken care of. That's the only challenge I have. Health wise, well, for me, well I have several health wise, health wise, and uh, heart problems, uh, uh, high blood pressure, and that's about it for a lot of that. It's pretty easy. I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing.

FSeePar4 discussed how she has various challenges in her life. She expressed that she was the only single grandparent enduring all the challenges by herself. She has medical concerns, and sometimes financially, she is unable to purchase the medication that is needed because she cannot afford it. She also explained she went through multiple years paying for legal counsel and court fees to ensure that she was the primary and only custodian for her grandchildren. Aside from the challenges that she has gone through with her grandchildren, she also noted that she has gone through challenges in her life with relationships and regarding abuse. So, during the interview, she insured that she took on the responsibility of the primary caregiver for her grandchildren because they were encountering abuse from their parents, which may have possibly triggered her in the process. FSeePar4 said:

His, his daddy's mama, the baby boy, his daddy's mama. They broke his leg. And, uh, something about his pancreas, and something else, they almost killed him. No, it was the 8-year-old. But he was 1. They, um, when he was in the hospital, they called for me and I've been going to court for him for four years and I had to get a lawyer and I got him. I got the 11-year-old grandson when he was two months. His mama was whooping on him when he was two weeks old. Why would you whoop a baby? She wasn't treating him right. So, she called me one day and asked me did I want him, but he was a month old. I told her yeah, send him on down. So, I did, and I got him. And he was going to be two months. Uh, I think the same week or the next week. So, I've been having him since he was two weeks. Cause I wasn't going to let nobody mistreat my, uh, grandchildren. It's hard, especially, uh, dealing with my, my, uh, my vision because I can't have a seat because everything is so blurry. But they help me. When I say they help me, they help me. They check on me, and we are in the same house. I had a heart attack and I got two stents in my heart. I'm dealing with a lot of health issues, but I keep praying. I need to get out of this house and go to the doctor so I can see what's wrong, get my shots, and take good care of myself, my biggest stress is taking care of me, but the first one (priority) is always taking care of my boys. Whatever it is that I go through, they are my number one priority. I don't handle stress good. That's what I need to stop doing, stressing out really bad. I'm, I'm a very emotional person. Very. I can watch stuff on TV and if it's sad I'm going to start crying. I can go somewhere and see the little babies and

get their ears pierced. Now I don't know these children. They cry and I'm crying. I can see people that I don't even know. If they cry, I start crying. I don't even know what's going on. And I really don't go nowhere. Cause I be here with these boys. Oh, one of my best friends, that's his godmother, that's the oldest one godmother. I went with her. They had a, a housewarming for her. And, uh, I went there on New Year's, and they had one, uh, this Saturday, I had another housewarming party. I haven't been to a housewarming party since before my daughter was born. You know, my youngest daughter, I haven't been to one since she was born. And I really enjoyed myself. Oh, I'm struggling now. Well, with all understanding, I don't have to pay no bills, no, I mean, no rent because I am in foreclosure and, you know, we trying to find somewhere to go before they throw us out. Because I've been trying, I've got six months, I've been trying to try to see who's taking it. Everybody says it's going to be this time. I be sitting here hoping to get up out of here. And with my medicine, because every time I go to the doctor, to my heart doctor, and my primary doctor, they always, it's my sugar and my heart, they're always giving me heart medicine. So, the heart medicine that I'm taking, they'll stop it and go a little higher. And then I have to pay for this medicine and sometimes I don't have the money for it. I got medicine at the drug store now I need to get.

SamPar5 mentioned when she was growing up, she did not have a supportive caregiver and it was difficult for her. Thus, many things that she decided to do as a parent impacted how she treated her children and grandchildren. She also mentioned when her

daughter passed away, her grieving process was minimized and she and her husband instantly became primary caregivers. She also reported she and her husband were staying in a two-bedroom home and it was fully paid for. However, this grandmother mentioned that when she received full custody of her grandchildren, she moved out of her paid-off home to give them more space and a place to call home with their own rooms. In addition to these financial concerns, she expressed she has family-related challenges that involve emotional cutoff and behavior concerns from her grandson. She stated because he has been possibly encountering feelings of grief, it is hard for her to convince him to behave appropriately at home and school. She also noted she wishes she was financially able to provide better opportunities for her grandson, but he does not understand how much she goes through. Lastly, this grandmother communicated she wants to maintain a healthy routine but is unable to do so because of uncontrollable events. SamPar5 said:

