

FROM CHILDHOOD LABELS TO ADULT IDENTITIES: EXPLORING SELF-
CONCEPT IN BLACK WOMEN THROUGH THE LENS OF THE MOTHER-
DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

by

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To Little Maya, you are so much more than just the Good Girl. To my “Baby C” and my Grandma Stine. And to all the Black women carrying the weight of their intergenerational lineage- may you redefine what it means to be strong.

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ABSTRACT

FROM CHILDHOOD LABELS TO ADULT IDENTITIES: EXPLORING SELF- CONCEPT IN BLACK WOMEN THROUGH THE LENS OF THE MOTHER- DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

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This study explores how intergenerational labeling within the mother-daughter relationship shapes the self-concept of Black women. Labels such as the “Good Girl” and Strong Black Woman schema reinforce emotional suppression, perfectionism, and self-sacrifice, serving as survival mechanisms but also limiting self-worth and well-being.

Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study examines the lived experiences of Black women through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Findings reveal that while many internalized early identity expectations, they later engaged in self-definition, challenging restrictive narratives and reconstructing their sense of self.

This research underscores the role of culturally responsive mental health interventions, such as narrative therapy, inner child work, and Internal Family Systems, in helping Black women deconstruct inherited labels. It also highlights the importance of breaking cycles of labeling to foster authenticity, self-worth, and empowerment in both personal and intergenerational identity development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	
Introduction to Chapter	1
Background	2
Relevant Trends	4
Statement of the Problem & Justification of Study	5
Conceptual Framework	6
Research Questions & Significance of Study	7
Methodology Overview	8
Assumptions	9
Definition of Terms	10
Chapter Summary	11
Organization of Dissertation	12

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

CHAPTER TWO	
LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Introduction	14
Labeling	17
Labeling Theory	18
Historical Labeling of Black People	21
Labeling of Black Women	32
The Black Parent-Child Relationship	39
Self-Concept	47
Developmental Theories and Self-Concept	49
Parenting and Self-Concept	54
Labeling and Self-Concept in the Mother-Daughter Relationship	60
Good Girl Archetype	63
Strong Black Woman Schema	67
Chapter Summary	71
CHAPTER THREE	
METHODOLOGY	73
Purpose of the Study	73
Negative Labeling of Black Women	75
Research Design	77
Phenomenological Methods Explored	80
Identity, Positionality, and Reflexivity of the Researcher	83

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Conceptual Framework	89
Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection	92
Data Collection	94
Data Sources	96
Data Analysis Procedures	96
Ethical Considerations	99
Chapter Summary	101
CHAPTER FOUR	
RESULTS	102
Introduction	102
Sampling and Data Collection Procedures	103
Target and Accessible Population	103
Data Collection Procedures	104
Data Analysis Methods	107
Bracketing	108
Phenomenological Reduction	109
Triangulation	110
Presentation of Findings	110
Central Theme: Self-Concept	111
Subthemes and Their Relation to Self-Concept Development	134
Cross Cutting Themes	146
Most Prevalent Overlapping Subthemes	146

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

One-Directional Influences	152
Bidirectional Influences	152
Chapter Summary	154
CHAPTER FIVE	
DISCUSSION	157
Introduction	157
Summary of the Findings	158
Conceptual Framework	159
Participants	160
Data Collection	161
Review of Results	162
Explanation of Findings in Connection to Research Questions	162
Discussion of Most Prevalent Themes	170
Literature Support for Subtheme: Spirituality	178
Implications	179
Potential Limitations	183
Future Research	183
Conclusion	185
APPENDICES	
A. Interview Questions	188
B. Focus Group Questions	189
C. Screener Questions	190

D. Informed Consent	193
E. Member Checking Email	197
F. IRB Approval	199
REFERENCES	201

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Participant Demographics	106
Table 2	Thematic Clusters	109
Table 3	Subthemes and Identity Frameworks	123

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Cycles of Influence	92
Figure 2	Conceptual Map	154

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following terms are defined and were shared with participants. These definitions were used consistently throughout the study.

Black Daughter: A person who is a Black female and is the biological child of a Black female.

Black Female: A person who self-identifies as female and is of African descent. This includes individuals who identify as Black, African American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino/a, or from other African diasporic backgrounds. The term “Black” is used to describe individuals whose racial identity is rooted in African ancestry, and “female” refers to those whose gender identification aligns with their assigned sex at birth.

Black Mother: A person who is a Black female and the biological parent of a child

Good Girl: The Good Girl (GG) label refers to a socially and culturally constructed identity that imposes expectations on a girl to conform to ideals of obedience, compliance, and perfectionism. She is expected to prioritize others' needs, be well-mannered, emotionally restrained, and to uphold a sense of responsibility, often at the expense of her own desires or authenticity (Bowman, 2023; Turkel, 2000; Riegel, 2024; Simmons, 2009).

Self-Concept: An individual's overall perception and understanding of themselves, encompassing thoughts, feelings, self-worth, and self-identity. It includes how a person views their abilities, values, and role in society, which develops over time through interactions with significant others, such as family and peers (Rogers, 1951)

Strong Black Woman Schema: The Strong Black Woman (SBW) schema describes a Black woman who is resilient, avoids displays of weakness or vulnerability, is consistently self-sufficient while being of service to others, and remains strong despite adversity (Abrams et al., 2019; Simon, 2024; Tookes, 2021; Tinsley-Jones, 2001; Watson-Singleton, 2017).

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction to Chapter

Childhood experiences profoundly shape who we become as adults. The roles we identify with, our relationships with primary caregivers, and the labels we receive during childhood all contribute to our development of self-concept. For Black women, these experiences are further complicated by racialized societal expectations and systemic inequalities. Constructs such as the Strong Black Woman (SBW) Schema or the Good Girl (GG) Archetype carry cultural weight that can influence identity development, often imposing expectations of resilience, compliance, and emotional suppression.

The parent-child relationship, as emphasized by Bowlby (1997), creates a foundation of security, or lack thereof, that affects personality development and relational stability. Black mothers, in particular, may transmit culturally influenced expectations of strength and self-sacrifice as a means of preparing their daughters for the realities of a racist society. Research indicates a positive link between parental attachment and adolescent self-worth (Arbona et al., 2003; Gomez et al., 2007; Harris et al., 2015), suggesting that the labels assigned by parents significantly impact self-esteem and identity. This study aims to explore how childhood labels, particularly within the racial context of Black families, influence self-worth, identity development, and relationships in adulthood.

To effectively address any problem, it is imperative first to understand its root causes, mechanisms, and effects. Without a deep understanding of how a particular issue develops and becomes perpetuated, attempts to create solutions may be misguided or

incomplete. However, it is not enough to simply know that the label is harmful; we must understand where this label originates and how it is reinforced across generations and within familial relationships, particularly between mothers and daughters.

Background

Labels have a significant impact on an individual's development, particularly those that are imposed during early life and perpetuated over time (Becker, 1963; Harris-Perry, 2011). Black women, in particular, have been subjected to historical labels such as "Colored" and "Negro," alongside stereotypes like the Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire, which have shaped their identity and self-concept. These labels have often contributed to feelings of inferiority and negative self-perceptions that have persisted across generations (Banks et al., 2007; Sellers et al., 2003). The Mammy archetype, originating during slavery, portrays Black women as loyal and nurturing caretakers who prioritize others' needs above their own (Tyler, 2008; Rogers, 2021). This stereotype, along with others, has conditioned Black women to embody traits such as compliance, emotional restraint, and caregiving, reinforcing societal expectations that limit the formation of an authentic self-concept.

The Mammy archetype directly intersects with labels like the "Good Girl" and the SBW schema. The "Good Girl" label is rooted in expectations of compliance, obedience, and emotional restraint, which are often instilled in childhood through family dynamics (Bowman, 2023; Turkel, 2000). As these daughters grow, the "Good Girl" label frequently evolves into the Strong Black Woman schema, emphasizing resilience, emotional suppression, and self-sacrifice. These expectations are passed down

generationally and collectively shape Black women's self-concept, impacting their mental health and the way they navigate societal pressures (Bowman, 2023; Rogers, 2012).

While the SBW schema has been identified as a source of resilience for many Black women, offering motivation and strength to navigate challenging environments, research has also shown its negative implications. It often leads to increased psychological distress, emotional suppression, and reluctance to seek help. For instance, Simon (2024) highlighted that while the SBW schema may have protective benefits, it can also contribute to mental health challenges by fostering emotional suppression and reluctance to express vulnerability. This tension between the positive and negative aspects of these labels makes it critical to examine their effects, particularly as they are passed from mother to daughter.

The development of self-concept in Black women is significantly influenced by their early experiences, particularly within family relationships, where the mother-daughter bond plays a crucial role. Labels such as the "Good Girl" and the SBW schema, while sometimes protective, impose emotional burdens, contributing to internal conflict and limited emotional expression (Harris-Perry, 2011; Tookes, 2021). The interplay between cultural labels, societal expectations, and family dynamics creates complex challenges for Black women, who must navigate their identity in a world that often marginalizes them based on race and gender.

Theories of human development, such as those proposed by Erikson, Freud, Bowlby, and Rogers, offer insights into how labels impact self-concept. Erikson's stages of psychosocial development illustrate how external expectations, including familial labels, shape identity during key developmental periods (Erikson, 1950). Freud's theory

of identification explains how children internalize parental behaviors and values, further reinforcing societal expectations (Freud, 1905). Bowlby's attachment theory emphasizes the role of secure mother-daughter attachments in fostering a positive sense of self-worth (Bowlby, 1988). Meanwhile, Rogers' concept of self-concept underscores how external feedback, such as familial labeling, impacts one's ability to form an authentic identity, with restrictive labels hindering emotional well-being (Rogers, 1951).

By exploring these complex dynamics, the current study sought to understand how labels, particularly those passed within the mother-daughter relationship, influence the development of self-concept in Black women. This exploration is essential for understanding the unique challenges faced by Black women as they navigate intersecting cultural, racial, and gendered expectations. The findings of this study contributed to more culturally responsive counseling interventions, ultimately fostering healthier self-concepts among Black women and enhancing the mother-daughter relationship.

Relevant Trends

A recent trend in the mental health field is the exploration of the labels, such as the "Good Girl" (Kaiser, 2018; Riegel, 2024; Simmons, 2009; Turkel, 2000) and "Strong Black Woman" (Abrams et al., 2019; Simon, 2024; Tookes, 2021; Tinsley-Jones, 2001; Watson-Singleton, 2017). These labels play a significant role in shaping self-concept, often promoting resilience and strength at the cost of emotional vulnerability. Research indicates that this labeling, while intended as a survival mechanism, can lead to negative outcomes, including emotional suppression and psychological distress (Rodgers, 2021; Tookes, 2021).

A promising area of development is the exploration of maternal labeling and its impact on daughters' emotional health and identity formation. For instance, Everett et al. (2016) demonstrated the role of Black mothers in transmitting resilience and self-worth, while also highlighting challenges like emotional suppression that arise from such cultural expectations. This shift toward exploring both the protective and restrictive aspects of maternal labeling in the Black mother daughter dynamic offers a more nuanced understanding that can inform intervention strategies aimed at fostering emotional well-being and authentic self-concept development.

Statement of the Problem & Justification of Study

The intersectionality of racial and gender labels complicates identity formation for Black girls, especially within their familial relationships. Research by Winfield et al. (2024) suggests that the SBW schema, while promoting resilience, also weakens mother-daughter relationships by reinforcing emotional distance. Daughters are often socialized to value strength over vulnerability, resulting in challenges with emotional regulation and mental health outcomes as they grow into adulthood. This internal conflict is particularly damaging when coupled with societal expectations to adhere to outdated and harmful stereotypes, ultimately shaping the self-concept of Black women in complex and restrictive ways.

The justification for this study stems from the limited research on the interplay between labeling and self-concept development, particularly within the context of Black mother-daughter relationships. Despite studies showing that societal labels and stereotypes significantly impact the self-esteem and identity of Black mothers and daughters there remains a gap in understanding how these labels function within the

family context (Matsueda, 1992; Fix, 2022; Jussim & Harber, 2005). Much of the existing literature has focused on school environments (Gold & Richards, 2012; Graves & Ye, 2017) and juvenile delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009; Jacobsen & Zaatut, 2020), neglecting the effects of parental labeling on identity formation within the home. Additionally, previous studies have tended to emphasize the influence of beauty standards on Black daughters' self-worth (Turnage, 2004), overlooking broader aspects of parental labeling and its effects.

This study aims to fill this gap by examining both negative and perceived positive labels and their long-term effects on self-worth and identity development in Black women. An unpublished pilot study I conducted highlighted that childhood labels like "Golden Child" and "Good Girl" significantly impact self-concept and adult relationships, with participants acknowledging the profound effects of these labels on their lives. Building on these initial findings, the current study further investigates the developmental trajectory to the "Strong Black Woman" schema, offering insights into how these identity constructs are shaped by the mother-daughter relationship.

Conceptual Framework

This dissertation uses Labeling Theory and Intersectionality Theory to explore the complexities of identity formation among Black women, particularly in the context of mother-daughter relationships. Labeling Theory, as introduced by Becker (1963), serves as a foundational framework for examining how labels assigned by mothers or other significant figures influence a daughter's self-concept and behavior. Labels often become internalized, shaping an individual's perception of themselves and their roles in both family and society. This study aims to investigate how these labels, whether intended as

protective or supportive, may also foster unintended consequences, such as perfectionism or emotional suppression. By focusing on the internalization and manifestation of familial labels, this research seeks to understand their influence on the identity and coping mechanisms of Black daughters.

Additionally, Intersectionality Theory, introduced by Crenshaw (1989), is crucial for understanding the intersecting influences of race, gender, and class on Black women's experiences. Through this lens, the study analyzed how societal stereotypes and labels intersect with individual experiences shaped by racial and gender identities, leading to unique challenges. Intersectionality Theory provides a framework to examine how Black women do not experience societal labels in isolation but rather in the context of multiple, intersecting identities. By utilizing this perspective, the study aims to understand how Black mothers navigate these intersections and how their experiences of racial and gendered oppression influence the labels they pass on to their daughters.

This research builds on the understanding provided by these theoretical frameworks, delving into the influence of race, gender, and cultural expectations on Black mother-daughter relationships. Empirical research demonstrates that Black women face dual challenges arising from racial and gendered stereotypes passed down within the family, impacting their self-concept and overall identity (Bowman, 2023). Labels such as the "Supergirl" complex emerge, wherein Black girls are expected to display resilience despite facing systemic barriers, ultimately leading to mental and physical health challenges. Together, Labeling Theory and Intersectionality Theory provide a comprehensive conceptual framework to examine how familial labels shape self-concept development within the broader cultural and historical context of Black families.

Research Questions & Significance of Study

The proposed research aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) How does labeling in the mother-daughter relationship impact the development of self-concept?
- 2) What role does the mother-daughter relationship play in the development of the Strong Black Woman Schema?
- 3) How does the Strong Black Woman Schema impact the development of self-concept?
- 4) How does the "Good Girl" label, when reinforced within the mother-daughter relationship, contribute to the development of self-concept and the Strong Black Woman Schema?

These research questions address crucial gaps in understanding how labels within mother-daughter relationships influence the development of self-concept, particularly among Black women. By focusing on the impact of labeling, the study aims to reveal how these labels, such as the "Good Girl" and "Strong Black Woman" (SBW) schemas, shape the development of self-concept. Understanding the role of the mother-daughter relationship in the transmission of both the GG label and the SBW schema provides insight into intergenerational dynamics and how cultural expectations are perpetuated, impacting the mental health and well-being of Black women. Furthermore, examining how the SBW schema and the GG label contribute to perfectionism, emotional suppression, and self-concept development can help unpack the psychological costs of conforming to societal expectations of strength and resilience. Addressing these questions will also contribute to culturally responsive counseling practices and interventions,

helping to foster healthier identities and emotional expression among Black women and ultimately challenging the systemic and societal pressures that contribute to emotional suppression.

Methodology Overview

The current study utilizes a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Black women regarding their self-concept development within mother-daughter relationships, specifically focusing on the "Strong Black Woman" label. The phenomenological design allows for an in-depth examination of participants' experiences, capturing the emotional and complex narratives of identity formation. Purposeful and snowball sampling methods were used to recruit Black women aged 18 and older who self-identify as a SBW.

Data collection will involve semi-structured interviews and a focus group to foster both individual and collective reflections. Interviews were conducted virtually, ensuring accessibility, while the in-person focus group will enable participants to share insights in a group setting, enriching the data collected. The analysis will follow Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenological method, emphasizing unbiased exploration of participants' narratives to reveal core themes. The use of Dedoose will support data organization and analysis, ensuring a rigorous and comprehensive examination of participants' experiences.

Assumptions

The principal researcher is the Black daughter of a Black mother and recognized that their mother embodied the SBW Schema, instilling similar values and expectations. Additionally, the researcher had a wide network of Black peers who shared similar

experiences with their mothers. This led to a personal inquiry into the impact of maternal influence on the development of self-worth, ultimately shaping the conceptual framework that would be further expanded upon in Chapter Three.

It was also assumed that the SBW Schema and childhood labels significantly influenced identity and self-concept, particularly among Black women. The principal researcher assumed that participants would have relevant experiences with this schema, offering meaningful insights into the research questions. Furthermore, it was assumed that participants would provide honest and reflective responses during interviews and focus groups, a crucial factor given the study's reliance on qualitative data gathered through self-reports. Lastly, it was assumed that the bracketing process would allow the researcher to minimize personal biases, ensuring the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data collected.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined and were shared with participants. These definitions were used consistently throughout the study.

Black Daughter: A person who is a Black female and is the biological child of a Black female.

Black Female: A person who self-identifies as female and is of African descent. This includes individuals who identify as Black, African American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino/a, or from other African diasporic backgrounds. The term "Black" is used to describe individuals whose racial identity is rooted in African ancestry, and "female" refers to those whose gender identification aligns with their assigned sex at birth.

Black Mother: A person who is a Black female and the biological parent of a child

Good Girl: The Good Girl label refers to a socially and culturally constructed identity that imposes expectations on a girl to conform to ideals of obedience, compliance, and perfectionism. She is expected to prioritize others' needs, be well-mannered, emotionally restrained, and to uphold a sense of responsibility, often at the expense of her own desires or authenticity (Bowman, 2023; Turkel, 2000; Riegel, 2024; Simmons, 2009).

Self-Concept: An individual's overall perception and understanding of themselves, encompassing thoughts, feelings, self-worth, and self-identity. It includes how a person views their abilities, values, and role in society, which develops over time through interactions with significant others, such as family and peers (Rogers, 1951)

Strong Black Woman Schema: The Strong Black Woman (SBW) schema describes a Black woman who is resilient, avoids displays of weakness or vulnerability, is consistently self-sufficient while being of service to others, and remains strong despite adversity. (Abrams et al., 2019; Simon, 2024; Tookes, 2021; Tinsley-Jones, 2001; Watson-Singleton, 2017).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the study, outlining the need to understand the roots and perpetuation of the SBW schema within the context of Black mother-daughter relationships. The SBW schema, while often associated with resilience and strength, has been shown to contribute to psychological distress, emotional suppression, and hesitancy to seek support among Black women. Despite extensive

recognition of these negative effects, limited research has explored the origins of this label, particularly within familial relationships, and the mechanisms through which it is passed down from mothers to daughters.

Grounded in Labeling Theory and Intersectionality Theory, the current study sought to explore how childhood labels like the GG archetype contribute to the later development of the SBW schema, and how these labels impact self-concept among Black women. Through a qualitative exploration of the lived experiences of Black women, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how the SBW schema shapes individual identity and relationships, focusing specifically on the mother-daughter dynamic.

The chapter also highlighted the importance of understanding how these labels are culturally and historically reinforced, emphasizing that to effectively address the emotional burdens imposed by the SBW schema, one must first comprehend its origins and perpetuation. By doing so, this research aims to inform culturally sensitive counseling practices, foster healthier mother-daughter relationships, and support the development of positive self-concept and emotional openness among Black women. The next chapter will delve into the relevant literature, providing a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical research that forms the foundation for this study.

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter one contains a brief overview of the relevant literature and methodology, research questions, explanation of the purpose, limitations, and the significance of the study. Chapter two provides a detailed and comprehensive overview of the literature as it

relates to the topic. Chapter three outlines the methodology extensively. Chapter 4 contains the results. Finally, Chapter 5 serves as the conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The formation of an individual's self-concept is profoundly shaped by their early experiences, especially within the context of family relationships. For Black women, the mother-daughter relationship plays a pivotal role in identity development, as it is often within this relationship that societal labels, such as the "good girl" and the "strong Black woman", are first introduced and reinforced. These labels, assigned during childhood, persist throughout life, deeply influencing an individual's sense of self-worth, emotional well-being, and interpersonal relationships. However, while these labels may serve as protective mechanisms, helping Black women navigate a society steeped in racism and sexism, they also come with a heavy emotional burden, contributing to internal conflicts and restricted emotional expression (Harris-Perry, 2011; Tookes, 2021).

The interplay between labeling and self-concept is particularly complex for Black women, who must navigate not only the typical challenges of identity formation but also the additional weight of long-standing racial and gendered stereotypes. These stereotypes, such as the perception of Black women as aggressive, loud, or lazy, have been historically imposed and continue to shape societal expectations of Black women (Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005). In response, many adopt an appearance of invulnerability and emotional resilience, aligning with the cultural archetype of the "strong Black woman" (SBW). While this response can be adaptive, allowing Black women to cope with external pressures, it also reinforces a narrative of self-sacrifice and emotional

suppression that can have long-term negative effects on their psychological health (Abrams et al., 2014; Tookes, 2021).

Within the family unit, the labels assigned to Black daughters by their mothers play a critical role in shaping their self-concept. Labels such as "independent," "successful," and "strong" are often seen as positive and desirable within both Black families and broader society (Nichols et al., 2015). However, these seemingly positive labels can impose rigid expectations, limiting the exploration of other aspects of identity and emotional vulnerability. The pressure to live up to these labels, particularly within the mother-daughter relationship, can create tension and internal conflict, as daughters strive to meet their mothers' expectations while navigating their own emotional needs (Rodgers, 2021; Tookes, 2021).

This literature review will explore the intersection of labeling, self-concept, and the mother-daughter relationship in Black families. By examining how these dynamics influence the development of self-concept in Black women, this review seeks to shed light on the broader implications of labeling on identity formation, emotional health, and well-being. Special attention was given to how the transmission of societal labels, such as the "good girl" and the SBW archetype, from mothers to daughters perpetuates specific expectations of strength and resilience, often at the cost of emotional openness and vulnerability (Rodgers, 2021; Tookes, 2021).

This study is drawn from Labeling Theory and Intersectionality Theory, supported by developmental and attachment theories. Labeling Theory, which explains how assigned labels influence behavior, self-esteem (Lemert, 1951), and self-concept (Valenty, 2021), is particularly relevant in understanding identity formation in Black

mother-daughter relationships. Labels like "Sapphire," "Jezebel," and "Mammy" significantly impact daughters' perceptions of themselves and their roles in society, often internalized through family socialization. For instance, a mother who embodies the SBW persona may unconsciously pass down expectations of resilience and emotional strength, shaping her daughter's self-concept and coping strategies. Thus, the mother-daughter relationship becomes a key site for adopting or resisting societal labels.

Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) further illuminates the impact of overlapping social identities, such as race and gender, on these relationships. This framework helps explore how Black daughters navigate a complex self-concept shaped by both conformity to and resistance against societal stereotypes like the "Sapphire" or "Jezebel" labels. The combination of Labeling and Intersectionality Theories provides a comprehensive understanding of identity formation in Black daughters, acknowledging the influence of intersecting identities and societal structures. The role of familial relationships in reinforcing or challenging these labels is crucial in understanding how Black daughters construct their identities within a broader social context.

By examining maternal labeling within Black families, this study explored how these labels, received during critical developmental stages, influence self-concept, including self-esteem, self-image, and identity. Developmental and attachment theories, such as those proposed by Freud, Erikson, and Rogers, emphasize the importance of early experiences and parental interactions in shaping personality traits and behaviors. Additionally, this study explored how the internalization of the SBW schema contributes to emotional suppression and mental health challenges within Black mother-daughter relationships, revealing the lasting impact of labeling on identity formation.

Labeling

Labeling theory, as introduced by Becker (1963), states that labels assigned by others, especially those labeling behavior as deviant or inappropriate, have a powerful influence on an individual's identity. These labels, often rooted in societal biases and stereotypes, carry stigma that can shape how both the labeled individual and others perceive and interact with them. This process often results in a self-fulfilling prophecy, where the individual internalizes the label and conforms to the behaviors and roles associated with it. In essence, labeling can confine people to the restrictive categories represented by these socially constructed definitions.

Becker (1963) also emphasized that the biases of those assigning labels are inherent in the labeling process. Labels such as "good" or "bad" reflect the subjective values of the labeler, and these perceptions are often influenced by broader societal prejudices and stereotypes. As a result, labeling not only affects the individual but also shapes how others perceive and interact with them, reinforcing these biases. When someone is labeled, it creates expectations that often lead to confirmation bias, whereby actions are interpreted in ways that align with the preexisting label.

Much of the research on labeling has historically focused on children within the legal system, those with disabilities, or those experiencing mental health challenges (Bernburg & Krohn, 2003; Gates, 2010; Macharey & Von Suchodoletz, 2008). However, further exploration is needed on the long-term effects of various labels, especially those perceived as positive. Despite the profound influence of childhood experiences on identity and self-worth development, the experiences of non-problematic children are often overlooked. To bridge this gap, developmental theories offer an essential lens for

understanding how labeling affects identity formation and the lived experiences of individuals, especially children.

Labeling Theory

Becker's (1963) labeling theory underscores how labels such as "Good Girl" and the "Strong Black Woman" (SBW) schema, often imposed through family dynamics, profoundly influence the self-concept of Black women. These labels, reinforced particularly in the mother-daughter relationship, shape how Black women navigate societal expectations and construct their identities.

Building on Becker's work, Erving Goffman expanded labeling theory with the concept of stigma in *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963). Goffman (1963) argued that labels not only categorize individuals but also attach stigmas, which affect how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves. This is essential for understanding how societal expectations, like the "Good Girl" and SBW labels, can negatively impact psychological and social functioning, especially in Black women.

Goffman (1963) categorized stigma into three types: physical deformities, character blemishes, and tribal stigmas related to race, ethnicity, and religion. Physical deformities refer to visible physical differences or impairments, such as disabilities, scars, disfigurements, or other bodily conditions that deviate from societal norms of appearance. Character blemishes, on the other hand, refers to perceived flaws in an individual's character or moral behavior. These stigmas arise from attributes like dishonesty, mental illness, addiction, criminal history, or unemployment. Finally, tribal stigma refers to stigmatization based on social characteristics that are connected to one's

membership in a particular group. Examples of tribal stigmas include race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. For instance, the discrimination experienced by marginalized racial groups, such as Black people in the United States (Goffman, 1963). For Black women, labels like GG and SBW intersect with "tribal stigma," subjecting them to both gendered expectations—such as obedience and emotional suppression—and racial stereotypes that frame them as caretakers or emotional laborers (Collins, 1991). These intersecting stigmas create a double burden, where Black women are judged through both a racial and gendered lens.

Stigma management, as described by Goffman (1963), is a key component of labeling theory. It refers to the strategies individuals employ to navigate and mitigate the negative effects of being assigned a stigmatizing label. Through these strategies, individuals attempt to manage how they are perceived and cope with the societal consequences of their labeled identity (Goffman, 1963). Concealment is a direct response to the fear of being discredited, driven by the internalized pressure to live up to the societal labels of SBW or Good Girl. Labeling theory posits that once labeled, individuals act in ways that conform to societal expectations, even if it means concealing their true selves.

Additionally, Goffman (1963) established the differentiation between "discredited" and "discreditable" and can also be used to further understand labeling. Discredited refers to individuals whose stigma is immediately apparent or visible, making it difficult for them to conceal their stigmatized identity (e.g., physical disabilities). On the other hand, "discreditable" describes individuals whose stigma is not readily visible, allowing them the option to conceal it to avoid social judgment or discrimination (e.g.,

mental health conditions). In the case of Black women labeled as SBWs, their emotional struggles often remain concealed while their intersection of race and gender are immediately apparent. Although they are externally praised for their strength and resilience, internally, they may struggle to meet these expectations, avoiding vulnerability and help-seeking behavior out of fear of deviating from societal norms (Abrams et al., 2019). In both the SBW and GG labels, the concepts of discredited and discreditable explain how societal expectations force individuals to manage their identity and behavior. Women labeled with these archetypes must constantly negotiate their external image and internal feelings, balancing societal approval with personal authenticity.

