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The Evolution of the African American Mother-Daughter Relationship: A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

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MS, Florida A&M University, 2004

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Psychology

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Abstract

The mother-daughter relationship holds a special place in the lives of African American women, given the rich history of women of African descent and the complexities of female relationships. However, few studies have discussed the evolution of this relationship and what it means in the lives of African American mothers and daughters. Using relational-cultural theory (RCT) and Black feminist theory, this qualitative grounded theory study described the experiences and evolution of the African American mother-daughter relationship. A sample of 10 mother-daughter dyads was interviewed together about their relationship. Research questions addressed how African American mothers and daughters define, maintain, and value their relationships with one another. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Themes generated from the data included the relationship undergoing ups and downs, including changes and fluctuations as the pair maintains an enduring bond; unconditional love; legacy; ongoing support; care; learning and spending time together; the role of communication; being available; and mutual acceptance. The results provide insight into the unique evolution of the African American mother-daughter relationship and provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how this relationship develops, evolves, and is maintained. Mental health clinicians who read this study may gain greater awareness of and sensitivity toward African American mother-daughter relationships, as well as insight into how these fluid relationships function. By applying this knowledge to their practice, they may support clients' healthy personal development and interpersonal growth.

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Dedication

All the praise, honor, and glory go to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, from whom all blessings flow! Without His blessings and protection over my life, I would not have been able to accomplish such a task. Next, to my husband, Wesley, who has supported me through this journey: Thank you so much for your love. Furthermore, thank you to my parents—both sets of parents (parents and in-laws)—for constantly being a source of encouragement and support for both me and my family. All of my friends out there who supported and encouraged me along with way, thank you so much. Finally, this research study is the product of my inspiration for obtaining my degree, my daughters, Nia Gabrielle and Nadia Simone. I found purpose in my life once I became a mother, and the influence you have had over my life has been tremendous. I hope that you know how much I love and adore you both and know that I completed this task as a personal goal and an opportunity to open up doors so that I can be in a position to be present for my family. I love you all, and may God to continue to bless and direct your lives.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Parent-child relationships have been viewed through a variety of lenses throughout history. Psychoanalytic theorists defined the parent-child relationship as a one-dimensional phenomenon that is biologically based. In essence, it was initially conceived as a relationship formed out of birthing an individual, in which the mother is responsible for fulfilling the child's needs (Van Mens-Verhulst, 1995). Psychoanalytic theorists suggested that the mother-child bond must be broken by the father in order to build independence, which in turn negatively affects the mother (Van Mens-Verhulst, 1995). Bowlby (1979), in contrast, suggested that social and emotional attachments are formed out of a need for survival and protection. Bowlby stated that this emotional attachment—something psychoanalysts believed was pathological—is necessary in both child and adult life. Attachment theorists have argued that the quality of the attachment in relationships is passed on from generation to generation (Brown, 2007). Therefore, if an unhealthy attachment has occurred, chances are good that the child will have the same unhealthy attachment with his or her own children. Goldsmith (2010) characterized attachment as a reciprocal relationship, in that both the infant and parent play an active role. However, most attachment interventions tend to focus on the parent's detachment difficulties rather than the mother-child relationship itself.

Although both psychoanalytic and attachment theory have been foundational in developing a theoretical basis for parent-child relationships, these theorists did not take into account the unique relationship of a mother and her daughter. Mothers, and the

relationships they hold with their daughters, are full of numerous complexities that

cannot be fully explained with either of the aforementioned theories.

Mother-daughter relationship theories typically grew out of two theoretical bases:

psychoanalytic and social learning theory. While psychoanalytic theory focused on the

unconscious and internal identification of the mother, social learning theorists highlighted

modeling as a way for daughters to identify with their mothers (Boyd, 1989). The notion

of modeling further extends into choices and attitudes the daughter may take on. For

example, Macke and Morgan (1978) found that both European American and African

American mothers' own work behavior had a direct effect on their daughters' work

behavior. However, Sholomskas and Axelrod (1986) found that there was no direct

correlation between a daughter's primary role choice and her mother's. This was the case

with mothers who had careers and mothers were homemakers. The study further

suggested that the mother's influence was in the explicit and implicit messages she

communicated to her daughter. This implies that a mother's words and expectations may

have a greater influence on her daughter than her actual actions. From this perspective,

the mother-daughter relationship, particularly all of verbal and nonverbal exchanges that

occur within it, is of paramount importance to a daughter's development.

Background of the Problem

Previous research has shown that the mother-daughter relationship is closer than

the mother-son, father-son, or father-daughter relationship (Campione-Barr & Smetana,

2004). This finding indicates that this relationship is extremely important in the

development of a woman. In addition, it has been found that these relationships involve a

greater need to instill confidence than other parent-child relationships (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Being of African American descent adds another level of complexity to this important relationship.

Boyd-Franklin (2003) asserted that for most African American women, family is important and emphasis is placed on raising their children. Boyd-Franklin stated that African American mothers and daughters share a common bond that involves "preparing … for womanhood" (p. 90). Romero (as cited in Jackson & Greene, 2000) tackled the concept of strong black women (SBW). SBW have internalized the notion that they are inherently "strong." This quality is characterized by "handling losses, traumas, failed relationships, and the dual oppressions of racism and sexism" (Romero, 2000, p. 227). Within the SBW paradigm, women need to be in control, and showing vulnerability is not accepted.

African American women's hair adds another level of complexity to the relationship. Greene, White, and Whitten (as cited in Jackson & Greene, 2000), contended that given the historical devaluation of African American women's physical features, body types, and hair textures, African American hair may play a role in how women perceive and value themselves. It is also implied that African American women may pass these feelings on to their daughters in the way they approach their daughters' hair. The mother's feelings can establish feelings in the daughter regarding her sexuality, self-image, femininity, racial identity, and personal value.

Turnage (2004) highlighted the African American mother's role in the development of a daughter's self-esteem. Turnage found that African American

daughters' images of themselves were strengthened by their mothers' approval of them. With these additional pieces of information, it becomes apparent that this relationship deserves some attention. With all of these known research findings, there is a need to study the African American mother-daughter relationship experience, as research suggests that its primary function is directing the development of the African American female.

Several researchers have documented the importance of African American mother-daughter relationships. For example, Turnage (2004) concluded that a daughter's self-rated self-esteem was positively correlated with her trust of her mother. Another important theme emerging from previous research is the idea of communication as a primary function of the mother-daughter relationship. Penington (2004) sought to understand the experience and communication within a mother-adolescent daughter relationship for both European American and African American mothers and daughters. It was found that African American mothers and daughters employed higher levels of relational connection than European mothers and daughters, among whom autonomy was emphasized. Other emerging themes focused on African American mothers and daughters included a relational approach to dealing with conflict and an African American mother's need to protect her daughter. Similarly, Pluhar and Kuriloff (2004) examined the communication style surrounding sexuality for African American mothers and their adolescent daughters. An interactive style of communication was found to be the most effective at maintaining closeness and openness in the relationship. Although these pieces of research give insight into the kinds of practices that will facilitate an

effective African American mother-daughter relationship, they do not fully bring understanding and explanation to the development and evolution of the relationship over time.

The evolutionary experiences of African American women and their daughters have yet to be documented in the literature. These evolutionary experiences include milestones and life experiences that shape and change the dynamic of the relationship. These experiences are the reason this relationship is viewed as ever-evolving or changing. The purpose of this study was to expand knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of how this unique relationship is established and how it develops, matures, and changes over time. Two theoretical models that may provide a better understanding of this phenomenon are relational cultural theory and Black feminist theory. These theories will be detailed later in this chapter and in Chapter 2.

Statement of the Problem

Mother-daughter relationships are important in the development of young women. Although much research exists regarding the mother-daughter phenomenon, little research has been conducted regarding the development and maintenance of African American mother-daughter relationships over the course of a lifetime. In this grounded theory research study, I sought to understand the development and maintenance of the African American mother-daughter relationship. It is expected that this research will contribute to the existing literature on mother-daughter relationships and, in particular, illustrate the uniqueness of African American female relationship development.

Research Questions

1. How do African American mothers and daughters define their mother-daughter relationship?

2. What value do African American mothers and daughters place on their relationship with one another? How is the relationship prioritized in the lives of these women?

3. What behaviors, attitudes, and/or traditions influence African American mother-daughter relationships?

4. How was/is the African American mother-daughter relationship established, maintained, nurtured, and developed over time?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to broaden the understanding of the African American mother-daughter relationship experience. I sought to describe the experiences of African American mothers and daughters in relation to one another. The literature provided a foundation in the research conducted regarding African American mothers and daughters and theories surrounding relationship development, as well as Black feminist ideology thus far. This study was conducted using a grounded theory approach, which will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

Theoretical Base

A theory that may bring further understanding to the African American mother-daughter relationship experience is relational-cultural theory (RCT). RCT is based on the premise that individuals grow and evolve through relationships or "connections" with one

another (Jordan, 2010). Miller (1986) suggested that women build their entire identities around affiliations and mutual relationships. RCT is in direct contrast with most developmental theories in that it celebrates interdependence and mutual empathy as sources of growth in interpersonal connections (Jordan, 2010).

The key foundational concepts of RCT include the belief that people grow in relationships with one another throughout their lives, that mature functioning is characterized by mutuality rather than separation, that authenticity is necessary for growth, that mutual empathy and empowerment are key to successful growth, and that the development of these relationships is beneficial for both individuals (Jordan, 2010).

Another important concept within RCT is disconnection. Jordan (2010) contended that disconnection occurs when someone "misunderstands, invalidates, excludes, humiliates, or injures the other person in some way" (p. 25). These disconnections are normal in relationships, and if addressed appropriately, can actually lead to an increase in trust in the relationship. However, if these disconnections are not addressed appropriately, they can cause suppression, leading to inauthenticity in the relationship. This, in turn, leads to chronic disconnection.

A second theory used to bring further understanding to the African American mother-daughter relationship experience is Black feminist theory. Collins (2000) contended that Black women in the United States continue to be an oppressed group of individuals. Collins stated that Black feminist theorists' goal is to "empower African-American women within the context of social injustice sustained by intersecting oppression" (p. 26). "Intersecting oppression" refers to the oppression of being African

American as well as the oppression of being a woman. Hooks (1984) stated that African American women are placed in a unique position in Western society. They are at the bottom both occupationally and socially. Hooks further explained that because of African American women's place in society, African American women have no group to oppress. Because of this unique position, Hooks contended, African American women have a worldview unlike that of anyone else in society, and they should use this worldview to challenge society's oppressive, sexist, and racist ideologies.

An African American mother-daughter relationship is no doubt a fluid and dynamic experience for both mother and daughter. By looking at this relationship through the lens of relational-cultural theory, I will seek to understand its uniqueness. Furthermore, in using Black feminist theory, I will add depth to this study by taking the African American woman's experience into consideration. These theories will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

Operational Definitions

Feminism is a collection of ideas and practices to defend, establish, and attempt to bring attention and equality to the issues affecting women (Collins, 2010).

A *feminist* is a woman who supports and practices the tenets of feminism (Collins, 2010).

A *dyad* is composed of two individuals identified as a pair. In the case of this study, the dyad is described as the mother and daughter (Penington, 2004).

Evolution of the relationship is defined as a gradual change or development in a relationship.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Several assumptions and limitations were addressed in regard to this research study. First, I assumed that I could gain access to African American mothers and daughters who would be comfortable sharing their experiences. A pool of participants was gathered including 10 mother-daughter dyads for the study. It was also assumed that participants would answer openly and honestly to all presented questions and have an enjoyable experience. It was important to express to potential participants the level of openness that needed to occur to increase research effectiveness. Recalling the mother-daughter relationship over years might bring up both positive and negative emotions, which might affect the study. Limitations of this study included its application to only African American mothers and daughters, as mothers and daughters from other ethnic/racial backgrounds were not included within the scope of this study.

Significance of the Study

This study expounded on the existing body of literature explaining the impact of African American mother-daughter relationships. Little research has been conducted up to this point about the evolution of this relationship and its meaning from the perspective of African American mothers and daughters. This research filled a gap in literature concerning this unique relationship, adding understanding at multiple levels. The results of this study provide insight into how these relationships develop and are maintained as well as a glimpse into the lives of African American mothers and daughters.

Specifically, I sought to bring attention to the African American mother-daughter relationship experience in order to elicit discussion about its importance. This may foster

change in how the relationship is viewed among African American women while celebrating the unique and life-changing experience that occur as a result of this relationship. Furthermore, this study may prove beneficial for community workers, counselors, psychologists, and educators in offering readers a deeper understanding of how these relationships affect the lives of African American women. This study will drive and serve as a model when developing programs, counseling models, and educational programs for dealing with this unique population. The social change implications of this study may include continuing dialogue surrounding positive relationship development among African American mothers and daughters and insight into how these relationships are maintained. Further exploration of African American mother-daughter relationships may give society a deeper understanding of the unique relationships that women of African descent hold.

Summary

Early researchers documented the parent-child relationship; research has since evolved to demonstrate the importance of the mother-daughter relationship. Over time, it has been found that this relationship is important in establishing a daughter's identity. Further research is being conducted on the significance of this relationship within specific ethnic groups. This study was designed to gain a deeper understanding of the unique relationship that African American women hold with their daughters. It did so within the context of a relational-cultural and Black feminist theoretical basis. Chapter 2 will follow with a review of historical and pertinent literature. Chapter 3 will provide an outline of the research design, including participants, procedures, and a detailed explanation of how

information will be gathered and assessed. Chapter 4 will provide research results including emerging themes, and Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the results, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review documents previous research and establishes further inquiry into the experience of mother-daughter relationships for African American women. The mother-daughter relationship is perhaps one of the most important relationships that directly influence the interactions that individuals have with others throughout the lifespan. Boyd (1989) noted that the mother-daughter relationship creates greater intimacy than the father-son or cross-gender relationship. Recent research has suggested that the mother-daughter relationship can be beneficial for both parties, with the adolescent daughter being a support for the mother (Aronowitz, Rennells, & Todd, 2005; Pinquart & Silberstein, 2004). African American women, in particular, have a unique historical and cultural context that dictates how they interact, interpret, and engage in relationships with one another.

The theoretical framework for this dissertation is rooted in two theories: relational-cultural and Black feminist theory. Key to these theories is the unique role that culture and feminism play in the experiences of these relationships. A search of literature was conducted digitally through electronic databases such as PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES. The list of search terms to conduct the literature review included *Black, African American, mothers, daughters, child, relationships, families, feminist, and relational-cultural.* The articles reviewed were obtained digitally. Additionally, textbooks were secured to examine historical research on relational-cultural theory, Black feminist theory, and African American women and families.