I grew up in a home with a very strict person. She was not my mother. She was not related to me. I had a rough childhood coming up. And I made myself a promise that if I ever have kids, I will not allow them to go through what I went through as a child. And I've always kept it at the back of my mind. But the woman that raised me, I had to go to church. I don't care where there was a tent revival, we were there. You understand me? I was not allowed to wear pants. I couldn't go to any school parties. I couldn't have any friends. That's how I grew up. And at the age of 16, I walked away. I packed my bags one morning. And I walked out of that house and never looked back. I say that to say this, because when I look at my brothers and my sisters, it's ten of us. All ten are alive. They're

not poor, they're not broke and it's so much friction. I've always kept myself from them. I speak to them, don't get me wrong, when I see them. But I've always had a wall up. Because I've always felt like an outsider. I have two sisters. And seven brothers. It's three girls and seven boys. And I have one sister that she gets along with nobody. And when my daughter died, she stirs up some corruption that I had to leave her where she was at. my grandson tries to reach out to his dad and his dad doesn't want anything to do with it. I said, because if he wanted to be in his life, when he found out that his mother was dead, he would have been in his life. But, you know, he wants to call him, I don't get involved in it, I don't know when he does it, he goes outside. But if you can't see that me and grandpa is here, grandpa gives you everything you ask for. The challenge that I have is him in school. That's my biggest challenge. And every time I see his report card, it breaks my heart. I'm always in tears. His schooling. Because to me, you're not trying. I don't put any pressure on you to where all I ask is that you go to school and do your work. That's all I ask of you. There are things that I would like to get done. I get sad sometimes. It breaks my heart to know that the more I try, it seems like the worse you get, you don't appreciate the things that I do for you. You don't (her grandson) appreciate it, and that's how I felt the other morning. It's like you did not appreciate this home. You did not appreciate having your own room, your own private space. You wouldn't even keep that space of yours clean. When I saw all the garbage. Looked like a hoarder. Yeah. It, it threw me into a stressful, and you understand that there was nothing, yeah. You know,

the sad part about it, my husband is so easygoing. He is so lovable. He loves his grandkids. And for him to say to me, I am just trying to get him through school. What does that tell you? He's stressed out as well. I don't like to see my husband sad.

BoyMom6 expressed she does not have many concerns, but she does have a new challenge of raising a girl because she has been raising nothing but boys in the past. She said it is difficult doing so because of the hormonal changes that her teenage granddaughter encounters, and it is different for her. She also mentioned there are challenges because she took on the responsibility and did a continuation of parenting because the parents of her grandchildren were too young to consider taking full custodianship, and she also has been assisting the maternal grandparent of one of her grandchildren by providing her assistance and relief because of the grandchild's disability. BoyMom6 said:

The 15-year-old, you know, she's a girl, so emotionally, physically, you have to be there for her. The boys, they're okay, they're gamers and you know, they just let me know and what, you know, their needs are. Whether it's, you know, they want this or they want a new game, they want some new shoes, they want, but that 15-year-old, Lord have mercy, she, physically wears me out and emotionally wears me out because you know, she's dealing with a cycle. She's dealing with just being a girl, just you know, Lord, it's a new thing. See, we raised three boys. This girl thing is something, she's totally different. But we still endure it, Lord. Financially through our pockets, she got us. My son was 17 and 18 when he had