This concealment of emotional needs can exacerbate mental health challenges, reinforcing isolation and emotional suppression (Abrams et al., 2014; 2019). Black women, adhering to the SBW schema, often hide feelings of sadness, anxiety, or overwhelm because they fear that expressing vulnerability will undermine their image of strength (Abrams et al., 2019). Society expects Black women to be "strong" no matter the circumstances, which can lead to concealing emotions such as fear, frustration, or mental health struggles. The idea of strength becomes discreditable when the woman feels that revealing emotional vulnerability will result in judgment or social penalties (Goffman, 1963). Similar to the SBW, the GG archetype encourages the suppression of emotional expression (Bowman, 2023; Turkel, 2000). Women are expected to present a composed, calm, and compliant demeanor, often at the expense of their true feelings. Concealing emotions such as anger, frustration, or sadness becomes necessary to maintain the "good girl" facade, making the true self discreditable.

Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) theory of the self-fulfilling prophecy complements Goffman's work, explaining how individuals internalize labels and modify their behavior to conform to societal expectations. For example, young girls labeled as the GG often feel pressured to conform to ideals of obedience and compliance, which later sets the stage for adopting the SBW schema in adulthood, where emotional resilience and strength become central to their identity.

Goffman's contribution to labeling theory underscores that internalizing labels is not a passive process. Individuals actively manage their identities in response to societal expectations. For Black women, this often involves "impression management" (Goffman, 1959), where they project an image of strength and resilience while concealing emotional struggles. This phenomenon is particularly relevant in Black families, where mothers, shaped by historical labeling and stereotypes, may unconsciously transmit these survival strategies to their daughters. These expectations, rooted in a legacy of racial oppression, reflect societal forces that reinforce strength and resilience in Black women, while simultaneously constraining emotional expression.

Historical Labeling of Black People

This review adopts a social constructionist perspective on racism, rejecting biological determinism in favor of the understanding that race serves to enforce hierarchies, particularly targeting Black individuals (Williams et al., 2022). Social constructionists argue that racism encompasses both ideological beliefs (e.g., perceptions of racial superiority/inferiority) and institutional structures (e.g., discriminatory laws, policies) (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Golash-Boza, 2016). In this context, labeling theory helps explain how racialized labels and stereotypes are socially constructed and imposed to

perpetuate these hierarchies, shaping individuals' identities and reinforcing societal power dynamics. These labels and stereotypes shape the development of laws and policies; historically, negative associations with the term 'black' in English contributed to biased representations of Black people long before the transatlantic slave trade. This legacy persists through literature, policies, and social practices such as slavery and Jim Crow laws, profoundly impacting the self-perception of Black individuals over thousands of years.

Global Historical Context

The historical narrative of Black inferiority predates the transatlantic slave trade, with Graeco-Roman and Renaissance literature perpetuating prejudiced depictions. In the Graeco-Roman period, Ethiopian individuals with black skin were associated with ominous symbolism, reinforcing negative stereotypes (Snowden, 1970). During the Renaissance Age (14th-17th century), Black people were derogatorily labeled as "beastly savage people," dehumanized as "chattel," and compared to animals, perpetuating their perceived inferiority (Snowden, 1970). These depictions laid the groundwork for centuries of racial discrimination. Even when Black physical traits were acknowledged positively, it was often in the context of labor, where strong legs were considered beneficial for manual work, reinforcing racialized roles of servitude (Snowden, 1970).

By the time the transatlantic slave trade began, these conceptualizations had solidified into a narrative that justified the enslavement of Black people. The perception of Black individuals as lazy and inherently suited for servitude reinforced their subjugation, establishing a foundation for racial hierarchies (Berlin, 1996). This historical labeling had direct psychological impacts on Black identity development, as the

dehumanization and objectification of Black people fostered internalized oppression and low self-worth.

For instance, the transatlantic slave trade not only physically displaced millions of Africans but also stripped them of their cultural identities, reducing them to property. This legacy of dehumanization and the systemic perpetuation of inferiority through labels created intergenerational trauma, shaping the way Black women perceive their worth and roles in society today. The long-standing stereotypes about Black women's strength and resilience, rooted in these early depictions, continue to affect their self-concept, emotional well-being, and societal roles.

Psychological Impact of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in America

From the 15th to the 19th century, Africa endured multiple simultaneous slave trades, with the transatlantic slave trade being the most extensive and destructive. During this period, millions of Black people were forcibly transported from West, West-Central, and Eastern Africa to European colonies. Enslavement systematically dismantled the identity of Black individuals, stripping them of their autonomy, cultural heritage, and humanity through dehumanizing practices and oppressive control systems.

Black people were subjected to derogatory labels that emphasized their status as property and reinforced racial hierarchies. Terms such as "slaves" reduced individuals to objects of ownership, while racial descriptors like "Negroes" or "colored" were used in a demeaning manner to distinguish African descendants, further marking them as inferior. More overtly derogatory terms, like "niggers," were employed to degrade and dehumanize Black people, stripping them of their humanity. Descriptions of Black

individuals as "property" or "chattel" underscored their commodification and objectification within the slave system (DeGruy, 2005; Nunn, 2008).

These labels were essential to the system of oppression, justifying the exploitation and mistreatment of Black people by reinforcing their perceived inferiority. In *The Making of African American Identity*, Rael (2005) quotes John Jacobs, an enslaved man, who described the deep psychological toll of these labels: "To be a man, and not to be a man—a father without authority—a husband and nonprotector—is the darkest of fates" (Rael, 2005). This quote powerfully reflects the dehumanizing impact of slavery on self-concept and identity, where even basic roles like fatherhood and manhood were stripped away by the labels imposed upon enslaved individuals.

The legacy of these derogatory labels persists in contemporary society, shaping attitudes and perceptions of race. The historical labeling of Black people as inferior has left a lasting psychological impact, contributing to the internalization of racial inferiority and the continued struggle for racial equality. These labels continue to echo through systemic racism, affecting how Black individuals are perceived and how they perceive themselves in the modern world.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), as theorized by DeGruy (2005), posits that the enslavement of Black people in the United States entrenched a narrative of inherent genetic and intellectual inferiority compared to their white counterparts. This narrative, carried forward through centuries, suggests that Black communities have inherited enduring historical trauma, which manifests in familial interactions, parenting practices, community customs, cultural beliefs, and systemic structures such as legal systems, governmental policies, and media representations

(DeGruy, 2005). The continued negative labeling of Black people as inferior contributes to internalized oppression, shaping low self-esteem, self-doubt, and a negative self-image.

The treacherous nature of internalized oppression, rooted in centuries of systemic racism, continues to undermine the self-worth of Black individuals and perpetuate cycles of psychological harm. Over generations, many Black individuals have come to internalize these oppressive narratives, which contribute to negative perceptions of self-worth. Multigenerational oppression, institutionalized racism, and historical trauma have left a lasting impact on Black communities, fostering feelings of inferiority and limiting self-concept development for some (DeGruy, 2005; Green et al., 2012; Herman, 2002).

The dehumanization experienced by enslaved Africans was a key mechanism that reinforced perceptions of inferiority and worthlessness, shaping their self-concept and identity (DeGruy, 2005; Green et al., 2012; Herman, 2002). Acts of brutal violence, such as bondage, rape, and kidnapping, during the transatlantic slave trade left deep psychological scars, perpetuating long-lasting cultural trauma. The persistent societal narrative of Black inferiority, coupled with systemic exploitation, further solidified harmful stereotypes that survive to this day.

For more than 400 years, the Black experience in America has been defined not only by the suffering endured through chattel slavery but also by the continuous effort to overcome the enduring impacts of that suffering. The historical imposition of negative labels has perpetuated harmful stereotypes, contributing to systemic discrimination that persists in modern society. These labels continue to shape societal perceptions and

reinforce the structural barriers faced by Black individuals, further complicating the path toward healing and equality.

Emancipation of Slavery

Slavery persisted in America for over four centuries until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in December 1865, officially freeing more than 4 million Black people from bondage. Despite this legal victory, fears of Black community dominance permeated Northern states, reflecting deep-rooted anxieties about racial equality (DeGruy, 2005). During this period, Black individuals were commonly referred to as "Colored," a term accepted by both White and Black communities at the time. However, this label was often criticized for being too generic and inadequate in capturing the complexity of Black identity (Smith, 1992).

The use of racial labels like "Colored" carried significant psychological consequences. Research has shown that such categorization contributed to internalized feelings of inferiority and negatively impacted the self-concept of Black individuals (Banks et al., 2007; Sellers et al., 2003). As the 1900s unfolded, the term "Colored" became increasingly viewed as outdated and inappropriate (Smith, 1992). Additionally, negative value labels, such as "lazy," further fueled stigmatization and self-doubt, while labels like "Colored," "Negro," and later "African American" continued to reflect historical biases that shaped individual identity with underlying negativity.

The label "Colored" held such negative connotations that it even prompted the enactment of the Black Codes in the South—laws specifically designed to restrict the liberties of newly emancipated Black individuals (DeGruy, 2005). While the Civil Rights

Act of 1866 sought to counteract these discriminatory laws, the Black Codes persisted, highlighting the resilience of systemic racism (Black Codes of Mississippi, 1865).

Scholarly research has extensively examined the psychological impact of racial labeling on Black individuals, focusing particularly on self-concept, identity, and mental health (Banks et al., 2007; Mouzon et al., 2017; Mattis et al., 2011; Seaton et al., 2009; Sellers et al., 2003). One key study by Mouzon & McLean (2017) explored the relationship between internalized racism and mental health among African-Americans, U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks, and foreign-born Caribbean Blacks. Drawing from data provided by the National Survey of American Life (NSAL), this quantitative, cross-sectional study included over 3,000 participants and examined how internalized racism correlated with depressive symptoms and psychological distress across these groups. The findings showed that internalized racism was significantly linked to worse mental health outcomes, especially among U.S.-born African-Americans and U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks. In contrast, foreign-born Caribbean Blacks exhibited lower levels of internalized racism and psychological distress, highlighting the role of nativity in mitigating these effects. Additionally, higher levels of personal mastery were found to help buffer the mental health consequences of internalized racism. The study calls for further exploration of protective factors like self-esteem and racial identity, emphasizing the mental health toll of internalized racism.

These findings, along with related studies, underscore the critical need for interventions that not only tackle systemic discrimination but also address the internalized psychological effects of racial labeling. The end of slavery marked the beginning of a new era of systemic oppression, as racial labeling continued to impact

Black communities. The transition from the post-emancipation period into the Jim Crow era institutionalized racial segregation and further solidified the lasting psychological and social consequences of these harmful labels.

The Jim Crow & Civil Rights

From 1896 to 1954, Jim Crow laws in the United States enforced racial segregation under the guise of "separate but equal," perpetuating racial inequality. Despite claims of equality, Black people were systematically labeled as inferior, denied access to shared public spaces, and forced into inferior living conditions. Acts of violence, including lynchings and shootings, were commonplace forms of punishment for those who defied these laws (Stern et al., 2008).

The message conveyed by Jim Crow segregation was clear: Black people were deemed unworthy of sharing public spaces with White individuals, reinforcing feelings of inferiority, worthlessness, and exclusion. This pervasive discrimination, combined with the violence directed towards Black communities, exacerbated negative self-concept, fostering internalized racism and psychological distress (Watkins et al., 2011). Despite their legal freedom, Black people continued to face dehumanization and marginalization, which undermined their sense of self-worth and identity.

During this period, the racial label shifted from "Colored" to "Negro." While some viewed "Negro" as a term of strength, others, like Roland A. Barton, criticized it, asserting that "'Negro,' or 'nigger,' is a white man's word to make us feel inferior" (Smith, 1992). Even with attempts to dignify the term through capitalization, it was met with significant critique and eventual rejection during the Civil Rights era.

Miller (2011) introduced the concept of Segregation Stress Syndrome (SSS) to explain the psychological impact of long-term exposure to Jim Crow laws. Miller highlighted how SSS, similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), develops not from a single traumatic event but from sustained exposure to segregation and discrimination. He further emphasized the intergenerational aspect of SSS, suggesting that the psychological damage and trauma from the Jim Crow era continue to affect younger generations, despite contemporary racial violence being less overt (Miller, 2011).

Building on Miller's (2011) examination of Segregation Stress Syndrome (SSS), the Civil Rights era served as a critical juncture in reshaping Black identity and confronting the deeply embedded racial labels that had long defined and constrained the community. The widespread advocacy for the end of legalized segregation and discrimination in the 1950s and 1960s was not only a fight for civil rights but also a redefinition of Black identity in America. As Black Americans began to reclaim their sense of self, the term "Negro," long associated with compliance and the trauma of slavery, was gradually rejected. In its place, the term "Black" emerged as a powerful symbol of pride, unity, and empowerment (Smith, 1992). This shift in racial labeling signaled a collective effort to break free from the confines of past oppression and redefine Blackness on their own terms. With this profound transformation came new challenges, as Black individuals continued to navigate a society that imposed restrictive labels, even in the post-segregation era. The following section delves into how racial labeling persisted and evolved in the years after segregation, continuing to shape the lived experiences of Black people in the United States.

Post Segregation

Even after the official end of segregation, the legacy of negative racial labeling continues to profoundly impact Black individuals and communities. In a qualitative study by Wheeler (2014), all 10 Black youth participants reported feeling the lingering effects of negative labeling. These labels, rooted in centuries of racial oppression, led to feelings of hopelessness and the belief that their skin color would subject them to unfair treatment. Many participants expressed feelings of disconnect, alienation, and distrust toward helping professionals and authority figures, underscoring the long-term psychological consequences of being labeled as inferior (Wheeler, 2014).

In the post-segregation era, changes in racial terminology reflect attempts to shift away from the explicit biases of the past. Hall et al. (2021) found that the transition from "Black" to "African American" was seen as a positive step, with the latter term evoking associations with civil rights and equality. However, while "African American" carries more positive connotations, it does not fully erase the enduring impact of historical racial discrimination. Bell (2013) highlights that even with such shifts in terminology, the traumatic psychological effects of negative labeling continue to resonate across generations, contributing to the persistent challenges faced by Black communities.

Each evolution in racial labeling serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle against systemic racism and oppression. While terms like "African American" signify progress, they do not fully address the deep-rooted legacy of discrimination that continues to shape perceptions of Black identity. This unresolved legacy has contributed to intergenerational trauma within the Black community, perpetuating cycles of

psychological distress and reinforcing negative self-perceptions long after the end of segregation.

Intergenerational Trauma

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines intergenerational trauma as “the transmission of trauma or its legacy, in the form of a psychological consequence of an injury or attack, poverty, and so forth, from the generation experiencing the trauma to subsequent generations.” This transmission is believed to be epigenetic, meaning that while the trauma does not alter the genes themselves, it affects the chemical markers that regulate gene expression, allowing the psychological effects of trauma to be passed on to future generations (APA, 2023). Historical traumas, such as slavery, and the ongoing systemic racism faced by Black individuals in the United States have left deep, enduring marks on Black communities, perpetuating cycles of trauma across generations.

Research shows that the psychological effects of trauma are not limited to the generation that experienced it directly. For example, Muzik et al. (2017) found that mothers with higher levels of trauma-related cognitions were more likely to have toddlers exhibiting elevated internalizing behaviors (e.g., anxiety, depression) and externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression, conduct problems). This finding suggests that parents’ conceptualization of trauma influences their parenting behaviors and emotional availability, ultimately affecting their children's emotional and behavioral functioning. Exposure to trauma can also lead individuals to internalize negative labels such as "victim," "weak," or "damaged," which contributes to feelings of worthlessness, shame, and inadequacy (Wilson et al., 2006).

The trauma stemming from centuries of enslavement, violence, segregation, and discrimination continues to affect Black communities today (Muhammad, 2003; Thomas, 1999). Descendants of those who experienced the transatlantic slave trade may inherit psychological and physical suffering, with some even experiencing suicidal tendencies as a result of intergenerational trauma (Thomas, 1999). Epigenetic research supports the idea that these traumatic experiences can be passed down, perpetuating their psychological and emotional effects across generations (Muhammad, 2003).

This legacy of trauma is compounded by ongoing discrimination and the negative labeling of Black individuals. Such labeling, reinforced over generations, can shape familial expectations and influence how children perceive themselves and their roles in society. Muhammad (2003) argues that cycles of labeling may lead parents to unintentionally reinforce societal expectations, indirectly compelling children to assimilate or conform to harmful stereotypes, further shaping their self-image and interactions with the world.

Labeling of Black Women

Over time, Black women have been deeply affected by the intersection of racial and gendered stereotypes, including the aggressive "Sapphire" (Harris-Perry, 2011), the hypersexual "Jezebel" (Hobbs, 2011), and the nurturing "Mammy" (Tyler, 2008). These labels have created enduring expectations for Black women, often limiting their perceived roles in society. Black girls are frequently assigned early household and caregiving responsibilities, which may contribute to societal perceptions of them as inherently mother-like (Hale, 1982).

Mathias (2022) observes that Black children, especially girls, are often socialized to suppress their voices and emotions:

As a collective culture, we are not taught to love and embrace our Blackness.

Most often, as children, we are taught to be silent and oppressed – to be seen and not heard, to keep what happens in the home in the home, no matter how bad things get, to refrain from being loud by any means (Mathias, 2022, p. 58).

This socialization reflects cultural norms that align with the Mammy archetype, which emphasizes obedience, loyalty, and self-sacrifice (Craven, 2015; Tyler, 2008).

Originating in slavery, the Mammy archetype conditioned Black women to embody the role of the "good little Black girl," a stereotype of servitude that Black mothers navigated as a survival strategy (Rogers, 2021). Although these traits were adopted to maintain dignity and resilience in the face of oppression, they simultaneously reinforced stereotypes that limited Black women's agency and identity.

Building on this legacy, the SBW persona emerged, an archetype passed down through generations (Abrams et al., 2014; West et al., 2016). The SBW schema portrays Black women as resilient, self-sacrificing, and emotionally strong, expected to endure hardship without showing vulnerability or seeking support. This idealization of strength has become deeply ingrained in cultural narratives, with media often depicting Black women as unbreakable, independent figures (Wallace, 1979). While the label "strong" is sometimes viewed positively, symbolizing empowerment, many Black women express concern over its psychological toll (Harris-Perry, 2011). Some see the SBW persona as contributing to feelings of isolation, emotional suppression, and a perceived inability to seek help (Tookes, 2021).

Despite perceived positive traits like independence and success (Nichols et al., 2015), the SBW schema has been negatively correlated with Black women's coping abilities. Tookes (2021) found that the pressure to uphold the SBW persona often leads to emotional exhaustion and psychological distress. As Black women continue to navigate the tension between societal expectations and their own well-being, the legacy of the Mammy archetype intersects with the contemporary SBW persona, shaping their experiences in complex ways.

This intersection between historical and modern labeling has particularly impacted Black mothers, who navigate strained family dynamics while dealing with racial discrimination. Research shows that heightened levels of discrimination correlate with increased psychological distress, feelings of overwhelm, and strained relationships with both children and romantic partners (McNeil Smith et al., 2019; Murray et al., 2001). The burden of supporting their partners, managing family life, and enduring the weight of societal expectations creates additional mental health challenges for Black women, underscoring the need for nuanced discussions on the impact of these labels on their parent-child relationships.

The Mother-Daughter Relationship

The parent-child relationship is pivotal in shaping a child's self-concept, serving as the primary context through which societal labels like the Good Girl and SBW Schema are transmitted. Drawing on foundational theories of development, such as Bowlby's attachment theory and Erikson's psychosocial stages, we understand that early interactions with primary caregivers, most notably mothers, form the blueprint for how children perceive themselves and their roles in society (Bowlby, 1969; Erikson, 1963).

Bowlby's concept of the internal working model explains how secure or insecure attachments influence emotional regulation and identity development, while Erikson's theory emphasizes how conflict at different developmental stages, such as autonomy versus shame or identity versus role confusion, shape a child's evolving sense of self. These developmental frameworks are particularly important when examining the mother-daughter relationship in Black families, where societal pressures related to race and gender often lead mothers to socialize their daughters into resilience, strength, and compliance as survival strategies (Anyiwo et al., 2023). Understanding how these theories intersect with the transmission of labels such as the GG and SBW provides essential context for exploring how identity and self-worth are shaped in this unique dynamic.

Developmental Theories

There are two key developmental theories that are highlighted in this section that speak to the significance of the parent-child relationship. Freud's Psychosexual Theory (Freud, 1905) and Attachment Theory (Bowlby 1944, 1956; Ainsworth 1971, 1978; Main, 1990) both provide additional insight into the relationship between childhood and adulthood. The current literature review will explore each in order of introduction.

Freudian Psychosexual Theory. Freud's psychosexual theory emphasized that early childhood experiences, particularly in the parent-child relationship, are crucial in shaping identity, behavior, and relationships later in life. According to Freud (1905), unresolved conflicts during childhood, especially with parents, can lead to psychological challenges as adults. These conflicts often arise around fears of abandonment or

emotional deprivation, which shape personality as the child progresses through Freud's five stages of psychosexual development: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital.

In the context of Black mother-daughter relationships, Freud's concept of identification plays a crucial role in shaping self-concept. Identification refers to the process by which children adopt the characteristics, behaviors, and values of their same-sex parent (Freud, 1905). For Black daughters, this often means internalizing the behaviors modeled by their mothers, including societal expectations and cultural stereotypes (Vincent & McCabe, 2000). This identification is critical to understanding how daughters learn societal norms, and it begins early in life, often reinforcing labels such as the "Good Girl." These labels emphasize traits like obedience, compliance, and emotional restraint, aligning with both maternal expectations and broader cultural standards (Rogers, 2012).

Freud's stages of psychosexual development underscore the profound influence of early parental relationships on identity formation. In the oral stage (0-1 year), the mother's responsiveness to the infant's needs shapes the child's ability to trust and form secure attachments (Freud, 1905; Bowlby, 1969). During the anal stage (1-3 years), issues of autonomy and control emerge, as the child's developing independence is influenced by the mother's role in toilet training and boundary-setting. The phallic stage (3-6 years), however, is particularly significant for identification, as children begin to align with their same-sex parent, internalizing gender roles and societal expectations (Freud, 1905). In the context of Black daughters, this identification can reflect societal labels like the "Good Girl" or "Strong Black Woman," which may be embodied by the

mother, consciously or unconsciously shaping the daughter's perception of herself and her role in both family and society (Collins, 1991; Abrams et al., 2014).

Unresolved conflicts during these formative stages, particularly the phallic stage, may disrupt this identification process. A strained mother-daughter relationship or conflicting messages about gender roles and societal expectations can lead to challenges with self-worth and internalized oppression. If a Black mother has internalized labels such as the "Strong Black Woman," these ideals may be passed down, perpetuating a cycle of emotional suppression and resilience that can shape the daughter's identity in restrictive ways (Harris-Perry, 2011; Watson-Singleton, 2017).

While Freud's focus on psychosexual stages has faced criticism, particularly regarding its emphasis on sexuality, the broader framework of parental relationships as formative remains influential (Erikson, 1968; Harter, 2012). Freud's theory provides a valuable lens for understanding how societal labels are transmitted intergenerationally through mother-daughter dynamics, reinforcing the "Good Girl" and "Strong Black Woman" schemas that later affect Black women's self-concept and identity formation.

Attachment Theory. Building on Freud's ideas, John Bowlby's attachment theory (1969) offers a relational perspective on early childhood development. Instead of focusing solely on internal drives, attachment theory emphasizes the quality of emotional bonds between the child and caregiver. A key foundation of this theory, the internal working model, described how early attachment experiences shape an individual's perception of self-worth and relationships throughout life (Bowlby, 1969). This model, formed through early interactions with caregivers, serves as the foundation for future attachment styles and self-concept (Bowlby, 1969; Rosenberg, 1979).

In the context of Black mother-daughter relationships, Bowlby's attachment theory provides insight into how secure or insecure attachments affect the transmission of societal labels. A secure attachment between mother and daughter fosters emotional availability, resilience, and a positive self-concept (Bowlby, 1969). However, insecure attachments, often exacerbated by external pressures such as systemic racism and societal expectations, may lead to emotional suppression and negative self-perceptions (Muhammad, 2003; Tookes, 2021). These external pressures reinforce the societal labels placed on Black women, such as the "Strong Black Woman" (SBW) schema, which emphasizes emotional strength and resilience at the expense of vulnerability.

For Black daughters, attachment relationships with their mothers play a significant role in the internalization of labels such as the "Good Girl" or the "Strong Black Woman." The emotional bonds between mother and daughter influence how these daughters navigate societal expectations, emotional regulation, and their sense of identity (McNeil Smith et al., 2019). If a daughter perceives that she must meet societal or familial expectations of strength and resilience at the expense of her own emotional needs, this may reinforce negative internal working models, affecting her sense of worth and ability to seek support (Nichols et al., 2015). The internalization of these societal labels is further complicated by the intergenerational transmission of trauma, which affects how mothers and daughters relate to each other emotionally (Muzik et al., 2017).

While Freud's theory focuses on internal conflict and identification with the same-sex parent, Bowlby's attachment theory shifts the focus to the quality of relational bonds. This relational perspective is particularly relevant in understanding how Black women, raised in environments shaped by historical and societal pressures, internalize

and perpetuate labels. The attachment bond between mother and daughter serves as a critical foundation for the transmission of cultural values, societal expectations, and emotional coping strategies (Murray et al., 2001; Tookes, 2021). The strength and nature of this bond not only influence the daughter's emotional development but may also play a pivotal role in the transmission of labels like the "Good Girl" or the "Strong Black Woman," embedding these societal expectations into the daughter's self-concept and shaping her identity across generations.

Both Freud's and Bowlby's theories highlight the formative role of early parent-child relationships in shaping identity and self-concept. In Black mother-daughter relationships, these theoretical frameworks provide valuable insight into how cultural and societal labels are passed down and internalized. As we explore the nuances of the Black parent-child dynamics, it is important to consider how these early relational bonds, influenced by historical legacies and societal expectations, continue to shape the experiences of Black women today.

The Black Parent-Child Relationship

The trauma of slavery, oppression, segregation, and systemic racism experienced by Black people, along with the lasting impact of societal labeling, has been passed down through generations. From the inception of the Black family in the United States, its structure has been significantly differentiated from the patriarchal nuclear family model (Franklin, 2000). DeGruy (2005) quotes James P. Comer, who writes:

The slave family existed only to serve the master, and in order to survive physically, psychologically, and socially, the enslaved families had to develop a system which made survival possible under degrading conditions.

The society of those who were enslaved prepared the young to accept exploitation and abuse, to ignore the absence of dignity and respect for themselves as blacks. The social, emotional, and psychological price of this adjustment is well known (p. 103).

This intergenerational trauma is passed down through parent-child attachment and narratives about self and the world (Coyle, 2014). Research has shown that many Black parents adopt authoritarian parenting styles, emphasizing obedience and control (LeCuyer, 2017; Patton, 2017). These practices may stem from intergenerational trauma, where strict control and discipline became survival strategies under oppressive conditions. For example, Black parents may enforce rigid rules, discourage emotional expression, and focus on maintaining order to protect their children from societal harm.

The differences between Black and white family dynamics, rooted in the legacy of slavery, highlight the need to recognize the unique characteristics of Black families (Miller, 2023; Sternthal et al., 2011). Key elements of Black family structures include extended family networks, adaptable roles, strong religious foundations, and resilient coping mechanisms (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; Hill, 1972; Nobles, 1972). These characteristics reflect a legacy of resilience and survival amidst historical adversities. Extended families provide essential support, while adaptable roles help Black families navigate challenging circumstances. Religious values and coping strategies further strengthen family cohesion and endurance, challenging negative stereotypes often imposed on Black families (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; Hill, 1972; Nobles, 1972).

Understanding the unique challenges Black families face is crucial to comprehending Black parenting strategies. Many Black parents, parenting from a place

of fear, engage in conversations with their children about race, culture, and societal oppression. However, these discussions may inadvertently transmit negative perceptions of self, reinforcing societal expectations. Rodgers (2021) identified that Black children are often socialized by their parents to conform to prescribed roles in order to confront racism. While some Black parents adopt more authoritative strategies to prepare their children for the realities of racism (McMurty, 2013), this preparation may contribute to higher levels of internalizing behaviors, lower self-esteem, and increased symptoms of depression (Osborn et al., 2021). Black children may also experience negative mental health impacts, including racial and academic discrimination, compounded by harmful media portrayals (Yip et al., 2015; Smith-Bynum, 2014; Hardie et al., 2015; Perez et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2018).