This chapter will provide an overview of relational-cultural and Black feminist theory. Research that explores the direct application of these theories related to the present research will also be reviewed. In addition, mother-daughter relationship research will be reviewed and analyzed.

Western Ideology

Much of the work on theories of the mother-child relationship has been highly focused on a classic approach that emphasizes biology as the determining factor in how the relationship is established. The assumption is that as a consequence of the biological process of attachment, the mother is solely responsible for meeting the child's needs (Van Mens-Verhulst, 1995). This assumption puts a great deal of pressure on mothers and suggests that if adequate and constant attachment does not occur, children will not develop into mentally healthy adults. Freud perpetuated the notion that mothers are responsible for upbringing by arguing that adult psychopathology is the result of unresolved conflict between mother and child, as well as fears of physical and psychological abandonment (McNab & Kavner, 2001).

A sense of individual self is another hallmark of psychoanalytic theories. Theorists such as Erikson emphasized autonomy as the ultimate achievement in adulthood. This struggle for autonomy becomes overwhelmingly apparent during adolescence, when separation from the mother is of paramount importance (McNab & Kavner, 2001). These misunderstandings originate from Western ideologies that emphasize individuality as a major component of maturity in adults. The self is viewed as being more successful if independent of others (Jordan, 2010). An alternative

theoretical perspective will be introduced that challenges the ideologies of individualism and self, and instead proposes a viewpoint that emphasizes relationships and interdependence.

Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT)

Relational-cultural theory (RCT) was originated by a group of women who sought to identify ways in which traditional psychoanalytic theories misrepresented the experiences of women. Jean Baker Miller, Irene Stiver, Judith Jordan, and Janet Surrey collectively developed the Stone Center theory, which later became known as the *self-in-relation theory*, and eventually became what is known today as *relational-cultural theory* (Jordan, 2010). RCT, which developed in the mid-1990s, addresses and encompasses the experiences of a wide array of women (Jenkins, 2000). Freedberg (2007) noted that this theory brings to the forefront the unique female experience and its marginalization in a patriarchal society where female connection is undervalued and underresearched.

The basic principle of RCT is that people grow as a result of the relationships they have with one another. Freedberg (2007) contended that the relational-self concept is "evolutionary in that the self is seen as developing within mutually empathic relationships starting with the mother-infant dyad" (p. 254). In contrast to previously stated theories, RCT presents individualism and separation as hindrances to humans' natural tendency to interrelate and depend on one another. As with other theories that propose graduated steps or an upward progression to occur, RCT focuses on increasing articulation as a means to develop mutuality (Jordan, 2010).

Jordan (2000) outlined the core concepts of RCT as follows: (a) people grow toward and through relationships throughout their lifetime; (b) mutuality rather than separation is the hallmark of mature functioning; (c) differentiating and elaboration in relationships characterizes growth; (d) mutual empathy and empowerment are necessary for growth-fostering relationships; (e) authenticity is essential for genuine engagement and full participation in growth-fostering relationships; (f) in growth-fostering relationships, both participants benefit; and (g) the goal is to develop an increased awareness of relational competence over the life span.

Mutual empathy, a key concept in RCT, is present when individuals begin to see their impact on one another. Freedberg (2007) argued that mutual empathy is more than just reciprocity. Instead, it involves individuals seeing other individuals as unique, just the way they are. When this occurs, individuals are able to reveal more of themselves in the relationship and thus become more present and open to growth and change (Jordan, 2010).

Disconnection, in RCT, is seen as inevitable in all relationships. It occurs when someone feels misunderstood, invalidated, or injured by another person in some way. In most situations, these disconnects, also known as *empathic failures*, can be a source for increasing trust in relationships (Jordan, 2010). When the injured person is responded to with genuine concern, he or she experiences a sense of importance, as he or she feels as though he or she has had an effect on the other. In cases when empathic failures occur often and validations are not made, the injured person begins to suppress his or her feelings and experiences and thus becomes inauthentic in the relationship. The injured

person feels disempowered and increasingly becomes isolated (Jordan, 2010). In RCT,

the individual's primary source of suffering is isolation (Jordan, 2001). Comstock et al.

(2008) noted that when disconnected, individuals experience decreased energy,

confusion, and a decreased sense of self, which cause disruption in relationships.

Chronic disconnections, or empathic failures, lead to negative relational images

(RIs). RIs are described as the expectations individuals create as a result of their

experiences in relationships (Miller & Stiver, 1997). These images are created early in

life and can be a source for continued growth or can hinder individuals by keeping them

in the past. If these images are flexible, individuals will not generalize them to other

relationships they experience. However, as Jordan (2010) argued, when these images are

generalized, individuals begin to bring these same past images and faulty expectations

into the present in a manner similar to the psychodynamic process of transference,

thereby clouding their reality and perception of the relationship.

These continued negative RIs create a sense of condemned isolation, or feelings

of hopelessness, blame, and shame. The individual begins to internally self-blame for

any problems that occur and experiences persistent disconnection and isolation from fear

of making connections with others (Jordan, 2010). This is what is known as the *central*

relational paradox (Miller & Stiver, 1997). An individual's core desire is to make

connections with others, but the risk of exposing vulnerabilities may be too much. The

individual, in turn, develops strategies of disconnection and remains disconnected and

isolated by the very strategies he or she has developed (Jordan, 2010). These strategies

of disconnection often originate from a feeling of shame and unworthiness. Shame is

viewed as a natural response when an individual feels unworthy. Jordan (2001) stated

that shame causes individuals to not reveal all of themselves because they "fear rejection

and judgment" (p. 100). However, Jordan (2010) asserted, shame "is also imposed upon

people to control and disempower them" (p. 29).

RCT suggests a move toward relational resilience, or the ability to move from

disconnection to connection and the ability to reach out for help. This reaching out for

help, or relational courage, involves individuals encouraging one another or helping to

develop courage in each other. In essence, an individual must feel fear but have the

courage to reach out for help (Jordan, 2010).

Van Mens-Verhulst (1995) noted that looking at the mother-daughter relationship

from a relational perspective forces one to view the relationship as mutual, fluid, and

interpersonal, with mother and daughter developing in interaction with one another.

RCT and Specific Populations

Covington (2008) used RCT as one of three theoretical foundations in her study

on women with substance abuse problems. The study involved a multifaceted approach to

counseling women with substance abuse issues by incorporating foundational principles

of RCT into a program. Women who participated in the program showed a decrease in

depression and trauma symptoms. In addition, these women were more likely to

voluntarily participate in aftercare groups and showed a lower incidence of being

incarcerated again.

RCT was used as a therapeutic approach with individuals suffering from eating

disorders. In this particular study, a psychoeducational multifamily therapy group

(PMFTG) based approach was selected. PMFTG, which was developed by McFarlane, is based on the assumption that a knowledgeable support system is essential when one is dealing with an illness. The model used for this study, the unity multifamily therapy group (U-MFTG), is based on promoting mutual relationships and understanding how disconnections play a role in the eating disorders. The group engaged in eight weekly 1.5-hour sessions with one therapist and six to eight families per group (Tantillo, 2006).

Vogel (2007) used a relational-cultural approach to describe ways of dealing with sexual addiction as a couple. Vogel remarked that people with sexual addictions have typically been victims of relational violations in the past and subsequently have difficulty trusting and participating fully in relationships. Vogel (2007) recommended couples counseling as a means to deal with sexual addiction mutually. Finally, Vogel offered several interventions such as activities, relationship tracking, and couples time together without technological distractions.

Finally, RCT is also used as an application in both educational and occupational environments. In their article, Edwards and Richards (2002) proposed that RCT be applied to social work education and teaching. They introduced relational teaching, which draws upon several concepts from RCT, mutual engagement, empathy, and empowerment. Edwards and Richards (2002) contended that relational teaching provides a foundation for personal growth, which leads to growth of the mind by the student. Hartling and Sparks (2008) proposed a relational-cultural approach to a working environment that is nonrelational. The authors adapted Janie Ward's four-step model first introduced to help African American adolescents overcome the realities of racism. The

four steps are read it, name it, oppose it, and replace it. Hartling and Sparks suggested

that workers read their current work situation to determine if it is fostering connections or

disconnections. This article reinforces the concept of connection and support from others

when working in these kinds of environments. Similarly, Edwards, Bryant, and Clark

(2008) offered some perspective on African American female social workers working in

a predominantly White school. The Council of Social Work Education estimated that

African American women make up approximately 15% of all female faculty. They

suggested that while the work of social workers focuses on the relationship between the

patient and the therapist, the same relationship should be afforded in the academic setting

among colleagues. This kind of relationship, or mutuality, involves "a leveling of the

playing field" (p. 42).

RCT and Other Cultures

Ruiz (2005) summarized how RCT can be applied to describe the personality

development of Hispanic populations. She noted that behaviors central to the Hispanic

culture such as collectivism or group collaboration, mutual respect, high priority for

family relationships, and empathy make it simple to apply RCT to this unique population.

Furthermore, the unique cultural expectations of women being self-sacrificing and men

being dominant, as well as immigration issues, can be understood under the RCT concept

of disconnection (Ruiz, 2005).

Similarly, Portman and Garrett (2005) introduced an application of RCT to

explain leadership among American Indian women and its application to leadership in

women in general. One of the historical foundations of the American Indians is that

women served as leaders of the tribes. With a Native American worldview of connection and recognition of leadership abilities at a young age, members of the culture work to hone these abilities by serving as mentors. Applying the concept of mentoring to a culture of people creates a sense of interdependence and connectedness, which are concepts of RCT.

RCT and African American Women

Jenkins (2000) noted that in 1987, Clevonne Turner, a therapist at the Wellesley College Counseling Service, sought to encourage practitioners to become more aware of the unique influences culture had on women of color. She endorsed RCT as being able to effectively address the complexities of women of color. Furthermore, because of RCT's similarities with traditional African American cultural values of collectivism, Jordan viewed RCT as having the potential "to enhance our understanding of relational development among African American women, adaptive behaviors with this group, and how social factors function as connectors and disconnectors" (p. 68).

Jenkins (2000) asserted that connection to or disconnection from African American heritage is key to how African American women perceive themselves and the world, how they cope, and their ability to progress in the world. It is this connection or disconnection that is associated with their mental and social health status.

RCT is an appropriate theoretical basis for this research study because its foundational thrust is the importance of relationships. In addition, RCT's emphasis on mutuality further highlights the give-and-take and responsibility of both individuals in a relationship. This theory speaks directly to mother-daughter relationships, which have

been found to be of the utmost importance to daughters. With the addition of culture

embedded in this theory, African Americans' unique experience has at the very least been

acknowledged and emphasized as an additional factor influencing the relationship.

It is important to gain a deeper understanding of the historical experiences of

African American women. Embodied in these experiences is an understanding of

African women's experiences, African women's slave experience, and the effects of

these experiences on African American women today.

Sexism, Racism, and the African American Woman

Hooks (1981) asserted that both racism and sexism serve as oppressive forces for

African American women. Most African American women are descended from women

who were brought to the United States as slaves and were exploited for various reasons.

For example, a law was implemented that required offspring of Black women, no matter

the race of the father, to remain the property of the slave master. Slave masters viewed

Black women as a valuable asset, as their offspring were their property (Hooks, 1981).

Furthermore, white slave masters' observation of African women's subservient behavior

toward African men gave them the impression that African women would not be a threat.

In addition, African women's ability to do hard labor as well as tend to the needs of the

house made them valuable to slave masters (Hooks, 1981).

Although all this value was associated with African American women, they were

also the target of many traumatic experiences. Bell Hooks (1981) stated that the

experiences of African men and women on slave ships, "were only the initial stages of an

indoctrination process that would transform the African free human being into a slave"

(p. 19). African people were stripped of their names and were divided into differing groups so that a common language could not be spoken between them. African women, in particular, were subject to rape and more beatings to condition them since they would have more contact with the white families than the African male (Hooks, 1981). Hooks (1981) argued that although the African male slave was exploited as a laborer, his role still remained a traditional masculine role. The African women, on the other hand, was not only exploited for her laboring abilities, but was also used domestically as a breeder, and a sexual object of the white male. The African women served in both masculine and feminine roles.

Collins (2000) outlined how the process of enslavement put into place many of the accepted practices among African American people. She stated that prior to African colonization and enslavement, African women combined work and family. For example, West African women would often bring their children along while conducting agricultural business in the marketplace. However, during slavery, African women's work only benefited the family she worked for. Many of the practices of entrepreneurship were replaced with capitalist notions and African women had no control over their own livelihood (Collins, 2000).

Sexual exploitation was another issue facing African women. African women were seen as valuable commodities since their ability to reproduce children increased their owner's economic capabilities. Pregnant slaves were treated differently than their non-pregnant counterparts. They were given less work, more food, and bonuses for having more children. Having more children also gave the African woman a stable

environment for both her, her children, and her marriage (Collins, 2000). Hooks (1981) further argued that the sexual exploitation during slavery has not changed since then. It was further validated once slavery ended. For the first time, slaves were free to choose their own sexual partners and many Black women chose several male partners. This new found sexual freedom was interpreted by Whites as being sexually immoral.

The history and enslavement of African women have impacted the way in which they view their relationships, including both their children and marriage. But the ways in which their history has impacted their relationships with their own daughters in unknown. In addition to being an African American, their female gender adds more complexity to the mother-daughter relationship.

Black Feminist Theory

West (2005) expressed that feminist theory is, "expansive rather than constrictive…" (p. 95). She went on to state that its questions allow, "ambiguity, entertain difference, invite reflection, and encourage investigation into new perspectives without being reductionist, without needing to dismiss, edge out, or shout down" (p. 95). Black feminist thought, however, has grown from the need to express the unique experiences of women of color. However, these experiences have been suppressed in various dimensions of American society. In developing this unique set of experiences, Collins (2000) asserted that it is necessary to discover and reanalyze the works of Black women who expressed their ideas. Within these ideas, it is also important to understand and interpret the experiences of the subgroups within the larger group. Furthermore,

when developing Black feminist theory, hearing the voices of Black women who are not traditional intellectuals is important.

Collins (2000) offered several distinguishing features of Black feminist theory. The first feature is the continued need for black feminist thought because women in the United States remain an oppressed group. Collins (2000) insisted that Black feminist thought is a critical social theory questioning United States' contradictory foundation. On the one hand, the country stands for equality for all; on the other hand, individuals are continuing to be treated differently due to race, class, gender, and citizenship.