them. Their mom was like 19, but she just wasn't ready. And he, when he stayed here in the state, he would help, you know, uh, with them financially and everything. We still, you know, it's a part of their lives, but their mom kind of, she just wasn't ready to be a parent, but she's gotten a whole lot better now, but with them being with us since birth, you know, it was hard, but they know their mom. They, they know, you know, they go out-of-state and spend summers or spring break, whatever they want to go out there, you know, spend time with him. But for, for us, it was like an age thing. They just weren't ready. And so, we just do what we had to do, step up. Um, and this with my nine-year-old, it was another situation. Now his mom had a disabled baby and that she's trying to get back on her feet with. She just needs a break and, uh, she asked for a week, you know, keep him for a year or so. So, I mean, he can stay as long as he wants and I think he doesn't want to go back, but we'll come across that bridge when we get, when we get there. I've lost a lot of friends behind this because they're like, I wouldn't, but I would. You know, uh, my journey is like, is not your journey is what I would tell them because I'm doing what was placed into my plate in this life, not what somebody else, you know, wants me to do or how you see, in your view of what you wouldn't be doing, which I would much rather have my grandkids living with us, which we provide food, clothes, shelter, uh, finances and everything for them than for them to be a product of child protective services or foster care. The challenges that I feel like I'm facing are like, my life has not stopped ripping and running because you always have some kind of practice,

somewhere to go, something you got to do. You got to keep them entertained, you got to keep them, you know, uh, going and busy. So that, uh stuff like anxiety and depression won't sit in on a child. You have to, you know, be open with them at all times. You've got to keep them busy and yourself busy, so you won't think of all the badness that you think you have going on in life. So just try to keep it very normal.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

There are various steps to ensure credibility in this study. I ensured that the findings and results appropriately conveyed each participant's lived experiences, as well as utilized the guided questions during the interview process. To ensure further credibility, my research committee thoroughly reviewed each step to ensure the study was appropriately aligned with the goals of narrative inquiry, my theoretical framework, and being purposeful with my research questions. In addition to remaining competent in my research, I also have prior experience working with Black families and multigenerational homes. I had prior knowledge before beginning the data collection process, which assisted with effectively reviewing my literature review and processing the helpful tools to guide me during the interview process.

Transferability

The evidence provided from this research can be utilized and replicated with similar studies, as well as following the procedures for those researchers who would like to discover further research gaps. In the role of a researcher, I ensured that generalization

was provided in the study in which another researcher who would be interested in replicating the study could utilize this material to assist with bridging the gap in their own research. In addition, I provided a substantial number of descriptions of the study itself to ensure clarification.

Dependability

The concerns of dependability were presented in the research and how it was documented throughout the study. My dissertation committee, as well as other research professionals, assisted and provided adequate feedback to enhance dependability. In addition to the concerns of dependability, the Walden University institutional review board (IRB) reviewed the information of data collection prior to conducting interviews and ensured no harm or unethical procedures will be present (ACA, 2014).

Confirmability

To address confirmability, I ensured the findings and analysis were more based on each participant's lived experiences and stories, rather than prior knowledge of the phenomenon and personal biases. In addition, I provided notes and a trail of my data during the data collection process and reviewed the transcripts and audio recordings to familiarize myself with the data. I also conducted member checks and reached out to the participants to verify what I analyzed and concluded was what the participants felt and experienced.

Results

Based on this study, the stories provided were from Black grandparents raising their grandchildren in the state of Mississippi. Many of the grandparents discussed the

importance of their sense of responsibility and obligation, as well as expressing their strong and unwavering faith. Although they have endured different challenges and tribulations while raising their grandchildren, they continue to endure each challenge and provide for their grandchildren as best as they can. Throughout the interviews, the grandparents shared rich stories while uncovering their purpose of maintaining their motivation of why they persevere through it all. There were no discrepant cases in the study to report, which further enhanced the confidence in the participants' stories. Overall, the results of this study conveyed how the participants' rich stories answered the research questions effectively.

Research Question 1

Theme 1: Strong and Unwavering Faith

Many of the grandparents who discussed their relationship with their grandchildren reported it has been both rewarding and challenging within the realm of their unwavering faith. Based on the participants' stories of how they feel about their grandchildren, one of the grandmothers reported her grandsons are her motivation for living and continuing to take care of herself health-wise. Another grandmother mentioned that it was God that prepared her to be a grandparent, raising her grandchildren because of the circumstances of grief. There was only one grandparent who had concerns about her grandson considering he is still enduring grief and not comprehending how to fully express it. Overall, the grandparents discuss their relationships have been well, especially when most participants spoke highly of their grandchildren. When the grandparents spoke about their grandchildren and the relationship, whether it was over the phone, or in

person for the interview, the grandparents expressed pride and discussed how God has blessed them with their grandchildren.