These systematic disparities extend beyond education. Empirical research shows that racial stereotypes shape societal attitudes in areas such as law enforcement (Correll et al., 2002), hiring practices (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004), and perceptions of physical threat (Wilson et al., 2017). As a result, Black individuals face greater challenges in relationships, including marital stressors (Bloome et al., 2019; Umberson et al., 2015), intimate partner violence (Brown et al., 2015), and child-related stress (Tomiya et al., 2021). The cumulative impact of racial stereotypes and discrimination underscores the complexity of family dynamics within Black communities (Brown et al., 2015; Tomiya et al., 2021).

The intergenerational transmission of trauma profoundly shapes Black family dynamics. Leslie et al. (2023) examined 377 Black caregiver-adolescent pairs and found a significant association between caregivers' Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and

adolescent self-reported PTSD, suggesting that trauma is passed from caregivers to their children. While caregiver ACEs did not significantly impact adolescent depressive symptoms, the study highlights the role of child ACEs in mediating trauma transmission across generations. This research emphasized the importance of understanding how caregivers' past experiences, including the labels they received, shape parenting behaviors and, ultimately, the development of their children's self-worth and identity.

Parenting behaviors often reflect caregivers' own childhood experiences, including the labeling they encountered. Leslie et al. (2023) stressed the importance of future research examining how labels like the "Strong Black Woman" or the "good little Black girl" shape parenting practices. These labels, passed down through generations, may influence how Black mothers perceive and label their children, perpetuating intergenerational patterns. Additionally, mothers' experiences with societal labeling can impact their ability to foster healthy self-worth in their daughters, illustrating the interconnectedness of generational experiences, trauma, and identity formation in Black families. Black women face a dual burden, as they must contend with both racial and gendered labels.

Boyd-Franklin (1989) discussed the resilience of Black families in the face of systemic oppression, noting that while these maternal roles and expectations have helped Black women survive in oppressive environments, they can also reinforce stereotypes that undermine Black women's emotional well-being. The strong religious foundations and adaptable roles within Black families serve as sources of strength, but they also highlight the tension between survival strategies and the psychological toll of fulfilling these societal expectations (Boyd-Franklin, 1989). Understanding the complexities of the

Black mother-daughter relationship requires acknowledging both the resilience these women exhibit and the burdens they carry, as they navigate a society that continues to label them based on outdated and harmful stereotypes.

The Black Mother-Daughter Relationship

Intersectionality theory is particularly relevant in the context of Black parent-child relationships, as it offers a framework for understanding how multiple social identities, such as race, gender, and class, intersect to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). Black parents, particularly mothers, often must navigate these overlapping systems of oppression while raising their children, which adds layers of complexity to their parenting dynamics. In Black families, mothers are not only responsible for nurturing their children but also for preparing them for a world that often marginalizes them based on both race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989).

For Black daughters, the intersection of racial and gendered oppression shapes the expectations placed upon them by society and, by extension, their families. The labels and societal pressures their mothers have internalized, such as the "Strong Black Woman" archetype, are often passed down through parenting practices, shaping daughters' self-concept. Black mothers, operating under the dual burdens of racism and sexism, may consciously or unconsciously transmit expectations of resilience, emotional strength, and self-sacrifice to their daughters. This dynamic can lead to the internalization of societal labels and contribute to emotional suppression, limiting daughters' ability to express vulnerability and seek help when needed.

Intersectionality theory allows for a deeper exploration of how these complex, interconnected identities influence the transmission of cultural values and societal

expectations within Black families. It highlights how the lived experiences of Black mothers, shaped by systemic inequalities, affect their parenting styles and the labels they assign to their daughters. This theory also underscores the importance of recognizing the psychological impact of these labels, particularly in terms of self-concept development and mental health outcomes.

Collins (1991) contrasted Eurocentric and Afrocentric views of motherhood, noting that Eurocentric perspectives often center around the nuclear family, where the mother's primary role is caregiving within the household. In contrast, Black motherhood is more community-centered, involving both biological mothers (bloodmothers) and othermothers—women who assist in caregiving. This collectivist approach, rooted in African traditions of kinship networks, frames the well-being of children as a communal responsibility. This contrasts sharply with the individualistic, nuclear family model prevalent in Western societies. Black mothers, historically excluded from the role of stay-at-home caregivers due to economic necessity and systemic racism, have often worked outside the home while simultaneously maintaining strong maternal roles (Collins, 1991).

Despite facing challenges such as single motherhood, oppression, working, and balancing household responsibilities, Black mothers have integrated work and caregiving in ways that defy traditional Western gender roles. This has fostered a unique sense of self-reliance and resourcefulness, traits that have been passed down intergenerationally through the mother-daughter relationship (Collins, 1991). These maternal roles also intersect with the transmission of cultural expectations and societal labels that have shaped the experiences of Black women across generations.

The dynamics of the Black mother-daughter relationship are deeply intertwined with the transmission of societal labels like the "Strong Black Woman" (SBW) and the "Good Girl." DeGruy (2005) discussed the historical trauma of slavery, segregation, and systemic racism that has been passed down through generations of Black families. This trauma not only affects Black mothers but also shapes how they raise their daughters, often instilling values like obedience, resilience, and self-sacrifice as survival mechanisms. The internalization of these values is reflected in the way Black daughters are often socialized to embody the SBW persona as they are expected to be emotionally strong, independent, and capable of enduring hardships without showing vulnerability (Nichols et al., 2015; Tookes, 2021).

Rodgers (2021) highlighted that Black parents, particularly mothers, often prepare their daughters to navigate societal racism by instilling resilience and strength, a socialization process deeply rooted in protective, intergenerational survival strategies. This process can lead to emotional suppression and internal conflict, as daughters may feel compelled to conform to societal expectations of being "good" or "strong," while simultaneously struggling with the psychological burden of these labels. The authoritarian parenting style observed among many Black parents (LeCuyer, 2017; Patton, 2017) is often a reflection of these intergenerational survival strategies, where strict discipline and control are emphasized to prepare daughters for the realities of a racist society. Black mothers may enforce these behaviors to protect their daughters from harm, at the same time, they can also reinforce feelings of emotional isolation and low self-worth (Tookes, 2021).

The attachment between Black mothers and daughters plays a crucial role in this intergenerational transmission of labels and trauma. Bowlby's attachment theory highlights how early relationships between mothers and daughters shape their self-concept and emotional regulation (Bowlby, 1969). In the context of Black families, where societal pressures often demand emotional strength, these early attachments may reinforce the SBW schema, further entrenching the expectation that Black women should not show vulnerability or seek support (McNeil Smith et al., 2019; Muzik et al., 2017). Black mothers, having experienced these societal pressures themselves, may unknowingly pass down the same expectations to their daughters, creating a cycle where emotional resilience is prized over emotional expression (Tookes, 2021).

Black mothers often bear the responsibility of preparing their daughters to navigate a world that devalues both their race and gender. McMurty (2013) highlights how many Black parents, in an effort to protect their children, adopt authoritative parenting techniques that emphasize resilience and coping mechanisms. However, while these strategies are aimed at preparing Black daughters for the discrimination they will inevitably face, they may also lead to negative psychological outcomes, including internalizing behaviors, lower self-esteem, and depressive symptoms (Osborn et al., 2021).

The psychological toll of these labels is also compounded by the societal stereotypes Black women face in areas such as education, employment, and law enforcement. Perez & Okonofua (2022) found that Black students often experience negative stereotyping in school settings, where they are judged more harshly than their white peers, regardless of their reputation. This dynamic mirrors the broader societal

perception of Black women as resilient, yet it comes at the cost of their mental and emotional well-being (Perez & Okonofua, 2022). Black mothers, understanding these realities, may further reinforce the need for their daughters to embody strength and independence, perpetuating the SBW schema as a coping strategy within the family.

Black mothers, in particular, face a dual burden: they must contend with both racist and sexist labels, which shape their own self-concept and influence how they raise their daughters (Rodgers, 2021). Labels such as the SBW and the "Good Girl" not only reinforce societal expectations of strength and obedience but also limit Black women's ability to express vulnerability and seek emotional support (Nichols et al., 2015). As Black mothers pass these labels on to their daughters, they contribute to a cycle of emotional suppression and psychological distress that is compounded by the broader societal pressures Black women face (Tookes, 2021) and potentially impacting their self-concept development.

Self-Concept

When asking the question, "Who am I?" an individual is engaging with their self-concept. Self-concept refers to the overall perception and understanding one has of themselves, encompassing their thoughts, feelings, and self-awareness (Rogers, 1951). It includes aspects of self-image, self-worth, and the various dimensions of self-identity (Rosenberg, 1979).

During childhood, developmental changes significantly shape self-concept, as outlined by stage theorists such as Freud and Erikson. Research has found that self-worth, a key component of self-concept, becomes more reliable in adolescence (Harris et al., 2015). Parental attachment has been shown to have a strong positive relationship with an

adolescent's self-worth (Arbona et al., 2003; Gomez et al., 2007; Harris et al., 2015; Song et al., 2009). This suggests a possible connection between labeling within the parent-child relationship and self-worth, as labeling is closely tied to attachment style.

Historically, William James (1890) explored the stability of self-worth, emphasizing that individuals carry an "average tone of self-feeling" throughout life. James (1890) distinction between self-worth, defined as a global judgment of one's overall worth, self-respect, and self-acceptance (Rosenberg, 1965); and domain-specific self-esteem, which is often linked to achievements, appearance, and external factors, continues to influence modern understanding (Rosenberg, 1995) of self-concept. Research suggests that self-esteem has a strong trait component, paralleling other personality characteristics (Dutta, 2016; Kuster & Orth, 2013; Wagner et al., 2016). Differences in self-worth, which can be identified as early as childhood, have been found to remain relatively stable over time (Cole et al., 2001; Trzesniewski et al., 2003).

Self-worth and self-esteem are shaped by various factors, such as school, friendships, and internal beliefs, but family dynamics play a fundamental role in this development (Zareipour et al., 2012). Parent-child interactions are crucial in the formation of self-worth, which begins in early childhood and stabilizes over time (Dutta, 2016; Harter, 2015; Crocker & Wolfe, 2005). The family is the primary context in which individuals learn who they are and how they relate to the world. Studies by Rezaei-Dehaghani et al. (2015), Harter (2012), and Krauss (2020) demonstrated the significant impact that family dynamics have on the development of self-worth. Qualitative research has shown that labels given by family members during childhood can affect career choices, future relationships, and self-worth (Solomon, 2015). Despite the evidence

supporting the role of family dynamics in self-worth, research on the intersection of childhood labeling and self-worth remains limited.

Individuals with higher self-esteem tend to believe they are worthy of love and support, which helps them set and accomplish goals more easily (Joseph, 1994). Mothers, in particular, play a critical role in shaping their daughters' self-worth, as they are often the primary caregivers and are more directly involved in child-rearing (Chodorow, 1978; Greene, 1990a, 1990b; Thornton et al., 1990; Shannon & Shaw, 2008). However, maternal factors, such as depression, can negatively impact a daughter's self-worth (Orth, 2018). As Friday (2010) powerfully notes, "When one woman gives birth to another, to someone who is like her, they are linked together for life in a very special way" (p. 20).

Historical perspectives, particularly from William James, highlighted the stability of self-worth as a distinct yet evolving trait significantly influenced by family dynamics (James, 1890; Rosenberg, 1979). Contemporary studies confirm the trait-like qualities of self-esteem and the pivotal role family interactions play in shaping self-concept from an early age (Kuster & Orth, 2013; Wagner et al., 2016; Cole et al., 2001; Trzesniewski et al., 2003). The following section will explore developmental theories as they relate to self-concept.

Developmental Theories & Self-Concept

The development of self-concept, a key aspect of identity formation, has been extensively explored through various developmental theories. Two of the most influential theories in this area are Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory (1963) and Carl Rogers' theory of self-concept (1951). Erikson's model emphasizes the importance of navigating distinct life stages, each involving a psychosocial conflict that shapes an

individual's sense of self and place in the world. In contrast, Rogers' humanistic approach focuses on the role of self-perception, emotional experience, and the environment in developing a healthy, congruent self-concept. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how early experiences, societal expectations, and relationships influence self-concept formation, especially in the context of external labeling and parental relationships. This section will delve into how Erikson's and Rogers' frameworks can be applied to better understand the impact of societal labels and family dynamics on the development of self-concept.

Erikson's Psychosocial Theories

Building on the foundational work of Freud, Erik Erikson's (1963) psychosocial development model emphasizes the parent-child relationship as a key determinant in shaping a child's identity, behavior, and psychological well-being. Erikson's eight-stage model highlights that each developmental phase presents a central conflict that significantly impacts future functioning and self-concept. The manner in which parents interact with their children plays a crucial role in resolving these conflicts, thereby shaping the child's evolving sense of self.

Erikson (1963) explained in the trust vs. mistrust stage (0-18 months), children are entirely dependent on their parents to meet their basic needs. Consistent care fosters trust in others and the world, laying the foundation for healthy emotional bonds and secure attachments. On the other hand, inconsistent or neglectful caregiving results in mistrust, which may lead to difficulties in forming secure relationships later in life and undermine the child's self-concept (Erikson, 1963). This stage is critical in understanding how early maternal behaviors shape children's perception of themselves and their world.

Similarly, in the autonomy vs. shame and doubt stage (18 months-3 years), the child begins to assert independence (Erikson, 1963). Supportive parenting that encourages exploration and self-control fosters autonomy and confidence. However, overly critical or controlling parenting may instill feelings of shame and self-doubt, directly influencing the child's self-concept and their future approach to autonomy (Erikson, 1963, 1968). The way parents handle their child's growing need for independence has long-lasting implications for their sense of control and self-worth.

By the industry vs. inferiority stage (5-12 years), children are increasingly focused on mastering skills and gaining a sense of competence (Erikson, 1968). Parental encouragement and recognition of their efforts lead to feelings of industry, where children feel productive and capable. Conversely, criticism or lack of parental support may foster a sense of inferiority, diminishing the child's self-esteem and motivation (Erikson, 1968). This stage highlights how societal labels, reinforced by parental feedback, contribute to the development of competence or inferiority, framing the child's self-concept in terms of capability. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development highlights that early caregiver relationships significantly shape self-worth, as stages such as trust versus mistrust and autonomy versus shame are deeply influenced by maternal support.

Throughout Erikson's model, the parent-child relationship serves as a crucial mediator of the child's ability to successfully navigate these psychosocial challenges. As children move into adolescence, they confront the identity vs. role confusion stage, where their evolving self-concept is shaped by how well earlier conflicts were resolved and how parental support or labeling continues to guide their development (Erikson, 1968).

Ideally, adolescents leave this stage with a strong sense of self integrated with their personal goals and societal roles (Bee, 1992). The journey through the identity vs. role confusion stage can be significantly shaped by early labels, which may either promote a well-integrated self-concept or lead to internal struggles and restricted emotional expression, aligning with the themes discussed in Carl Rogers' framework on self-concept development.

Roger's Theory of Self Concept

Carl Rogers' (1951) humanistic theory complements Erikson's model by emphasizing the importance of a supportive and accepting environment in the formation of a positive self-concept. Rogers argued that children thrive when parents provide unconditional positive regard, fostering a self-concept based on intrinsic worth rather than external validation. In contrast, negative labeling by parents, whether subtle or explicit, can lead to the internalization of harmful self-perceptions (Rogers, 1951). This dynamic is particularly relevant when examining how maternal labeling, particularly in the Black mother-daughter relationship, can shape the development of the SBW schema. Rogers' theory underscores the importance of acceptance in cultivating a healthy self-concept, while negative or limiting labels contribute to emotional suppression and the development of a self-concept based on resilience and strength at the expense of emotional vulnerability.

Rogers emphasized that self-concept is deeply influenced by the judgments of significant others and society (Rogers, 1951). According to labeling theory, societal labels become internalized, and when individuals accept these labels, they incorporate them into their self-concept. For instance, if someone is consistently labeled as "lazy" or

“troublesome,” these descriptors may become part of their self-image, even if they are not accurate representations of their true self. This internalization can create a divide between the ideal self and the real self, causing incongruence and emotional distress (Rogers, 1951).

Rogers’ theory holds that unconditional positive regard from others is essential for developing a healthy self-concept (Rogers, 1951). Labeling theory suggests that when individuals receive negative labels, especially from family, peers, or society at large, they experience conditional regard, where their worth is judged based on their adherence to societal expectations (Becker, 1963). For instance, Black women who are labeled as “Strong Black Women” are praised for their strength, but this label can restrict their ability to express vulnerability, ultimately reducing their self-worth because they feel compelled to conform to societal expectations rather than their true emotions. Additionally, Rogers argues that for a person to be psychologically healthy, there must be congruence between their self-concept and their experiences (Rogers, 1951). Labeling theory, however, suggests that labels can create a sense of incongruence when societal expectations do not align with the individual’s true feelings or identity.

By understanding how both Erikson’s psychosocial conflicts and Rogers’ humanistic principles influence self-concept, we gain deeper insights into how early parental interactions, particularly labeling, shape identity formation, self-worth, and the perpetuation of societal expectations, especially within Black families. This theoretical framework sets the stage for exploring how labels such as “Good Girl” and SBW impact self-concept development in Black women, beginning with early childhood in the parent-child relationship and extending into adulthood.

Parenting and Self-Concept

Research has consistently demonstrated the profound impact that parenting has on a child's development. Parenting styles, such as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, are linked to various child outcomes, with authoritative parenting often resulting in higher social competence and emotional regulation (Baumrind, 1966; Bowlby, 1988; Morris et al., 2007). Additionally, early attachment with caregivers shapes emotional development and future relationships, while supportive parenting fosters essential emotional regulation skills, which are critical for mental health and social success (Baumrind, 1966; Bowlby, 1988; Morris et al., 2007).

One of those areas being the development of self concept (Aabedi-Asl et al., 2017). Using a descriptive correlational method with a sample of 181 high school students, Aabedi-Asl et al., (2017) demonstrated that adolescents' self-concept is significantly influenced by parenting styles. Positive and authoritative parenting approaches, characterized by support, warmth, and balanced discipline, were strongly associated with higher self-concept. Conversely, parenting styles that were more controlling or punitive had a negative impact on self-concept development. The research emphasized the critical role that the parent child relationship plays in the development of self-concept in adolescents (Aabedi-Asl et al., 2017). Supporting this research, Harter (1992) found that as children move into middle childhood and adolescence, they rely more on feedback from peers. However, parental support continues to be important. Harter's research has shown that parents can help children navigate social comparisons by reinforcing their competencies and providing a secure base from which to evaluate themselves (Harter, 1992; Harter 2012).

Harter (2012) explained that parents play a crucial role in the development of their child's self-concept at all stages of development. Parents provide direct feedback through praise, criticism, and reinforcement, which significantly impacts a child's self-evaluation. Positive feedback tends to foster a more positive self-concept, while negative or inconsistent feedback can lead to feelings of inadequacy or negative self-concept (Harter, 2012). Additionally, parents serve as primary models for behavior, attitudes, and emotional regulation. Children often internalize their parents' values and perspectives, which shape their own self-concept (Bandura, 1986).

While parental feedback directly shapes a child's self-concept through praise and criticism, the quality of the parent-child attachment further reinforces or undermines these evaluations, influencing the emotional security necessary for healthy self-concept development. Bowlby (1988) explained that secure attachments with parents, which is characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and emotional availability, provides a critical foundation for children to explore their environment and develop a coherent self-concept. This secure attachment allows children to internalize a sense of safety and self-worth, which is essential in forming a stable self-concept. Conversely, insecure attachment styles, such as neglectful or overly controlling parenting, can disrupt this developmental process, leading to difficulties in emotional regulation, self-esteem, and identity formation.

For Black daughters, the mother-daughter relationship plays a particularly significant role in shaping self-concept. Mothers, often the primary caregivers, not only provide emotional security but also serve as models for how their daughters perceive themselves and navigate societal expectations. As attachment theory suggests, the quality

of this relationship can influence how daughters internalize societal labels such as the "Good Girl" or "Strong Black Woman," which may impact their sense of self-worth and identity. Understanding this dynamic is essential for exploring how Black mother-daughter relationships uniquely contribute to self-concept development.

Self-Concept and the Mother-Daughter Relationship

The development of self-concept in children, especially daughters, is profoundly influenced by their relationship with their mothers. Attachment theory, pioneered by John Bowlby (1969), posits that early bonds between a child and their primary caregiver, typically the mother, establish a framework for how the child perceives both relationships and themselves. The first five years of life are particularly critical in shaping what Bowlby refers to as an internal working model, which serves as the mental representation of how relationships function and how the individual fits within them (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). Mothers, as primary caregivers, not only provide emotional and physical care but also act as a key source of feedback, labeling, and expectations, all of which contribute to the child's emerging self-concept (Fithriyah et al., 2020).

Building on Bowlby's attachment theory, which highlights the mother's role in shaping a child's internal working model, research has further explored how this relationship influences self-esteem and coping mechanisms in daughters. Everett et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study to explore the influence of Black mothers on their daughters' development of self-esteem, resilience, and coping strategies. The study involved 17 African American mothers and daughters from two New England cities, using snowball sampling for participant recruitment. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather in-depth insights into the mother-daughter relationship, focusing on

messages related to self-worth and coping. The findings revealed that while most participants described their relationship as positive, a few mentioned challenges such as emotional distance. Mothers were reported to have conveyed messages of resilience and self-worth, although not all participants received positive affirmations growing up. The study highlighted the intergenerational transmission of coping strategies and resilience, often shaped by the mothers' own experiences with adversity. One limitation of the study is the absence of the mothers' voices directly; future research could incorporate both mother and daughter perspectives to gain a fuller understanding. Additionally, the small sample size and lack of representation from other Black ethnic groups limit the generalizability of the findings. Further research should explore how mothers in diverse cultural contexts impart these lessons and how successful they are in mitigating the negative effects of racism on their daughters.

Research suggests that the ways in which mothers describe, reinforce, and characterize their children play a critical role in shaping self-concept during formative years (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999; Rogers, 1951). Bretherton and Munholland (1999) argued that early interactions with primary caregivers, including the labels mothers use, significantly shape a child's internal working model, which influences their understanding of self and relationships throughout life. Rogers (1951) similarly emphasized the importance of feedback from significant others in the development of self-concept, noting that labels reflecting societal expectations can lead to the internalization of conditional self-worth. When mothers provide positive or negative labels, they affect not only the child's self-esteem but also their capacity for authentic self-expression, as children often strive to meet external expectations in pursuit of

approval. Labels such as the GG, which are often assigned to daughters to encourage obedience, compliance, and emotional restraint, can serve as a double-edged sword. While seemingly positive, these labels limit a child's capacity for identity exploration by imposing a rigid framework of behavior that prioritizes external validation over the development of an authentic self (Turkel, 200). Additionally, Singh (2023) explained that the internalization of labels like GG often leads to a conflict between the child's personal desires and the expectations of others, creating tension between their outward behavior and internal emotional needs.

The mother-daughter bond has been shown to be especially influential in shaping a daughter's self-concept. Research consistently finds that this relationship tends to be the closest among familial ties, with the mother's role in guiding her daughter's social, emotional, and psychological development being crucial (Campione-Barr & Smetana, 2004). Studies such as Besser et al. (2005) demonstrated the intergenerational transmission of attachment styles, revealing significant correlations between the attachment patterns of mothers and their daughters. Whether secure or insecure, these patterns often persist across generations, reinforcing the importance of the family system in shaping not only attachment but also identity and self-worth. Hayden et al. (2006) further argue that a secure attachment, characterized by consistent emotional support and encouragement, correlates with higher self-esteem and a more positive self-concept both in childhood and adulthood.

In this context, the emotional connectedness between mothers and daughters plays a vital role in the formation of self-esteem. Fithriyah et al. (2020) found that emotional bonding, mutual reliance, and supportive communication within the mother-daughter

relationship significantly contribute to a higher sense of self-esteem in female college students. These findings underscore the importance of emotional closeness, as daughters internalize their mothers' approval, which directly influences how they perceive themselves and navigate external societal expectations.

Similarly, Singh's (2023) study examined the relationship between mother-daughter dynamics and self-esteem among 201 young female adults in India. Using a cross-sectional and correlational research design, the study employed the Mother-Adult Daughter Questionnaire (MAD) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between connectedness and self-esteem, while factors like interdependence and trust in hierarchy showed no significant relationship. However, the use of purposive sampling limits the generalizability of the results, and the cross-sectional design prevents establishing causality. Future research could benefit from qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, to explore how connectedness fosters self-esteem and why other relational factors have less impact. Additionally, longitudinal studies with more diverse samples are needed to understand the long-term effects of mother-daughter relationships on self-esteem and overall well-being.

However, the process of labeling within the mother-daughter dynamic can complicate this connection. Labels like GG are often designed to teach daughters how to navigate societal norms of gendered behavior, particularly compliance and emotional control. While these labels may serve to protect daughters from societal repercussions, they can also inadvertently restrict personal growth. Over time, these labels become ingrained in the daughter's identity, leading to self-concept issues, especially when the

individual feels compelled to suppress emotions or individual desires to conform to external expectations (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999).

The mother-daughter relationship is foundational for attachment, emotional development, and the transmission of societal expectations through labeling. Daughters, especially those labeled as Good Girls, often internalize these labels, shaping their self-concept and influencing how they navigate adult relationships and self-expression (. In Black families, this dynamic becomes more complex due to the intersection of racial and gendered oppression. Black mothers must nurture their daughters while preparing them for a world that marginalizes them based on both race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1991). This dual burden often results in the transmission of labels like the GGand Strong Black Woman, which function as protective mechanisms but can also create internal conflict for Black women. In this context, the Black mother-daughter relationship becomes a key site where societal expectations of strength, resilience, and obedience are internalized and passed down across generations, further shaping the self-concept of Black women in unique ways.

Labeling and Self-Concept in the Black Mother-Daughter Relationship

The process of labeling within the Black mother-daughter relationship plays a critical role in shaping self-concept. The Afrocentric model of motherhood teaches Black daughters to be independent, resilient, and strong, values that are necessary for survival in a society that often devalues Black women (Collins, 1991). However, the transmission of these labels, particularly the SBW schema, creates a dual challenge. On one hand, Black mothers pass down values of strength and survival as a protective measure, equipping their daughters to navigate a world rife with racism and sexism (Winfield et al., 2024).

On the other hand, these same labels can lead to emotional suppression, as daughters internalize the notion that vulnerability and emotional expression are signs of weakness. This internalization can significantly affect their self-concept, often leading to feelings of inadequacy when they struggle to live up to these societal expectations.

The intersection of labeling and self-concept is particularly evident when considering how societal expectations and familial transmission of labels converge within the Black mother-daughter relationship. Goffman's theory of stigma (1963) suggested that labels become internalized and shape an individual's identity through societal expectations, often leading to a "spoiled identity" when these labels are stigmatized. In the context of the Black mother-daughter relationship, the GG and SBW labels serve as tools of both empowerment and restriction. Black mothers, having internalized these labels themselves, often pass them down as a means of preparing their daughters for the harsh realities of racial and gender-based oppression. However, the very act of labeling daughters as *strong* or *good* imposes constraints on their emotional expression, as these labels come with the expectation of resilience and emotional suppression (Tinsley-Jones, 2001). This tension between internal emotional needs and external expectations plays a crucial role in the development of self-concept in Black women.

Research by Matos et al. (2023) highlighted how negative labeling profoundly impacts self-concept, often reinforcing feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. However, the presence of supportive relationships can counteract the negative effects of labeling by fostering a sense of self-worth and agency. In the Black mother-daughter relationship, these supportive relationships are often double-edged; while mothers may provide emotional support and guidance, they also reinforce societal labels that prioritize strength

over vulnerability. This dynamic creates a complex psychological landscape where daughters are expected to embody strength, but may feel emotionally stifled when they cannot express vulnerability. Despite the challenges posed by labeling, research suggests that daughters can develop a healthier self-concept through positive reinforcement and open communication within the family system (Besser et al., 2005).

This cyclical process of labeling within the Black mother-daughter relationship demonstrates how self-concept is shaped by both internal and external forces. While societal labels like the GG and SBW are imposed by external factors such as media, cultural norms, and historical stereotypes, they are reinforced and perpetuated within the family. The internalization of these labels significantly affects the self-concept of Black daughters, who often struggle with balancing societal expectations of resilience and strength with their own emotional needs. As Harris-Perry (2011) suggested, the SBW schema creates an unrealistic expectation of invulnerability, leading to long-term psychological consequences such as anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion.