Another distinguishing feature of Black feminist theory is the tension between linking experiences and ideas. What this means, it that although many African American women may have the same experiences of oppression, their interpretation and degree of emphasis that they place on these experiences may vary. However, it is emphasized that a collective standpoint does exist although all may interpret it differently (Collins, 2000). Furthermore, another key feature is the need for a connection between these experiences and a collective standpoint. It is the belief that this standpoint will empower African American women and activate resistance (Collins, 2000).

Next, African American women intellectuals and their contributions is another distinguishing feature of Black feminist theory. Collins (2000) pointed out that an interrelated environment exists between intellectuals and the community of African American women. The common place where all African American share ideas, thoughts, and actions constitutes one body of knowledge, while the intellectuals that come from these groups represent a second body of knowledge. It is important that these intellectuals

exist since they serve as leaders and the voice for Black feminist thought. In addition, having African American intellectuals as leaders ensures that when obstacles present, Black feminist thought has leadership with an invested interest in the collective whole (Collins, 2000).

The final two features include the significance of change and a need for justice for all. By change, Black feminist thought is fluid, dynamic, and always changing. It also involves a need to collaborate with others in similar social justice projects. Black feminist thought seeks to foster empowerment, social justice, and human dignity (Collins, 2000).

Miller and Parker (2009) offered a Black feminist view when looking at the relationships that lesbian daughters have with their mothers. Black lesbian female's silence, it was pointed out, is believed to be attributed to the gender and race oppression that exists in America. However, it is the self-reliance and independence taught by Black mothers that can help to develop positive self-image and self-esteem in their daughters. The authors expressed that Black lesbians gain skills from their mothers that give them the power to identify their sexual identity.

A Black feminist perspective was also used in an intervention to reduce HIV risk reduction for low-income women. It was used as a framework to examine to social, political, and economic issues that contribute to Black women's risk for HIV/AIDS. One of the major features utilized in the interpretation of this study were the tension of linking experiences and ideas as stated above. In keeping with the spirit of this feature, this ethnographic study yielded Black women from a myriad of backgrounds and experiences including, women who lived in rooming houses, frequented crack houses, have gone into

drug treatment programs, and lived on the streets. The authors illustrated later that even within these groups, a range of unique experiences were found that all played a role in Black women's risk for HIV (Gentry, Elifson, & Sterk, 2005). All of this information informs and legitimizes intellectuals' interpretations about the uniqueness of Black women's experiences in America.

Black feminist theory/thought seeks to stand as a historical reference point for the unique experiences of all African American women. Black feminist theory/thought does so within the context of the gender, political, and sexual oppression that exists today in America. This theory will serve as a second theoretical framework for this study given the need to incorporate these ideologies within the context of the African American mother daughter relationship experience. It is believed that this second theory is needed to account for the African American part of the experience that would otherwise be overlooked. Next, a review of mother daughter relationships will be presented and the many facets of a daughter's life that this relationships impacts.

Women as Mothers

Before a discussion can begin on mother-daughter relationships, we must first address what it means to be a mother. Chodorow (1978) honed in on the uniqueness of the mother and the responsibilities she carries. She stated that women not only bear children but are typically responsible for their upbringing, spending more time with them than their fathers. She remarked that a child's early relation to their mother affects how that child with relate with others, including its mother in the future. Furthermore, she stated that the child builds a sense of self in relation to the mother, by internalizing the

most important aspects of their relationship. These important aspects include emotions, self-love, and/or self-hate.

African American women in particular view motherhood as an important role image. Boyd-Franklin (2003) suggested that motherhood for these women is complex and is often a shared activity with other multigenerational women. She stated that no matter how problematic an African American woman's upbringing may have been, they still continue to feel an intense need to become a mother. Turnage (2004) remarked that the task of an African American mother is, "to be available to her daughter without interfering with her daughter's efforts to individuate" (p. 159). The mother's avaliability will require a level of trust from the mother as well as the availability and willingness to provide support and guidance when needed.

Mother-Daughter Relationships

Mother-daughter relationships have been presented in a negative light for quite some time. I can attest to this, because when I tell someone that I have two daughters they quickly remark that girls are much more difficult to raise than boys. Historically, mother daughter relationships have been characterized as a negative, difficult, and challenging process. In addition, many theories have placed the blame on mothers if they did not fit the model of what a mother should be. This included the pressure for a woman to become a mother, and if not, being categorized as unwomanly. And for the women who were mothers, they were expected to make their children happy, and if not, they were the first to blame (Van Mens-Verhulst, 1995). All of this unrealistic pressure was summarized by Van Mens-Verhulst as putting women at risk both mentally and

physically. In this section, several studies will be reviewed that highlight the mother-daughter relationship and the impact it has on the lives of both.

Mother-daughter relationships are unique and play a primary role in a female's development. Particularly, Chodorow (1978) stated the mother-child relationship is central to the development of a person's sense of self. Turnage (2004) echoed this sentiment by stating that since most mothers serve as the primary caretaker in homes, they play a central role in the development of their daughter's self-esteem. Chodorow stated that this early sense of self occurs in relation to another person and can be described as a social and interpersonal relationship. Perhaps one of the first reasons why mothers and daughters experience such a unique relationship is the way in which women have been socialized to treat their daughters. In Weitzman (1979), several studies were reviewed which highlighted the behavioral differences in children as early as thirteen months of age. One particular study found that at age 13 months, girls more readily sought out physical contact with the mother than boys due to the mother's physical contact behavior. Mothers were more likely to give their daughters more physical contact then their sons and subsequently the daughters required more physical contact as a result.

African Americans, in particular, have historically socialized their sons and daughters differently. One particular area that they are socialized differentially is in educational attainment. This sentiment is echoed in literature. Successful school achievement among African American girls over African American boys has been documented (Michelson & Green, 2006). In a longitudinal research study conducted by Wood, Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, & Okeke-Adeyanju (2010), it was found that African

American mothers viewed their daughters as more academically capable than boys. Mandara, Varner, and Richman (2010) also remarked that African American adolescent females outperform their African American male counterparts in both academic and social domains. In their quantitative study that assessed if African American mothers socialized their girls and boys differently, data showed little socialization differences between first born boys and girls. However, it was found that mothers tended to be stricter with later born girls than their first born boys. The socialization gap was found to be very different between later born girls and later born boys. The later born boys were given fewer chores and fewer rules to follow as well. What these findings imply is that, no matter where an African American girl falls in birth order in the family, she still is raised with the same degree of responsibility placed on her than an African American male is.

This finding is perhaps a product of African Americans' past. Weitzman (1979) pointed back to the African Americans' legacy of slavery and the formulation of strong, independent Black women who were forced to become head of the household. It is no doubt that this phenomenon has residual affects today on how African American women socialize their daughters to be self-sufficient, which takes the form of being academically successful and responsible.

Weitzman (1979) pointed out that unlike European American women, African American women regard work as a normal female role and support their daughters' educational and occupational aspirations. Evidence also suggested that many African American daughters internalize their mothers' aspirations. However, Sholomskas &

Axelrod (1986) found that there was no direct relationship between a mother's occupational choice and the choice of her daughter's occupation. It was found; however, that the most important influence was in the mother's implicit and explicit messages to her daughter. It is suggested that the mother's attitudes about her own roles and sense of self have a direct influence on how her daughter will view her own occupational role and sense of self. Similarly, in a study conducted by Luedemann, Ehrenberg, and Hunter (2006), post-divorce discussions between mother and adolescent daughter were evaluated to determine how they contributed to the quality of the relationship. It was found that mothers directly expressing their satisfaction and happiness with being a parent that contributed to positive mother-daughter relationships. It appears that a mother's attitude regarding her own personal and professional life play a direct role in how her daughter perceives and/or will perceive her professional life.

However, evidence also indicated that a daughter's perception holds merit. In Sholomskas and Axelord's (1986) study, they examined the relationship of daughters' current occupational choice, job satisfaction, and self-esteem, to their perceptions of their mother's occupational choice and job satisfaction. Results indicated that the daughter's perceptions of their relationship with their mothers were the single most important factor in determining her job satisfaction. The authors go on to note that if the daughter felt a sense of love and warmth, regardless of her mother's occupation, she would in turn be happier with her own occupation. This finding is similar to those of Luedemann, Ehrenberg, and Hunter (2006), which suggested that the more comfortable a daughter

feels when talking about topics with her mother the better quality relationship she will have with her.

In a similar study conducted by Campion-Barr and Smetana (2004), a group of African American mothers and adolescents, both male and female, were involved in a dyadic interaction task and rated both their own and their partner's support during the task. It was found that the adolescent's perception of the mother's behavior during the task had a direct impact on their trust and communication with their mother even 2 years later at a follow-up. This single factor determined the closeness the adolescent felt with their mother. This finding speaks volumes to the unique relationship of a mother and her child.

Closeness and trust in a mother appears to have significant affects on an African American daughter's overall self-esteem as well. In Turnage's (2004) study, evidence was sought to determine whether a positive relationship existed between a daughter's self-esteem score and her trust in her mother score. It was also hypothesized that if the daughter scored high on the self-esteem assessment, she would also score high on an ethnic identity assessment. Both of the hypotheses were validated which implies that an African American mother's presence is needed in the development of a self-assured African American daughter.

Unlike the proposed research study, the previous studies were conducted using a quantitative analytic method. In addition, the results only speak to a particular component of a daughter's experience. The proposed study will in contrast, speak to an explanation

of the mother-daughter relationship over time thus giving a holistic representation of what the relationship is to mothers and daughters.

Mothers, Daughters, and Communication

A critical question for this study to address is: How do mothers and daughters communicate with one another? Penington (2004) sought to describe the experience of and communication between mothers and their adolescent daughters. To investigate this experience of communication, Penington utilized both African American and European American mother-daughter dyads to determine if their communication styles differed using both in-depth interviews and an interaction activity. Results showed that African American dyads preferred relational approaches versus European American dyads which preferred autonomy. Relational approaches including compromise when dealing with conflicts was also used among African American dyads. European American daughters tended to be more verbal and assertive often yelling at their mothers and were allowed to compete with their mothers in decision making which again reinforces their individualistic orientation.

A second point that emerged from the study was African American mother's need to protect her daughter. This need for protection was expressed in the form of rule enforcement, teaching lessons, and the need for immediate obedience. It was suggested that European American mothers expressed that same need but it was not explicitly expressed to the daughter. This finding was interpreted as European American mothers not seeing the world as threatening to their daughters as African American mothers do.

In a study conducted by Pluhar and Kuriloff (2004), a qualitative analysis was performed to determine the communication style of African American mothers and their adolescent daughters about sexuality. Effective communication was found to be the result of several factors. First, mother-daughter dyads were most successful when the mother showed empathy and respected her daughter's feelings. Daughters disliked communication from their mother in the form of yelling or lecturing, but preferred an interactional, back-and-forth style of communication, which created connection and openness. In addition, the mother's use of storytelling and body language played a role in their connectedness. Finally, most daughters expressed that most of their communication occurred during activities such as cooking or driving, which they preferred over focused, one-on-one conversations. These studies utilized a qualitative research methodology similar to the proposed study and included similar interviewing procedures and mother-daughter dyads. However, the proposed study sought to look at African American mothers and daughters exclusively, and hoped to gain a deeper understanding into the evolution of the relationship over time.

Methodology

Several quantitative studies were reviewed, but were only successful in determining outcomes in specific areas of a mother's and/or daughter's life. Specifically, Turnage (2004) looked at how the mother-daughter relationship affected self-esteem while Sholomskas & Axelrod (1986) examined how the mother-daughter relationship impacted the daughter's occupational choices. These studies generally utilized rating scales to determine the status of the mother-daughter relationship. In addition, many of

these quantitative studies did not adequately address areas that were specific or relevant to African American women. However, Pluhar & Kuriloff (2004) was one qualitative research study specifically related to African American mothers and daughters. This study utilized a format similar to this proposed study in which mothers and daughters are interviewed and encouraged to articulate how they view their communication styles. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate to study different constructs and aspects of African-American mother-daughter relationship and it is expected that the detailed, individual interviews with mothers and daughters may generate new culturally- and context-specific definitions of these constructs which would inform the current research and theories in this area. This approach would be the most appropriate for the proposed study since it will allow for semi-structure yet the allowance of the study to reveal the essence of the relationship.

Summary

All of the previous research brought light to the unique and important role that mothers play in the lives of their daughters. It appeared that both explicit and implicit communication play a role in this relationship and how the daughter will perceive her own life. It also brought to the forefront the need for continual dialogue and direct communication about perceptions in the relationship because these perceptions whether correct or incorrect may appear to become reality in the lives of daughters. This will require constant connection among mothers and daughters to remain in tune regarding the reality of their relationship. Relational cultural theory and Black feminist theory help to

provide more insight into how African American women and daughters experience their relationship. Key issues to address are:

- Will African American mothers and daughters describe their experiences that are similar with the tenets outlined in relational cultural theory?

- To what degree will the historical African American slave experiences play into this relationship?

- How will the unique experiences of being an African American woman affect how these two experience their relationship?

This research study sought to explain the evolution and experience of the African American mother-daughter relationship. The next chapter will provide information on how this study was performed, how participants were selected, the questions that were asked, and how the information was organized and analyzed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The previous two chapters addressed mother-daughter relationships. Specifically, these relationships were examined for how they serve to guide a daughter's overall development. This relationship serves as an anchor and may dictate how a daughter perceives herself, the world, and the important decisions she makes throughout her life. What is not known, however, is how this relationship develops, matures, and changes over time through the eyes of African American mothers and daughters. This chapter will outline the qualitative method used to interpret and understand these experiences.

Research Methodology

Creswell (2007) explained that qualitative research involves determining a meaning individuals or groups of individuals place on a social or human problem. When studying such a problem, Creswell (2007) noted that researchers collect data in their participants' natural environments and construct themes as a way to analyze the data. Furthermore, researchers use the participants' point of view in order to interpret the complex problem. Finally, Creswell (2007) explained that qualitative research is used when a researcher wants to better understand a complex and detailed issue or problem. As the focus of my research study was determining the meaning of the evolutionary experiences of African American mothers and daughters, qualitative research inquiry was the most appropriate method to address this question.

Research Design

A grounded theory inquiry was deemed the most approach research design to address the questions in this study. A grounded theory study is designed to generate or discover a theory. Individuals involved in this study all experienced a process—in this case, an African American mother-daughter relationship. The intent of a grounded theory study is to provide an explanation for the area under study in an attempt to provide a framework for further research (Creswell, 2007).