Theme 2: A Sense of Responsibility and Obligation

All the participants reported their sense of responsibility and obligation to their family when the grandparents received primary guardianship of their grandchild. The grandparents discussed during the interviews that their outlook on grandparenthood did not change except one. The first participant mentioned although she sacrifices daily and ensures her grandchildren are well, it is difficult for her physically because she is older and has a significant age gap from the younger grandchildren. The third participant mentioned she was thankful and grateful that she was able to raise a grandson and can provide a better life for her grandson and her daughter as well, but she stated if he were any younger, or if she was older than what she is now, it would be almost impossible because of the health concerns that she currently has. The fifth participant mentioned she could not see it any other way, because when her daughter passed away in a fatal car accident, this was all part of God's plan rather than her own.

In addition, all participants had various reasons for their purpose of receiving full custodianship. The first participant mentioned she was making the sacrifice of her own physical and mental freedom to ensure that the mother of her grandchildren and her son could have a better financial and physical life until they were able to receive full custodianship. The second participant mentioned her daughter is in school now, and she will graduate soon, which will allow her to have more time to focus on her health. The third participant stated his daughter is in medical school, but it was nothing that was

detrimental for him because it was like having a second son he never had. The fourth participant explained that her grandchildren suffered from abuse from previous caregivers and parents, which was nonnegotiable for her to receive custody of her grandchildren. The fifth participant noted her daughter was involved in a fatal car accident. Lastly, the sixth participant mentioned it was due to her grandchildren's parents being capable at a young age of taking care of children, as well as needing assistance with one of her grandchildren who has a disability.

All the participants expressed the importance of love, obligation, peace, and healthy family relationships. A few of the participants discussed that the bloodline is not composed of what a family looks like for them, but it is about the people that are involved in their lives and who make it a family. In addition to these results, family is expected to have a sense of responsibility and obligation to take care of their family members regardless of how stressful or emotional the situation is for them. Each grandparent stressed the importance of healthy communication and creating lasting memories with their family members.

In addition, all the participants expressed that they have noticed behaviors from the grandchildren they resemble closely to themselves or previous generations of family members. Many generational patterns stem from cultural norms and inherited values (Sue & Sue, 2015), which provide additional obligations for grandparents to teach their grandchildren. For example, participant six noted she has seen much of her granddaughter's behaviors in herself, but it was new for her because she has never raised a girl before considering she has only birthed boys. Participant one explained how she

noticed the generational patterns in her grandchildren, and stressed the importance of how the Bible is heavily impacted and what she sees in her grandchildren today.

Participant three explained he sees so much of himself and his grandson because he enjoys doing everything that he does. Overall, the grandparents noted that generational patterns are prevalent in their households because it provides a sense of support and the roles within the family unit.

Theme 3: The Importance of Respect

Participants reported that one of the key ingredients to resolving conflict is learning how to effectively communicate respectfully to their family. In addition, participants discussed the importance of trusting them to make the decisions and know that what they request of them to do is not to harm them, but to help them. All the participants except one expressed the importance of listening the first time because it is a part of respect, which is imperative, and demanded in the grandparent household. On the contrary, one participant reported it is essential for her to teach her grandchildren healthy communication habits by teaching them how to communicate effectively and discuss their concerns.

All the grandparents noted that society sees them as someone who is noble and highly respected in the community for taking on the responsibility of taking care of their grandchildren. Many other grandparents explained that they are prideful of the role and would not have it any other way. Participant three stated he enjoys it, and knows that when people look at him, they see pride and joy in what he does as a grandfather for his

grandson. Participant four expressed people around her are proud of her and very supportive of her decision to seek for custodianship.

Theme 4: Ongoing Challenges

Three of the grandparents discussed they had physical health challenges while raising their grandchildren. Participant five expressed she has challenges with her grandson because she understands he is still facing grief, as well as the behavioral challenges in home and in the school environment. Participant three mentioned he has no outstanding challenges, but he does want to ensure that he is a provider for his family. While looking at the participants' stories and examining what challenges they may endure, they all discussed a challenge of some sort, and expressed there was a sacrifice when they received primary guardianship.