The connection between labeling and self-concept is further complicated by the role of intersectionality in the Black mother-daughter relationship. Crenshaw (1989) emphasizes that Black women experience oppression through both racial and gender-based lenses, which adds layers of complexity to the process of identity formation. The transmission of labels like the GG and SBW is not only a result of gender socialization but also a response to racial oppression. Black mothers teach their daughters to be strong as a means of survival in a world that devalues their humanity, yet this survival strategy often comes at the cost of emotional expression and psychological well-being.

Labeling and self-concept are deeply interconnected in the Black mother-daughter relationship. Societal labels like the GG and SBW shape how Black daughters perceive themselves, often reinforcing emotional suppression and unrealistic expectations of strength. However, supportive relationships within the family, particularly between mothers and daughters, can provide a pathway for challenging these labels and fostering a healthier, more holistic self-concept. Understanding this dynamic is essential for exploring how labeling affects the psychological and emotional development of Black women, particularly as they navigate the dual pressures of societal expectations and personal identity formation.

Good Girl Archetype

Despite the prevalence of the GG archetype in cultural discourse, there remains a limited body of scholarly research focused specifically on how this label shapes identity development and mental health outcomes in women. Most existing academic literature addresses the archetype indirectly through broader discussions of gender role socialization, feminist critiques of traditional female roles, or analyses of the psychological impacts of societal expectations on women (e.g., Gilligan, 1982). While these works engage with related concepts, they do not offer an in-depth exploration of the GG identity as a distinct social label with specific emotional and psychological consequences.

However, Bowman (2023) did explore the gendered and racial biases Black girls face in educational settings. Utilizing a critical analysis of both literature and empirical data, Bowman highlighted how Black girls are disproportionately subjected to over-discipline and surveillance due to societal stereotypes that cast them as aggressive and

unruly. The research also delved into the psychological impact of these stereotypes, contributing to the "Supergirl" complex, where Black girls develop emotional resilience but also face significant mental and physical health challenges due to their need to conform to these imposed ideals. The study concluded by proposing various interventions, such as mentorship and training programs, to mitigate these harmful biases and foster more equitable treatment for Black girls in schools. This work is particularly relevant in the context of understanding the intersection of race, gender, and systemic bias in educational institutions.

In contrast, popular media platforms such as Psychology Today have extensively discussed the GG archetype and its associated challenges. Articles like Mastroianni's (2024) "*Tired of Being a Good Girl?*" explore the emotional exhaustion and burnout that results from perfectionism and a constant need to please others. Similarly, Riegel (2024) examines how deeply ingrained societal expectations cause women to suppress their true emotions in pursuit of external validation, further reinforcing the notion that personal worth is tied to conformity. Although these articles provide valuable insights into how women experience the pressures of the GG archetype, they are often limited to anecdotal evidence and lack the empirical rigor necessary for deeper academic investigation. This gap underscores the need for more scholarly research to investigate how such labels affect identity formation, particularly in the context of race and gender.

Additionally, Turkel's (2000) study, *The Good Girl Grows Up: Gender and Self-Esteem*, offers a theoretical and psychoanalytic exploration of how societal expectations and gender roles influence the development of self-esteem in young women. The study focused on the internalization of the GG archetype, characterized by compliance,

perfectionism, and emotional restraint, which shapes women's self-concept and negatively impacts self-esteem as they transition into adulthood. Turkel argues that the pressure to conform to these societal norms leads to emotional suppression, internal conflict, and strained identity development, as women struggle to balance societal expectations with their personal ambitions. The study relied on psychoanalytic theory and literature review to discuss broader patterns and interpretations rather than using empirical methods like quantitative surveys or qualitative interviews. While the study provides valuable insights into the psychological impact of gender norms, its reliance on psychoanalytic theory without empirical data limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research incorporating empirical methods, such as qualitative interviews or mixed-methods approaches, could provide more concrete evidence and expand understanding of how the "good girl" archetype influences self-esteem development in specific participant groups.

The limitations of the GG archetype are well-documented in non-academic sources, including blogs, self-help literature, and popular psychology articles. For instance, Kaiser (2018) noted that women conditioned to adhere to the GG ideal often struggle with assertiveness and self-prioritization, feeling unworthy when they prioritize their own needs. These non-academic sources, while insightful, primarily offer personal narratives and practical strategies for overcoming the limitations of GG identity. However, they lack the theoretical and empirical grounding that academic research could provide, particularly regarding the long-term psychological effects of internalizing this identity throughout one's development.

Moreover, the intersectionality of race and gender further complicates how the GGlabel affects women of color, particularly Black women. As Bowman (2023) highlighted, racialized biases place additional expectations on Black girls to conform to this archetype, often subjecting them to racialized stereotypes that frame assertive behavior as "unruly" or "loud." These stereotypes impose dual pressures on Black girls, who must navigate both the expectations of being "good" and the racial biases that demand subservience and quietness in order to be perceived as acceptable. This intersection of racial and gendered expectations compounds the challenges Black girls face in developing a healthy self-concept.

Not all labels are negative; some, like being labeled as a “good girl” or “hard-working,” may be considered positive. However, even positive labels can limit self-concept. Rogers' idea of self-actualization, the drive to fulfill one's true potential, can be hindered by rigid labels, as they may constrain an individual's capacity for authentic self-expression (Rogers, 1951). For instance, a young girl labeled as the “good girl” may feel pressured to be obedient and perfect, suppressing her true desires and emotions in favor of societal expectations, which stunts her journey toward self-actualization.

In *The Curse of the Good Girl* (2009), Rachel Simmons critiques the societal pressures that compel girls to adopt traits such as perfectionism, emotional suppression, and compliance, which stifle authenticity and emotional expression. Simmons argues that the *Good Girl* identity begins in childhood and continues into adolescence, forcing girls to prioritize external approval at the expense of their self-worth. For Black girls, this identity is further complicated by the expectations of the SBW schema, which adds another layer of emotional suppression and resilience. The transition from the GG to the

SBW schema in adulthood reflects a shift from a focus on obedience to one of invincibility, where Black women are expected to endure hardship without expressing vulnerability.

The mother-daughter relationship plays a crucial role in this trajectory, as Black mothers, shaped by their own experiences with racism and sexism, often pass down these survival strategies to their daughters. The combination of the GG archetype and SBW schemas reinforces emotional suppression and self-sacrifice, molding the daughter's self-concept around the need for resilience. Understanding this transition is essential for exploring how both labels contribute to the emotional and psychological development of Black women. These labels not only shape how Black women view themselves but also influence how they navigate personal, familial, and professional relationships in adulthood.

Strong Black Woman Schema

The SBW schema demonstrates how cultural and societal labels are passed down through generations, particularly via the mother-daughter relationship. The study titled *"Strong Black Woman Schema and its Impact Among Black Women"* (Simon, 2024) explored the influence of the SBW schema on the mental health and help-seeking behaviors of Black/African American professional women. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, the study included 11 Black/African American professional women. Data were collected through interviews, and thematic analysis was applied to uncover patterns related to the impact of the SBW schema. Key findings revealed that while the SBW schema provided motivational benefits, it also contributed to emotional suppression, mental health issues, and hesitancy to seek mental health

services. The participants expressed challenges related to self-reliance, distrust in the mental health system, and a perceived lack of emotional support. Importantly, the study highlighted both the protective and harmful aspects of the SBW schema, showing how it could drive resilience while also exacerbating psychological distress. One limitation of the study is its focus on professional Black women, potentially limiting generalizability to other socioeconomic groups. Future research could expand on these findings by examining the experiences of Black women across different socioeconomic backgrounds and incorporating quantitative methods for a broader analysis.

Simon (2024) contends that mothers, often embodying the SBW schema to navigate societal challenges, unconsciously pass this expectation of strength, self-reliance, and emotional suppression to their daughters. While this behavior is rooted in survival and protection from societal vulnerabilities, it also restricts emotional expression within the family. Daughters internalize this schema, shaping their self-concept around resilience at the expense of emotional well-being. This dynamic, intended to empower, creates a rigid identity framework that profoundly influences daughters' self-perception from a young age (Simon, 2024; Collins, 1991).

The SBW schema has been shown to contribute to poor mental health outcomes, including higher levels of psychological distress, depression, and anxiety (Abrams et al., 2019; Simon, 2024, Tinsley-Jones, 2001; Tookes, 2021; Watson-Singleton, 2017). Black women labeled as "strong" often feel compelled to project strength even when they are emotionally vulnerable, resulting in distress as their internal experiences clash with external expectations. This incongruence, as described by Rogers (1951), can lead to emotional turmoil when the self-concept does not align with societal labels. Black

women who internalize the SBW schema may struggle with emotional regulation and are more likely to adopt maladaptive coping strategies, such as emotional suppression, to maintain the facade of strength (Tookes, 2021). This suppression deepens the disconnect between their true selves and external perceptions, exacerbating mental health challenges.

Watson-Singleton (2017) found that emotional suppression, a core component of the SBW schema, is associated with increased psychological distress, including symptoms of depression and anxiety. The societal expectation of resilience makes many Black women reluctant to seek help, perpetuating cycles of emotional isolation. Black daughters, learning to embody strength over vulnerability, may internalize the belief that seeking support signals weakness, adding to the emotional toll across generations (Watson-Singleton, 2017; Simon, 2024). As a result, emotional openness is deprioritized, contributing to a self-concept centered on independence and strength but lacking emotional support, leading to long-term distress such as anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion (Simon, 2024; Wallace, 1979).

As Michele Wallace (1979) noted, the "Superwoman" myth pressures Black women to act as emotional pillars for their families, suppressing their own vulnerability. In mother-daughter relationships, this often translates to mothers modeling strength as the only acceptable way to navigate challenges, leaving little room for emotional expression. This dynamic creates emotional distance, as daughters may feel compelled to replicate their mothers' emotional restraint, struggling to openly discuss personal struggles or seek support. The lack of emotional transparency prevents bonding and limits daughters' ability to develop a self-concept that incorporates both strength and vulnerability (Winfield et al., 2024; Abrams et al., 2019).

As emotional distance becomes ingrained, it shapes the mother-daughter bond and has broader implications for how Black women approach mental health and help-seeking behaviors. Abrams et al. (2019) quantitatively explored the SBW schema's impact on these behaviors, finding that while it promotes resilience and independence, it also fosters emotional suppression and self-silencing, which increase depressive symptoms. The study highlighted the complex role of the SBW schema: though it offers protective benefits, it also discourages vulnerability and help-seeking, leading to emotional isolation. This isolation further compounds mental health struggles, as Black women may feel unable to seek support due to societal expectations of strength. A limitation of the study is its cross-sectional design, which makes it difficult to determine whether the SBW schema and self-silencing directly cause depressive symptoms. The pressure to maintain an image of strength reinforces emotional isolation, especially in mother-daughter relationships, and underscores the intersection of systemic racism and gendered expectations (Abrams et al., 2019; Bowleg, 2012).

The SBW schema is also particularly challenging in academic settings. As Tookes (2021) noted, Black women in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) often feel immense pressure to work harder and suppress their emotions to counteract stereotypes. This reinforces the SBW schema, creating a cycle of emotional suppression and isolation. There is a significant relationship between the SBW schema and lower levels of wellness. Black women who internalize this schema often experience negative consequences on their physical, emotional, and mental health, as they suppress their own needs to maintain the facade of strength. This pattern can lead to burnout, physical exhaustion, and emotional distress (Tookes, 2021).

However, there is emerging research that emphasizes resisting these restrictive societal labels. Winfield et al. (2024) introduce the concept of "loud healing," which encourages open dialogue about health, trauma, and emotional needs. By engaging in loud healing, Black daughters can disrupt the generational transmission of the SBW schema, reclaiming vulnerability and redefining self-worth. This resistance allows for a more nuanced self-concept, integrating both strength and emotional openness, challenging the generational emphasis on stoicism (Winfield et al., 2024; Wallace, 1979).

While the SBW schema seeks to empower Black women, it ironically weakens mother-daughter relationships by reinforcing emotional distance. Mothers may prioritize modeling strength, unintentionally stifling emotional development in their daughters. As daughters learn to value strength over vulnerability, they may struggle to maintain balanced emotional lives, perpetuating a cycle of emotional suppression in their relationships and continuing the same dynamic when they become mothers themselves (Simon, 2024; Winfield et al., 2024). Ultimately, the SBW schema's demand for strength limits the emotional depth of mother-daughter relationships and impacts the self-concept of future generations.

Chapter Summary

The literature review has illuminated the profound impact of discrimination, negative labeling, and societal expectations on the mental health and identity development of Black individuals, particularly Black women and girls. These labels, transmitted across generations, ranging from terms like "Colored" and "Negro" to the derogatory "N-word", exacerbate the emotional and psychological burden on Black

individuals, impacting areas such as self-esteem, relationships, academic success, and career aspirations (Bogart et al., 2013; Brown & Bigler, 2005).

The SBW schema, a prominent label in the Black community, though rooted in survival and resilience, has contributed to emotional suppression and mental health challenges. Passed down through generations, often within mother-daughter relationships, the SBW schema reinforces ideals of strength and self-reliance at the expense of emotional vulnerability (Abrams et al., 2014). Coupled with the "good little Black girl" archetype, which encourages obedience and perfectionism (Rodgers, 2021; Mathias, 2022), these labels shape the self-concept of Black women, often leading to long-term emotional consequences and perpetuating intergenerational trauma.

While the literature underscores the pervasive effects of these labels, there remains a gap in understanding how they are specifically reinforced within Black mother-daughter dynamics. This study aims to address this gap by examining how the transmission of these labels shapes the self-concept and emotional well-being of Black women. By focusing on the transition from the GG archetype to the SBW schema, the research seeks to provide deeper insights into the emotional toll and identity complexities Black women face because of these societal and familial expectations.

The next chapter will delve into the methodology used to explore these themes, outlining the qualitative approaches employed to gather and analyze the lived experiences of Black women navigating these identity trajectories. Through the application of phenomenological methods, this research will uncover the complexities of identity formation, self-concept development, and emotional well-being in Black women.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This section will focus on the theoretical and methodological framework that the researcher used to explore self-concept, mother/daughter relationships, and labeling in Black women. Included in this response was an explanation of the purpose of the study, rationale for qualitative methodology, positionality of the researcher, population sampling, proposed data collection and analysis, and lastly the research team and ethical considerations.

Purpose of the Study

There are few studies that examine the interconnection between labeling and the development of self-concept (Matsueda, 1992; Jussim & Harber, 2005; Link & Phelan, 2001; Pomerantz & Saxon, 2001) despite past research demonstrating that societal labels and stereotypes significantly affect the self-esteem and identity of Black mothers and daughters, often reinforcing negative self-perceptions (Fix, 2022). However, although the parent-child relationship is recognized as crucial for identity development, much of the research has focused on school environments (Gold & Richards, 2012; Graves & Ye, 2017; Hines et al., 2014) and juvenile delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009; Jacobsen & Zaatut, 2020; Xiong et al., 2020). Additionally, studies on Black mothers' influence on their daughters' self-worth often emphasize beauty standards (Turnage, 2004), overlooking the broader effects of parental labeling. By investigating both negative and perceived positive labels and their lasting effects on self-worth and identity development,

this study informs culturally responsive counseling practices and interventions, ultimately fostering healthier self-concepts among Black clients.

In an unpublished pilot study, the principal researcher explored how childhood labels affect self-worth, identity, and adult relationships. The research question—"How are self-worth, identity, and relationships in adulthood impacted by childhood labels?"—allowed participants to reflect on the labels they received during childhood and examine their effects on adult functioning. This qualitative project highlighted the significance of such labels, with a particular focus on the 'Golden Child' and 'Good Girl' labels, which emerged as the most prominent. The findings from the unpublished study revealed that participants not only recognized the impact of these labels but also expressed that the effects were substantial. This foundational understanding set the stage for the current study, as it further explores these specific labels and their implications for the individual lives of Black women. Building on this, the researcher explored how the 'Good Girl' label potentially lays the foundational characteristics of the 'Strong Black Woman' schema, suggesting a developmental trajectory from childhood conditioning to adult identity constructs.

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black women who were labeled as the GG in their childhood and later internalized the SBW schema in adulthood. Specifically, the study provided insight as to how this trajectory influenced their development of self-concept. Additionally, the research sought to investigate the role of their Black mother in shaping their self-concept, particularly in relation to notions of strength, resilience, and identity. By delving into these experiences, the sought to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between childhood labels, the

mother-daughter relationship, and the formation of self-concept in Black women. These insights could inform the overall well-being of Black women, enhance the mother-daughter relationship, improve mental health treatment for Black women and families, and promote increased self-concept.

Negative Labeling of Black Women

Black women have been impacted by intersecting negative racial and gendered labels, such as the aggressive “Sapphire” (Harris-Perry, 2011), the hypersexual “Jezebel” (Hobbs, 2011), and the nurturing “Mammy” (Tyler, 2008). These labels have each contributed to the formation of the SBW persona, a cultural archetype that idealizes Black women as resilient, self-sacrificing, and emotionally strong (Abrams et al., 2014; West et al., 2016).

The negative labels attributed to Black women, such as the aggressive "Sapphire," the hypersexual "Jezebel," and the nurturing "Mammy," each contribute to the SBW persona in distinct ways. The "Sapphire" stereotype pressures Black women to counteract perceptions of anger and hostility by constantly displaying strength and resilience, often suppressing their emotions to avoid being seen as aggressive. Similarly, the "Jezebel" stereotype's portrayal of Black women as sexually promiscuous prompts them to adopt the SBW persona to assert control over their narratives, emphasizing self-sacrifice and moral fortitude as a defense mechanism. Meanwhile, the "Mammy" stereotype idealizes Black women as devoted caretakers, reinforcing the expectation that they must prioritize others' needs over their own (Tyler, 2008). This nurturing role promotes self-sacrifice and emotional strength, key components of the SBW persona. Collectively, these negative labels create societal expectations that Black women must display resilience,

self-sacrifice, and emotional fortitude, leading them to adopt the SBW persona as a survival strategy. However, this persona also imposes significant emotional and psychological burdens, as Black women feel compelled to live up to these unrealistic and often harmful ideals. (Abrams et al., 2014; West et al., 2016).

While the term "strong" is often used to symbolize positive attributes, it also has psychological implications, as it can pressure Black women to hide vulnerability and avoid seeking support (Harris-Perry, 2011). Despite the positive associations with being independent and successful (Nichols et al., 2015), the SBW schema is linked to negative coping mechanisms (Tookes, 2021). Labeling theory helps to understand how these societal expectations shape self-concept and psychological well-being, highlighting the dual impact of such labels on Black women's lives. However, the specific impact of Black mothers placing such labels on their daughters has not been thoroughly explored. The current study addresses the following questions:

1. How does labeling in the mother-daughter relationship impact the development of self-concept?
 - a. This question seeks to understand the nuances of how specific behaviors (labeling) within a relationship (mother-daughter) influence an individual's perception of themselves.
2. What role does the mother-daughter relationship play in the development of the Strong Black Woman Schema?
 - a. This question examines the influence of a specific relationship dynamic on the internalization of a cultural schema which may impact one's self-concept.

3. How does the Strong Black Woman Schema impact the development of self-concept?
 - a. This question explores the implications of a cultural identity framework on an individual's self-concept.
4. How does the "Good Girl" label, when reinforced within the mother-daughter relationship, contribute to the development of self-concept and the Strong Black Woman Schema?
 - a. This question captures how the expectations tied to being a "Good Girl" contribute to self-concept and intersect with the cultural and societal pressures embodied in the SBW Schema.

The findings of the research could significantly impact both counseling practice and theory, as well as influence Black family dynamics. While theories like Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (DeGruy, 2005) address the lived experiences of Black families, much of the existing research has focused on single motherhood (Elliot & Reid, 2019; McGroder, 2000), poverty (Anderson, 2018; Turner, 2020), or children with behavioral concerns (Jackson et al., 2019; Sheely-Moore, 2010). This study sought to broaden the scope by exploring the impact of the Black mother-daughter relationship, particularly how labeling affects self-concept development, a topic that remains under-researched.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative methodology to explore the deeply personal and subjective experiences of Black women in their relationships with their mothers. Qualitative research is ideal for capturing the richness and complexity of lived

experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Wood, 2011; Sutton, & Austin, 2015), providing detailed insights into how these cultural and relational dynamics shape an individual's self-concept. The study's focus on understanding perceptions, meanings, and the essence of these phenomena aligns well with qualitative methods, which prioritize depth and context over generalizability and statistical measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, qualitative research allows for flexibility in exploring diverse perspectives, making it the most appropriate approach for unpacking the intricate, culturally embedded processes being examined.

The use of qualitative research is particularly justified for this study due to the significant gap in understanding how Black mothers label their daughters and how this affects their self-concept. This gap highlights the need to explore these experiences deeply and through an intersectional lens. Qualitative methods allow participants to share personal narratives about mother-daughter relationships, labeling, and self-concept, yielding rich, detailed insights that quantitative approaches cannot provide. Reflective discussions on lived experiences offer a more complete view of identity development, especially within the context of Black women and girls. Previous studies on self-concept development in Black daughters (Everet et al., 2016; Murry, 2010; Smith, 2014), labeling (Bowman, 2023; Epstein et al., 2017), and Black mother-daughter relationships (Everet et al., 2016; Etienne, 2013; Leath et al., 2023; Mathias, 2022) further support the use of qualitative research for this exploration.

While existing qualitative studies have examined labeling, self-concept, and mother-daughter relationships individually, there is a notable gap in research that explores how these constructs intersect and influence one another. Past research has

shown that societal labels and stereotypes significantly affect the self-esteem and identity of Black mothers and daughters, often reinforcing negative self-perceptions (Fix, 2022). Moreover, the mother-daughter relationship is crucial to the development of a daughter's self-concept (Turnage, 2004), and societal labeling has a lasting negative impact on Black women and girls throughout their lives (Epstein et al., 2017; Nuamah, 2021; Opara et al., 2022). However, more qualitative studies are needed to explore how Black mothers' labeling of their daughters affects self-concept development.

Qualitative research is essential for exploring complex phenomena when existing literature is limited, as is the case with maternal labeling and self-concept in Black women. This approach delves into subjective experiences and meanings, offering deeper insights into the nuanced realities of Black women and girls (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Neubauer et al., 2019). By focusing on participants' lived experiences, this provided a comprehensive understanding of how maternal labeling shapes self-concept. Given that Black daughters remain an understudied group, there is a critical need for focused research on Black mother-daughter relationships to better understand their unique challenges and strengths (Etienne, 2013; Hinton, 2004; Ward, 2022).

There is a pressing need for more qualitative research on Black mother-daughter relationships to ensure their voices are heard and their unique challenges and strengths are comprehensively understood. Qualitative studies are crucial for capturing the lived experiences and nuanced perspectives of Black women, which are often overlooked in quantitative research (Etienne, 2013). By employing methodologies such as in-depth interviews, researchers can delve deeper into the personal and cultural dimensions of these relationships. This approach not only amplifies the voices of Black mothers and

daughters but also provides richer insights into their relational dynamics and how this unique relationship shapes the development of Black women's self-concept.

Qualitative research methods are particularly suited for studies that aim to explore the lived experiences of marginalized groups and their intersecting identities (Bright et al., 2016). In the proposed research, a qualitative approach will allow for the collection of personalized and detailed data, capturing the nuances of labeling and self-concept development within the Black mother-daughter relationship. This approach is essential for understanding how the intersecting identities of being Black, a woman, and a daughter of a Black mother influence and shape one another. By focusing on these intricate relational dynamics, this study aligns with the core objectives of qualitative research: to uncover the complexity and richness of lived experiences (Bright et al., 2016; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Given these objectives, phenomenology was the most appropriate subset of qualitative research for this study, as it allowed for a deep exploration of how individuals make meaning of their experiences, particularly within the context of cultural and relational identity. The next section will delve into the reasons phenomenology is ideally suited to this study.

Phenomenological Methods Explored

Phenomenology focuses on understanding the lived experiences of individuals (Hays & Wood, 2011; Teherani et al., 2015), which aligns with the study's goal of exploring how labeling in the mother-daughter relationship and the development of the SBW Schema shape self-concept. According to Teherani et al. (2015), phenomenology is appropriate when the research aims to better understand a specific phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon is the lived experience of how labeling within the mother-

daughter relationship impacts self-concept development and how the SBW Schema influences that self-concept. The focus is on understanding the meaning participants ascribe to the phenomenon which is commonly done through the use of interviews (Teherani et al., 2015) allowing for direct feedback from those who have experienced the phenomenon (Hays & Wood, 2011).

The complex constructs of identity formation, mother-daughter relationships, and labeling in the current study were explored using phenomenological research methods. Phenomenology excels in revealing the depth of personal experiences and their impact on self-perception, making it well-suited for dissecting the nuances of these interrelated constructs. As Creswell (2013) and Smith et al. (2009) explained, phenomenology deepens our understanding of identity dynamics and interpersonal relationships, offering profound insights into how individuals navigate their internal and external worlds. Additionally, phenomenology's application to labeling theory, as explored by Petrunik (1980), highlights its effectiveness in examining how people interpret and respond to social labels, thereby enhancing our understanding of subjective experiences within broader social frameworks.

Furthermore, phenomenological methods are closely aligned with counseling strategies, as they help researchers access participants' thoughts and feelings, often requiring discussions around deeply personal topics (Sutton & Austin, 2015). This approach is particularly valuable for uncovering how race, gender, and cultural context intertwine to shape the identities of Black mothers and daughters. Through phenomenology, the current study provides insights into their unique experiences and the effects of internalized labeling. Given these objectives, transcendental phenomenology

stood out as the most appropriate phenomenological method for the current study. By focusing on bracketing and intentionality, transcendental phenomenology has allowed for an objective exploration of the lived experiences of Black women and daughters, capturing the essence of these intricate dynamics.

Transcendental Phenomenology

Transcendental phenomenology, also known as descriptive phenomenology, is valued for its ability to bring clarity and deep understanding to the experiences being studied, particularly in areas such as education and cultural studies. Moustakas (1994) draws upon the foundational work of Edmund Husserl, who introduced key concepts in transcendental phenomenology, such as intentionality and intuition. Intentionality refers to the process of grasping lived experiences, whether they are imagined in the mind or encountered in reality. Intuition refers to a self-awareness that helps create a judgment from a lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). The view on the nature of being in phenomenology is that reality exists within the individual and is shaped by their perceptions and consciousness (Neubauer et al., 2019). Husserl emphasized that the focus of scientific study should be on phenomena as perceived by individual consciousness, offering a richer understanding of lived experiences that quantitative methods cannot fully capture (Neubauer et al., 2019).

In transcendental phenomenology, as Neubauer et al. (2019) explained, the researcher's role is to examine the phenomenon from multiple perspectives, identify units of meaning, and group them into themes to create the "what" of the experience. This is followed by imaginative variation, a process that allows the researcher to explore various conditions and perspectives to construct the "how" of the experience. By integrating these

descriptions, the researcher uncovers the essence of the phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019).

This process, grounded in Husserl's work, emphasizes a rigorous reflective practice in transcendental phenomenology. Central to this is *epoche*, or bracketing, which requires the researcher to consciously set aside personal biases and assumptions to ensure objectivity (Neubauer et al., 2019). Imaginative variation, in this context, involves systematically varying the conditions or perspectives of the phenomenon to reveal its essential structures, while maintaining objectivity through bracketing (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Thus, imaginative variation in transcendental phenomenology emphasizes a greater focus on neutrality and objectivity compared to general phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) emphasized that bracketing is crucial in ensuring researchers can explore phenomena, such as how Black women experience labeling in the mother-daughter relationship and the development of the SBW Schema, without the influence of preconceived notions. By engaging in bracketing, the principal researcher strived to see the phenomenon as it truly is, free from their own assumptions, which is vital for enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings. Addressing their own biases and identity, positionality, and engaging in reflective practices are essential to achieving this objectivity, especially as a Black daughter of a Black mother.

Identity, Positionality, and Reflexivity of the Researcher

Wilson et al. (2022) identified three key concepts in phenomenological research specifically for clinical researchers: positionality, reflexivity, and identity. This framework is highly relevant to the study as the principal researcher is a licensed

professional counselor. Wilson et al. (2022) described identity as a fluid concept shaped by how individuals perceive and express themselves in their professional roles.

Positionality refers to the stance a researcher adopts, requiring reflection on how personal traits may influence the research process, while reflexivity involves critically examining and questioning one's assumptions to ensure transparency and credibility (Wilson et al., 2022). These concepts are further explored in relation to the study as the identity, reflectivity, and positionality of the principal researcher all had the potential to directly impact the research process.