A phenomenological approach was not chosen for this study because it was not my intent to describe only personal and lived experiences of the participants. Phenomenology describes the meaning of a shared experience or phenomenon by several individuals (Creswell, 2007). A phenomenological study requires that the individuals under study all have shared the same experience, with the goal being to describe the essence of the same phenomenon. Narrative research inquiry was not chosen due to its need to explore the life of an individual or small group of individuals. Essentially, narrative research involves collecting extensive information about an individual or group of individuals and retelling the individual's or group's story in the context of the individual's or group's life (Creswell, 2007). This inquiry method would not have been appropriate to address the research question, as it requires the retelling of participants' stories. It was not my intent to reconstruct the mother-daughter relationship in the lives of the participants, but to provide an explanation of the relationship.

Case study research inquiry was not appropriate for this research study because it involves the selection of cases in order to show differing perspectives on the same

problem (Creswell, 2007). It was not the intent of this study to provide differing

perspectives. However, it was my belief that as a result of grounded theory inquiry,

differing perspectives might emerge.

An ethnographic research inquiry was not the chosen model for this study due to

the deep immersion required of this type of study. Creswell (2007) noted that an

ethnography requires immersion into a culturally specific group and observation of their

daily lives. Although this study was culturally specific to the lives of African American

women, its focus was not observing and studying this group. The goal was to let African

American mothers and daughters explain the evolution of their relationships.

Furthermore, an ethnographer is interested in observing shared patterns and behaviors of

a cultural group (Creswell, 2007). Shared patterns and behaviors were expected to

emerge from this study; however, this was not the intent of the study.

Role of the Researcher

As a mother of two young daughters, I had a personal investment in the research

study to develop a theory of African American mother-daughter relationships. Given my

own experiences with my daughters and as a daughter myself, I already had some

experiences that had shaped my views on these relationships. However, Creswell (1997)

stated that in a grounded theory inquiry, a researcher must do away with preconceived

theoretical ideas in order to let the actual theory emerge. As a mother with a passionate

connection to this study, I believed my role as interviewer was to remain committed to

the structure of the interview yet immerse myself within each of the dyads' own stories.

Although I did find some connection throughout the course of the interviews, I remained

committed to telling the stories of the mothers and daughters, which were unique and separate from my own.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the research study were derived from the African American community in the South with a population of approximately 250,000. Interviews for the research study were conducted in the participants' place of residence for privacy and comfort; however, an alternative neutral location was available as well. Interviews were conducted with 10 participants or five mother-daughter dyads. It was expected that data collected from approximately 10 mother-daughter pairs would reach a point of saturation. Individuals included in this study had to be mothers of African American descent and their natural daughters who were at least 21 years of age. It was also required that mothers and daughters had resided together until the daughter reached adulthood. This criterion was designed to ensure that mothers and daughters had lived together for the majority of the daughter's life for relationship establishment purposes.

Research Questions

1. How do African American mothers and daughters define their mother-daughter relationship?

2. What value do African American mothers and daughters place on their relationship with one another? How is the relationship prioritized in the lives of these women?

3. What behaviors, attitudes, and/or traditions influence African American mother-daughter relationships?

4. How was/is the African American mother-daughter relationship established, maintained, nurtured, and developed over time?

Ethical Protection of Participants

Prior to beginning the research study, I secured permission and approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). An IRB, mandated by the U.S. government, reviews all proposals involving human participants (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The IRB requires that researchers provide information concerning how they will protect participants' privacy (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

In order to be sure that each individual was participating without any risk of harm, a consent form from each participant was required. Moustakas (1994) explained that it is the responsibility of the researcher to fully disclose the purpose of a research study and the requirements of the participants. He suggested that procedures should be open-ended and allow the participants to respond in ways that ensure their safety and comfort. Finally, it is important that participants are informed that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Procedures

Once IRB approval was secured through Walden University, one sampling strategy was used in the selection of participants for this study. As the requirements for this study included that individuals be of African American descent and be mothers and their natural-born daughters, criterion sampling was used.

Specifically, potential participants need to be mothers of African American descent and their natural daughters who were at least 21 years of age. It was also

required that mothers and daughters had resided together until the daughter reached adulthood. Recruitment was solicited through flyers posted at African American beauty shops, churches, and historically Black colleges and universities. In addition, African American sororities were contacted.

Data Collection

Creswell (2007) noted that data collection should be a group of procedures aimed at gathering a wealth of information in order to answer research questions. The primary means of data collection for this study were interviews. Seidman (2006) noted that interviewing involves a deep understanding of a person's lived experiences. This lies at the heart of seeking to gain a deeper explanation of African American mother-daughter relationships. Seidman (2006) noted that interviewing provides the researcher access into the context of people's behavior so that the meaning of that behavior can be understood. Creswell (2007) stated that interviews are the most widely used data collection method for grounded theory inquiry. I believed that interviewing was the most effective data collection method to answer my research questions. Conducting interviews of African American mothers and daughters helped me to understand and begin to develop an explanation of their relationship with one another. It was also important that each interview occur with the mother and daughter together. Clendon (2006) noted that conducting such interviews together helps the researcher draw from the familiarity of the mother and daughter to understand their experiences in greater depth.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using NVivo 10. The data analysis began with open or initial coding. This process included forming categories of information by segmenting the information (Creswell, 2007). Open or initial coding was used as a starting point and provided leads for further inquiry. However, these proposed leads remained tentative during this cycle of analysis (Saldana, 2009). Next, during axial coding, categories were developed from the open or initial coding phase. This cycle served as the transitional cycle between the open or initial and the selective coding phases (Saldana, 2009). Finally, in the selective or theoretical coding phase, a core category was formulated that encompassed all the other codes. It was a way to synthesize the categories to create a theory (Saldana, 2009).

Trustworthiness

Several strategies were used in order to increase trustworthiness in this qualitative inquiry. First, following the recommendation of Shenton (2004), I developed familiarly with the group under research. Phone conversations and email communication occurred prior to the interviews, which helped to place the mothers and daughters at ease. Sharing African American ethnicity with the participants added a layer of comfort and trust. Another strategy was iterative questioning. This included probing and asking more detailed questions as a result of an answer received to a more general question (Shenton, 2004). Member checking was another strategy used to increase trustworthiness. Member checking offered a way to confirm with the participants that my interpretation of the data was correct (Carlson, 2010). Carlson (2010) also noted that data should continuously be

reevaluated and reaffirmed. For this research study, member checking occurred after the actual data collection phase. Interpretations were summarized, and participants were asked to confirm the validity of the interpretation throughout the interview process. In addition, after the interviews, transcripts were forwarded to participants to confirm and validate.

Verification of Findings

Several strategies were used to further validate the results of my research study. First, Creswell (2007) suggested prolonged interaction with the research participants. In the case of this study, this occurred because my interviews with the mother-daughter dyads lasted from 1.5 to 3 hours. This allowed me to spend a great deal of time with each of the participants. Triangulation was another strategy that was used. Ten mother daughter dyads were interviewed separately. Creswell (2007) noted that finding common evidence among different sources will bring validation to the topic under study. Next, researcher bias can get in the way of an authentic research study. Creswell (2007) suggested that the researcher comment on past experiences that could taint the interpretation of the study. Member checking was also used in this study. This technique required that collected data be reviewed with the participants to ensure that the data had been interpreted and presented correctly. The participants were also sent transcripts of their interviews for review and input.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative study; the objective was to develop a theory outlining the evolution of the African American mother-daughter relationship. I present the results in narrative form and then proceed to identify the common themes among the participants' experiences. Chapter 4 details the results of the study, and Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the results and the implications of the study.

Data Processing

A recruitment letter (Appendix B) was sent to prospective mother and daughter participants via email. Potential participants were recruited from a flyer that was distributed to African American-owned beauty shops, African American churches, and historically Black colleges in the Atlanta area. An email with the flyer attachment was also distributed to Atlanta area African American sororities. It was required that potential participants be African American mothers and their natural-born daughters who were at least 21 years of age and had lived together until the daughter reached adulthood. Once each participant met the criteria and agreed to participate, and once confirmation of participation was received, a date, time, and location for the interview were established.

Throughout the study, the following mother-daughter dyad names were used so that anonymity was maintained: Carla and Tiana, Susan and Nina, Linda and Renee, Paige and Mila, Betty and Deidre, Anna and Nadine, Kendra and Tara, Sandra and Tonya, Maureen and Melissa, and Barbara and Helene. All interviews were held in either

the mother's or daughter's home, with the exception of Linda and Renee, whose interview was held in Linda's private office.

The data were generated by interviewing 10 mothers and daughters together using the interview questions (Appendix A) to gather information regarding the evolution of the African American mother-daughter relationship. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by me. Transcripts were then member checked by the participants, each of whom received a transcript via secure email. Participants were instructed to return the e-mail with requested changes.

Participant Profiles

Table 1 provides participant profiles:

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Mother	Age	Married	Daughter	Age	Married	Children
Carla	64	widowed	Tiana	31	Y	son
Susan	63	Y	Nina	27	N	none
Linda	59	Y	Renee	29	N	none
Paige	66	Y	Mila	36	divorced	daughter
Betty	66	divorced	Deidre	34	Y	son
Anna	41	N	Nadine	22	N	none
Kendra	57	N	Tara	35	Y	daughter & stepdaughter
Sandra	61	Y	Tonya	35	Y	2 daughters
Maureen	57	Y	Melissa	37	Y	2 sons & stepdaughter
Barbara	64	Y	Helene	32	Y	none

Data Collection and Systems Used on Data

My objective was to identify themes relevant to the research questions as reflected in the data from 10 interviews with mothers and daughters. Each interview was viewed as a single incident and was considered individually in the analysis. Common themes were

identified across the data with regard to addressing the research questions. I searched for patterns, themes, and dimensions in the data through analysis of the interviews, coding of the data, and further analysis as themes and patterns emerged. My goal was to develop a theory regarding the evolution of the African American mother-daughter relationship.

Open coding was the first phase and was conducted using NVivo 10 software, which is an analytic tool to facilitate the coding of qualitative data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) described *open coding* as "open[ing] up the data to all potentials and possibilities contained within them" (p. 160). In open coding, I thoroughly reviewed the data contained within the data set before beginning to group and label concepts. The process of coding involves taking the raw data and pulling out concepts and then grouping them into themes. Furthermore, axial and selective coding was used to create a theory.

Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was as follows: How do African American mothers and daughters define their mother-daughter relationship? The three primary themes related to this research question are summarized in this section. This section includes tables summarizing the definitions of the identified themes and the frequency of occurrence for the themes, as well as the number of interviewees who mentioned a specific theme. As reflected in Table 2, the primary themes were *ups and downs, changing fluctuating*, and *enduring bond*. The related themes are also summarized.

Table 2

Themes and Definitions for Research Question 1

Theme	Definition
Ups and downs	The mother-daughter relationship is defined by perceptions that there are "ups and downs" and "turning points."
Changing/fluctuating	The mother-daughter relationship is defined by perceptions that the relationship changes over time; the relationship changes due to life circumstances.
Enduring bond	The mother-daughter relationship is defined by perceptions that the relationship remains the same over time; there is an enduring bond that cannot be broken.

Table 3 shows the frequency with which the themes appeared across interviews and across the data as a whole.

Table 3

Frequency of Themes for Research Question 1

Themes	Number of interviewees mentioning this theme	Total exemplar quotes
Ups and downs	7	12
Changing/fluctuating	6	17
Remaining the same	4	5

The first theme, ups and downs, was defined as the perceptions that there are "ups and downs" and "turning points" in the mother-daughter relationship. This theme was mentioned 12 times over seven interviews. Tiana provided an example of the ups and downs in the mother-daughter relationship:

I would say from the time I was probably 14 until maybe 15 ½, 16, again, I was starting to gain more independence, learn more about who I was, but also I think that was developmentally a period for me that was kinda tough because you know, you're still developing cognitively, you're changing even more and then just um, questioning, you're also kinda questioning about who you are, who you wanna be when you grow up, and you know, what does it take to get there, you know, and things like that so, um, I loved my mom, I trusted what she had to say, but my friends, I think my peers, were a little bit more important at that, um, if I could say that, at that period of time. I valued what my parents had to say, what my mom had to say in terms of teaching me being a young lady and you know,

how to conduct myself, but at that period in time, I think my um, I probably

valued my friendships a little bit more and was more concerned about what my

friends would say, what my peers would say and certain things that I would not

with my parents, so um, and there were many challenging moments, um, but she

said I was a little bit, um, vocal and that time I became even more vocal. There

were times where I tested them very often um, there was an incident I remember

as a freshman where I gave a boy my high school jacket and was dishonest about

it and my parents told me when they finally found out several months later that

they lost trust in me and I had never thought that I would come to that point where

my parents wouldn't trust anything that I had to say so that was a very

challenging, um, couple, I would say 3 or 4 months because I remember thinking

well, you know, um, Mom and Dad are gonna start questioning everything that

I'm doing now and um, I didn't like that too much so I think I was trying to

redeem myself in a certain way (Carla laughs). I don't think I did that year at

all…

Diedre stated,

Between 15 and 20, like a good 5 years, it was just, it's like that stuff you saw on

TV, you was like, what happened? And I can't even start to tell you what it was or

what triggered things, but we couldn't be in the same space without just conflict.

There was some good times in there, but more often than not, I felt like she didn't

understand me, I felt like she wanted me to do certain things and I didn't

understand what I was saying. It was that time, there was dissonance and what I

was trying to communicate and what she was hearing from me. I just remember

the feeling of me not communicating and she wasn't understanding stuff. In high

school, she let me do things, but it was like, man, it was a feat to do anything.

There were a lot of things that my mother would not allow.

Her mother, Betty, explained these ups and downs as follows:

She's right, between 15 and 20, we didn't agree. I may hear her and I allowed her

to express herself, but for me, you know, doesn't mean it's gonna go your way. It

was a challenge to me, not to her, it was, what kind of a person am I?

Mila and Paige indicated the ups and downs in their relationship were minor.

Paige said, "She got to the point she thought she was grown. She wanted to go out with

her girlfriends. But I was the kind of person I would just sit back and let it pan out and it

usually did." Mila chimed in and indicated, "I stayed busy because I was in the band and

I worked. There were four women in the house but the stuff was minor." Anna indicated

that there was a turning point in the relationship when her daughter got to high school.

She said, "Now high school was another story! Was that when? Yea, her freshman year is

when she started running track, and that's when she temporarily lost her mind."

In a final example, Tonya mentioned the ups and downs in the relationship:

I think during middle and high school is when most of the conflict started

happening. I remember being a little smart aleck and talking back to her at times.