Research Question 2

Theme 2: A Sense of Responsibility and Obligation

All the participants discussed the significance of loving their family regardless of the situation or unfortunate circumstance. The participants mentioned it is an obligation of theirs to teach their grandchild how to maintain healthy relationships in the family. Participants one, two, three, and six stated that they want their grandchildren to have a relationship with their parents and to respect them because they are still their parents. Participants two and five want their grandchildren to understand the love they have for them, the sacrifices of how they are maintaining their households for them to have better life and challenges they have gone through for them to reap the benefits of their labor.

Participants three and four mentioned their grandchildren are what keeps them going and motivates them to effectively provide for them financially, emotionally, and spiritually.

Theme 3: The Importance of Respect

All the grandparents discussed the importance of respect and love for one another in the household. Respect is essential for the participants because it shows a sign of gratitude and wisdom for the family. Participant one discussed the significance of ensuring that her grandchildren understand the love that they have and teaching them how to properly take care of their children and grandchildren. Participant two expressed that she wants to ensure that she teaches her grandchildren to be mindful of how they handle conflict and mitigate behaviors of violence, especially towards their family members. Participant three expressed the importance of maintaining an education, learning about the type of people who his grandson surrounds himself, how he views life, and the meaning of what success looks like for him. Participant four wants to teach her grandchildren the meaning of respect and learn how to adopt independent living skills. Participant five explained she wants to ensure that she teaches her grandson to have God as his focal point and how to maintain healthy coping skills regarding grief. Lastly, participant six wants her grandchildren to understand that having morals and treating people right in life are important characteristics to have.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the stories of grandparents raising their grandchildren and how it correlates to both the interview questions and research questions. Each of the grandparents' stories have been summarized into four themes: (a)

strong and unwavering faith, (b) a sense of responsibility and obligation, (c) the importance of respect, and (d) ongoing challenges. With the rich stories provided in Chapter 4, I have provided the demographics of this study, the data collection process, the data analysis, a thorough explanation of each theme, and included results of how the intentions of the interview questions answered both the research questions. In Chapter 5, I will discuss how the literature provided in Chapter 2 complements each theme discussed from Chapter 4. In addition, I will provide the interpretation of findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for positive social change, and conclusion of the overall study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to explore the rich stories of Black grandparents raising their grandchildren in the state of Mississippi to help determine how counselors can provide enhanced evidence-based therapeutic interventions. Narrative inquiry was chosen as the qualitative approach for the study because the type of questions that were developed for the interview allowed each participant to tell their lived experiences as a Black grandparent caregiver. In addition, the challenges and struggles that each grandparent has endured were able to be captured as well. Based on the results, I was able to convey, confirm, and understand that not only is there a need to provide mental health services for this phenomenon, but it is imperative of how to enhance and sharpen the skills that are already established in clinical practice and other helping professional fields. Although there is more research needed to bridge the gap for Black grandparents raising their grandchildren, this study explored how Black grandparents in the state of Mississippi provide their family with a sense of responsibility and obligation, still encounter ongoing challenges, and manage their strong and unwavering faith in God. In this chapter, I will discuss what has emerged from each theme provided from Chapter 4, the interpretation of the findings, limitations, recommendations, implications for social change, and a conclusion for the study.

Theme 1: Strong and Unwavering Faith

Each participant mentioned throughout the interviews the importance of God and including the teachings of the Bible in their daily routines. Each grandparent discussed

the significance of teaching their grandchildren about Biblical teachings and was passionate about how these teachings have influenced their lives. CoJPar3 mentioned he prays every day and does not miss a day doing so. The grandparents discussed how imperative it is for them to incorporate God's teachings. Many of them discussed that they grew up in the church and it was mandatory for them to learn and interpret the Word, which has been passed from multigenerational patterns, which is explained in the Bowen family systems theory concept of multigenerational transmission process. The participants believe that incorporating the Bible, praying daily, and providing wisdom from their previous experiences have assisted with raising their grandchildren. The grandparents expressed that the Bible provides adequate teachings on how to maintain their morals and values from previous generations to presently in the home. In addition, when a few participants mentioned spanking and whooping their grandchildren as an authoritarian parent, it was based on the concept of multigenerational transmission process. As a result, the participants felt that the authoritarian parenting style (see Berk, 2017) is imperative while raising their grandchildren.