Identity

The principal researcher is a Black female Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) who owns a group therapy practice and is currently a doctoral student, embodying a multifaceted professional identity shaped by diverse roles and experiences. As a counselor, the principal researcher is committed to enhancing the emotional and psychological well-being of clients. The role of practice owner introduces an additional layer of leadership and operational management, requiring skills in guiding a team and shaping the therapeutic framework. Doctoral studies further demonstrate dedication to advancing knowledge and contributing to the field through research.

As a Black woman in these roles, the principal researcher also navigates and addresses the complexities of race and gender, advocating for inclusivity and understanding the diverse backgrounds of clients. This perspective is further enriched by personal identity, particularly as a Black daughter of a Black mother, which influences professional interactions and research perspectives. This intersection of personal and professional experiences fosters a deepened empathy and advocacy for inclusiveness in

mental health care. Furthermore, the principal researcher serves as both the target audience and the lens through which the research is conducted, ensuring that the study remains deeply informed by lived experience and professional expertise.

Positionality

Huberman and Miles (2002) described a researcher's positionality as either insider or outsider. In the context of this study, the principal researcher occupies an insider position, as they are both a member of the studied community and meet all participation criteria. This insider status provides distinct advantages, such as the ability to foster deeper connections with participants, similar to their clinical work, where many Black women clients prefer a Black female therapist due to shared cultural experiences. As a Black female Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), doctoral student, and Black daughter of a Black mother, the principal researcher brings a nuanced understanding of the challenges and dynamics faced by this community. However, to mitigate bias, the researcher implemented strategies to enhance trustworthiness, particularly through reflexivity, which will be further discussed.

Additionally, the principal researcher's personal experiences contribute to their understanding of the study's themes. Having navigated the influence of maternal labeling on self-concept, the researcher has personally observed how the mother-daughter relationship creates a continuous feedback loop in identity development. Over time, recognizing the complexities of this dynamic was essential for forming a more independent self-concept and breaking cycles of internalized labels. Through ongoing discussions with friends, clients, and other Black women, the researcher has explored

these patterns across lived experiences, leading to the development of insights, conceptualizations, and perspectives that inform the present study.

Reflexivity

The framework for trustworthiness outlined by Lincoln et al. (1985), which includes the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, provided a structured approach for engaging in reflexivity throughout the research process. As a Black female Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and doctoral student who owned a group therapy practice and identified as the Black daughter of a Black mother, these criteria were particularly relevant to the principal researcher's dual role as both a researcher and a member of the studied community. The intersection of personal and professional identities enriched the research perspective, ensuring that the data collection and analysis accurately represented genuine lived experiences while upholding rigorous academic standards. It was essential for the principal researcher to integrate the four trustworthiness criteria by consistently engaging in reflexive strategies to enhance the integrity and validity of the study.

Additionally, Wilson et al. (2022) suggested practical strategies for enhancing reflexivity that was incorporated into the current study, including maintaining a research diary. This diary did not only capture the research process but also reflect on how the identity of the principal researcher influences both the collection and interpretation of data. Involving non-clinicians in the data analysis can provide an external viewpoint that helped balance the insider perspective, enhancing the objectivity and breadth of the analysis. Including a positionality statement within the data analysis further articulated how the unique background of the principal researcher as a clinician

and a Black woman shapes the research, ensuring that the study remains transparent and grounded in its cultural and social context (Wilson et al., 2022).

Credibility. Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the study's findings (Lincoln et al., 1985). Credibility is closely tied to reflexivity, which requires researchers to reflect on their biases and positionality to ensure objectivity, thereby fostering truthful and unbiased results (Ahmed, 2024). Building trust with participants over time and using multiple data collection methods helps strengthen credibility by gathering richer data and minimizing bias (Ahmed, 2024). The current study ensured credibility through triangulation and member checking. Triangulation involved using multiple methods, data sources, and perspectives to cross-verify results (Ahmed, 2024; Lincoln et al., 1985). A peer reviewer, who is of a different race and not in the mental health field, reviewed interview recordings and transcripts to identify codes and themes (Ahmed, 2024). To enhance triangulation, both interviews and a focus group were conducted to corroborate findings from different data sources (Wilson et al., 2022). Member checking involved sharing data and interpretations with participants for verification, giving them the opportunity to correct any inaccuracies, provide additional insights, and reflect on the identified themes (Ahmed, 2024). This process helped ensure the findings are accurate and aligned with participants' experiences. It also provided the principal researcher an opportunity to reflect on themes that have been identified further allowing questioning of previous assumptions.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which study results can be applied to other populations (Lincoln et al., 1985). Reflexivity enhances transferability by encouraging researchers to recognize their biases and provide detailed descriptions of the

research context and participants, aiding others in assessing the findings' relevance in different settings. Although qualitative studies often focus on specific contexts and small samples, thorough documentation improves replicability and potential transferability (Ahmed, 2024). This is crucial for qualitative research, as it explores people's thoughts and feelings and may inform future studies or the development of survey tools for quantitative research (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Dependability. Dependability in qualitative research refers to the stability of data over time and under varying conditions (Lincoln et al., 1985). Due to the subjective nature of qualitative analysis, achieving dependability can be challenging. However, strategies such as peer review, detailed methodological documentation, and supervision by an experienced researcher enhance dependability. Peer review helps verify data interpretation (Lincoln et al., 1985), while supervision ensures rigor, particularly for doctoral-level researchers (McNair et al., 2008). Thoroughly documenting methodology also provided transparency and increased the reliability of the analysis (Ahmed, 2024). A supervised researcher was able to challenge the pre-existing assumptions of the principal researcher and research team to help to identify blind spots.

Confirmability. Confirmability in qualitative research ensures that findings reflect participants' perspectives rather than researcher biases (Lincoln et al., 1985). This is achieved through maintaining an audit trail, employing triangulation, and practicing reflexivity. Reflexivity involves continuous self-reflection on the researcher's biases throughout the data collection and analysis phases (Ahmed, 2024). To strengthen this process, I plan to engage in reflexive bracketing as advised by Ahern (1999), which includes keeping a reflective journal to document personal biases and insights. This

journal, along with peer reviews and colleague consultations, enhances both credibility and confirmability by offering a structured way to identify and mitigate biases (Ahern, 1999; Ahmed, 2024).

Conceptual Framework

Based on the findings from the unpublished qualitative study that served as the pilot for the current study, a conceptual framework highlighting the significant role parents, particularly mothers, play in shaping the development of self-worth and identity in children was developed. Participants emphasized how labels assigned during childhood had lasting impacts throughout their developmental years. When the data was analyzed, the prevailing theme that emerged was that self-worth and identity are often negatively affected by labels, even those perceived as positive, such as “perfect,” “smart,” and “good.” These labels, while intended to uplift, came with negative, long-term implications.

Many participants shared personal reflections regarding the role of their mothers in shaping their self-worth. For example, participants stated, “*My mother destroyed my self-worth,*” and “*Be careful of what you say to your children because the parent’s voice becomes the child’s inner voice.*” Another participant said, “*Self-worth is taught—as a mother, I feel that I have to tell my children they are worthy,*” while another emphasized, “*Self-worth comes from your parents.*” These quotes underscore how deeply parental influence, particularly through labeling, affects the child’s self-concept.

When asked about the impact of labels during childhood, many participants noted that these labels led to low self-esteem and confusion about their true value outside of being “good” or “sweet.” One participant shared, “*It has caused me low self-esteem and*

self-worth, not knowing my true value outside of me being 'good' or 'sweet.' ” Others expressed how labels created internal conflict, with one participant stating, “All these labels have made me have such conflicting beliefs about myself, family, and the world around me. I often find my self-worth from others and need assurance I am doing the right thing.” The findings illustrate how labeling within the mother-daughter relationship impacts self-concept, which is visually represented in *Figure 1*.

One of the most striking findings from the pilot study was the frequency with which participants referred to the label “Golden Child” and its gender-specific counterpart, “Good Girl.” These labels had profound long-term negative implications. The “Golden Child” label reflected characteristics such as perfection, meeting the expectations of others, and excelling in various areas, while the “Good Girl” label appeared so frequently that it warranted a subcategory under “Golden Child” during the coding process. Terms like “Gifted and talented,” “Star child,” “Baby Jesus,” and “Perfect Girl” were common examples that participants used to describe their experiences.

The intersection of the “good girl” (Rodgers, 2021) and “strong Black woman” (Abrams et al., 2014; Tookes, 2021; West et al., 2016) labels reveals the significant and often negative implications these labels have on Black women and girls. Both labels emphasize selflessness and the expectation that Black women and girls prioritize the needs of others above their own. As “good girls,” Black girls may feel pressured to maintain harmony in relationships by being compliant, nurturing, and non-confrontational, while the “strong Black woman” label reinforces the expectation of

resilience, independence, and the ability to endure hardship without complaint (Abrams et al., 2014; West et al., 2016).

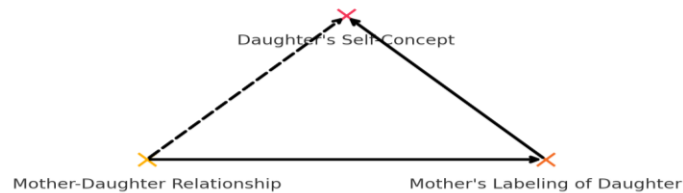
This overlap creates a dynamic in which Black women and girls are often viewed as both caretakers and emotional pillars, expected to provide support and stability to those around them. These societal expectations foster a deep sense of responsibility and sacrifice, leading many Black women and girls to internalize the belief that their worth is tied to how well they care for others and how much they can endure. This internalization often results in the neglect of their emotional and physical well-being, as showing vulnerability or seeking help may be seen as a betrayal of the strength they are expected to embody (Abrams et al., 2014; Tookes, 2021; West et al., 2016). The intersection of these labels not only reinforces limiting stereotypes about Black womanhood but also creates a rigid framework that leaves little room for vulnerability, softness, or self-prioritization. Ultimately, this can lead to emotional strain, burnout, and depression (Abrams et al., 2019), highlighting the importance of critically examining these labels and creating spaces where Black women and girls can define themselves outside of these restrictive roles.

This unpublished study points to the need for additional research on the role of the mother-daughter relationship and parental labeling in the development of self-concept, with a particular focus on positive labels that align with the SBW Schema. Understanding how these labels affect self-concept and mental health can help guide interventions that allow Black women and girls to redefine their identities in more empowering ways.

Figure 1

Cycles of Influence: Understanding the Feedback Loop in Mother-Daughter Relationships

Relationships



This diagram shows a visual representation of my conceptualization of the feedback loop. The dynamic flow of influence within a mother-daughter relationship is visually represented to emphasize how the relationship serves as the channel through which the mother's labeling impacts the daughter's self-concept. The direct arrow from the "Mother-Daughter Relationship" to "Mother's Labeling of Daughter" illustrates that the nature of their relationship influences how the mother labels her daughter. Subsequently, an arrow leads from "Mother's Labeling of Daughter" to "Daughter's Self-Concept," indicating that these labels directly affect how the daughter perceives herself. Additionally, a dashed arrow loops from "Daughter's Self-Concept" back to the "Mother-Daughter Relationship," signifying that the daughter's self-concept also feeds back into and potentially influences the nature of their relationship. This diagram captures the cyclical and interconnected nature of these dynamics, highlighting the critical role of the relationship in mediating the effects of labeling.

Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling is often used in social science research (Stratton, 2024). The aim of purposeful sampling is to find participants that fit a certain set of criteria because as Palinkas et al., (2015) explained, the participants are believed to have first hand knowledge about the research topic being studied. Research utilizing purposeful samples aims to explore current concepts, standards, and social issues. It is often designed to provide deeper insight into specific research questions (Stratton, 2024). The current study used purposeful sampling to recruit participants as it aligned with the goals of the study to explore the concepts of the Black mother-daughter relationship and self-concept with the goal of gaining deeper insight to the research questions.

A subtype of purposeful sampling is snowball sampling. It is described by Palinkas et al., (2015) as a strategy where researchers begin by identifying key participants who have experience with the phenomenon being studied. Those participants are then asked to encourage others who meet the criteria to also participate. Stratton (2024) noted that snowball sampling can lead to recruiting participants with similar beliefs and opinions. However, given the specificity of the current study, this concern was less relevant. Mother-daughter relationships are inherently unique, and while participants may connect through shared experiences, this reflects broader cultural patterns rather than mere acquaintance-based similarities. The current study used snowball sampling as a means of participant recruitment, however sibling pairs were excluded as they would be reflecting on the same mother and would limit the amount of unique data collected.

Data saturation is often used to determine sample size in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2020). Guest et al. (2020) proposed a structured method focusing on three elements: base size, run length, and new information threshold. The base size for the current study was set at 9 for this study, representing the initial interviews analyzed to establish key themes. Run length, set at three interviews, identifies new themes, with saturation achieved when new information falls below 5% or none at all. This approach ensures an adequate sample size by monitoring saturation both during and after data collection. Data collection concluded when no new information emerges, the current study followed this method to ensure a structured and transparent process (Creswell, 2013).

Pertaining to participation selection, participants were required to meet the following criteria: 1) self-identify as a Black female, 2) identify their mother as a Black female, 3) be above the age of 18, and 4) self-identify with the SBW schema 5) self-identify with internalizing the expectation of being a GG in childhood. Definitions of each of the criteria as outlined in Chapter 1 were presented to participants during the screening process. Participants who do not meet all 5 criteria were excluded from the study. Black women who are transgender were excluded from this study as the previous research has not explored this mother-daughter relationship dynamic. Lastly, there is an additional layer of intersectionality that is found between trans-daughters and their mothers as well as daughters and their trans-mothers that were not taken into consideration for the current study.

Data Collection

To recruit participants for the interview, an email invitation was sent to referrals from personal connections, a local counseling practice, and the graduate listserv at Oakland University. Participants were encouraged to engage in snowball sampling by forwarding the invitation to other Black women who meet the first three inclusion criteria, the fourth and fifth inclusion criteria was screened for by the researcher. This process will involve providing the participants with a description of the SBW schema and the GG via Qualtrics, where they were instructed to indicate whether they identify with each of the descriptions. The screening tool has been included in Appendix C. Any participants who do not complete the screening or do not self-identify with the definitions provided in Chapter 1 were excluded from the study.

The informed consent form was sent via email, all interviews were conducted via Zoom, thereby enabling transcription and audio recording. Conducting interviews via Zoom will offer greater flexibility for scheduling. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing a general list of questions with room for flexibility and deeper probing, as explained by Merriam et al. (2016). This structure helps the interviewer explore emerging themes based on participants' responses, fostering rapport and more meaningful discussions. Each interview will last approximately one hour.

The research will also include a focus group as an additional method of data collection. The focus group will involve no more than eight participants, following Kreuger et al. (2015), who suggest that 6-10 participants are ideal for fostering rich discussion while allowing everyone to contribute. The focus group was held in person at my counseling practice to promote participant interactions and richer data collection.

Observing non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures will provide important context to participants' verbal responses (Krueger et al., 2015). This in-person format aligns with insights from Egan (2013) and Hill et al. (2003), who emphasize the role of non-verbal communication in understanding participants' deeper emotions and thoughts. Individuals who completed the interviews will not be eligible to participate in the focus group, this will widen the diversity of data collected by increasing overall individuals participating in the study. Ultimately, by using both interviews and a focus group, comprehensive data on participants' experiences was gathered, fostering a richer and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Data Sources

The data was derived from two primary sources: individual semi-structured interviews and an in-person focus group. The semi-structured interviews will allow for a personalized exploration of participants' experiences, focusing on how self-concept develops within the Black mother-daughter relationship. The flexible nature of the interviews (Merriam et al., 2016) will enable the researcher to follow up on emerging themes during the conversations.

The focus group, an additional data source, will provide a group dynamic where participants build on one another's contributions. This interaction, as highlighted by Palmer et al. (2010), often leads to the articulation of thoughts and feelings that may not surface in individual interviews. Conducting the focus group in person will allow the researcher to observe and interpret non-verbal communication, which, as Krueger et al. (2015) and Egan (2013) suggest, can add an additional layer of understanding to verbalized experiences.

Data Analysis Procedures

To ensure a comprehensive and reflective approach to data analysis, the principal researcher followed Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological method, which provided a structured framework for interpreting participants' lived experiences. This method, which emphasized setting aside biases through epoche or bracketing, was comparable to journaling, as both approaches encouraged the release of preconceived notions for deeper exploration. The principal researcher had previously benefited from journaling and found that this practice was immensely valuable to the data analysis procedures.

Before analyzing the data, the principal researcher engaged in bracketing to minimize personal biases and remain open to new ideas and concepts (Moustakas, 1994). To extend reflexivity beyond coding sessions, a research diary was maintained (Wilson et al., 2022), allowing for continuous reflection throughout the research process. This ongoing reflexivity contributed to greater self-awareness, ensured objectivity, and strengthened the authenticity and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

After engaging in bracketing, the principal researcher conducted phenomenological reduction, systematically breaking down the collected experiences into their core components (Moustakas, 1994). This process, known as horizontalization, ensured that each piece of data was treated with equal importance, preventing any single statement from being prioritized over others at this stage (Moustakas, 1994). The goal was to avoid hierarchical prioritization and instead create a balanced representation of participant experiences.

This step was crucial for accurately describing the phenomenon as it was experienced by participants, with a particular focus on the development of self-concept in Black daughters and the impact of maternal labeling (Moustakas, 1994). The objective was to isolate essential qualities, eliminate assumptions, and uncover the specific ways labeling influenced self-concept formation, ensuring a rigorous and authentic analysis of the lived experiences shared in the study.

Next, the principal researcher engaged in imaginative variation, exploring the possible meanings and perspectives of the phenomenon by examining various factors that may have influenced participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This process involved thinking creatively and analytically about the data to uncover deeper contextual influences that shaped how participants experienced the phenomenon.

The principal researcher actively considered multiple angles and external influences, including cultural, social, and emotional factors, to identify underlying structural themes. The goal of this step was to answer the "how", understanding the mechanisms and contexts that contributed to participants' lived experiences, ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the data.

As the analysis progressed, the principal researcher clustered themes by identifying patterns and connections within the data, enhancing the overall understanding of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Both focus group discussions and interview data were analyzed to detect emerging patterns and relationships.

To increase the rigor and depth of the research, the principal researcher utilized Dedoose to efficiently organize, code, and analyze transcripts from the interviews and focus groups. Additionally, Dedoose allowed for the creation of memos documenting

thoughts, insights, and reflections throughout the coding process, linking these memos to specific codes or data segments to enhance clarity and ensure a systematic, transparent approach to data interpretation.

As the analysis progressed, after identifying emerging themes, the principal researcher crafted detailed textual descriptions that provided narrative accounts of participants' experiences, capturing the complexity and depth of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The next step involved developing a contextual design, interpreting the data within a broader framework to understand how emotions, environmental factors, and social dynamics influenced participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Finally, the principal researcher synthesized all insights to create a coherent and comprehensive description of the lived experiences. This synthesis aimed to capture both the uniqueness and universality of the phenomenon, offering deep insights into the human condition as experienced by study participants (Moustakas, 1994). Rather than simply listing themes, the analysis focused on weaving them together to present a holistic understanding of how the phenomenon was experienced. By integrating these meanings into a coherent whole, the principal researcher sought to capture the essence of the experience, revealing its deeper significance. Ultimately, this process transformed fragmented data into a meaningful representation, offering profound insights into the development of self-concept within the Black mother-daughter relationship.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Oakland University in Michigan to ensure that the

research adhered to the highest ethical standards. Given the sensitive nature of this study, particularly its focus on a marginalized population, careful ethical considerations were paramount. Participants, who were drawn from marginalized communities, reflected on deeply personal experiences related to trauma, labeling, and familial relationships. Therefore, the research ensured informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for the emotional well-being of participants throughout the process.

To protect participants, several key measures were implemented. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Participants were given opportunities to ask questions and were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing consequences. All respondents were informed of these rights through a pre-approved Informed Consent form, which had been reviewed and approved by the IRB.

Confidentiality was a critical concern in this study. All data collected remained anonymous, and every effort was made to protect participant identities. Data was anonymized to safeguard privacy, and precautions were taken to prevent the disclosure of any identifiable information.

Given the sensitive and personal nature of the topics discussed, such as trauma, labeling, and family dynamics, special attention was paid to participants' emotional well-being. Post-interview debriefing sessions were offered to provide participants with support, and referrals for counseling services were made available if necessary. These measures ensured that participants received emotional care and support both during and after their participation in the study.

Additionally, positionality and reflexivity were crucial considerations, given the principal researcher's personal connection to the subject matter as a Black daughter of a Black mother. Continuous reflexive practices were employed to mitigate bias and maintain the integrity of the study's findings. This reflexivity ensured that the principal researcher remained aware of personal influences throughout the study, promoting objectivity in the research process.

Furthermore, permission to use Dedoose as the data collection and analysis tool was obtained, ensuring that the software complied with legal and ethical guidelines. The study did not commence without approval from the dissertation chair, committee members, and the IRB. Overall, these ethical measures ensured that participants' rights, privacy, and well-being were prioritized and that the study was conducted in a manner that respected both their personal experiences and the broader ethical standards set by Oakland University.

Chapter Summary

This chapter brings together key theoretical frameworks, methodological considerations, and ethical precautions that will guide this study. By examining the intersection of labeling theory, psychodynamic, and attachment theories, this study provided a comprehensive understanding of how self-concept is shaped within Black mother-daughter relationships, particularly through labels such as the GG and cultural schemas such as the SBW schema. The selection of qualitative research, rooted in phenomenology, offers an appropriate and nuanced approach to exploring the lived experiences of participants. The chapter has also outlined the study's commitment to ethical rigor, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the emotional well-being of

participants. These considerations, coupled with the use of reflexivity and bracketing, have ensured that the research was conducted with both integrity and sensitivity. The next chapter will delve into the findings of the study, bringing these frameworks to life through the voices and experiences of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, exploring how the GG Archetype and the SBW Schema shape identity development and self-concept among Black women, particularly through the lens of the mother-daughter relationship. The results provide insight into how labeling within this relationship influences self-perception, how the GG and SBW frameworks interact with coping mechanisms, spirituality, and family expectations, and how participants engage in breaking generational cycles of self-sacrifice and emotional suppression.

The findings are organized around the four central research questions outlined in Chapter 1:

1. How does labeling in the mother-daughter relationship impact the development of self-concept?

2. What role does the mother-daughter relationship play in the development of the Strong Black Woman Schema?
3. How does the Strong Black Woman Schema impact the development of self-concept?
4. How does the "Good Girl" label, when reinforced within the mother-daughter relationship, contribute to the development of self-concept and the Strong Black Woman Schema?

Each of these questions is addressed through thematic analysis of participant narratives, which reveal the role of familial expectations, coping strategies, spirituality, and intergenerational dynamics in shaping self-concept. The chapter first explores the central theme of self-concept, followed by an examination of key mediating frameworks, GG and SBW, and their intersections with identity development. It then delves into the identified subthemes such as family expectations, coping mechanisms, the mother-daughter relationship, spirituality, and the process of breaking cycles. Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of cross-cutting themes that highlight the interconnected nature of identity-shaping forces, linking these themes to the broader conceptual framework and setting the stage for the discussion in Chapter 5.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

Target and Accessible Population

This study targeted Black women who experienced labeling within the mother-daughter relationship and identified with the GG Archetype in childhood and the SBW Schema in adulthood. Participants were required to be at least 18 years old to provide reflective insights on how these experiences shaped their self-concept. To maintain

cultural specificity, the study excluded individuals who did not identify as Black women, did not identify with both GG and SBW, or were raised by non-Black mothers. The accessible population included Black women across diverse geographic locations within the United States, ensuring variation in cultural and familial influences.

Following IRB approval, participants were recruited via social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn), Oakland University's counseling listserv, and snowball sampling, where participants referred others who met the study criteria. The study employed qualitative methods, using semi-structured interviews to explore lived experiences. Interviews were conducted via HIPAA-compliant Zoom, lasting 45–75 minutes, with questions focusing on labeling, self-concept, and the mother-daughter relationship. A focus group was also conducted to encourage diverse perspectives and participant interaction.

All participants provided informed consent before participation. Consent forms detailed rights, confidentiality measures, and study objectives. Interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded with participant permission, and transcriptions were completed verbatim for accuracy. This approach ensured rich, reflective data aligned with the study's aim of examining the impact of labeling and the mother-daughter relationship on Black women's self-concept.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process for this study followed a systematic approach, incorporating Dillman's (2000) suggested steps for survey and qualitative research to ensure consistency, rigor, and participant engagement. The data collection procedure is outlined in detail in this section.

Participant Recruitment

The data collection process began with identifying and reaching out to potential participants who met the study's inclusion criteria. Recruitment materials were designed to explain the study's purpose, eligibility criteria, and steps for participation. These materials were distributed through various channels, including social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, where calls for participation were posted. Additional outreach was facilitated through community networks, including local Black women's organizations, academic groups, and therapists. To expand the pool of participants, snowball sampling was also employed, allowing existing participants to refer others who fit the study's criteria. This step was essential in establishing trust, fostering transparency, and ensuring meaningful engagement with participants.

Description of Participants

A total of 47 individuals responded to the screener questions for this study. Of these, 12 participants completed individual interviews. Additionally, a focus group consisting of 4 participants contributed to the overall analysis, resulting in a total of 16 participants whose narratives were coded. Data saturation was achieved after analyzing the narratives of the 12 participants and the focus group. While the focus group was coded collectively, each individual interview was coded separately. *Table 1* provides a comprehensive breakdown of participant demographics, including assigned pseudonyms, ages, and whether they participated in an individual interview or focus group.

Table 1***Participant Demographics***

Participant Name	Participant Age	Data Collection Method
Alex	40	Interview
Amy	30	Interview
Bailey	35	Interview
Danielle	24	Interview
Denise	34	Focus Group
Elsa	49	Focus Group
Gloria	30	Interview
Hannah	24	Interview
Jackie	31	Interview
Janice	21	Interview
Jasmine	63	Interview
Kayla	58	Focus Group
Michelle	32	Interview
Nitasha	30	Interview
Robby	29	Interview
Yasmine	33	Focus Group

Overall, there were 47 respondents in total. 22 individuals were excluded from the study for various reasons. Four respondents were excluded based on self-identification criteria: three identified with the SBW schema but not the GG archetype, while one did not identify with either construct. Additionally, 18 respondents were excluded due to

concerns that they were bots, as their phone numbers and email addresses contained inconsistencies. Furthermore, nine individuals met the inclusion criteria but did not respond to scheduling requests for interviews or focus group participation. This left a final participant pool of 16 individuals, all of whom self-identified as Black women. Participants were from Michigan, Arizona, Virginia, and Texas, ranging in age from 21 to 63, with a mean age of 34.19.

Member Checking

Member checking was conducted following the completion of initial coding to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings. An email was sent to participants outlining the identified codes and inviting them to review and provide feedback on whether the codes accurately reflected their experiences. The email template used for this process can be found in Appendix D. Seven participants responded to the email and confirmed that the codes accurately represented their narratives, with no requested modifications. This affirmation reinforced the reliability of the coding process and the validity of the themes derived from the data

Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis process began with verbatim transcription of interviews recorded via HIPAA-compliant Zoom. Transcripts were imported into Dedoose, where the research team systematically coded and organized the data. Initial codes were generated from recurring themes, then refined into subcodes to capture nuanced aspects of participants' experiences. These subcodes were analyzed for their connection to the GG and the SBW Schema, with influences categorized as either unidirectional—meaning the influence flowed in one direction, from one construct to the other—or bidirectional,

indicating a reciprocal relationship where both constructs influenced each other. The analysis ultimately mapped these themes to the overarching concept of self-concept, illustrating how GG and SBW mediate identity development.

Data saturation was reached following 12 interviews analyzed in four rounds of coding with the codes identified by the principal researcher followed by feedback from the research team. The first three rounds established six key themes: family expectations, identity formation, coping mechanisms, the mother-daughter relationship, spirituality, and breaking cycles. The final round of coding confirmed that no new themes emerged. This continuous approach ensured the findings were comprehensive, rigorous, and reflective of participants' lived experiences.

Bracketing

Given the principal researcher's personal connection to the study topic, bracketing was an essential component in mitigating bias. To ensure interpretations remained grounded in participants' narratives rather than personal assumptions, the researcher maintained a research diary to document personal reactions, biases, and emotional responses before and during data analysis. This reflective practice allowed for self-awareness and intentional separation of personal experiences from data interpretation.