I remember always questioning her decisions, but for the most part, she was pretty

easy-going, but I just think that maybe that was the time when I was trying to

grow up and question authority. She was always still very active in my activities

and let me participate in activities as much as possible. She grew up in a home where she was not allowed to do very much so she made every effort to make sure that my brother and I could be involved and get to do as much as possible.

The next theme, changing/fluctuating, refers to the mother-daughter relationship being defined by perceptions that the relationship changes over time. Some respondents indicated that the relationship changes or changed due to life circumstances. This theme was mentioned 17 times over six interviews. It was evident in the interview with Deidre and Betty. Deidre, the daughter, indicated that the relationship changed when she moved away. Deidre shared,

> So I started to realize that the decisions I made were all on me. I had to figure out how to make decisions, and I started to see a pattern. The option came up for me to go to Arizona, and it was a choice I had to make and we talked about it, but I ended up going out there. I became more responsible for myself.

Her mother, Betty, followed this by saying,

> Well, I think when Deidre moved to Arizona, she's right, and one thing that I saw was Deidre actually taking responsibility for herself. And like she said, she had to. I noticed that she was making decisions, and I respected those decisions, and like she said, we really didn't have any conflict. Once she went out there, we did not have any conflict. She was very responsible on the decisions that she made. I think when she was close to me, she didn't have to take total responsibility cause I was so close she didn't have to do that. I think that was the major point from there, so she stepped out of there and then from there she went to Michigan, you know,

it just went from there, challenges, and I could see the maturity in her decisions.

She was a young lady before then, but at that point, yea, real maturity.

Renee, another daughter, shared, "I think I got a little bit more clingy in middle school because they uprooted me from everything I knew…" Linda indicated that her relationship with Renee was changing because of life circumstances. She indicated,

I don't think we ever got back to where we were. I still think she could call me more. We had a bit of an adjustment period where I would call and the conversation would just be flat and it would hurt my feelings. And so I got to the point that I would just stop calling, I would just wait on her to call me. Now things have changed a bit and the reason is because, she's thinking about getting married. And I think that that's gonna bring us closer together now because and that makes me very happy because she sees me as a big part of that plan. Now, you gotta move down here because I wanna get married and have kids. It's changing and walking into something else, and I guess that's just a natural change.

In another example, Maureen explained how her relationship with her daughter, Melissa, changed because of her surgery:

At that point, I felt like I had already lost her, you know? I had to stop working because I had surgery and for a while, I couldn't do much physically because of the procedure. I guess she ended up with even more responsibilities because since she was the oldest, I expected her to help out more in the house.

Melissa shared a similar sentiment:

I think in those earlier years, with my mother working, I didn't get to spend too much time with her. I think now, I notice that I am constantly trying to seek out relationships with women and my friend's mothers. Like she wanted to give us so much, I think she was willing to sacrifice her relationship with me. Because I was the oldest, I was forced to grow up fast and be a leader. I had to learn how to do a lot of things by myself. I had a childhood, like being a kid with my cousins, but when it comes to you know having a parent to teach you how to read and write, it was difficult because my parents' educational level at a high school level. So I relied heavily on my cousins to help me with things.

Tara explained how going to college changed the mother daughter relationship. She shared,

When it was time for me to transition I was very excited because I was going through this phase of wanting to have more freedom. And then when my mom's family took me down I remember then drop me off it was like yesterday and I remember them helping me out and dropped me off, and then when they pulled off I remember reality hit me. And I realized that at point that if anything goes wrong that my mother is a whole three hours away. I also recognized that at this point I needed to prove things myself, all the things that I talked about now I had to make it happen for myself. And I would also have to wait for them to send me money and wait for them to call me back whereas before I was able to walk into her room and say mommy I need this or call her at work and say mommy I need that.

Sandra, a mother, shared similar views:

> She went to a college about 1000 miles from our hometown. We spoke on the phone
>
> at least once a week. I felt this was the worst time of our relationship. She was so far
>
> away and I felt like I lost touch with who she was becoming.

The last theme, *enduring bond*, was defined as perceptions that the mother-daughter relationship remains the same over time. It was mentioned five times in four interviews. Barbara, a mother, mentioned, "I don't think Helene and I's relationship has changed much over the years." Melissa, a daughter, said, "I don't think it has changed. I mean, I know I can call her and she'll tell me what to do, which helps." Her mother, Maureen, also said, "No, it hasn't changed." Paige shared, "I didn't see a big change it was the growing up part but as far as the relationship wasn't no ups and downs." In a final example, Anna indicated, "I don't really think it's changed too much, we've always been and still are really close. Maybe now it's not as close physically cause she's three hours away from me, but yea, we still talk all the time."

Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was as follows: What value do African-American mothers and daughters place on their relationship with one another? How is the relationship prioritized in the lives of these women? The four primary themes related to this research question are summarized in this section which includes tables summarizing the definition of the identified themes, the frequency of occurrence for the themes, as well as the number of interviewees that mentioned a specific theme. As reflected in Table 4, the primary themes were *unconditional love, legacy*, and *ongoing support*.

Table 4

Themes and Definitions for Research Question 2

Theme	Definition
Unconditional love	Mothers and daughters express and value unconditional love that is part of the relationship.
Legacy	Mothers and daughters value the legacy of their relationship and how this has influenced them as individuals.
Ongoing support	Mother and daughters value the ongoing emotional support they receive from the relationship

Table 5 shows the frequency with which the themes appeared across interviews and across the data.

Table 5

Frequency of Themes for Research Question 2

Themes	Number of interviewees mentioning this theme	Total exemplar quotes
Ongoing support	9	18
Unconditional love	8	18
Legacy	7	13

The most frequently occurring theme for Research Question 2 was *ongoing support* which refers to mothers and daughters expressing that they value the ongoing emotional support they receive from the relationship. This theme was mentioned 18 times over 9 interviews. Carla explained how she supports her daughter:

> I'm retired too, so I pretty much left my home and I came here because Tiana had asked that I come and help out with the baby so I told her fine I was able to do that and thankful that I was able to do that. Um, but it's been difficult, and Tiana and I talk about this all the time but I'm still working on this, you know, because when you're used to being independent, now you're in someone else's, your daughter, your kid's house, so now you're here every day, you know, how do I, how do I, um, remain, I don't wanna say neutral, you know, but how do I keep my independence but yet be here for them so that's what I continue to work on, you

know, so I try to stay out of their…you know, I came here to take care of my grandson and that's what I do.

Tiana explained how she supported her mother when her father died:

I'm think in my adult life, I um, I'm thinking of when dad passed away. My father, the three of us were very close and he died unexpectedly like 12 years ago. That was a tough one because I was, the three of us were very close I was in Columbus, OH which was 2 hours away and I just came home, I was very upset for losing my dad but very concerned about her because they had such a great relationship and you know, they had talked about her retiring the following year and possibly moving to the Carolinas or Virginia and things like that. So that was a tough time, but what I can recall is she was a lot stronger than I thought she was gonna be. As a matter of fact, I left Columbus and told my boss, "I don't know if I'm ever coming back," So, I mean I was ready to just drop everything and move back home with her.

The following exchange between Barbara and Helene exemplifies the ongoing support:

Helene: Yea, it's like, I just want to hear her voice, even if I don't have anything to say. But I go to her for everything, I'm always asking her opinion..

Barbara: And I'm always gonna give it, but I know she's capable of making up her own mind about things, she's got a good sense of that, she's level headed.

Anna mentioned how she provides her daughter with ongoing support:

And she has made me proud. Like I said before, she's just an easy child and right now, I don't worry about her at all. I know she's doing the best she can in school

and I wouldn't expect nothing less from her. I can see she's still trying to find her

way and yea, she calls me and asks me for advice here and there. I'm glad she still

needs me, but I'm also glad she's confident enough to start to find her own way.

In a final example, Tara said,

Also being open knowing that you can go to each other for anything and also

where we also learn together. And so um, I think that you know those are the

things that make an ideal mother/daughter relationship. Without the foundation of

Christ, learning from each other, those principles, you make it through anything.

Unconditional love was defined as mothers and daughters expressing that unconditional

love is part of their relationship. This theme was mentioned 18 times over eight

interviews. Carla advised that there should always be unconditional love, "And no matter

what, whether you agree or disagree, to love one another. You need to love one another."

Betty said,

My idea of a good mother-daughter relationship is unconditional love for my

daughter, then I would say even from a child up till now respect and try to be

there and be open and be objective and listen in unconditional love I mean for her

to feel like there's nothing so bad that she can come to me and talk to me about.

Linda advised, "What may work for one group may not work for another. Absolutely the

love has to be strong and unconditional." Nadine explained,

Gosh, I was so difficult during that time. I don't know what it was, the hormones,

or what, but for a while there, her and I couldn't be in a room together without

getting into it. Now I guess I was just looking for my independence, I was always

the good girl, you know, and then I guess I was trying to be grown. But my mom,

you know, she didn't give up on me, she stood her ground, she punished me when

I needed punishing, and I knew she cared about me.

Nadine further explained,

She also taught me how to love. You know, even when I was going through a

rough time in high school, she never gave up on me, you know, she just loved me,

she didn't judge me or ridicule me.

Nina said,

I like talking to my mom but I know that she wants the best for me, it's not like a

competition. I know a lot of mom and daughters, they feel like they need to

compete with each other, but I never have to compete with my mom because I

know she wants the best for me. And, if I needed something to this day I know

she would take the shirt off her back and give it to me.

In a final example of unconditional love Tara shared,

As an adult, as I began to make decisions, she would give me her point of view,

but she said it's your decision, but I taught you to pray about it for yourself and it

doesn't mean I love you any less.

The last theme, *legacy*, was mentioned 13 times over seven interviews and refers to

valuing the legacy of their relationship and how this has influenced them as individuals.

It also refers to the mention of other mothers and daughters in the family history. Carla

stated,

I don't, maybe that's what I got from my mother, you know, because my mother always believed in you have to make decisions for yourself, so that's you know, I make a conscious effort to um, (laughter) to step back, step out of the situation and, and, sometimes it's not always easy, you know.

Carla added,

you know Tiana and I talked about it and I said you know sometimes people um, don't understand and especially as African Americans, um, we don't understand the importance of family and how, I mean if it were not for my grandmother, my aunt, my uncle, you know all those people played a very important piece in my life. So that's something that I'm able to hand down to her so, they didn't get that at first, you know, but I think they, it's ok, it doesn't matter, I'm here for my kids.

Betty, a mother, explained legacy,

You know the challenges of being a single parent and I know this being a black woman in this country yet you do put your foot down and you have to you can't be nice. Not to her but to the outside world because what I've experienced and the journey it came to survival and especially with the child yes sometimes yes you're mean. Because to me a lot of it was nonsense and a lot of it was bias and prejudice and I have no room for any of that stuff. And again if you're single parent you'll have no time for that nonsense. You know I'm trying to make it and survive in this society and that's the big challenge that I had in again I didn't have anyone to fall back on you know, if I didn't have it we didn't have it you know. I've dealt with discrimination and I have no room for the other it's nonsense.

Renee, Linda's daughter, added,

I think my mother has shown me the kind of mother I hope to be one day. I know

this interview is just about mothers and daughters, but she took such good care of

me and my brothers. And the example that she set as a wife, my mom and dad's

marriage was so good, they treated each other respect and seeing that growing up,

now that I'm out here dating now, that speaks volumes. It was just the way she

carried herself, you know, she didn't have to say a lot of things to me, I mean she

did, but I just learned from watching her, I just did what she did.

Mila, a daughter, shared,

Yea, I agree. I was so young, I don't know, just speaking from what she was

talking about, I come from a long line of independent women who just did what

they wanted to do, so it was never a question, I don't know I guess I just kinda of

emulated what I saw.

In a final example, Paige, a mother, explained,

That comes from being a grandparent. I remember my mother and grandmother

telling me and now I understand. It's a different love and care for your

grandchildren. And I'm like that because I know she's a single parent and I want

to make sure it goes as well as it can. I want the same thing for her but I try to

make it as good and close as possible.

Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was as follows: What behaviors, attitudes, and/or traditions

influence African American mother-daughter relationships? Three primary themes

related to this research question are summarized in this section which includes tables

summarizing the definition of the identified themes, the frequency of occurrence for the

themes, as well as the number of interviewees that mentioned a specific theme. As

reflected in Table 6, the primary themes were *care, learn from one another*, and *spend*

time together.

Table 6

Themes and Definitions for Research Question 3

Theme	Definition
Care	Care is shown by "doing things" (e.g., baking a birthday cake, doing hair, going shopping, showing up to games)
Learn from one another	Daughters express how things their mothers taught them shaped and influenced their lives.
Spend time together	Mothers' /daughters' availability or lack thereof, influences the mother-daughter relationship.

Table 7 shows the frequency with which the themes appeared across interviews and

across the data.

Table 7

Frequency of Themes for Research Question 3

Themes	Number of interviewees mentioning this theme	Total exemplar quotes
Spend time together	10	32
Learn from one another	9	29
Care	10	19

The most frequently occurring theme for Research Question 3 was *spend time together*,

which refers to mothers and daughters mentioning that availability or lack thereof,

influences the mother-daughter relationship. This theme was mentioned 32 times over 10

interviews. Carla described how having one child allowed her to be more available,

> Um, also because I did want other children but was unable to have them for some
>
> reasons, it was really unique to have an only child because I grew up, there was
>
> four of us so I was used to sharing everything. With Tiana being the only child I
>
> knew I was gonna have to work extra hard (laughter) to instill in her the
>
> importance of sharing, you don't just, and I think that's something that's a part of
>
> our culture too. Um, but it was unique to have the one child and be able to take
>
> her everywhere that we went. I mean we very seldom went anywhere without
>
> Tiana cause I know sometimes she asked, well who would babysit me when you

guys went out? And I said well, we very seldom went out, because I went out

sometimes, you know, but my husband didn't because he wasn't into the club

scene, so he would stay home with her. But then after a while we just started

doing things as a family so she was always with us wherever we went. To me that

was pretty unique.

Deidre also recalled her mother being available,

 I remember, a lot of time together, I remember funny stuff like putting pajamas

under clothes (laughs). I think the earliest thing I can remember is probably

elementary school so probably like first grade when we lived off Metropolitan and

it was just the two of us, because my mom was a single parent, and I remember

her dropping me off to school and picking me up from school because the school I

went to was right across the street from the bank she worked at. I remember a lot

of time spending playing with me, because I was the only child, she was my

playmate. So I remember in the evenings playing a lot and she would be my

playmate sometimes. We would go bike riding, out to the park and after work and

on the weekends we would go ride the bike, and just always there, actually. I just

remember spending a lot of time together, reading together.