Theme 2: A Sense of Responsibility and Obligation

All participants communicated the importance of a sense of responsibility and obligation from family members and even those who are not related to them. Bowen family systems theory confirms what is presented in the results for each grandparent with the emotional family unit, which concludes how they were heavily impacted and influenced on the love and support that they were provided from their family, as well as

how they believe they should support their family. In the words of MarPar1, it takes a village to raise a child.

Theme 3: The Importance of Respect

Each grandparent voiced the importance of respect in their household and wants their grandchildren to learn how to respect themselves in society. Some of the grandparents reported that they felt that respect came from learning to trust their decisions as experienced caregivers. Other grandparents noted that it is important for the children and grandchildren to understand the sacrifices they have made as a full-time caregiver. Each grandparent mentioned the importance of respect because they were taught to respect their elders, and their grandchildren are taught the same thing. This is an example of a result of multigenerational patterns within the eight concepts of Bowen family systems theory.

Theme 4: Ongoing Challenges

Each participant discussed how they have endured many challenges, and they vary based on past and current circumstances that were unforeseen and already established. The participants were asked about their challenges presented from the time they received full custody to the present day, and Bowen family systems theory was significantly highlighted throughout the results. MarPar1 and DejPar2 discussed challenges regarding mental health, physical health, and self-care, which are all reflected in the concept differentiation of self. CoJPar3 explained he has health-related challenges and wants to ensure that he is a provider for his family, which could be conveyed as multigenerational transmission process and family emotional process if he was unable to

do so. FSeePar4 communicated her challenges were related to health, financial, reactions to stress, and denounced familial relationship concerns, which can be concluded as differentiation of self, triangulation, emotional, and emotional cutoff. SamPar5 communicated her challenges were regarding consistent sacrifices for her grandchildren, high levels of stress when overwhelmed, adverse childhood experiences, and non-communication with family members, which could be interpreted by the following concepts from Bowen family systems theory: differentiation of self, emotional cutoff, and family projection process. Lastly, BoyMomPar6 communicated her challenge she had was raising a granddaughter because she has never raised a girl before, which could conclude in the multigenerational transmission process concept.

Interpretation of the Findings

Bowen family systems theory was utilized as the grounding approach for this study. The overall interpretation of the findings of Bowen family systems utilized in this study provided an improved outlook of Black grandparents raising grandchildren. In addition, it was utilized to discover preventive and enhanced techniques based on the eight concepts included within Bowen family systems theory. My findings are aligned with RQ1 considering the participants communicated through their rich stories that they provide care within the family, and they perform as an emotional unit. If their relationships in the home are not congruent with what they were taught by previous generations, there is a disequilibrium in the family unit, and it must be resolved immediately. The grandparent participants have experience in raising their own children, and it was second nature for them to raise their grandchildren because they believe it is a

Godly purpose for them to do so based on Biblical teachings. Overall, the participants confirmed there are ongoing challenges that need to be resolved to maintain effective outcomes for the grandchildren.

The interpretation of the findings for RQ2 conclude that counselors can assist in the therapeutic setting by creating treatment goals that include cultural values and generational norms. The findings of this study confirm that Black grandparents love their family so much that they will sacrifice their own needs to ensure everyone else in the family is functioning properly. In addition, the participants mentioned they would do anything to ensure their grandchildren are safe, unharmed, and adequately taken care of. Furthermore, this study created a different approach to what a sense of responsibility and obligation looks like and sacrifices that are made by the grandparents to ensure their grandchildren have their needs and desires met.

The grandparents have been unconsciously utilizing multigenerational patterns to take care of their family as an intervention method for the family. This is something to consider that is discussed in Maslow's hierarchy of needs: (a) physiological needs, (b) safety needs, (c) love and belonging, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization (Berk, 2017). Black grandparents ensure that they can provide the basic needs of food, water, shelter, and anything else they may need. They also provide their grandchildren with a safety net to ensure that they provide the resources rather than outside individuals of the family. These grandparents also want their grandchildren to feel loved with family support and authoritarian parenting. In addition, demanding respect and showing their strength and endurance is exemplified throughout the caregiving process. Self-actualization is carried

through ensuring that the grandparents provide the teachings from the Bible and generational experiences on how they can teach their grandchildren how to do well in life. This is essential to providing more enhanced health and wellness practices for Black grandparents.