An example of this would be the researcher's use of the reflective diary after interviews where a strong personal connection was felt. In these instances, the researcher documented specific distinctions between their own lived experiences and those of the participant, helping to create a clear separation while acknowledging points of connection. During the coding process, the researcher noted instances of identification with particular quotes, using the diary to validate personal emotional responses while also

challenging themselves to contextualize the quote within broader societal structures. This practice ensured that data interpretation remained grounded in participants' narratives rather than personal assumptions. The goal was not to eliminate identification with participants, an unrealistic expectation given the researcher's positionality, but rather to critically differentiate the narratives, recognizing that no two experiences are identical and that the researcher, while connected to the topic, remains distinct from the participants.

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994) was applied to distill participant experiences to their core elements, ensuring no single narrative was prioritized over another. Horizontalization was used to treat all participant statements as equally significant during initial coding. Thematic clustering was then performed, grouping data into six primary subthemes: family expectations, identity formation, coping mechanisms, the mother-daughter relationship, spirituality, and breaking cycles. The list of subthemes and codes can be found in *Table 2*. Patterns within the data underscored the cyclical nature of intergenerational influences, revealing how family expectations shaped self-concept and coping strategies across generations.

Table 2

Thematic Clusters

Subtheme (Cluster)	Codes
Family Expectations and Roles	Behavioral Expectations, Caregiving Roles, Generational Dynamics, Academic Expectations, Expectation of Conformity, Internalized Parental Voice, Role Model Expectations

Table 2- Continued

Thematic Clusters

Subtheme (Cluster)	Codes
Identity Formation	Internal vs. External Identity Conflict, Struggle for Authenticity, Suppression of Self, Reduction of Identity Through Labels, Masking, Awareness of Racial Labels (Internal), Identity Autonomy, Family Impact on Sense of Self
Coping Mechanisms	Emotional Suppression, Growth in Vulnerability, Discomfort with Vulnerability, Boundary-Setting, Remaining Silent, Perfectionistic Pressure on Self, Awareness of Racial Labels (External), Hyper-Independence, Conforming
Influence of the Mother Daughter Relationship	Mother as Model, Tension Between Care and Independence, Boundaries and Reconciliation, Desire to Please Mom, Generational Pattern, Responsible for Mom's Emotions
Spirituality	Moral Expectations and the Good Girl Label, Struggle Between Spiritual Expectations and Authenticity, Strength and Resilience Tied to Faith, Spiritual Household
Breaking Cycles	Intentional Cycle Breaking, Teaching the Next Generation, Recognizing Patterns, Intentional De-Labeling, Parenting Differentiation, Therapy, Self-Awareness, Acceptance of Family, Differentiation of Self from Mom

Triangulation

To ensure rigor and minimize researcher bias, all transcripts were reviewed by two research assistants as themes and subcodes were developed. The finalized coding structure, along with the full transcripts, was then reviewed by a peer reviewer, a non-Black woman, who provided external feedback (Ahmed, 2024). This triangulation

process ensured that the coding accurately reflected participants' narratives rather than researcher assumptions, ultimately enhancing the credibility and validity of the findings.

Presentation of Findings

This section will include an in-depth overview of the findings from the data collection. Self-concept serves as the central theme of this study, as the purpose was to explore its development in relation to the influence of the mother-daughter relationship for Black women who were labeled the GG in childhood and identify with the SBW schema in adulthood. For the purpose of this study the researcher conceptualized the GG Archetype and SBW Schema as identity frameworks that shape the development of self-concept in this study. While self-concept serves as the central theme, the GG and SBW paradigms provide the lenses through which the following subthemes: family expectations and roles, spirituality, coping, the mother-daughter relationship, identity formation, and breaking cycles are internalized and processed.

Central Theme: Self-Concept

Self-concept serves as the central theme of this study, as it examines how the mother-daughter relationship, familial expectations, coping mechanisms, spirituality, and the GG Archetype and SBW Schema intersect to shape identity development. The mother-daughter dynamic is particularly influential, as it is within this relationship that labels such as GG and SBW are introduced, reinforced, modeled, and internalized, often dictating participants' sense of self-concept, emotional expression, and role expectations (Harris-Perry, 2011; Tookes, 2021). These labels not only impose cultural and gendered expectations but also intersect with racialized narratives, creating a complex framework

of identity formation that participants navigate throughout their lives (Bowman, 2023; Rogers, 2021).

This study employs Bowlby's attachment theory and Erikson's psychosocial stages to highlight the role of early relationships in shaping self-concept. Bowlby's internal working model underscores how secure or insecure attachments with the child's mother influences identity development, while Erikson's theory emphasizes the lifelong impact of familial interactions on self-perception (Bowlby, 1988; Erikson, 1950). These frameworks provide a foundation for understanding how GG and SBW emerge within the mother-daughter relationship and extend into broader self-concept development.

Each subtheme intersects with self-concept by shaping how participants internalize, navigate, and sometimes resist inherited labels. These influences create tension between authenticity and conformity, as participants work to reconcile their personal identity with societal and familial expectations (Harris-Perry, 2011; Nichols et al., 2015). The participants' narratives reveal that self-concept is not simply inherited but actively negotiated, both reinforced through intergenerational influences and reshaped through intentional acts of resistance and self-definition.

For Black women, self-concept is deeply embedded in societal, familial, and cultural dynamics, requiring them to balance strength with vulnerability, autonomy with obligation, and resilience with self-care. This chapter explores how the GG Archetype and SBW Schema serve as identity frameworks that mediate the development of self-concept, influencing how participants navigate family roles, emotional expression, and self-concept. Additionally, while the mother-daughter relationship plays a pivotal role in shaping self-concept, other familial and societal relationships also contribute to this

process. The nuanced interplay of labeling, intergenerational expectations, and societal pressures ultimately reveals the dynamic and evolving nature of self-concept, as participants strive to define themselves beyond inherited identities and external validation.

Identity Frameworks

In this study, the GG and SBW Schema were conceptualized as identity frameworks that shape the development of self-concept. The data in this study was analyzed through the lens of the GG and SBW paradigms as identity frameworks, reinforcing self-concept as the central theme. The GG Archetype, emerging in childhood, emphasizes compliance, perfectionism, and external validation, serving as an early influence on participants' self-concept development. As participants matured, the SBW Schema evolved as a response to familial and societal pressures, highlighting resilience, caregiving, and emotional suppression. Together, these frameworks mediate how the subthemes intersect with self-concept development.

Analyzing the data from this perspective allowed for a nuanced understanding of how these frameworks operate as identity constructs, influencing participants' perceptions of themselves while navigating intergenerational dynamics, societal stereotypes, and personal growth. This approach builds on existing research that positions identity frameworks as critical to understanding the interplay of labels and self-concept, particularly in the context of intersecting racial, cultural, and gendered narratives (Harris-Perry, 2011; Abrams et al., 2014; Tookes, 2021). By situating GG and SBW as identity frameworks, this study underscores their pivotal role in shaping, reinforcing, and sometimes challenging self-concept throughout participants' journeys.

Good Girl Archetype

The GG archetype emphasizes compliance, perfectionism, and external validation (Harris-Perry, 2011). It shapes how participants navigate familial and societal expectations, often reinforcing emotional suppression and the pressure to uphold an image of "goodness" (Nichols et al., 2015). The following section will provide an overview of each of the six subthemes as they relate to the GG archetype.

Family Expectations. The GG Archetype was deeply embedded in family expectations, shaping participants' identities from childhood. Being a "good girl" meant adhering to strict standards of obedience, responsibility, and achievement, often at the expense of personal autonomy. Nitasha described how she internalized this role, stating, *"Being the good girl meant sometimes hiding stuff that I was doing that didn't fit the good girl persona, but also it meant going above and beyond for my parents and grandparents. I became a yes girl, always trying to meet their expectations."* Her experience highlights how GG archetype fostered compliance and perfectionism, reinforcing the pressure to conform. Similarly, Hannah reflected on the emotional toll of these expectations, saying, *"I was trying to meet everyone's expectations, but it felt like I was losing myself in the process."* Over time, these pressures created internal conflicts, making it difficult for participants to differentiate their authentic selves from the roles imposed upon them. Even when explicit pressure was absent, family dynamics reinforced the GG archetype as an unspoken expectation.

While much of the discussion on inherited expectations centers on the mother-daughter relationship, participants described how fathers, grandmothers, and extended family members also reinforced the GG identity. Janice reflected on the career pressure

she felt from her father, explaining, *"Like a lot of pressure and like trying to live up to what I think my dad would want me to do. That's kind of why I went into engineering in the first place, because he pushed them."* Her experience illustrates how paternal expectations shaped career choices and self-concept, framing "good girl" behavior as fulfilling external standards rather than personal aspirations. Another participant described how her grandmother held her to a stricter standard than other children, stating, *"They could do whatever they wanted. They can go to school. They can act up. They can come home, don't do anything. Rooms look a mess. But I was the one who had to be orderly. You know I couldn't. I couldn't go to school and act a fool."* This highlights the unequal expectations placed on certain girls to uphold discipline and respectability, while others were granted more freedom. These rigid standards reinforced the idea that being a "good girl" meant control, emotional restraint, and maintaining order, leaving little room for self-exploration or imperfection.

As participants reflected on their experiences, many described how familial conditioning blurred the line between personal desires and imposed roles, making it difficult to distinguish their true identity from external expectations. Over time, these roles became so ingrained that participants questioned whether their self-concept was shaped by choice or obligation. Amy captured this internal conflict, stating, *"I don't know who I am sometimes because I spent so long being what everyone expected of me. It wasn't just a label anymore. It was like, that's who I was."* Her statement highlights how the GG archetype extended beyond behavior, becoming a deeply internalized framework for self-concept reinforced by family members that made it challenging to define themselves outside of external validation.

Mother-Daughter Relationship. For many participants, their mothers did not explicitly tell them to "be a good girl," yet they still internalized the role through observation and indirect reinforcement. Rather than being taught in a direct manner, the GG identity was absorbed through the ways their mothers navigated the world, handled responsibility, and expressed (or suppressed) emotions. Participants described learning what was expected of them not through direct instruction, but through the unspoken rules that shaped their upbringing.

Elsa reflected on this process, stating, *"I had to be the good girl... I was that good mother, but a child. And then I had to be this good girl to show my brother the way to go."* Her words illustrate how she was never explicitly told to be a GG, but rather, she assumed the role based on the example, or lack thereof, set before her. The modeling of responsibility and caretaking, particularly in the absence of explicit permission to be anything else, led her to embody the GG label naturally.

Similarly, another participant explained how perfectionism was never stated outright as an expectation, yet it became embedded in her self-concept, sharing, *"I don't want to say perfect, but that's how I view how my parents expected me to be."* The absence of direct reinforcement made the expectation feel even more internalized, as participants weren't simply following rules, they were aligning their identity with what they believed their mothers valued most.

Ultimately, participants' experiences reveal that the GG Archetype was not explicitly assigned but silently inherited, shaped by how their mothers navigated the world rather than by direct instruction. As Alex reflected, *"But for me, it wasn't even like the labels that she gave. It was more so like what I seen from her, and how she conducted*

her life. I made a decision based on her presence, and then lack thereof, to not be like her.” This quote encapsulates the power of observation in shaping self-concept, as participants internalized messages about responsibility, emotional restraint, and achievement based not on what their mothers said, but on how they lived. Whether participants sought to mirror their mothers' strength or actively reject certain patterns, their self-concept was deeply tied to what was modeled for them. In this way, the GG Archetype was not imposed, but absorbed, woven into identity through the unspoken expectations that shaped their understanding of what it meant to be seen as good, responsible, and worthy.

Identity Formation. The GG archetype made it difficult for participants to separate their authentic selves from imposed expectations. Danielle captured this conflict, explaining, *"I feel like the good girl stereotype really pushed me into where I am right now—when it comes to relationships, when it comes to education, what I decided to do. Like, I'm pursuing medicine because that's what good girls do, right? They want to help people. So I help people in the best way that I can, which is trying to go to med school. I feel like that has pushed me that way."* Her statement illustrates how GG shaped self-concept and life choices, making it challenging to develop an identity independent of societal and familial expectations. Similarly, Nitasha described the pressure to perform across multiple roles, explaining, *"I really struggled with boundary setting, trying to be smart, hardworking, the good girl... to try to fit what society is telling me, to try to fit what I thought people expected of me as a sister, as a daughter, as a granddaughter, as a student."* These reflections highlight how GG imposed intersectional pressures, reinforcing the expectation of being the “ideal” woman in every aspect of life.

As participants entered adulthood, these expectations became an internalized identity that participants struggled to separate from. Hannah reflected on this explaining, *"I am still figuring out who I am outside of my mom's expectations."* Her statement highlights the lifelong challenge of separating personal identity from generational conditioning. Alexis reflected on this internal tension, stating, *"So I didn't go to the parties. I didn't do Greek life. It was just so many different things that I was afraid to do, because I wondered, will I still be seen as a good girl? I feel like I still had to keep that up, even though I told myself, when you go to college, you can be whoever you want to be. You don't have to keep this label anymore."* Her experience underscores how GG remained a defining framework well into adulthood, restricting participants' ability to explore their identity outside of familial and societal expectations.

The journey toward differentiation was often met with resistance, as rejecting these expectations felt like a betrayal of deeply ingrained family roles. Amy described this internal conflict, explaining,

And now that I'm an adult, like, no one's forcing me to do anything, but it's still like that potential of guilt is still there. Even recently, I went on vacation for my 30th birthday and had a shot with my mom. My grandma was like, 'Oh, that's what you guys are doing? You're gonna be drunk,' and she started saying all these different things. And it wasn't even anything crazy—it was just a green tea shot. Then me and my mom made a joke, and she was like, 'Oh, it must be the liquor because you had that shot five hours ago.' So even when I feel comfortable not being the good girl, something is said or implied that makes me think, 'Okay, I must have done too much—let me pull back.'

Her statement underscores how GG created a profound sense of obligation, where deviation, even in small ways, was met with subtle reprimands that reinforced internalized guilt.

However, participants also described moments of empowerment as they worked to reclaim their identities. Hannah captured this shift, stating, *"I want to be good with not being perfect and not being good enough."* This statement reflects the gradual rejection of external validation as the foundation of self-concept, allowing participants to embrace imperfection and self-acceptance.

Coping Mechanisms. For many participants, coping mechanisms developed as a response to the emotional weight of maintaining the GG label. The need for perfectionism, self-sacrifice, and emotional control were dominant clusters, shaping how participants navigated personal and professional relationships. Bailey expressed how perfectionism was central to her self-concept, stating, *"I prided myself on being a good girl... I could check boxes. But if I missed the mark, I was ruined!"* This illustrates how the GG framework ties identity to external validation, making any perceived failure feel catastrophic. Additionally, emotional suppression emerged as a key coping strategy. Nitasha articulated this struggle, explaining, *"You have to be strong for everyone, and sometimes you forget about yourself... I think that's the strong Black woman persona, always trying to help the world selflessly."* These narratives reinforce the bidirectional relationship between self-concept and coping mechanisms, where early internalization of the GG label led to self-sacrifice and emotional suppression that persisted into adulthood, often manifesting in the SBW.

Participants described how these learned behaviors became automatic, making it difficult to break free from the need to meet expectations at all costs. Robby reflected on this generational cycle, stating, *"My mom has the same thought process of the good girl situation from my grandma, and then I got it, and then I try to fill the void so my mom's not as stressed."* This intergenerational transmission of coping mechanisms illustrates how participants internalized responsibility and self-sacrifice from an early age. Similarly, Elsa expressed, *"I had to be this good girl to show my brother the way to go,"* highlighting how caregiving expectations extended beyond parent-child relationships and into sibling dynamics. This expectation to lead and maintain order often left participants struggling to balance personal needs with external demands. As they matured, many recognized the emotional toll of these coping strategies and began actively working to unlearn perfectionism and cultivate self-compassion, a shift that was both liberating and deeply challenging.

Breaking Cycles. Despite the constraints imposed by the GG archetype, many participants actively worked to unlearn inherited roles and redefine their self-concept. Amy captured this struggle, explaining, *"I think I struggle with self-concept, like I don't entirely know who I am sometimes, and that's something I've tried to work on in therapy. I'm still not there yet, but we're working on it. But it's like, because I grew up for so long with what I was supposed to be, that I think it morphed into my personality, and I don't know what I would have been."* Her reflection highlights the long-term impact of internalizing the GG label, where participants had to challenge deep-seated beliefs about identity and self-concept. A crucial part of breaking this cycle involved rejecting perfectionism and setting boundaries. Jackie emphasized this shift, asserting, *"I don't*

want my kids to think they have to be perfect to be loved—it's something I had to unlearn for myself." Her statement underscores the generational weight of the GG archetype and the conscious efforts participants made to redefine expectations for themselves and future generations.

For many, breaking free from the GG archetype was met with resistance from family members who upheld the same rigid standards. Yasmine captured this struggle, stating, *"People are like, Oh, well, you're being selfish... so basically, I'm supposed to be in shambles while making sure everybody else is. Well, who's going to be pouring into me?"* Her words highlight the tension between self-preservation and familial duty, as participants navigated guilt and external judgment while unlearning the expectation of self-sacrifice. Similarly, Alex reflected on the weight of intergenerational caregiving, explaining, *"I was groomed to be my family's caretaker... It's just what was expected of me because my mom wasn't around."* This demonstrates how breaking cycles required both personal growth and an active rejection of inherited roles that had long defined their sense of self-concept.

Participants who successfully broke free from the GG identity described a shift toward self-compassion and self-definition, rather than seeking validation through compliance or achievement. Hannah reflected on this transformation, stating, *"I call myself rebellious because I'm not doing it anymore."* Her statement highlights the power of unlearning, as participants moved away from external validation and toward an authentic self-concept. By redefining success, resilience, and self-concept, they cultivated an identity that aligned with their personal values rather than inherited expectations.

Spirituality. For some participants, spirituality reinforced the GG archetype by intertwining religious teachings with expectations of perfection, obedience, and emotional restraint. Faith was often introduced as a guiding principle within families, shaping moral values and defining what it meant to be "good," particularly for young girls. Religious beliefs justified high behavioral expectations, reinforcing purity, humility, and self-sacrifice as virtues. This alignment between spirituality and the GG archetype created an internalized belief that falling short of perfection was not just a personal failure but a spiritual one. Kayla captured this struggle, stating, *"Growing up in church meant I had to keep it together at all times,"* reflecting how religious spaces mirrored family structures in enforcing emotional suppression and perfectionism.

Many participants described faith as both a moral guide and a form of social control. Amy shared, *"I grew up in a very Christian household. I grew up Baptist, so we were at church all the time—Sunday School, choir rehearsal, service after service. The pressure of 'Be a good Christian, be a good girl, don't do this, don't do that' was constant."* Similarly, Alex reflected on how religious expectations shaped self-concept, stating, *"Just being strong, being a good girl, not being promiscuous, and things like that—all of that came from my grandmother, and she gave me that structure."* For some, spirituality was empowering, but for others, it became a burden, particularly when it reinforced submission, self-denial, and the pressure to perform goodness.

Over time, participants began reassessing the role of faith in their self-concept. Some shifted from rigid religious expectations to a more self-affirming spirituality. One participant reflected, *"I'm learning to separate faith from perfectionism and find a spirituality that supports my growth."* Jasmine similarly described how religious

participation was less about belief and more about fulfilling expected roles, stating, *"I was always in the church. So that goes to the good girl... If my mother was at church, I was at church."* Kayla reinforced this theme, explaining, *"Growing up, I had to be a good girl. You have to present yourself in a certain way because, you know, people are watching."* These reflections highlight how faith-based expectations extended beyond religious spaces, reinforcing external validation over personal authenticity. As participants critically examined their spiritual identity, many worked to reconstruct faith in a way that allowed for imperfection, self-acceptance, and personal growth.

Table 3

Subthemes and Identity Frameworks

Subtheme	Findings in Connection to Good Girl Archetype
Identity Formation	Shapes early self-concept by reinforcing perfectionism, compliance, and external validation.
Family Dynamics	Parents and other relatives reinforce high expectations, teaching daughters to prioritize achievement and obedience.
Coping	Encouraged to engage in emotional suppression, self-reliance, and seeking validation to maintain the Good Girl label.
Spirituality	Strengthens the moral expectations tied to the Good Girl identity, emphasizing perfection and obedience.
Mother-Daughter Relationship	Less direct influence on Good Girl identity but reinforces strength and resilience that transitions into the SBW Schema.
Breaking Cycles	Participants reject perfectionism and external validation, striving for authenticity and self-acceptance.

Strong Black Woman Schema

As participants mature, the SBW Schema emerged in adolescence and adulthood, emphasizing resilience, caregiving, and continued emotional suppression in response to societal and familial pressures (Abrams et al., 2014). This schema reinforces the expectation of strength and self-reliance, shaping participants' identities while simultaneously limiting opportunities for vulnerability and emotional authenticity (Tookes, 2021). The following section will provide an overview of each of the six subthemes as they relate to the SBW schema.

Transition from Good Girl to Strong Black Woman. The shift from childhood to adulthood marked a pivotal transformation in how participants internalized and navigated the GG Archetype and the SBW Schema. While the GG identity emphasized compliance, perfectionism, and external validation in childhood, these expectations naturally evolved into the SBW Schema as participants matured. This transition was not abrupt but rather a progression shaped by both internalized expectations and external pressures, reinforcing the idea that strength, self-sacrifice, and resilience were non-negotiable components of their identity.

A critical link between these frameworks was the expectation of dependability. Michelle encapsulated this shift, stating, *"I think, being viewed as a good girl in childhood made it easier for everyone around me to dump their shit on me. There's no pushback, [people think] oh she's not gonna have these problems, she's not gonna make them worse, you know. So it became easy for them to just say, 'Oh, she got it! She got it.'"* Her experience highlights how being the responsible, well-behaved daughter created

an unspoken expectation that she would continue to shoulder burdens into adulthood, an expectation that solidified into the SBW Schema.

Participants described this transition as both inevitable and burdensome. Kayla reflected, *“So I went from being a good girl, and also the strong Black woman—which I’m still going through. The process of rejecting all of that. How about I just be me and not deal with them? And that’s where I’m at right now. But yeah, it’s just a natural progression [from GG to SBW].”* Her insight highlights the cyclical nature of these labels, where the traits instilled in childhood; dependability, emotional suppression, and high achievement, seamlessly transitioned into adulthood’s expectations of resilience and caregiving. At the same time, her reflection also underscores growing resistance, as participants actively worked to redefine their identities outside of inherited expectations.

For many, this transition was reinforced through direct experiences of responsibility and parentification. Gloria recounted the pressure of maintaining the GG persona while taking on adult responsibilities, stating, *“I never really wanted to let my mom down. I saw what she went through, and I didn’t want to add to her stress. So I made sure my grades were up to par, that my behavior was up to par. And even now, that pressure still sits on me.”* This illustrates how GG expectations laid the groundwork for perfectionism, which over time, morphed into the endurance and high achievement associated with the SBW Schema.

Similarly, Hannah described how the pressure to uphold the Good Girl identity naturally transitioned into the expectations of the Strong Black Woman schema. She reflected, *“I have to be resilient all the time, like I can’t go through stuff. And I feel like that comes from that perfectionism, from the Good Girl aspect.”* This shift highlights how

the early emphasis on compliance and high achievement evolved into an obligation to endure, leaving participants feeling as though they could not show weakness or struggle openly. What began as a pursuit of external validation through perfectionism in childhood seamlessly transformed into a rigid expectation of resilience in adulthood, reinforcing the idea that strength meant suppressing vulnerability.

Beyond personal development, this transition was deeply embedded in cultural and familial structures. Yasmine reflected on the tension between these roles, stating, *“I always felt like being the good girl was supposed to protect me, but then I had to be strong too. At what point do I just get to exist?”* This quote encapsulates the double bind participants experienced—where being the GG was intended to secure love and acceptance, but adulthood’s expectations of SBW required them to endure, provide, and suppress their needs.

Participants also acknowledged how these expectations were often modeled for them by their mothers. Janice reflected on how her mother’s resilience during a difficult period in her marriage shaped her understanding of strength, explaining that she watched her mother rely on faith to navigate challenges. *“Just like relying on God and praying about things and reading, and just like living through faith is how she showed me how to be a strong Black woman.”* Similarly, Michelle reflected, *“Watching her, I know what strength is. I know what determination is, and those are the qualities I took on as well.”* These statements highlight how the GG and SBW were not only reinforced through direct messaging but also absorbed through observation. Many participants internalized their mothers' behaviors, whether they admired and emulated them or resisted and rejected them, as part of their own evolving self-concept.

Ultimately, the transition from GG to SBW was both an inherited expectation and a survival mechanism, shaping how participants navigated relationships, work, and self-concept. However, as many sought to redefine these roles, they began questioning their own agency in crafting identities beyond compliance and strength. This critical shift marked a turning point in self-concept development, as participants worked to resist and reshape the narratives that had governed their lives, striving instead for balance, vulnerability, and self-authorship.

Family Expectations and Roles. Family expectations played a critical role in reinforcing the SBW Schema, shaping participants' perceptions of strength, resilience, and caregiving. In childhood, obedience and high achievement were central to the GG Archetype, but these expectations evolved in adulthood into emotional suppression and self-sacrifice, hallmarks of the SBW. Amy captured this shift, stating, *"They say I'm the voice of reason in the family, or I'm the cousin that everybody is like, 'Oh, Amy is like the little angel of the family,' and it's like, but why? What if I don't want to be today?"* Her statement illustrates how early expectations of dependability and composure transitioned into a broader demand for strength, where personal needs became secondary to others' well-being.

As participants matured, resilience and caretaking became ingrained expectations, positioning SBW as both a survival mechanism and an inherited role. Jackie described this burden, stating, *"I've learned to keep going even when I feel like I can't anymore."* This highlights how perseverance was not a choice but a requirement within family structures, reinforcing the non-negotiable nature of emotional endurance. Similarly, Alex reflected on how she was conditioned into caregiving, explaining, *"My grandmother*

primarily—I felt like she kind of groomed me to be... like a caretaker for my family. So there was this structure of a lot of just responsibilities." Her experience illustrates how caretaking was framed as a duty rather than an option, making self-sacrifice an integral part of identity formation.

The expectation to endure without complaint further reinforced emotional suppression as a normalized response to hardship. Hannah captured this struggle, explaining, *"It's like you're not able to experience emotions the way you should be allowed to. You're not able to go through things because you have to keep going, because you have to be strong, because you have to."* Her statement reflects the unspoken burden of resilience, where participants felt obligated to suppress their emotions in order to meet the expectation of strength. Yasmine expanded on this, sharing, *"Nobody really talks about how exhausting it is. Like, everyone just expects us to handle it, like we don't even have the right to struggle."* Her statement underscores the silent expectation placed on Black women to endure without acknowledgment of their emotional needs. This emotional conditioning not only shaped participants' responses to adversity but also created an internal conflict between their authentic emotional needs and the external demand for unwavering fortitude. The pressure to remain composed at all times reinforced stoicism as a survival mechanism, making vulnerability feel like a luxury rather than a right. While the study primarily examined the mother-daughter relationship, participants also described paternal influence on their identity development. Fathers were often perceived as authoritarian figures, enforcing external expectations rather than providing emotional support. Jasmine reflected on this dynamic, stating, *"My dad tried to dictate a lot of stuff in my life, and so I always had to fight, to feel like my worth and my*

value." This highlights how paternal influence reinforced discipline and strength, reinforcing the belief that self-concept had to be earned through resilience and defiance.

Ultimately, family expectations shaped participants' identities by normalizing self-sacrifice, emotional suppression, and relentless strength, positioning SBW as both an inherited responsibility and a survival strategy.

Identity Formation. The subtheme of Identity Formation emerged in 100% of participant narratives, reflecting a shared struggle in developing an autonomous sense of self. Many aligned with Bailey's sentiment: *"I didn't know my identity. My identity was given to me."* This statement captures how participants grappled with inherited identities rather than self-defined ones. For some, identity was deeply tied to familial obligation, making differentiation from parental expectations difficult. Jasmine expressed this tension, stating, *"[My mother and grandmother] brought me this far. Who am I to not carry on?"* Her words illustrate how identity formation was often framed as duty rather than personal exploration, reinforcing the expectation that daughters should continue the legacy set by their mothers and grandmothers.

For many, self-concept was more inherited than independently developed, particularly through the mother-daughter relationship. Mothers reinforced expectations that shaped participants' self-perception, often blurring the line between personal identity and familial obligation. Denise reflected on this internalized conditioning, stating, *"Whenever I do something, I can hear her saying, 'That was stupid. Why did you do that?'"* This demonstrates how maternal voices became an internalized guide, often restricting identity formation rather than supporting its autonomy.