Betty elaborated on Deidre's statements:

So I devoted time and tried to do fun things, I was a single parent, so I didn't have

a lot of money, but I just tried to make sure that I gave her a lifestyle, joy, she

didn't come up deprived or have the most elaborate but she still got. So I was very

about her education, we bought books, she would play, but we would always find

that time to spend together. And the way I was brought up, it was just the most valuable, it was the two of us, but we shared meals together. I cooked almost everyday, I just valued those things coming up as a kid.

Barbara stated,

I remember making sure that I involved her in as much as possible. She was my youngest and only daughter, I had three older boys, so I was so excited to finally have my little girl! You know, I just remember taking her to ballet class and she took gymnastics too. We had so much fun together, I remember us spending a lot of time with her after school activities. Um, but education was important to us as well, so you know, we did spend a lot of time doing homework together, but she was a good student so that wasn't a problem.

Linda recalled,

Well, Renee doesn't really love to shop, but I guess when I'm buying her something she'll shop. But I remember the kids said when we were growing up they said do you guys go anywhere without us? And we were involved in church, we were in charge of a young group, so we did everything with them, when they were growing up everyone was at our house. Can you think of anything in particular?

Anna shared, "I remember weekends of us reading novels together, hours would go by, yea, those were some good memories."

Learn from one another was defined as daughters and mothers expressing how things their mothers or daughters taught them shaped and influenced their lives. This

theme was mentioned 29 times over nine interviews. Tiana shared the following about learning from her mother,

> My mom taught me there are just certain things that you and your husband have to figure out. Um, you can't, I think I would call you sometimes for advice when we were dating and you know, "what do you think, Mom," how should I handle this situation. She would say, you have to decide, you know, you and your fiancé will have to decide on how that's gonna work for you and your home. Um, there were some things that I think now that I still consult with her when it involves parenting and you know and taking care of him and relationship things.

> Deidre mentioned,

> I saw that her style and method of negotiating and navigating actually worked. I have some similarities in terms of how I act, how I approach things, but I'm very much my own person. There are parts of hers her negotiating skills and then parts of me that I started understanding about myself. I learned how to read people and understand situations more, which gave me more insight into my mother. She was the one person no matter what was always there. I understand the understanding that you're responsible for making the decision and you can't take those decisions back. By the time I moved to Arizona, think it was my sophomore and junior year it clicked in my brain. You know why she responded to certain things immediately.

> Deidre's mother, Betty, indicated,

You know one thing she truly is, patient. And she has taught me how to not to be so quick to respond in some instances. No, she's right I would (laughs) but now she's taught me patience. And her word to me, patience is a virtue. And you know I'm still working on that but a lot of times if you're just patient it works out itself and a lot of times it just does. And I've learned from future she's low key she's not like mom.

Linda discussed that she realized her daughter was learning from her:

My sorority and your coming out. I would take Renee on our college trips, and then her cotillion, just having your daughter presented, having her try on wedding gowns that would have her father tearing up. I will never forget we went to the local library and it was MLK Day and she was doing a presentation and I was sitting with my legs crossed and arms crossed and she was sitting the exact same way as me. That resonated with me, God, she's watching you and emulating everything that you do! It hit me like a ton of bricks.

Linda also mentioned what she learned from her own mother:

I've always been so proud of what my mother did, I don't think I will ever touch that. She always knew there was nothing she couldn't do. I think she has more of that than I do. It's in her genes, I had to guide but I didn't have to push. A lot of it was initiated by her. Trying to channel her in the right direction.

Mila said, "We're so alike, crafty, artsy, baking…we have a lot in common. And my daughter is crafty and likes to bake as well." Nadine shared,

My mom has taught me the value of hard work and sacrifice. You know we lived in New York before moving down here and I just remember her wanting to get us out of New York. She used to work overtime trying to save up money so we could move down here.

Nina stated,

Um, yea, middle school, I could take care of myself a little more or whatever, I remember um, one summer maybe the summer of when I was turning eleven or twelve is when she started making me do those things for myself, like ironing my clothes for myself. And I remember I got so mad and I was like, I don't wanna do this, this is stupid, but looking back and I realize that it was teaching….

In a final example, Tonya indicated,

I learned the importance of education. I remember my mother telling me to get all my education before I had kids, she was in her Master's program while she was pregnant with my brother and she told me how hard it was. So I made sure I did that and I'm glad I did now that I have a family of my own. I also learned how to be thrifty, in the summers, we used to roll pennies and take them to Dairy Queen to get ice cream. And we always bought things on sale, she always bought off season.

The next theme, care, refers to showing you care by "doing" (e.g., baking a birthday cake, doing hair, going shopping, showing up to games). This theme was mentioned 19 times over 10 interviews. Deidre stated, "I always tell this story, I remember it was a trick. Every night she would read stories to me." Helene recalled,

Yea, I remember my mommy taking me to dance class. That was our time together you know, because the boys and all, I mean they made so much noise and so yea, we enjoyed our time together. And like she said, she helped me with schoolwork and oh yea, I remember her doing my hair too, she used to braid my hair on the weekends

Melissa shared how her mother showed care,

She was still working and I would have to do my homework by myself. What I remember, she made sure I was clean, she made my clothes, and did my hair on the weekends, and she would have new outfits for me that she had made. We visited a lot of family on the weekends.

Maureen, Melissa's mother, further explained this,

Yea, I was still working and I did want so badly to spend time with her. But my favorite thing to do with her was doing her hair, I loved doing that, it made my day to make sure that hair looked nice and she looked nice in the clothes I made for her. Money was so tight and I loved to sew anyway.

Mila shared the ways her mother would show care after she went away to college,

She wanted us to go away, staying at home was not an option. She wanted us to go! I missed home, I missed, it was hard for me, I was the oldest and being there on my own was hard. And I got sick my freshman year and they came to take care of me. Seeing them helped. Momma would send me care packages, it had the red velvet cake, banana bread, and I was good. You know going away helped me see

how my relationship really was. Because I saw some girls and they did have a

parent but their mom's weren't doing anything like that.

Anna discussed how she would show her daughter, Nadine, that she cared,

And you know, I really didn't mind her participating in sports and all, but when

her grades started to slip and then the whole boy thing, I was like, we gotta do

something about this. But no really, that's when I started to notice that I needed to

spend more time with her. So I made it a point to ask her more questions about

her day, her friends and everything, and I attended all of her track meets, you

know, I wanted to make sure that she knew I cared about her, she was important

to me. But it was hard you know, there was no man in the house, and she tried my

patience a lot.

In a final example of show care, Nina indicated,

I remember her just always being there and going like above and beyond what

most moms did, like, I remember everyday she would polish my shoes, nobody

polishes anybody's shoes anymore. Every single day she would polish my shoes,

she would always have all of my um shirts lined and stuff for school, make sure

the homework was done and everything like that.

Results for Research Question 4

Research Question 4 was as follows: How was/is the African American mother-

daughter relationship established, maintained, nurtured, and developed over time? The

four primary themes related to this research question are summarized in this section

which includes tables summarizing the definition of the identified themes, the frequency

of occurrence for the themes, as well as the number of interviewees that mentioned a

specific theme. As reflected in Table 8, the primary themes were *role of communication,*

being available, acceptance, and *mother/daughter as shaper*.

Table 8

Themes and Definitions for Research Question 4

Theme	Definition
Role of communication	Mothers/daughters emphasize the importance of regular open communication for maintaining and nurturing the relationship.
Being available	The mother/daughter relationship is maintained and nurtured by each person being available for the other person.
Acceptance	The mother/daughter relationship is nurtured and evolves by acceptance (e.g., of flaws, decisions, etc.).
Mother/daughter as shaper	The mother/daughter relationship is established and nurtured by the mother shaping and molding the daughter (and vice versa).

Table 9 shows the frequency with which the themes appeared across interviews and

across the data.

Table 9

Frequency of Themes for Research Question 4

Themes	Number of interviewees mentioning this theme	Total exemplar quotes
Role of communication	10	29
Mother as shaper	6	26
Being available	4	10
Acceptance	5	7

The most frequently occurring theme for Research Question 4 was *role of communication*, which refers to mothers and daughters emphasizing the importance of regular open communication for maintaining and nurturing the relationship. This theme was mentioned 29 times over 10 interviews. Carla explained that communication was important in the household,

> Um, yea, we do that because I, my husband and I both felt, you know, open communication was very important in the household, so we always tried to leave the door open for Tiana to come and you know discuss things and we would all be honest about it, um, yes, whenever we had boundaries, and whenever she stepped over those boundaries we did discuss it and tried

Her daughter, Tiana, added,

And I think most of the time, I listened to what they had to say. Um, communication, I think, was a very effective way, of course back then I didn't think so but, you know, looking back I think that was a very effective way

Barbara stated,

We've just never had a problem talking about things and I've tried to be an open book and made sure the doors of communication were always open for her and her brothers too. My husband and I always wanted our kids to know that they could talk to us about anything and that didn't change with Helene. I think the only difference was she was a girl and so I feel like we had a closer bond.

In regard to communication, Linda indicated,

There's never a doubt no matter how much we bicker, there's a foundation of love there. Respect and I mean respect from the time that they're able to express themselves and you have to listen to what they have to say and you always encourage them and show respect for what they have to say.

Paige shared,

We still have our communication, that never went away, and right now if she needs something she get on the phone and we gonna help her. I expected her being the oldest she should have made better decisions, but she's an adult now and I can only suggest. If there's something I don't like, I'll let her know….. We just up front with each other…

Paige simply stated, "First of all, open communication, then your love. Actually to me, open communication, once you got that, it covers everything." She felt this was the

foundation of a strong relationship. The role of communication was emphasized by Anna

and Nicole as evident in the following final example,

> Anna: I don't recall any real conflicts in our relationship, she didn't really cut up
>
> too much and even when she did, she didn't get too far with it. I always tried to sit
>
> down and talk to her about why she was being punished though.
>
> Nadine: I do remember her talking to me after a punishment, you know. But I
>
> respected her and knew she meant well so there weren't too many disagreements
>
> between the two of us.

The next theme, *mother/daughter as shaper*, was defined as the mother/daughter

relationship beings established and nurtured by the mother shaping and molding the

daughter (and vice versa). It was mentioned 26 times over six interviews. Carla explained

that a mother's role was to shape her children, "our children are a gift from God and I

truly believe that and um, you know, we're responsible, we're their stewards while

they're growing up." She also shared her feelings about how her daughter Tiana shaped

her:

> No, you really have, Tiana really has influenced me in many ways. Um, I think
>
> about when you were struggling about whether or not you were gonna go back to
>
> work on your Master's and um, that was right before your dad passed and you
>
> were coming up with all these different reasons why you couldn't do anything
>
> right now. And the next think I know, she had already enrolled in school. I like
>
> how Tiana is a take charge kind of person and she follows through on things, I
>
> like that in her. She's one of the most compassionate people, and I think that's a

God-given talent and gift that she has. She's very compassionate, and I really try to model that and I try real hard to model that (laughter).

Betty mentioned,

My definition of what Deidre was experiencing and I would say she was trying to grow up and didn't know how to. And that's fine, there's nothing wrong with that because that's what we are, parents, are for. And I think that's what good parents should be and that's understanding. So I always believe it's true, I think she should have exposure and opportunity to the best and my philosophy for Deidre was, I don't want to decide her future, I want her to decide what she is to do in life and that's always been my idea. And the only way I could do that is to allow her to be in activities and I was open. Even from elementary school she took dancing, piano, played the flute, so I was that kind of parent. I believe let her decide, but it's my job to expose her to it, open the doors for her, and let her make the decision…not force her. And to never feel guilty of her choices and that's what I feel that I tried to direct her from birth. If you're gonna do something and you say that's what you want to do, then you need to learn to stick with it. Because it gets a little challenging if you quit. I believe in instilling those qualities that and I'm speaking from a minority and single parent standpoint. You need to know how to go there in life and take care of yourself.

Renee provided an example of how her mother shaped her,

I remember college banners hung in my room when I was little. I had a Hampton jacket when I was a kid that I absolutely loved, so it was never a question to,

because I never thought that they wanted me to stay home. She wanted me to get

out and see things and I do think that helped, that was a big part of our

relationship, she was pushing me to get out and try new things and experience

more outside.

Paige explained, "I was the kind when they did good in school we recognized that. But I

always pushed them to do better. We tried to encourage them to get good grades."

Kendra stated,

Well she was the oldest so she had to have a little bit more responsibility and of

course I gave her that and I also coached her in areas that she needed she turned

out very well with. She got to the point where she thought she was her brother's

mother, she wanted him to do right just like I wanted him to do right. She was

very demanding her brother be a better person in life and I appreciated that

because it was just a rearing and I had instilled in her in the prayers that I sent up

to God to watch over them. This girl here she was on and popping she was on

point!

In a final example Sandra summarized her role in shaping her daughter,

As a mother, I knew she needed to grow into her own person. Giving her that

room to grow was stressful for me...as there is no set way to cut those apron

strings...so to spoke. You just hope you have taught and modeled about making

wise decisions.

Being available, another common theme, was defined as the mother/daughter relationship being maintained and nurtured by each person's availability. This theme was mentioned 10 times over four interviews. Betty explained her availability and dedication to her daughter,

> I think I was the kind of mother that was excited to have a kid and especially a daughter. Her dad and I were married for five years before I had her and we enjoyed life, so when I had her she was a gift to me so I think at the point in my life I was just excited and ready to be a mother. I devoted my life to Deidre. I didn't have a social like, not that I wanted one, so our relationship, I was, I was always there. My issues were education and helping her to develop intellectually, being who I am, and how I was raised, I knew what society expected of us as minority. We already categorized and I said that would never be her life

The following exchange between Barbara and Helene captures the theme well:

> Barbara: I was lucky, I didn't work, I was a stay at home mother, so a job was never an issue. My boys were older than her and my husband took the bulk of their responsibilities, so when Helene was born I was able to devote a lot of time to her.

> Helene: I don't remember anything getting in the way or me feeling like I wasn't getting enough attention from my mother. She cooked and cleaned and ran all the errands, but even if she did that, she would always incorporate me into it, so it all felt like fun to me, not work. I didn't feel like I was in the way or anything.

Carla simply stated, "When Tiana was in elementary school, um, we were very, cautious in terms of who she associated with and so we kind of watched, I don't know, my husband and I had our way of doing things together." In the final exemplary quote, Nina stated,

> I really don't remember things that we used to do on our own only because my mom didn't drive. So usually we did things with me, her, and my dad. But I do remember her being home because she was a stay at home, so I do remember being with her at home and learning certain things, like I remember learning how to tie my shoes. I remember watching certain things on TV and me asking questions and stuff like that.