Furthermore, these grandparents have put their lives on hold to ensure their grandchildren and children have the optimum opportunity to balance and enhance their lives. Many of the participants explained they do not complain about their roles to their grandchildren, and counselors should consider enhancing the community support resources for them. As a result, there was a conclusion of how they have been raising children since they entered parenthood with their first child. In Chapter 2, a few grandparents discussed that they have been raising their own children while also raising their grandchildren in their homes, as well as having a continuation of raising children since they were first parents as well. Based on the findings noted from DejPar2, CoJPar3, FSeePar4, and BoyMomPar6, they all have been raising their children and continuing to raise their grandchildren since they have initially become parents. In conclusion, it is considerable to note that there is a commutative disconnect between grandparents and their children while teaching them the struggles that they have faced. It is uncertain to conclude that the grandparents do not discuss these concerns with their children or grandchildren. However, counselors should consider helping Black grandparent caregivers by helping them express the struggles that they are facing to potentially mitigate some of the multigenerational patterns that they face. Overall, it is important that Black grandparents raising grandchildren can explain some of the challenges, concerns,

and sacrifices that are made throughout the process of raising their children and grandchildren in counseling sessions. This preventive and enhanced intervention may assist the grandchildren when they are of age to family plan, which may decrease the likelihood of adverse generational patterns.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation to consider for the study is generalization because the study was limited to only Black grandparents who reside in the state of Mississippi. These are rich stories and they reflect the literature provided in the study. On the contrary, they may not be the same concerns and challenges throughout various cultures. In addition to generalizability, there was a small sample size of the participants in the state of Mississippi. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) concluded that utilizing no less than six, but no more than 10 participants is recommended for groundbreaking research. In summarization, this may not reflect the rest of the population of Black grandparents raising their grandchildren in the state of Mississippi.

Narrative inquiry provides in-depth information of the phenomenon being studied. The researcher captures an overall understanding of the stories being expressed without prior judgments or biases, which is essential for rich data (Kim, 2015). I have prior knowledge and understanding of what this phenomenon may endure, and this could be a potential limitation. The researcher's lens is subjective and may not be interpreted the same way as another researcher would (Kim, 2015). In addition, as the researcher, I am a Black woman who is familiar with many of the cultural language and the meaning of various terminologies. If another researcher were to attempt to duplicate the same study

and not have prior knowledge or understanding of the phenomenon, this could be posed as a limitation as well.

Lastly, a limitation of this study is the possibility of the participants describing the present-day concerns and not the ones that were initially established. The data relies on the researcher's recollection of the stories being described during each interview. Thus, a potential follow-up interview may be applicable to inquire the questions of concern or asked in a different way, as well as inquiring for clarity from the participant (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This concludes the researcher can only interpret the stories that are being explained during the interview rather than understanding and knowing the participant's previous history.

Recommendations

As exemplified in this study, there is more research that is needed to ensure that Black grandparents raising their grandchildren can express themselves in comfort while providing enhanced, individualized, and more culturally aware interventions in clinical practice. Just as any other culture, the Black culture deserves ongoing research and advancement for the phenomenon (Sue & Sue, 2015). There is a plethora of research that notes how Black households are underserved and overlooked when it comes to the challenges that they currently face. The findings from the study display that their challenges are more than just the previously studied concerns, and there are emotional and sacrificial challenges to consider as well. This is a small sample to consider raising the bar and standards for this phenomenon, and the stories display in detail why it is necessary to enhance clinical implications.