Similarly, Robby described how perfectionism was deeply ingrained from childhood, explaining, *"I feel like it was instilled in us at a very young age that we were to do the best that we could. Perfectionism was expected, both of us... I wouldn't say that it was just like a congratulations. It was more like, this is what you're supposed to do. And if you're doing anything different—what are you doing, or why?"* This rigid framework of expectation left little room for exploration, as self-worth became tied to meeting external standards rather than personal fulfillment. She further captured the extent of this programming, admitting, *"I honestly did not know [what I would want to do], because I'd been so programmed [to do the thing I was supposed to do]."* Her words underscore how maternal expectations shaped not only behavior but also self-perception, making it difficult to separate personal desires from imposed obligations. The internalized pressure to meet perfectionist standards illustrates how identity formation was not entirely autonomous but instead dictated by maternal influence, leaving participants to grapple with the challenge of forging an independent sense of self.

Coping Mechanisms. The findings suggest that coping mechanisms and self-concept exist in a bidirectional relationship, wherein coping strategies shape identity, and identity in turn dictates coping strategies. Within the framework of the SBW Schema, participants described how resilience and emotional suppression became default coping mechanisms, often at the expense of their well-being. Robby illustrated this internalized expectation, stating, *"Even if I had started to get emotional, I was quickly told, like, I'm not worried about the emotional bullshit."* This response underscores how expressions of vulnerability were often dismissed, reinforcing the notion that strength and composure were non-negotiable traits. Similarly, Danielle reflected on how familial models of

strength shaped her own coping mechanisms, describing how her grandmother embodied the SBW: *“My grandma, she’s the typical Strong Black Woman... very hard, very aggressive.”* Her description highlights how resilience was not only modeled but expected, creating a generational reinforcement of emotional endurance as a primary coping strategy.

At the same time, participants described moments of tension where their self-concept evolved, leading them to actively challenge inherited coping mechanisms. Hannah captured this internal conflict, explaining, *“I’m still figuring out who I am outside of my mom’s expectations—it’s hard, but it feels like freedom.”* Her statement reflects the complexity of unlearning deeply ingrained narratives, as participants sought to redefine their identities outside of rigid expectations. Gloria further echoed this struggle, stating, *“So it’s like I always put on this front to always be the good girl or a good person, or be the strong Black woman. And then, basically, when I get home, because my home is my safe space, it feels like I literally just take off a mask.”* This tension between maintaining resilience and seeking emotional authenticity illustrates how participants oscillated between learned coping mechanisms and emerging self-awareness. Essentially, while the SBW Schema provided participants with a framework for survival, it also constrained their emotional expression and self-definition. As participants redefined their self-concept, many began to disrupt intergenerational patterns of emotional suppression, seeking therapy, setting boundaries, and allowing themselves space to exist beyond the demands of resilience.

Influence of Mother Daughter Relationship. The mother-daughter relationship was a defining factor in how participants internalized the SBW Schema, with many

participants describing a complex interplay between maternal expectations, resilience, and emotional suppression. Some participants described their mothers as enforcers of the SBW, teaching them from a young age that strength was paramount. Gloria reflected on this experience, stating, *“I never really wanted to let her down... because I’ve seen what she went through. And as much as she tried to hide it from us, like we were still aware of what was going on”*. This quote illustrates how participants inherited the SBW framework not just through direct messages from their mothers but also by witnessing their struggles and internalizing a need to uphold that same resilience.

For some, maternal absence played a critical role in shaping their perception of strength. Alex described how her mother’s instability reinforced the need for her to take on a caregiving role, sharing, *“I had a lot of pressure on me because of her behavior. I felt like I had to be better than her, not to conduct myself in the way she did”*. This sentiment reflects how some participants learned to embody the SBW Schema as a means of survival, ensuring that they did not repeat the patterns they witnessed. In these cases, grandmothers or other female caregivers often reinforced the SBW ideology, framing resilience and self-sacrifice as necessary attributes for survival.

The expectation to remain emotionally strong and self-sufficient was deeply ingrained within mother-daughter dynamics. Elsa described the generational impact of these expectations, stating, *“I learned independence and strength from my grandmother more than my mother... Now, my mother learns from me”*. This perspective highlights how some participants actively worked to challenge inherited narratives, shifting the direction of influence and redefining their relationship with their mothers.

Despite these inherited expectations, participants also described moments of tension and transformation in their mother-daughter relationships. Some began questioning whether the strength they were taught to embody was truly a reflection of their authentic selves. Denise captured this realization, explaining, “*My mom finally asked me one day if I felt like she had damaged me... and I had to be honest, I just wish she had listened more*”. This quote underscores the emotional complexity of the SBW schema, where strength is both a source of pride and a barrier to vulnerability.

Spirituality. Spirituality had less direct influence on the SBW Schema, as resilience and strength were more often modeled through the mother-daughter relationship rather than through religious or spiritual frameworks. While some participants described faith as a grounding force in their upbringing, it was often framed as a tool for endurance rather than a source of emotional flexibility or self-compassion. In this way, spirituality functioned as an external reinforcement of strength rather than a mechanism that allowed for vulnerability or emotional expression. Although spiritual beliefs shaped GG and self-concept in early life, the findings suggest a weaker feedback loop between self-concept, SBW, and spirituality in adulthood.

Breaking Cycles. Breaking cycles emerged as an intentional and often difficult act of resistance against the inherited SBW, as participants sought to redefine their identities and disrupt generational patterns of emotional suppression, caregiving, and self-sacrifice. Many described their journeys as unlearning the expectations tied to strength, expectations that had been reinforced by their families and broader society. For some, breaking cycles meant consciously allowing themselves to be vulnerable, asking for help, or rejecting the belief that their worth was tied to endurance. Hannah captured this

process, reflecting, *"I feel like I'm consistently undoing that now as an adult... I keep having to tell people, specifically my mom, when she does that, I'm like, no, I'm gonna feel what I feel. I'm not gonna just repress and keep pushing like that, because that has never helped anyone in the history of ever."* Her statement underscores the ongoing, active resistance required to break free from the deeply ingrained SBW expectations.

For many participants, breaking cycles also meant setting boundaries within their families, which was a shift that often led to tension, as their mothers and grandmothers had internalized the same SBW schema they were now resisting. One participant described the difficulty of rejecting the "fixer" role in her relationships, stating, *"I learned how to say, 'That's not my journey, you gotta figure it out yourself.' I'll be here for you, but this is my peace, and I'm not letting anyone take that from me."* This reflects the emotional labor involved in breaking cycles and the struggle of balancing care for others with self-preservation.

The process of breaking cycles was not linear. Participants often oscillated between embracing self-compassion and falling back into old patterns of over-functioning and self-sacrifice. Robby articulated this struggle, noting how she had to unlearn generational messages that equated strength with silence: *"I had to be strong because everybody else was losing it... like, somebody had to hold it together, and that somebody was always me."* This quote illustrates how breaking cycles was not just about rejecting external expectations but also about redefining strength in a way that allowed for emotional expression and self-care.

Subthemes and Their Relation to Self-Concept Development

Family Dynamics

Across all interviews and the focus group, one theme remained universally present: family influence was central to identity formation, which in turn shaped participants' self-concept. Regardless of individual differences, every participant described how their familial environment, expectations, and intergenerational patterns established the foundation for their self-perception. Identity was not formed in isolation but rather within the context of family roles, narratives, and relationships. Whether through the GG archetype or the SBW Schema, participants internalized messages from their families that defined their place in the world before they had the chance to define it for themselves. Denise encapsulated this experience, stating, *"I feel I have to stay within a certain role, I would say, but I have to always behave a certain way in order to be liked, or in order to be safe."* These inherited identities were shaped by mothers, fathers, grandparents, and extended relatives, forming an interwoven family structure that profoundly influenced participants' self-concept and coping mechanisms.

Participants' experiences demonstrated that family influence was not limited to direct relationships with their mothers but was shaped by broader family dynamics. Fathers played a critical role, whether through active expectations, emotional distance, or absence, each of which contributed to participants' self-perception. Some described their fathers as disciplinarians who enforced high standards, while others experienced them as emotionally unavailable figures, whose detachment forced participants into premature roles of responsibility. Grandparents and extended family members reinforced these generational expectations, shaping participants' views on strength, sacrifice, and duty.

Alex highlighted the weight of these intergenerational patterns, explaining, *“I had to be strong. I had to make those sacrifices, because not only is my grandmother dependent on me, she’s dependent on me to look out for the other people that come into the household.”* These narratives illustrate how family expectations extended beyond immediate relationships, becoming deeply embedded in participants’ sense of self.

A key factor in family influence was not just how participants were treated, but how they observed family members interact with one another. More than their direct relationships with their mothers, participants were shaped by how their mothers engaged with fathers, grandmothers, and other relatives. Nitasha explains *“[My mom says] She never left my dad because she didn’t hear God tell her to. I think that might be some of what she tells herself, but I also think a lot of it, 99%, if I’m you know, could be a betting woman, was that she couldn’t financially support us enough to leave. And because of that, I think I’ve always been in a space where I want to financially be able to support myself and the things that I want. So that I never have to depend on someone else.”* These interactions served as models for emotional expression, boundary-setting, ideals around dependence, and relational dynamics, teaching participants how to navigate relationships long before they had conscious awareness of their identity.

Identity Formation

While family influence, societal pressures, and coping mechanisms played significant roles in shaping self-concept, participants’ journeys toward self-concept development were deeply personal, requiring them to navigate between inherited roles and personal identity formation. Bailey reflected on the constraints of this process, stating, *“I tried to do all the things, and I’m depressed because I graduated, went to*

school... because I wanted to go to school for music? No. Or I wanted to go to school for culinary arts. My mom said, 'No, you need to be an engineer.' So I did what I was supposed to do, and I still feel lost." This experience highlights how identity formation, when dictated by external forces, can lead to a fractured sense of self, requiring intentional effort to reclaim personal agency.

For many participants, identity formation was intertwined with societal expectations that reinforced certain identities while restricting others. Robby reflected on how racialized gender roles shaped her self-perception, explaining, *"Black women are often referred to as queens as opposed to princesses, or something, while white women are usually referred to as princesses. And it's like, why do we have to rule? Why do we have to... you know, put our foot down? Why can't we be catered to? Not that queens aren't, but so much less is expected of white women in society. And I'm like, I just want to be a girl. I don't want to be the ruler of the nation, you know? I just want to be a girl and do my thing, and go on about my business, but that room isn't afforded to us."* Her reflection highlights the rigid identity expectations placed on Black women, where strength and leadership are presumed rather than chosen, making identity formation not just a personal journey but one deeply entangled with historical and societal narratives.

The internal struggle between societal expectation and personal identity was particularly evident in the participants' experiences with perfectionism and self-concept. Denise described the duality of strength and self-criticism, explaining, *"I know there's this stronger side of myself where it's just like I can do these things. And I'm human. I'm gonna make mistakes, and that's okay. But the part of me that has always been the girl of feeling like she has to be perfect... It hurts me when I don't live up to that. It's this really,*

really hard duality where I feel like I'm running back and forth on both ends. But I can't find that center where I feel okay when I make a mistake." Her statement captures the struggle of reconciling self-concept with internalized expectations of perfection, illustrating how identity formation is not always a linear process, but rather a negotiation between conflicting internalized beliefs—strength as a necessity, yet perfection as an unattainable standard.

As participants engaged in identity formation, their self-concept evolved, shifting from externally dictated roles to internally defined self-awareness. Some described this transformation as an awakening, where they recognized the ways in which they had performed identity for the sake of others and began making choices that reflected their own desires and needs. Yasmine described this realization, stating, *"We're strong in our own right because it was kind of like embedded in us almost like from birth. Oh, you're Black and you're a girl? Ding. Strong Black Woman. Put it on there. You've got to wear the armor of the strong Black woman. And it's like, okay, we can be strong. We can be good girls. But can we be human? Can we be ourselves? Can we literally just be us?"* Her reflection underscores the tension between inherited labels and authentic self-expression, highlighting how identity formation is a deliberate process of redefining self-concept beyond rigid expectations.

The narratives described identity formation is an action, an ongoing process of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing selfhood. In contrast, self-concept was described as the result of the internalized understanding of who one is after navigating these experiences. Participants' experiences reveal that identity formation requires them to actively engage in self-definition, breaking cycles of external validation and embracing

a more authentic sense of self. While societal and familial expectations initially shaped identity, participants' narratives illustrate that self-concept was not static but continuously evolving in response to their own sense of agency and self-awareness.

Coping Mechanisms

The findings suggest that coping mechanisms and self-concept exist in a reinforcing cycle, where identity shapes coping strategies, and those strategies, in turn, reinforce identity. Many participants described how the GG archetype shaped early coping mechanisms, centering on perfectionism, emotional suppression, and external validation. Nitasha reflected on this conditioning, explaining,

The emotional and mental load that you have is just so much stronger than other people, and I think it fits into the good girl persona from childhood, where you were told to do. Told to do your chores. So it's like, 'Okay, good.' Told to wash the laundry. 'Okay? Good.' Told to clean up. 'Okay, that's good.' And so then you have all of these things. So then, as you grew, what was good grew, but like bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger, right? Like, so now it's not just washing the dishes. It's also washing the dishes and doing the laundry and keeping your room clean and getting good grades in school, and, you know, doing X, Y, Z by yourself. So then, you know, the mental, emotional load of the good girl just gets bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger. So now you follow any societal expectations most of the time.

This pressure to perform reinforced coping behaviors like overworking and self-policing to maintain self-concept. As they matured, these strategies evolved into the SBW schema, further embedding resilience, caregiving, and emotional suppression. Nitasha then

reflected on this shift, stating, *"You have to be strong for everyone, and sometimes you forget about yourself,"* illustrating how emotional suppression became both a coping tool and an expected part of identity.

Participants described a duality in coping, some reinforced the GG and SBW schemas through self-sacrifice and over-functioning, while others sought therapy and reflection to disrupt these cycles. Michelle, for example, coped by withdrawing, stating, *"I just stayed out the way. That's the best way to put it... I didn't want to do anything else."* Similarly, Alex shared, *"I felt like my grandmother groomed me to be the caretaker... I was responsible for everybody,"* demonstrating how responsibility and control often took precedence over emotional well-being. Denise further reflected, *"It hurts because it's just like, why do you guys get to react? And when I do it, it's like, 'Wow, no, shut that down,'"* highlighting the expectation for Black women to suppress their emotions to maintain compliance and stability.

However, as participants worked to redefine their identities, shifting their coping mechanisms required intentional and continuous effort. Hannah captured this struggle, stating, *"I choose not to be this way, you know. So yeah, yeah, it's a very intentional, unlearning process."* This conscious rejection of inherited narratives allowed participants to actively challenge ingrained habits of perfectionism, emotional suppression, and over-functioning. Yet, unlearning these coping mechanisms was not always linear. Many participants found themselves in a constant push-and-pull between internalized expectations of strength and self-compassion. Robby described this ongoing battle, explaining, *"I've had to actively fight myself not to be mothering in my relationships, because that's not who I want to be."* Her experience highlights the depth of conditioning

participants had to confront, illustrating how caregiving and resilience had been embedded into their self-concept. Breaking free from these expectations required not just self-awareness, but a deliberate and often exhausting effort to rewrite their responses to stress, relationships, and identity.

Mother-Daughter Relationship

The mother-daughter relationship played a pivotal role in shaping participants' self-concept, emerging as one of the most dominant influences in this study. Within this dynamic, the most prevalent cluster was 'mothers as models' with participants consistently described observing, internalizing, and sometimes resisting their mothers' behaviors, values, and coping mechanisms. More than direct messaging, participants' identities were profoundly shaped by what they saw their mothers do, rather than just what they were told.

For many participants, their mothers' identities became blueprints for their own self-concept. Some internalized their mothers' behaviors as aspirational, while others shaped their identities in contrast to them. Michelle explained, "*Watching her, I know what strength is. I know what determination is, and those are the qualities I took on as well.*" Similarly, Amy reflected on how her mother's independence shaped her own, sharing, "*I talked to my mom and I told her, you being so independent made me want to be independent.*" These reflections illustrate how maternal modeling provided a framework for participants' self-concept, with strength and resilience often becoming core components of their identities.

However, not all modeling resulted in positive reinforcement, some participants internalized emotional suppression as an expected part of their identity. Robby recounted

how her mother's avoidance of emotional expression influenced her own difficulty in seeking help: *"It made me not want to ask for things, or ask for help, or even talk about my emotions. I remember going to a doctor's appointment, and they asked me if I was stressed out. I looked at my mom, and she looked at me, and I just said no—even though I was."* This highlights how mothers' behaviors, whether consciously or unconsciously demonstrated, became ingrained as part of participants' self-concept, shaping how they understood vulnerability, emotional needs, and self-reliance.

Beyond individual identity development, the mother-daughter relationship carried a generational component, with many participants recognizing that their mothers' behaviors were shaped by their own upbringings. This reinforced intergenerational cycles of strength, suppression, or overachievement. Bailey reflected on this continuity, stating, *"My mom behaved the way she did because her mother behaved the way she did, and probably her mother before her. It's just the way things were."* This acknowledgment underscores how self-concept was often the result of inherited identity scripts, requiring active effort to break generational cycles and redefine self-perception.

As some participants actively worked to reshape their identities, they also noticed shifts in their mothers' perceptions of them. Robby described this bidirectional influence, explaining, *"Once I hear myself described a certain way, especially by my mom, I feel like I have to live up to that. If she says she's glad I'm independent, then I feel like I can't be dependent now."* This highlights the evolving nature of identity within the mother-daughter relationship, self-concept was shaped not only by maternal influence but also by how participants' evolving identities were reflected back to them by their mothers.

Spirituality

Spirituality, as explored in this study, emerged as an unanticipated but significant subtheme, aligning with existing literature that highlights its deep connection to identity formation and self-understanding. Kavar (2015) emphasized that spirituality serves as a fundamental dimension of self, deeply embedded in relationships, social engagement, and an overarching sense of meaning and purpose in life. This resonates with the findings of the current study, where participants described spirituality as both a personal and communal resource that influenced their coping strategies, reinforced moral frameworks, and supported personal growth, particularly in shaping the GG archetype. Religious teachings often emphasized obedience, submission, and the importance of upholding a "good" reputation, reinforcing the idea that faith and compliance were inherently linked. Yasmine reflected on this pressure, sharing, *"Growing up in a family, a household where both my parents are very strict, very churchgoing... you have to be a good girl..."* she continued and explained how religious expectations extended beyond childhood and continued into adulthood, *"but I'm 33 years old now, and I'll post what I want. And my mom would be like, 'But you know that there are church people following you,' and I'm like, '[Mom] I don't care.'"* Her statement illustrates the tension between faith as a personal belief system and as a tool for social regulation, where religious communities reinforced behavioral expectations long after childhood.

Participants also highlighted how spirituality was used to justify family hierarchies and expectations of respect, particularly within the mother-daughter relationship. Nitasha shared a striking example of this, recalling, *"I remember yelling at my mama, and I had to write, 'Honor your mother and father,' in Ephesians 6... like a*

hundred times on a sheet of paper because I yelled at her. And you know, so yeah, sometimes I'm like, 'Okay, you gotta honor your mother and father, but in what way?''

Nitasha built on this reflection, explaining, *"So how does Honor look like, right? In adulthood, it's like, well, I've had to grow my own relationship with honoring my mother and my father."* These statements underscore how religious teachings shaped participants' early understanding of obedience and respect, often limiting their ability to establish boundaries or challenge parental authority.

Beyond shaping personal identity, faith-based expectations also reinforced the GG label's emphasis on silence and compliance, particularly in moments of conflict or advocacy. Kayla described how religious spaces discouraged assertiveness, stating, *"But good church girls don't speak up, and sure the hell don't fight for somebody."* This quote highlights how spirituality was often weaponized to maintain social order, reinforcing submission and discouraging expressions of resistance or self-advocacy. While some participants found empowerment in their faith, others described a journey of reevaluating and redefining their spirituality to separate it from perfectionism and external validation. The significance of spirituality in shaping identity and self-concept underlines its role as a foundational construct, intertwined with participants' efforts to reconcile inherited narratives with their authentic selves.

Breaking Cycles

Breaking cycles emerged as one of the most transformative aspects of participants' experiences, reflecting not only personal growth but also a conscious effort to model new possibilities for future generations. Participants described how they actively worked to unlearn inherited expectations of perfectionism, emotional

suppression, and over-functioning, creating space for self-compassion and authenticity. This process was not just about personal liberation, it was also about ensuring that future generations benefited from their intentional healing. Many participants viewed breaking cycles as an intergenerational responsibility, recognizing that their choices could set new standards for what it means to be strong, vulnerable, and self-accepting.

One of the most prominent clusters within this process was *Self-Compassion*, reflecting participants' efforts to grant themselves permission to embrace their authentic selves as they are. Jasmine expressed this shift in mindset, stating, *"I'm not a crackhead; like, it could be so much worse. I'm really just doing what I want to do, and nobody's getting hurt in the process."* Her words reflect a radical departure from the rigid expectations she once felt obligated to meet, highlighting the internal shift from external validation to self-acceptance. By prioritizing their well-being, participants demonstrated that breaking cycles was not just about rejecting labels—it was about redefining self-concept outside of performance-based expectations.

This transition directly connects to *Differentiation of Self from Mother*, another dominant cluster. Many participants described the tension between honoring their upbringing and forging their own paths. Jasmine captured this struggle, stating, *"It's just not what [my mom] would have done."* Her words encapsulate the conscious effort to make choices that diverge from their mothers' decisions, signaling an intentional move toward self-definition. For some, differentiation meant setting firmer boundaries; for others, it meant embracing emotional expression or rejecting the need to be everything for everyone. In all cases, breaking cycles was not just an act of resistance, it was an act of self-creation, allowing participants to claim agency over their narratives.

A particularly powerful cluster was *Intentional De-labeling*, in which participants rejected imposed identities and asserted their right to define themselves on their own terms. Jasmine reinforced this idea, stating, *“Don’t put that on me, that is not a label I gave myself.”* Her assertion reflects the active refusal to be confined by generational expectations. Rather than passively accepting inherited roles, participants redefined strength as balance, resilience as self-awareness, and success as living authentically.

Beyond personal transformation, participants described how their efforts to break cycles were already influencing younger generations. Many expressed a desire to model a healthier sense of identity for their children, ensuring that they did not grow up with the same burdens of emotional suppression or hyper-independence. Michelle reflected on this responsibility, explaining, *“Because I am still strong, you know, but I have to be strong for different reasons. I got kids to take care of. I got kids to worry about. I got kids that I want them to be prepared for what the world is when I send them out into the world.”* Her statement underscores the long-term impact of breaking cycles, not only freeing themselves from inherited labels but also creating a new legacy for the next generation.

Cross Cutting Themes

The GG Archetype and the SBW Schema served as the central identity frameworks through which participants navigated the core theme of self-concept, with each subtheme interacting with and reinforcing these labels. However, these interactions were not always bidirectional; some influences were one-directional, shaping self-concept without being significantly altered by it, while others exhibited a feedback loop, where self-concept and behavior mutually reinforced each other. A conceptual model can be found in *Figure 2*.

Most Prevalent Overlapping Subthemes

Coping Mechanisms and Identity Formation

One of the most prevalent co-occurring subthemes that emerged in this study was the deep connection between coping mechanisms and identity formation. Coping was not just a response to family dynamics but a core factor in shaping participants' self-concept. Initially, coping strategies such as emotional suppression, hyper-independence, and perfectionism were developed as survival mechanisms in response to family expectations. However, over time, these mechanisms did not remain tools for navigating adversity, they became deeply embedded aspects of participants' identities. The roles they played to maintain security and approval became more than strategies; they became self-definitions that were difficult to separate from their authentic selves.

For many participants, self-suppression was a dominant coping strategy that directly influenced their identity formation. The repeated suppression of emotions, avoidance of visibility, and prioritization of others' needs over their own became so ingrained that they struggled to recognize their own desires. Gloria reflected on this, stating, *"It took a while for me to find my voice."* After years of silence, she no longer knew what she wanted. Similarly, Michelle described how relentless self-sacrifice became second nature, explaining, *"It's exhausting, but you learn to lean into it... you learn that you can't trust anyone else to let you rest."* Her words highlight how strength and endurance, initially developed as protective strategies, became expectations she could not escape. Bailey also experienced the unraveling of a long-held identity, stating, *"My good girl image failed me."* For years, her sense of worth was tied to perfection and compliance, but when these traits no longer served her, she was left questioning her

identity. Hannah further described this detachment, sharing, *“It feels like a disconnection as well. I’ve been separated from that part of myself for so long.”* Her statement underscores how these coping mechanisms led to a profound sense of disconnection from her emotions and authentic self.

As participants became more aware of these ingrained patterns, some began to challenge the identities that had been formed around their coping mechanisms. This process was bidirectional; just as coping mechanisms shaped identity, shifts in self-concept led to new coping strategies. Participants who had relied on emotional suppression and hyper-independence began working toward self-expression, emotional awareness, and boundary-setting. Rather than continuing to navigate relationships through compliance or suppression, they began to redefine strength on their own terms. This transformation highlights how coping mechanisms and identity were not fixed, but rather evolved together, illustrating the complex, reciprocal relationship between how participants saw themselves and how they navigated their emotional world.

Family Expectations and Roles and Identity Formation

The relationship between family dynamics and identity formation emerged as equally as prevalent as coping mechanisms and identity formation. Participants consistently described how family expectations, roles, and imposed identities shaped their self-perception. Many participants did not feel they had the autonomy to explore their own identities outside of what their families expected of them. Bailey captured this experience, stating, *“I didn’t know my identity. My identity was given to me.”* This sentiment illustrates how family influence extended beyond guidance and into the realm

of identity prescription, where participants often felt that their sense of self was predetermined rather than organically developed.

For some participants, familial roles and responsibilities dictated their identity. Many were assigned labels such as “the good child,” “the responsible one,” or “the strong one,” which they felt obligated to uphold. Michelle described this experience, sharing, *“They would say to me ‘You are the glue’. I held everybody together.”* This expectation to serve as the stabilizing force in the family often led participants to internalize self-sacrificing behaviors, prioritizing the needs of others over their own self-discovery. Similarly, Alex reflected on the generational patterns that shaped her identity, explaining, *“I had to be strong. I had to make those sacrifices, because not only is my grandmother dependent on me, she’s dependent on me to look out for the other people that come into the household.”* These narratives highlight how family structures and expectations reinforced specific identities that participants often felt compelled to embody, even when they conflicted with their own desires and aspirations.

The intersection of family expectations and identity was often experienced as both formative and restrictive. While some participants acknowledged that their families provided a sense of structure, others felt trapped by the pressure to conform to predetermined identities. Robby recounted how this manifested in career decisions, stating, *“I was offered a full ride scholarship, but it was for a program that I wasn’t really interested in, but it was something my parents wanted me to do. So I took the scholarship, and you know, it’s transpired into my career today. I didn’t want to be an engineer growing up, but that’s what you know... school was going to be free [of charge and I did not want to deviate from what my parents wanted].”* This example

demonstrates how family influence extended beyond immediate behaviors and into long-term life choices, with many participants following paths dictated by their families rather than their own intrinsic motivations.

The relationship between family dynamics and identity formation was deeply embedded in participants' experiences, shaping not only their self-perception but also their navigation of relationships, responsibilities, and expectations. While family influence often felt one-directional, prescribing identities based on roles and obligations, participants also described moments of resistance and redefinition, particularly as they became more aware of how these imposed identities shaped their coping mechanisms. This interplay between family expectations, self-concept, and coping strategies was not always static, some patterns remained rigid across generations, while others evolved as participants actively worked to break cycles of self-sacrifice and emotional suppression.

Breaking Cycles

Breaking cycles emerged as one of the most pervasive and interconnected themes, influencing coping mechanisms, spirituality, family dynamics, and the mother-daughter relationship. Participants consistently described a conscious effort to disrupt generational patterns that had constrained their families for decades. Whether by changing how they managed emotions, rethinking their relationships with faith, setting new boundaries within their families, or redefining their roles as daughters and mothers, participants viewed breaking cycles as a necessary but challenging process.