The last theme, *acceptance*, was mentioned seven times over five interviews and refers to the mother-daughter relationship being nurtured and evolving through acceptance (e.g., of flaws, decisions, etc.). Renee stated that she accepts her mother's opinions, "We may not always agree and I really wanted to hear her opinion, so I appreciate her in a different way." Sandra expressed a similar feeling, "I don't recall any conflicts, maybe it's because they were so minor. But I'm pretty easygoing, agreeing to disagree is not a problem." Mila indicated that she accepts her relationship with her mother, "I would say us, it look like me and mommy. It's not perfect and it's not gonna be. But believe me, from stories I've heard, it's perfect." In a final example, Nina revealed that she accepts her mother even through arguments,

> That's true and for the most part we get along, and I mean, everybody gets mad at each other, to be honest, I can't remember the last time I was mad at my mom, it

would have to be at least 3 to 5 years. I mean, even when it is something, like she

said, it might be okay I don't talk to you for 2 or 3 days but we never have

disagreed so much that we've had to talk it out or hash it out or really even

apologize.

Evidence of Quality

Trustworthiness was acquired through the use of member checks on the

transcriptions. As discussed in chapter 3, each mother-daughter dyad reviewed, made

corrections if needed, and approved the final transcription prior to data entry.

Triangulation was achieved through the dissection and organization of the participant

transcripts to document the repeating themes. In regards to researcher bias, it is important

to note that I am a mother of two young daughters and I share similar perspectives and

experiences as some of the mother-daughter dyads. However, I differ from the mother-

daughter dyads in that my daughters and I are not at the point that we are able to reflect

over the evolution of our relationships yet. Finally, the mother-daughter dyads were given

the opportunity to speak freely without interruption or interjection of my beliefs,

thoughts, or feelings.

Summary

I described, identified, and introduced the study in chapter 1, presented related

research and literature in chapter 2, and clearly defined the research design in chapter 3.

The results of the study revealed the evolution of the African American mother-daughter

relationship. Themes included *ups and downs, changing/fluctuation, enduring bond,*

unconditional love, legacy, ongoing support, care, learning from mom, spending time

together, role of communication, being available, acceptance, and mother as molder. The

discussion of results and the implications of the study will be addressed in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Discussion

A gap in the literature existed in describing the evolution of the African American mother-daughter relationship. A grounded theory inquiry was used to describe the experiences of African American mothers and daughters in relation to one another. This method was chosen to provide a description of the evolution of the African American mother-daughter relationship as participants viewed it as well as a framework for further research inquiry.

The findings from the interviews revealed that African American mothers and daughters define their relationship through the recognition that it will have its ups and downs, is ever changing and fluctuating, but has an everlasting enduring bond. Next, the value that African American mothers and daughters place on their relationship is exercised in their unconditional love for one another, the legacy that is instilled in them, and the ongoing support that mothers and daughters give to one another. Furthermore, the relationship is defined by behaviors such as care for one another, spending time together, and learning from one another. Finally, the relationship was nurtured by these mothers and daughters through communication, being available to one another, and the acceptance of each other as individuals. The results were significant in describing the continuum of the relationship and the way in which African American mothers and daughters experience this relationship.

Interpretation of the Findings

The intent of this study was to establish a grounded theory to describe and explain the evolution of the African American mother-daughter relationship. It was found that in addressing the first research question, "How do African American mothers and daughters define their mother-daughter relationship," participants explained that the relationship experiences ups and downs, undergoes changes and fluctuations over time, and is defined as an enduring bond between the two.

Ups and downs in the relationship were generally described as times of conflict, lack of understanding, and a need for independence, as stated by daughters Tiana, Deidre, and Tonya. Boyd (1985) noted that because mothers and daughters identify with each other so much, there are often periods of conflict when the daughter tries to separate herself and become her own individual. Betty, a mother, described this time as a time of listening to her daughter yet sticking to the rules she set forth in the home, while another mother, Paige, took a laid-back approach and waited for things to work themselves out. These ups and downs were generally referred to as occurring during middle adolescence through early adulthood.

Changes in the relationship occurred most frequently once a major life transition such as attending college occurred. In another mother-daughter dyad, the relationship changed once the family moved to another state, and in another, changes occurred once the mother had surgery. In the case of these women, their life transitions caused life cycles in their relationships. Although the mothers and daughters described their relationships as having ups and downs and changing or experiencing varying life cycles,

the relationship can still be defined as the two having an everlasting or enduring bond.

Anna, a mother, echoed this sentiment by remarking that although she and her daughter

are not close physically, their relationship has endured and remained intact.

In statements addressing the second research question—"What value do African-

American mothers and daughters place on their relationship with one another? How is the

relationship prioritized in the lives of these women?"—the mothers and daughters

expressed that they valued unconditional love as part of their relationship, the legacy of

their relationship, how the relationship had affected them as individuals, and the ongoing

support that the relationship affords both of them.

Unconditional love was described by Betty as being open, respectful, and ready to

listen as a mother. The daughters expressed unconditional love as their mothers loving

them without judgment and always wanting and expecting the best for their daugthers.

Mothers expressed their desire to leave a legacy, which stemmed from their other

relationships with family members and the things they learned from them. Carla

recounted lessons from her mother and sought to use these lessons when dealing with her

own daughter. The daughters also expressed their understanding and the importance of

the family members who came before them and what they learned from them. Mila

explained that the line of independent women in her family had served as models for her

to move forward in her life. This ties in directly with Black feminist thought, a theoretical

framework chosen for this research study. Collins (2000) noted that Black feminist

thought is emcompassed in Black women's experiences and serves to better those

experiences. The African American mothers in this study drew from their own

experiences and the experiences passed down to them with their daughters. The daughters, in turn, used these experiences as a reference point in their own lives. Finally, Renee expressed that her mother's own behavior had directly impacted the woman, wife, and mother she hoped to be. Turnage (2004) remarked that African American mothers act as role models for their daughters and provide a secure foundation from which the daughter can explore her world. It appears that with the help of these mothers and lessons from older family members, African American daughters can begin to establish their identity.

The African American mother-daughter relationship is also reflected in the amount of ongoing emotional support that each reciprocates to the other. Tiana recalled being concerned about her mother following the passing of her father and putting aside her own personal needs to care for her. Tara and Helene, both daughters, also pointed out that being able to go to the other for guidance is helpful and comforting. Carla's support for her daughter had gone so far as moving closer and helping with the day-to-day care of her grandson. On the other hand, Anna mentioned that she is glad her daughter is independent enough to make her own decisions yet still values her mother's opinion and calls on her for advice.

In remarks addressing Research Question 3, "What behaviors, attitudes, and/or traditions influence African American mother-daughter relationships," mothers and daughters stated that care, learning from one other, and spending time together were the most important. Mothers showed their daughters how much they cared for them with intentional actions. Daughters expressed these intentional actions in the form of their

mothers reading with them, helping them with schoolwork, doing their hair, and taking them to extracurricular activities. Anna, a mother, expressed that making an intentional effort to spend time with her daughter, attend her activities, and get to know her friends was important to her and would show her daughter that she cared.

Learning from one another was expressed as how mothers and daughters had influenced and shaped one another's lives. Daughters remarked that they learned the importance of education, parenting, marriage, interpersonal skills, and domestic skills. Boyd-Franklin (2003) remarked that African American mothers and their daughters share a bond that involves preparing the daughters for womanhood and the tasks of surviving and coping in this world. Modeling and actual behavioral tendencies were also learned from mothers, as expressed by Linda, a mother, who recalled how she noticed that her daughter sat and crossed her arms and legs just like her. Mothers and daughters also expressed that spending time toegther further influenced their relationship with one another. Mothers remarked that involving their daughters in day-to-day activities and carving out special time to do things with their daughters contributed to their relationship.

Finally, Research Question 4, "How was/is the African American mother-daughter relationship established, maintained, nurtured, and developed over time," was defined as emphasizing the role of communication in the relationship, being available, offering acceptance, and the mother or daughter shaping the relationship. First, open communication was mentioned as being an important component of the relationship. The mothers and daughters stated that there was consistently an open-door policy in the homes regarding communication. Linda stated that in addition to open communication,

there must be a level of respect for her daughter's expressions. She stated that communication was done in love and expressed the importance of listening to her daughter's expressions. Pluhar and Kuriloff (2004) found that a mother's communication style that induces good conversations increases trust in the mother-daughter relationship. They went on to state that when parents spend more time listening to their children and engaging in an interactive communication style, their children are more likely to open up about topics. Given the closeness of their relationships, it appears that the mothers and daughters in this study have experienced an increased closeness due to their chosen communication styles.

Next, the African American mother-daughter relationship can be characterized by the mother's dedication to being available for her daughter. Helene noted that she always felt that her mother made her a priority in her life. She stated that although her mother had domestic responsibilities, she always incorporated Helene into those responsibilities. Two mothers made the decision and sacrificed to stay at home to show their dedication to their daughters. In either situation, these mothers made being available for their daughters a priority.

Furthermore, acceptance was noted as a component of the mother-daughter relationship. Acceptance can be defined as the natural evolution of the relationship by accepting each other's flaws and decisions. Turnage (2004) stated that a mother's acceptance prepares her daughter to accept herself. The mothers and daughters noted that even in the face of differing opinions, there was still acceptance of each other's decisions, thoughts, and opinions. This could greatly contribute to the development of a healthy

sense of self in daughters. When a mother allows her daughter to make her own decisions without judging her, the daughter's confidence in her own abilities is further validated.

Finally, mother/daughter as shaper was defined as the mother and daughter being the molders of each other. Mothers from this study appeared to shape their daughters' character and choices for college education. Betty, a mother, also expressed her responsibility in raising her daughter and took her assignment as a gift from God. Tiana, a daughter, modeled compassion that her mother tries to model as well.

A second theoretical framework, relational cultural theory (RCT), was used to inform this study. The African American mothers and daughters from this study appeared to consistently have relational interactions with one another. Freedberg (2007) pointed out that RCT was conceived out of the life experiences and developmental processes of women and girls. These women consistently engaged in mutual empathy and mutuality and were authentic in their relationships with one another—all important relational cultural theoretical concepts. Furthermore, Jordan (2001) found that women grow through and toward connection, with their sense of being coming primarily from their relationships throughout their lives. The African American mother-daughter relationship is a daughter's first relationship that she has with another woman. And given the significance of this relationship and the results of this study, it appears to establish a loving bond between two females that contributes to their overall sense of self and provides a place for emotional support and guidance.

Implications for Social Change

Specific education and training are essential to educate mental health professionals, clergy, and the African American community at large about the uniqueness of the African American mother-daughter relationship. This study can serve to assist clinicians who may be working with African American mothers and daughters and may serve as a framework for working with other minority mothers and daughters, particularly those from a collectivistic culture. Training must include sensitivity to African American culture, as well as the understanding of how to deal with these fluid relationships. It will be important to give presentations in the African American community, to present educational lectures, and to publish the results of this study, which will all contribute to increasing the awareness of African American mother-daughter relationships. The research established a grounded theory introduction of this relationship and will serve as a theoretical foundation for future study in this area.

Recommendations for Further Study

In this study, I sought to answer the broad question concerning the evolution of the African American mother-daughter relationship. The African American mother-daughter relationship is characterized as having ups and downs, with noted changes and fluctuations, but it involves an everlasting enduring bond that is expressed through unconditional love for one another and ongoing support of one another. A legacy is instilled in these young women through their mothers in the form of care for one another, spending time together, and learning from one another. Finally, the relationship is further

nurtured through communication, being available to one another, and the acceptance of each other as individuals.

However, several topics still exist that have yet to be covered. First, it is recommended that additional research be conducted to determine the continued evolution of the mother-daughter relationship throughout the lifespan. It is currently unknown as to how the relationship evolves as mothers and daughters continue to age. Finally, it is recommended that this study be further explored in other parts of this country. This study was conducted in the South, and expanding this study to include African American mothers and daughters from every part of the country would further the breadth of this topic and potentially add differing perspectives that would give a voice to all African American mothers and daughters in the United States.

Researcher's Experience

I was very aware and cautious throughout my research process to ensure that my bias and personal experience did not affect this process. I am an African American woman with two young daughters of my own. However, my experience differs from those of the participants in that my daughters and I are not able to go back and reflect on our relationship over the years. I also used open-ended questions in the interviews so that each of the mother-daughter dyads could answer questions freely and without interruption or insertion of my own thoughts, feelings, or ideas. I found myself excited and in awe of the uniqueness of each interview. However, even with this uniqueness, the mother-daughter dyads were very similar in the information that was being communicated to me. It was also rewarding to hear upon the conclusion of the interviews

that the mothers and daughters really enjoyed the experience. They consistently and specifically stated that they were glad to hear that they had been influential and important in the lives of one another. The results support my personal experience and beliefs concerning the African American mother-daughter relationship. This work has allowed me to reflect, appreciate, and further understand my relationship with my own mother and will allow me to better understand my own experiences with my daughters.

Conclusion

This study yielded valuable information that will allow mental health professionals, clergy, African American mothers and daughters, and other family members who live with these women to better understand the unique African American mother-daughter relationship. By understanding the components of their relationship, individuals will who work with this group will have sensitivity to the workings, nuances, and phases of the relationship. Each of the mother-daughter dyads spoke candidly about the positive and negative parts of their relationship yet seemed to understand the ebbs and flows of their relationship as necessary. The African American mother-daughter relationship is a unique, ever-evolving interaction between two individuals who do so in a mutually appreciative and honest way that conveys love toward one another. African American mothers and daughters should be proud of the uniqueness and closeness they can experience with one another.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your relationship when daughter was in elementary school? Middle school? High school? College? Now?
2. As a mother/daughter, how do you feel your relationship has changed over the years? What contributed to those changes?
3. What kinds of things do/did the two of you do together?
4. How do/did the two of you handle conflicts in the relationship?
5. What, if any, external influences (ie, marriage, work, and children) affect/impact your relationship? How do/did you deal with that? In what way did those external influences impact the relationship?
6. As a mother/daughter, how do you think your relationship has changed? What do you think has contributed to those changes?
7. Tell me about an experience the two of your shared that was memorable? Why?
8. How has your mother/daughter influenced you? What kinds of things have you learned from one another?
9. For the daughter: If you are a mother, how has your relationship with your mother changed since becoming a mother?
   For the mother: How has your relationship changed since your daughter gave birth?
10. How would you define an ideal mother-daughter relationship?