In recommendation, it is imperative to ensure mental health professionals learn more about Black culture (Sue & Sue, 2015). Many challenges expressed by this phenomenon may be overlooked or taken out of context because the counselor or mental health professional does not understand the rich history and the challenges they have faced that date from past to present peer-reviewed evidence. If mental health professionals are willing to better understand the history and how it relates to the current-day trends, Black multigenerational homes have a higher likelihood to see influential changes to positively impact future generations. In addition, history repeats itself, and it is recommended that mental health professionals and paraprofessionals engage in ongoing continued education, even after their degrees, certifications, and licenses are awarded (ACA, 2014). It is our duty and ethical obligation as mental health professionals to ensure that the welfare of society is maintained. In consideration, we are the key-holders for how society views and treats this phenomenon. It is essential to continue for counselors to become more influential social change agents and advocate on Black grandparents behalf with integrity.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Social change is not specifically geared towards helping just the counselor education profession, but the helping profession in its entirety. My motivation of helping the general welfare of society drives the perseverance to assist others beyond creating research (Walden University: Center for Research Quality, 2015a). It is suggested for future researchers to be dedicated to learning how to engage in positive social change, as well as teaching it to those who have never experienced it for themselves. One of the

goals as a social change agent is to enhance my skillset of how advocacy would be taught in society for Black grandparents raising grandchildren and engage in meaningful work. There are various definitions of what positive social change may consist of, and it is most appropriate to dedicate the work to the way the phenomenon needs and requests to be served. Positive social change requires a different level of engagement and comfortability. The work initially begins once recognizing there is a need beyond what is discovered through evidence-based research.

This study has increased my competency level on how to further assist this phenomenon and the welfare of clinical practice in the counseling profession (ACA, 2014). Without the adequate amount of research done to help enhance the lived experiences of the Black grandparent participants, ongoing challenges will continue to exist, and multigenerational families will likely continue to suffer from ongoing challenges (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In the helping profession, we aim to find not only the gaps in research, but gear towards bridging the gap so future studies can be duplicated to assist other phenomena. Providing the rich stories provided by each participant of this study will likely help to mitigate future recurrences of existing challenges of Black grandparents while they raise their grandchildren (Thompson et al., 2019). Thus, creating positive social change from this study requires the determination of learning what has worked for the phenomenon, what techniques need to be redirected for better results, and how to analyze the lived experiences for future endeavors.

Conclusions

Based on the background information, literature, and results of the study, I can conclude Black grandparents raising grandchildren in the state of Mississippi have various nuances of what a sense of responsibility and obligation, ongoing challenges, and their faith in God would look like. The challenges that grandparents are still going through have impacted their lives positively and negatively because of the generational patterns that have influenced their outcomes and the relationships within the family. Future research should focus on how mental health professionals can move forward and assist with enhancing therapeutic interventions that have been provided throughout the years. Research has, in fact, displayed that grandparents within the Black culture have negative connotations as caregivers and the individual who is underserved. As mental health professionals, we can change the outlook on how they are viewed in society and provide increased support systems throughout the communities in which they live in. This study is only based in the state of Mississippi; however, this may be beneficial for other individuals across the United States because the participants' stories may heavily reflect what another Black grandparent caregiver is going through. Thus, sharing the lived experiences provided in the study could potentially help another grandparent who is struggling and feeling like they are the only ones going through it. As mentioned, Black grandparents raising their grandchildren have a spiritual connection with God and raise their grandchildren based on Biblical teachings. With effective multicultural counseling considerations, we can assist Black grandparent caregivers by providing eclectic evidence-based techniques.

It is imperative to provide multicultural interventions to assist Black grandparents while raising their grandchildren. If mental health professionals look beyond their preconceptions and view the family as an emotional unit with various concepts, the generational patterns of the family begin to reveal the past, present, and future concerns noted from previous literature and the challenges presented from this study. The sense of responsibility and obligation Black grandparent caregivers have shown is invaluable yet misunderstood by looking at surface-level perspectives of what they face. Mental health professionals can bridge the miscommunication and biases against Black grandparent caregivers by (a) listening to their lived experiences, (b) building cultural competency within the Black culture, and (c) comprehending what the phenomenon has mentioned they struggle with. As counselors and mental health professionals, if it takes a village to help raise a child, we are the village, social change agents, and support that is needed to help all Black grandparent caregivers to feel empowered and encouraged. In summarization, while Black grandparent caregivers are their grandchildren's village, we become the grandparents' village in return.

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