Appendix B

Recruitment Flyer

RESEARCH STUDY:

Volunteers are wanted for a research study on African American Mother-daughter relationships

WHO: African American mothers and their natural born daughters who are at least 21 years of age and have lived together from the daughter's birth until adulthood.

WHAT: African American mothers and daughters will participate in an interview discussion together about their relationship. The interview will last a maximum of 3 hours.

BENEFITS: This study hopes to facilitate open and continuous communication between African American mothers and daughters.

CONTACT: To learn more about this research study, please contact Toneka R. Etienne at 678-520-9147 or toneka.etienne@waldenu.edu.

Appendix C

IRB Approval

Your approval # is 09-17-12-0069436. You will need to reference this number in your

dissertation and any future funding or publication submissions.

Appendix D

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of African American mother-

daughter relationships. The researcher is inviting African American mothers and their

natural born daughters who are at least 21 years of age and have lived together since the

daughter's birth, to be in the study. Adult daughters are required to have lived with their

natural mothers until adulthood. This form is part of a process called "informed consent"

to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Toneka R. Etienne, who is a
doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to generate a theory of the experiences of African American
mothers and daughters in relation to one another.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- The interview will take place in either your residence or a private, neutral location
- The interview will take a maximum of 3 hours to complete
- The interview will be audio-recorded
- After the interview is completed, a transcript will be emailed to you and your
  daughter for verification. This will likely take 1 hour to review.

Here are some sample questions:
1. How would you define an ideal African American mother-daughter relationship?
2. How do/did you handle conflicts in your relationship?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you
choose to be in the study. No one at Walden University will treat you differently if you
decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change
your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. In the event that you do need to seek help, here are some recommended counseling services in the area:

Thriveworks Atlanta Counseling   Healing Circles, Inc.
Dr. Joy Harden   Vanessa Jackson, LCSW
8800 Roswell Road   833 Braddock St., SW
Atlanta, GA 30350   Atlanta, GA 30310
404-586-4645   404-369-2436

This study will likely highlight the uniqueness of African American mother-daughter relationships and give some insight into how the relationship evolves.

Payment:
There will be no compensation provided for participating in this study.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use any of the information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. The researcher will use a pseudonym to identify each of you in the study. The only time the researcher, a mandated reporter, would need to share your name or information would be if the researcher learns about possible harm to you or someone else. Data will be kept secure by an external drive. Data will be kept for a period of 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone 678-520-9147 or email address toneka.etienne@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Only include the signature section below if using paper consent forms.

Printed Name of Participant

_____

Date of consent

_____

Participant's Signature

_____

Researcher's Signature

_____

Appendix E

Interview Sample

Linda: Our relationship, I think we were pretty tight in those years, um, it was a lot different because I was mommy so she pretty much, did what mommy said, but she listened to me a whole lot more than she does now (laughing) I think that she's just a great kid, I had no problems with her at all, she was good in school, she was very outgoing um, I remember when where we lived in Freeport Long Island, when you got to the fifth grade, you had the opportunity to go to Europe. And so my son, who's two years older, um, had the opportunity first, and he just we went along with it and was just whatever, whatever, and my husband and I talked about it and we were like, I don't think he's gonna be the one to go away because he's a real homebody. And when we approached him with him, he said I really didn't want to go. And we were like, Why didn't you tell us. Renee, ok, this money is due, you have to have this ready, there was no question, no discussion. She was going and she was pushing us to go. And so she did and she went to Europe for two weeks and that whole year she was immersed in the French language and they kept all the kids together that were going, and she was there the anniversary of D Day, so she's always been the one to try something new and that just always really excited me and I just encouraged whatever you want. So it was good, I had a lot of fun, in church we were the, we lead the youth group and so we did trips and we just had a great time, so your turn…

Renee: Yea, I agree. I was so young, I don't know, just speaking from what she was talking about, I come from a long line of independent women who just did what they wanted to do, so it was never a question, I don't know I guess I just kinda of emulated what I saw. I remember college banners hung in my room when I was little. I had a Hampton jacket when I was a kid that I absolutely loved, so it was never a question to, because I never thought that they wanted me to stay home. She wanted me to get out and see things and I do think that helped, that was a big part of our relationship, she was pushing me to get out and try new things and experience more outside. Cause we always said our family was in our house, so we were very close knit, all of us.

Renee: I think I got a little bit more clingy in middle school because they uprooted me from everything I knew….

Linda: That's true, um, we moved from New York to Virginia just as she was entering middle school.

Renee: I was just in the 7th grade and so, I realized how outgoing or shyness I still had in me because I didn't make friends very easily, uh, at least I didn't think I was..

Linda: She was fine..

Renee: I used to come home crying, ok, I came home crying once (laughing) but you know, I think I got a little more clingy,

Linda: Yea, you did a bit..

Renee: So and it was the same thing, you know encouraging to get out, you know, she's very encouraging. Just didn't put down any of my ideas, only the ones she didn't like, um, but…

Linda: There's another factor in there too because my mom lived with us since my son was nine months old and so she was always a part of and I tell everybody, this is my mom's child because mom has broken down racial barriers, gender barriers, in her line of business and she was, I don't feel I was as outgoing as Renee, you know, Renee, she's just out there you know her middle name is Vivian, that's my mom's name, and um, she's just always reminded me of the go getter like my mom was…

Renee: And I think mom wanted to try more but she didn't so she made sure that I did, would you say that's accurate?

Linda: Yea, I think I lived vicariously through my daughter (laughing)

Renee: So I guess that was elementary school and middle school..

Linda: Middle school was kinda quiet for you but I thought you met that lady who was in charge of your cheerleading squad…

Renee: Cheerleading?!

Linda: Your stepping, you know, who was that, Duncan? Wasn't that middle school?

Renee: Yea, she was a middle school teacher, but I was in high school. We used to go down to the middle school and used to help teach/help the middle school step team and we wound up merging the high school and middle school team.

Linda: You know, she didn't go through the typical teenage attitude, not at all, I guess we'll get to the college years and I guess that's the biggest change to me. High school she was on the step team, they travelled, they won first prize every place they went, and I was always with them and I just loved it. And then she was in ROTC and so they had their competitions too, then she ran for Ms. Homecoming and she won which shocked everyone. We knew she was gonna be a part of the court, she comes over and says, mom I gotta have a dress and be a part of the whole court. I did not know that everybody that was part of the court was selecting the queen out of the court.

Renee: And I won, the only African American one on the court.

Linda: I remember there was some Honors Math class and you were the only one or something and the teacher deferred to her about some black experience and was like, Renee, tell them… she was so upset!

Renee: Besides the fact I really wasn't paying attention (laughing)

Linda: You didn't tell me that part (laughing) anyway, so, we did a lot together in those high school years, and I'll never forget when they called out her name I was shocked and couldn't move because they had never indicated to me that there was a possibility that she would be voted queen! And her friends told me later, well she told me, my friends were telling me…well, anyway…that was exciting, that was the highlight of her senior year.

Renee: I came down here for college…

Linda: And never came back home (laughing). But it was upsetting to me because Renee had always talked about going to white college. But she had this meeting with a counselor and came out so upset and said, I'm going to a black college. And I said, Renee, you can't let one person just dash your dreams like that. But she stuck to it, but then I said well, you can go to a black college but you can't go to just any black college. So she refused to apply to any other than Spelman and Florida A & M. So let me tell you what happened. We went to Spelman and it was so organized the visit they were there for us and there were these dynamic women. And they told me these heartfelt stories and all they talked about was academics, step team, ROTC, all of the other fun stuff. So we left there and went to FAMU. Nothing organized, they were not ready for us, we were just, my husband and I were, and then, Spelman's campus was gated, and rolling hills, and so one of the questions that was asked during the Spelman visit was what do you do for students that are not adjusting well and having difficulty being away from home? And it was answered to my satisfaction. So I asked the same question at FAMU. Well, it was not answered to my liking. No! No! No! So, we get in the car and she's upset because all A&M talked about was extracurricular activities so she's like, sign me up! (laughing) So we were talking in the car and she's upset and she says I know where you and dad want me to go. And I said we don't need an answer now, let's talk when we get home. We got home and she was actually tearful and was like, I don't know if I can make it and I said try it for a semester, if it doesn't work out, you can always switch to another school.

Renee: I went and hated it the first semester. She said, well just try it for a year and by second semester I was sold.

Linda: But then she didn't want no parts of me, mom, I got this, leave me alone. It was the worst.

Renee: I think mom went through an empty nest syndrome. I was the youngest and the only girl and I wasn't going to Hampton which I always said I was going to which was 30 from the house. Now I wind up in Atlanta and I'm coming home twice a year so Spelman did always have something to do, if it wasn't academics we were doing something. Momma is a check in daily kind of person and I'm a check-in weekly kind of person (laughter) so I think that's where the struggle came it because I think she's still trying to be because I'm like, I'm grown, I'm down here in Atlanta doing my thing and I don't think I communicated that very well. So we clashed for a while.

Renee: Time, age…

Linda: I don't think we ever go back to where we were. I still think she could call me more. We had a bit of an adjustment period where I would call and the conversation would just be flat and it would hurt my feelings. And so I got to the point that I would just stop calling, I would just wait on her to call me. Now things have changed a bit and the reason is because, she's thinking about getting married. And I think that that's gonna bring us closer together now because and that makes me very happy because she sees me as a big part of that plan. Now, you gotta move down here because I wanna get married and have kids. It's changing and walking into something else and I guess that's just a natural change.

Renee: I know we're both in better places, she doesn't hound me about calling everyday, but now I try to call more. She probably right, maybe cause I'm thinking about marriage…

Renee: Shop…

Linda: Well, Renee doesn't really love to shop, but I guess when I'm buying her something she'll shop. But I remember the kids said when we were growing up they said do you guys go anywhere without us? And we were involved in church, we were in charge of a young group, so we did everything with them, when they were growing up everyone was at our house. Can you think of anything in particular?

Renee: We usually did whole family events, because the only reason we were along it's because we were shopping. We used to push our sectional couch together and lay in our fort and watch Disney movies all day.

Renee: We're the run tell that kind of people and I think that's the main reason we bump heads because we're so much alike. She'll run and tell my dad and I'll run and tell my brother and they'll both tell us we're crazy and work it out.

Linda: My husband will get on the phone with her and my son will get on the phone with me and tell us to work it out. We are really close.

Renee: I think just major changes in life, I think work of course because now that I'm in the professional world, I'm always calling and asking how things work.

Linda: I worried about the whole married thing. Because now they're talking about alternating holidays and that's a major change.

Renee: Here's the thing, mom doesn't listen to us when we talk…

Linda: I do! You want us to come down to Atlanta and…it's a change, baby!

Linda: My sorority and your coming out. I would take Renee on our college trips, and then her cottilion, just having your daughter presented, having her try on wedding gowns that would have her father tearing up. I will never forget we went to the local library and it was MLK Day and she was doing a presentation and I was sitting with my legs crossed and arms crossed and she was sitting the exact same way as me. That resonated with me, God, she's watching you and emulating everything that you do! It hit me like a ton of bricks.

Renee: It was a few days before I left for France, taking me to get my hair braided. We're riding on the road and the car, mom is like, get out of the car! Two minutes later the car catches on fire!

Linda: It started smoking and I actually think I started to see the metal starting to buckle and so I said ok, this is not good. What happened was it was a high tide that the water would come up so high and the water got in the car. Adjuster came out and said it was ok, well we had a problem, it caught fire.

Renee: I just remember I was frantic and I remember knocking on a lady's door and asking to use her phone.

Renee: Confidence of course, standing firm. My parents roles were kinda of switched growing up, my mom left to go to work and my dad got us up. So seeing that, some women grow up wanting to have kids and I'm like, get a job!

Linda: I've always been so proud of what my mother did, I don't think I will ever touch that. She always knew there was nothing she couldn't do. I think she has more of that than I do. It's in her genes, I had to guide but I didn't have to push. A lot of it was initiated by her. Trying to channel her in the right direction.

Renee: She influences, she guides, she demands (laughter)

Linda: That's not true, I demanded one thing…

Renee: What's that?

Linda: To go get your Master's

Renee: Oh my God, that was such a fight! (laughter)

Linda: She did…

Renee: You see! Exactly alike! But yea, her friends used to call me little Linda so I think that speaks to how she influenced me. I want to do everything that she does in everything. I mean in every way, professionally, personally, I don't think there's one thing she's done that I don't want to do. There may be some things she hasn't done that I want to do. It's not like she was laying down inappropriate footsteps to the point that she has some outfits that mirror what her closet looks like. Does that make sense?

Linda: I find that I go to her for advice, I think it may be a part of the aging process, you know keeping me young. I've learned that you can't expect it to be exactly how it was and I've had to adjust to that. And in adjusting it's made our relationship better. I can't say stronger because it never weakened. Though she doesn't mind being called little Linda, she still wants to be her own person. I think she has some wisdom and I respect her mind and her thoughts on things. We may not always agree and I really wanted to hear her opinion, so I appreciate her in a different way.

Renee: I don't think you can.
Linda: What may work for one group may not work for another. Absolutely the love has to be strong and unconditional. There's never a doubt no matter how much we bicker, there's a foundation of love there. Respect and I mean respect from the time that they're able to express themselves and you have to listen to what they have to say and you always encourage them and show respect for what they have to say.
Renee: And I guess that's as close to ideal for us. She listened to how I felt about things.

Curriculum Vitae

Toneka R. Etienne

EDUCATION
2007-present Student, Ph.D. General Psychology, Educational Track
Walden University, Minnesota

2004   Master of Science in School Psychology
Florida A&M University, Florida

2000   Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Minor in Human Resource Mgt.
Florida A&M University, Florida

CERTIFICATION
Georgia Certified School Psychologist
Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP)

10/10-present School Psychologist
Atlanta Heights Charter School, Atlanta, GA
Perform psycho educational evaluations for special education eligibility
determinations. Consult with parents, teachers, and administrators
regarding results and make recommendations for special education
placement.

08/07-05/10   School Psychologist
Dekalb County School System, Stone Mountain, GA
Complete psycho educational evaluations for school aged children to
determine eligibility for special education services. Serve as a member of
the Student Support Team, Crisis Intervention Team, and 504 Team. Train
teachers and administrators in the successful development and
implementation of Response to Intervention strategies.

07/04-06/07   School Psychologist
Muscogee County School District, Columbus, GA
Provided school psychological support to k through 12 population.
Participated as a member of various multidisciplinary teams such as SST,
IEP, crisis intervention, and manifestation teams. Responsible for
completing three year re-evaluation meetings and maintaining updated
eligibility.

MEMBERSHIPS
2009   National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)