For many, breaking cycles began with rejecting self-sacrifice as a coping mechanism. All 16 participants described engaging in self-sacrifice at some point, often as a learned survival strategy. Hannah reflected on how breaking the cycle required an

intentional shift in emotional regulation, explaining, *“I feel like I’m consistently undoing that now. As an adult, I keep having to tell people—specifically my mom—when she does that, ‘No, I’m gonna feel what I feel. I’m not just gonna repress and keep pushing like that, because that has never helped anyone in the history [of] ever.’”* This shift toward emotional authenticity rather than repression was a major theme in how participants began to redefine their self-concept.

Breaking cycles also meant rejecting inherited expectations of endurance and perfectionism. Robby reflected on the burden of resisting the SBW narrative, stating, *“I think that’s me actively working against this strong Black woman in here for everybody else... sticking up for the world. The Queen. I’m not. I can’t.”* This quote highlights how rejecting generational expectations required not just emotional work but a redefinition of identity itself, allowing participants to step away from performative strength and toward self-acceptance.

In the realm of family dynamics, breaking cycles meant creating different types of relationships with their children than they had with their own parents. Michelle reflected on the weight of this responsibility, explaining, *“Because I am still strong, you know, but I have to be strong for different reasons. I got kids to take care of. I got kids to worry about. I got kids that I want them to be prepared for what the world is when I send them out into the world.”* Many participants viewed breaking cycles as not just an individual process but a generational commitment, ensuring that future children would not inherit the same burdens they carried. Gloria echoed this sentiment, stating *“She [my mother] doesn’t know what to do with herself, because her life was always about us. So, I’m trying very hard to not do that. I love my kids, and my kids have a spot on my plate, but I*

want to make sure that I actually put myself first”. Her reflection underscores how many participants became intentional about disrupting inherited patterns of emotional pain, ensuring that their children would not carry the same weight they once bore.

The mother-daughter relationship was perhaps the most entrenched cycle participants sought to break. This relationship was unique in that many participants saw their own mothers struggle with inherited expectations, reinforcing patterns they later had to unlearn. Gloria described this intergenerational impact, explaining, *“She [my mother] doesn’t know what to do with herself, because her life was always about us. So, I’m trying very hard to not do that. I love my kids, and my kids have a spot on my plate, but I want to make sure that I actually put myself first.”* This reflection underscores how breaking cycles required participants to consciously challenge generational scripts that dictated their self-concept. The following sections explore the directionality of other subthemes influences.

One-Directional Influences

Family expectations shaped self-concept, but self-concept did not significantly reshape family expectations. Participants described how their upbringing and maternal modeling dictated their perception of strength, responsibility, and resilience, yet there was little evidence that participants’ evolving self-concept changed how their families viewed or enforced these expectations.

Spirituality influenced self-concept; however, self-concept did not significantly influence spirituality in the participants interviewed. While spirituality played a foundational role in participants’ early beliefs about morality and identity, changes in self-concept did not lead to notable shifts in religious or spiritual frameworks.

Bidirectional Influences

Coping mechanisms and self-concept exhibited a feedback loop. Participants described how the coping strategies they adopted, such as emotional suppression or therapy, shaped their identity, reinforcing the GG or SBW labels. In turn, as participants redefined their self-concept, they actively worked to change their coping strategies, moving away from inherited behaviors and towards emotional expression and self-care.

The mother-daughter relationship both shaped and was shaped by identity development. Participants internalized maternal modeling of strength, caregiving, and endurance, but in some cases, as they began to redefine their identities, they observed shifts in their mothers' perspectives, with some mothers questioning or adjusting their beliefs about strength and emotional resilience. While this relationship was initially one-directional, where daughters absorbed their mothers' expectations, participants also described moments where this influence became bidirectional. As they matured and redefined their self-concept, some noticed shifts in their mothers' perspectives as well. Jackie explained, *“When I finally started saying no and setting boundaries, my mom didn’t understand at first. She would say, ‘Why are you acting different?’ But over time, I noticed she started doing the same, saying no to things she never would have before.”* This suggests that while identity formation was largely shaped by maternal influence in childhood, daughters could challenge and reshape these patterns, making the relationship more reciprocal over time.

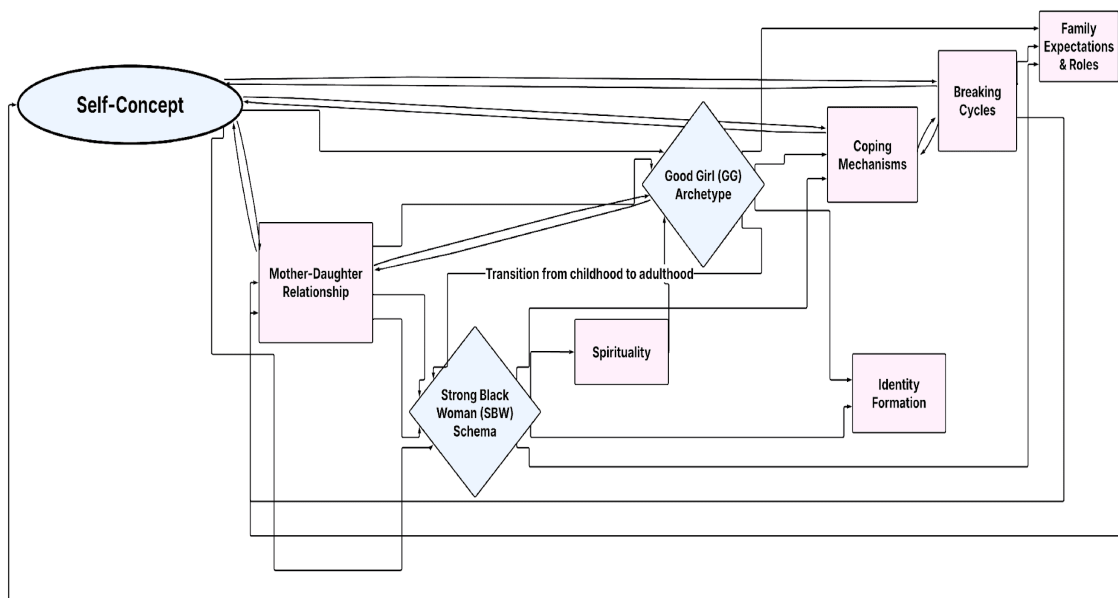
Breaking cycles was a bidirectional process, as self-awareness influenced efforts to disrupt generational patterns, and the process of breaking cycles further shaped self-concept. Participants who challenged the SBW and GG frameworks described an

evolving understanding of self-concept and personal boundaries, which, in turn, allowed them to push back against expectations that had long dictated their roles.

The interplay between these themes highlights a cyclical, reinforcing process, where participants' experiences of identity formation were shaped by inherited expectations, yet breaking cycles required them to actively challenge these frameworks. Those who sought to redefine their self-concept described moments of tension, as rejecting GG and SBW often meant unlearning behaviors that had once been necessary for survival. This complexity underscores how GG and SBW were not static labels but evolving frameworks that interacted across multiple domains of participants' lives, shaping their self-concept through both reinforcement and resistance.

Figure 2

Conceptual Map



Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the major findings of the study. The analysis revealed that labeling and modeling within the mother-daughter dynamic reinforced the GG archetype in childhood, later evolving into the SBW Schema in adulthood. This process was not only shaped by direct expectations from mothers but also interactions within the broader family structure, including fathers, grandmothers, and generational patterns. Participants consistently described their identities as inherited rather than freely explored, with self-concept being deeply intertwined with family expectations, societal pressures, and survival mechanisms.

Each research question was addressed through the participants' narratives. Labeling in the mother-daughter relationship was the foundation of self-concept development, as daughters internalized maternal expectations of strength, resilience, and caregiving. The mother-daughter relationship was also the primary vehicle through which the SBW Schema was modeled and reinforced, with participants observing their mothers endure hardship, suppress emotions, and sacrifice personal needs. This intergenerational transmission of resilience contributed to self-concept shaped by duty rather than self-exploration. The findings also underscored how the GG Archetype served as the early framework that later transitioned into SBW, demonstrating a cyclical pattern of obedience, overachievement, and emotional suppression as survival strategies. Beyond mother-daughter interactions, breaking cycles emerged as a cross-cutting theme across all subthemes, revealing participants' efforts to redefine self-concept beyond inherited roles. While spirituality reinforced GG expectations in childhood, many participants later distanced themselves from rigid religious structures, adopting a

personalized spirituality that aligned with self-acceptance rather than perfectionism. Similarly, coping mechanisms were initially shaped by familial expectations, particularly emotional suppression and self-sacrifice, however participants actively sought to unlearn these behaviors through boundary-setting, therapy, and intentional self-reflection. Family dynamics, including paternal influence and intergenerational caregiving, played a crucial role in both reinforcing and challenging identity formation.

Ultimately, this study illustrates that self-concept among Black women is not a passive inheritance but an active, ongoing negotiation between societal expectations, familial narratives, and personal agency. While participants were shaped by the GG and SBW labels, many also described moments of resistance and transformation, redefining their identities beyond the roles prescribed to them. These findings provide a critical understanding of how labeling functions within intergenerational relationships, highlighting both its impact and the potential for self-redefinition.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study examined the long-term effects of labeling within Black mother-daughter relationships, specifically investigating how the GG archetype transitions into the Strong Black Women (SBW) schema and how these identity constructs influence self-concept. Previous research has established that Black women's self-concept is deeply influenced by social labels, particularly those imposed within familial and cultural contexts (Harris-Perry, 2011; Nichols et al., 2015). However, how these labels, such as the GG archetype and the SBW Schema, shape identity development within the mother-daughter relationship remains underexplored. While existing research has examined the SBW Schema as a coping mechanism (Abrams et al., 2014) and the impact of labeling on self-perception (Tookes, 2021), few studies have applied a qualitative lens to how these labels are transmitted intergenerationally and negotiated in the formation of self-concept. Furthermore, the intersection of gender, race, and familial expectations is often discussed in broad sociocultural terms rather than through the personal narratives of Black women navigating these identities in real-time.

This qualitative research study addresses this gap by centering the voices of Black women who have experienced labeling through the lens of the mother-daughter relationship. Specifically, this study explores how the GG label, reinforced in childhood, transitions into the SBW Schema in adulthood, shaping self-concept development. By employing a phenomenological approach, this research captures the lived experiences of participants as they navigate, internalize, and challenge these labels. The study's findings

underscore the impact of family expectations, coping mechanisms, identity negotiation, and efforts to break generational cycles, contributing to a deeper understanding of Black women's identity formation.

This chapter discusses the results of the study with existing literature and theoretical frameworks. It examines the broader implications for clinical practice, education, and future research, offering insights into how mental health professionals, counselor educators, and families can support Black women in redefining their self-concept beyond restrictive labels. Additionally, the chapter addresses the limitations of the study and provides recommendations for future research before concluding with reflections on the significance of these findings.

Summary of the Findings

Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study explored participants' lived experiences through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The findings revealed that identity formation among Black women is not a straightforward process of self-discovery but rather a negotiation between inherited labels and personal authenticity. The major findings of the study align with the research questions:

1. **Labeling in the Mother-Daughter Relationship and Self-Concept:** The mother-daughter dynamic served as the primary site where labels were introduced and reinforced. Participants internalized these labels as core aspects of their identity, shaping their self-worth and behavior from an early age.
2. **The Role of the Mother-Daughter Relationship in the SBW Schema:** Mothers, often unintentionally, modeled and passed down the SBW Schema as a survival

mechanism. This transmission of strength and resilience, while protective in many ways, also reinforced emotional suppression and self-sacrifice.

3. The Impact of the SBW Schema on Self-Concept: The shift from GG to SBW involved an increasing emphasis on resilience, caregiving, and perfectionism. While this schema provided a sense of pride and purpose, it also constrained emotional expression and limited opportunities for vulnerability.
4. The Influence of the GG archetype on Self-Concept and SBW Development: The GG archetype, established in childhood, created a foundation for high achievement and compliance. Over time, it evolved into the SBW Schema, where participants felt responsible for upholding familial and societal expectations of strength.

The study revealed that breaking cycles of generational conditioning was central to participants' self-concept redefinition. Many engaged in active unlearning, boundary-setting, and therapy to challenge these imposed roles and cultivate a more authentic sense of self.

Conceptual Framework

This research was framed by Labeling Theory (Becker, 1963) and Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989), which provided a foundation for understanding how labels function within the mother-daughter relationship and how intersecting social identities shape self-concept.

Labeling Theory emphasizes that labels assigned by significant figures, such as mothers, become internalized and shape identity development (Becker, 1963). The study confirmed that the GG archetype became a core aspect of participants' early self-concept,

with expectations of compliance and achievement. Over time, this label evolved into the SBW Schema, reinforcing expectations of strength and emotional suppression.

Intersectionality Theory highlights the compounded impact of race, gender, and societal expectations on identity development. The findings supported the notion that Black women experience identity formation through the lens of both gendered and racialized expectations, making the GG and SBW labels uniquely complex and deeply embedded in cultural survival strategies.

Additionally, the study engaged with Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1988) and Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory (Erikson, 1950) to further contextualize the mother-daughter relationship's role in shaping identity. Bowlby's theory underscored how secure or insecure attachments influenced emotional regulation and self-worth (Bowlby, 1988), while Erikson's model provided insight into the lifelong negotiation of identity within social and relational contexts (Erikson, 1950).

By integrating these frameworks, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how self-concept in Black women is constructed, reinforced, and challenged within familial and societal structures. The next section will explore the implications of these findings for mental health professionals, and broader cultural discourse.

Participants

The study included 16 Black women who self-identified as having been labeled a GG in childhood and currently identifying with the SBW Schema in adulthood. Participants were required to be at least 18 years old to provide reflective insights on how these identity labels shaped their self-concept over time. To maintain cultural specificity,

the study excluded individuals who did not identify as Black women, those raised by non-Black mothers, and those who did not currently identify with the SBW Schema.

Participants were recruited from varied geographic locations within the United States, ensuring a diverse representation of backgrounds and experiences. Recruitment efforts utilized social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn), professional networks, and snowball sampling, allowing participants to recommend others who fit the study criteria. This method ensured a broad range of perspectives while maintaining thematic cohesion across narratives.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological approach, designed to capture the lived experiences of participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via HIPAA-compliant Zoom, each lasting 45 to 75 minutes. These interviews focused on self-concept development, familial expectations, coping mechanisms, and identity negotiation, providing in-depth personal narratives. To complement individual interviews, a focus group discussion was conducted, offering participants the opportunity to engage with others' experiences, compare narratives, and further elaborate on key themes. All interviews and the focus group were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed to ensure accuracy in capturing their experiences. The transcribed data was then imported into Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software, where it underwent systematic coding and thematic analysis. This process allowed for the identification of recurring themes and subthemes, ensuring a rigorous and structured examination of the constructs.

Review of Results

The study's results align with existing literature on identity development in Black women while also offering new insights into how participants actively renegotiate inherited labels. The findings highlight four central findings: 1) Self-Concept Development- Participants' identities were shaped by both internalized labels and the struggle to redefine themselves outside of familial expectations; 2) GG to SBW Transition – The compliance and perfectionism associated with GG in childhood evolved into resilience and self-sacrifice in adulthood; 3) Family Expectations– The family dynamic played a crucial role in reinforcing and modeling these identity frameworks; and 4) Breaking Cycles – All participants described intentional efforts to unlearn and reject aspects of the GG label and SBW Schema, prioritizing self-compassion and authenticity over external validation.

Participants ranged widely in age, highlighting how these labels persist across generations. The majority described upbringings with strong maternal influences, reinforcing research that Black women's socialization often includes strict behavioral expectations (Nichols et al., 2015).

Explanation of Findings in Connection to Research Questions

How does labeling in the mother-daughter relationship impact self-concept?

Findings from this study reinforce Harris-Perry's (2011) assertion that Black women's identities are shaped by deeply internalized expectations, which originate both within the family unit and through broader societal pressures. The study highlights how mothers act as both reinforcers and products of these expectations, simultaneously passing them down while also bearing the weight of these same imposed roles. This

cyclical nature of labeling suggests that the messages participants received about strength, resilience, and self-sacrifice were not solely a product of individual family dynamics but were instead deeply ingrained within intergenerational structures of Black womanhood.

This study found that mothers played a dual role: they actively reinforced the GG Archetype and SBW Schema in their daughters, yet they too were often trapped within these same identity frameworks. Many participants reflected on how their mothers modeled strength through emotional suppression, self-sacrifice, and perseverance, expecting their daughters to uphold similar traits. This aligns with Tookes (2021), who argued that Black mothers often instill strength and resilience in their daughters as a protective mechanism against the compounded oppression they will inevitably face due to their race and gender.

For instance, several participants described their mothers discouraging emotional vulnerability, reinforcing the belief that expressing distress or asking for help was a sign of weakness. This reflects previous research suggesting that Black women are often socialized to prioritize caretaking over their own emotional needs, as resilience is framed as a survival strategy (Abrams et al., 2014). However, participants also recognized that their mothers had internalized these same messages from their own mothers, demonstrating how these identity expectations persist across generations.

The participants' narratives illustrate that the SBW Schema was not merely taught but modeled through daily interactions. Many saw their mothers carry heavy emotional and financial burdens alone, sometimes at the expense of their well-being. As a result, participants internalized the belief that being strong meant minimizing one's needs and maintaining composure, no matter the circumstances. At the same time, the study

expands on this framework by demonstrating that some participants began to resist these labels as they aged. While prior research often focuses on how Black women continue the cycle of SBW expectations, this study highlights intentional acts of unlearning and redefining strength.

What role does the mother-daughter relationship play in the development of the SBW Schema?

Findings from this study reinforce Abrams et al. (2014) by demonstrating that the SBW Schema is transmitted intergenerationally, often through the mother-daughter relationship. Participants overwhelmingly described their mothers as primary models of strength, resilience, and self-sacrifice. Mothers were often seen enduring hardship without complaint, juggling multiple responsibilities, and prioritizing the needs of others over their own well-being. In this way, the SBW identity was not simply taught, it was lived, shaping how daughters understood their own roles within the family and broader society.

For many participants, their mothers embodied the hallmarks of the SBW Schema: a) emotional suppression, b) self-sacrifice, c) uncompensated labor. Participants described witnessing their mothers endure challenges in silence, internalizing the belief that strength equated to suffering. One participant reflected, *“I don’t think I ever saw my mother cry. Even when things were bad, she just kept going.”* This mirrors Watson-Singleton (2017), who found that Black women are socialized to suppress emotional expression, reinforcing the notion that vulnerability is a weakness.

Similarly, participants recalled how their mothers rarely asked for help, further solidifying the expectation that Black women must be entirely self-sufficient. This

reflects Beauboeuf-Lafontant's (2009) argument that the SBW Schema functions as a badge of honor and a burden, symbolizing both cultural pride and an inescapable obligation to endure.

However, while prior research often suggests that daughters passively inherit the SBW Schema (Harris-Perry, 2011; Watson-Singleton, 2017), this study found that many participants actively resisted it. Rather than accepting strength as a mandatory trait, they described a growing awareness of the emotional and physical toll this identity placed on them. For instance, participants reflected on moments of realization, often triggered by burnout, mental health struggles, or increased self-awareness, where they began to question the necessity of self-sacrifice. Many described setting boundaries with family members, advocating for their own well-being, and rejecting the belief that they must always be strong.

Jackie shared, *"When I finally started saying no and setting boundaries, my mom didn't understand at first... But then I saw her start saying no too."* This insight challenges the unidirectional assumption of the SBW Schema, suggesting that daughters who push back against these expectations may also influence their mothers to reassess their own beliefs.

This reciprocal dynamic highlights a crucial shift in understanding the SBW Schema—not only as something passed down from mother to daughter but as a belief system that can be challenged and reshaped through intergenerational influence. One of the most compelling findings of this study is the bidirectional influence between mothers and daughters regarding the SBW Schema. While previous research has emphasized the ways in which mothers shape their daughters' identities (Harris-Perry, 2011), participants

in this study provided examples of how daughters' resistance prompted their mothers to reconsider their own adherence to the SBW identity. For instance, some participants described their mothers becoming more open to emotional vulnerability after witnessing their daughters engage in therapy, self-care, or open discussions about mental health. Others noted that as they established boundaries, their mothers began doing the same, suggesting that breaking cycles of self-sacrifice may not only be an individual act but a generational shift.

This challenges the dominant narrative that the SBW Schema is a rigid expectation (Simon, 2024), instead presenting it as a negotiable and evolving identity. Participants described generational conversations about emotional well-being, rest, and self-worth, highlighting the potential for transformation within the mother-daughter relationship.

How does the SBW Schema influence self-concept?

This study aligns with existing research demonstrating that the SBW Schema reinforces emotional suppression, self-reliance, and perfectionism (Watson-Singleton, 2017; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009). Participants described how the SBW identity was framed as an expectation rather than a choice, shaping their self-concept in ways that often prioritized external validation over personal fulfillment. The perception of strength as a non-negotiable trait meant that many participants struggled with expressing vulnerability, asking for help, or acknowledging their own needs, which influenced how they understood themselves.

Participants reflected on how self-worth was tied to endurance, meaning that struggles were to be navigated alone, emotions were to be suppressed, and success was

measured by how much one could handle without breaking. One participant shared, *“I always thought that if I was struggling, I just had to deal with it on my own. That’s what I saw my mother do, and I thought that’s what it meant to be strong.”* This finding is consistent with Abrams et al. (2014), who argue that the SBW Schema teaches Black women that resilience is synonymous with emotional endurance.

However, a key contribution of this study is that participants did not view these traits as fixed or inescapable aspects of their identity. Unlike earlier studies that frame the SBW Schema as an unquestioned and rigid framework (Tinsley-Jones, 2001), more recent research suggests that many Black women are actively redefining strength and challenging traditional expectations (Tookes, 2021; Allen et al., 2021; Harrington et al., 2023). This study builds on this emerging literature, illustrating how participants engaged in a process of resisting and renegotiating what it meant to be strong. Rather than fully embracing the self-sacrificing, perfectionistic ideals of the SBW Schema, many participants described efforts to prioritize self-care, set boundaries, and embrace emotional authenticity (Tookes, 2021; Allen et al., 2021; Harrington et al., 2023).

How does the Good Girl label contribute to self-concept and the SBW Schema?

Findings from this study confirm that the GG Archetype serves as a foundational framework for the SBW Schema, reinforcing early socialization around obedience, self-sacrifice, and perfectionism, all of which later manifest as resilience, emotional suppression, and hyper-independence in adulthood. Participants described how being a “good girl” in childhood meant prioritizing others’ needs, meeting high expectations, and avoiding any behavior that could be perceived as disobedient or disruptive. This aligns with Bowman (2023), who found that early lessons in “good girl” behavior

cultivate emotionally restrictive coping mechanisms, limiting a child's ability to express vulnerability and reinforcing an identity rooted in external validation rather than self-authored authenticity.

For many participants, the GG identity was not a temporary phase but a foundation

self-concept that shaped their transition into adulthood. The obedience and self-sacrifice demanded of "good girls" eventually evolved into the resilience and self-reliance expected of Strong Black Women, with little room to question these expectations. One participant explained, *"I never even thought about what I wanted. My role was always to be responsible, dependable, the one who had it all together."* This illustrates how early social conditioning around being the "good girl" fostered internalized beliefs that one's worth was contingent upon serving others, maintaining composure, and excelling in all aspects of life.

While this study supports prior research that links characteristics of the GG Archetype to the development of the SBW Schema, a key contribution is its demonstration that this transition is not always automatic or inevitable. Traditional research has often presented a potential GG characteristics-to-SBW internalization trajectory as a linear progression, in which childhood expectations of compliance and perfectionism naturally evolve into adult expectations of strength and emotional endurance (Abrams et al., 2014; Watson-Singleton, 2017). However, findings from this study suggest that some participants actively disrupted this trajectory, resisting the inherited belief that strength must come at the expense of their own well-being.

Several participants described experiencing a moment of realization or a pivotal life event that prompted them to reassess the GG identity and reject the expectation of perfectionism and self-sacrifice. Nitasha reflected on this shift, stating, *"So it's still the okay, good, good, good—check box, check box, check box. Okay, now, you also didn't do this—check box, check box, check box. And so I think along the way, you're like, you look back and you're like, 'Wait, what's happening here?' Right? Like, you're like, 'What was all of this for? And did I even want this? Or was I just doing it because people said, 'Good, good, good, next, next, next.'"* This quote illustrates the moment of self-reflection and realization that many participants experienced—the recognition that they had been conforming to expectations without actively choosing their own identities.

Moreover, some participants actively worked to redefine success and self-worth outside of the GG-to-SBW framework, choosing to prioritize self-care, set boundaries, and embrace imperfection. One participant shared, *"I'm good with also not being perfect and not being good enough, and it's just like not good enough in a bad way. But you know, good enough where this is just where I am, and it's okay, and I can learn from my mistakes... and no one has—no one will put me down about it. I don't have to take it to heart."* This insight challenges the traditional assumption that the SBW Schema is an inevitable outcome of childhood conditioning, highlighting instead that identity formation is fluid and can be consciously reshaped over time.

For participants who resisted the GG-to-SBW trajectory, the process of breaking cycles was deeply tied to redefining what it meant to be strong, successful, and worthy. Instead of adhering to the GG's need for perfection or the SBW's demand for endurance, some participants reclaimed self-concept by allowing themselves to exist outside of these

rigid frameworks. One participant described this shift, stating, *“I want to be good with not being perfect. I want to be okay with just being enough.”* This statement reflects a profound transformation in self-concept—one that prioritizes self-compassion over perfection, emotional expression over suppression, and balance over hyper-independence.

Discussion of Most Prevalent Themes

Two of the most prevalent overlapping subthemes were the interconnection between coping mechanisms and identity formation, as well as the influence of family dynamics on self-concept. Additionally, breaking cycles emerged as a critical, cross-cutting theme that influenced nearly every domain of participants’ lives, from their emotional regulation to their relationships and sense of self.

Coping Mechanisms and Identity Formation

One of the most significant findings of this study was the reciprocal relationship between coping mechanisms and identity formation. The relationship between coping mechanisms and identity formation is deeply intertwined, particularly within the context of the SBW and the GG archetype. This study reinforces existing research by demonstrating how coping strategies initially developed for survival, such as emotional suppression, hyper-independence, and perfectionism, become ingrained in self-concept over time (Tookes, 2021; Watson-Singleton, 2017). Rather than merely serving as responses to external pressures, these behaviors are internalized, shaping how individuals view themselves and their roles within relationships and society.

This process aligns with Labeling Theory, which posits that repeated reinforcement of certain traits, such as being “strong” or “responsible”, leads individuals to adopt these characteristics as defining aspects of their identity (Becker, 1963).

Participants described how behaviors like emotional detachment or taking on excessive responsibilities were not just coping mechanisms but fundamental parts of how they understood themselves. These findings also build on research highlighting how maternal labeling contributes to the development of self-concept (McNeil Smith et al., 2019), particularly within Black mother-daughter relationships where expectations of strength and resilience are deeply rooted in historical and cultural survival strategies (DeGruy, 2005).

At the same time, this study highlights the fluidity of self-concept by showing that identity is not static but shaped through ongoing reflection and intentional shifts in behavior. Participants described a conscious effort to unlearn survival-based coping mechanisms and adopt healthier forms of self-expression, boundary-setting, and emotional openness. This process aligns with Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), which suggests that early relational experiences shape emotional regulation patterns, but that these patterns can be revised when individuals engage in secure and affirming relationships. As some participants challenged familial expectations, they found that their ability to express vulnerability and prioritize self-care expanded, reinforcing research on identity as an evolving construct (Rogers, 1951).

Furthermore, Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) provides insight into how these identity shifts occur within the broader context of race, gender, and societal expectations. The SBW Schema is often framed as an inherent trait of Black womanhood, yet these findings demonstrate that it is a learned response to systemic and familial pressures rather than an intrinsic characteristic. Participants who moved away from these behaviors did so by challenging both internalized familial expectations and societal

narratives that equate Black women's worth with their ability to endure hardship (Harris-Perry, 2011).

By examining the interplay between coping mechanisms and self-concept, this study deepens the understanding of how Black women negotiate, resist, and redefine the roles and labels imposed upon them. Rather than passively inheriting these expectations, participants demonstrated the capacity to reshape their identities in ways that prioritized emotional well-being, reflecting the ongoing tension between cultural survival strategies and individual self-definition.

Family Dynamics and Identity Formation

In addition to coping mechanisms, family dynamics played an equally powerful role in shaping identity. Family structures and expectations played a fundamental role in shaping participants' identities, reinforcing research on the intergenerational transmission of labels and self-concept within Black families (McNeil Smith et al., 2019; Rodgers, 2021). Participants overwhelmingly described their early identities as externally assigned rather than independently discovered, reflecting the prescriptive nature of family expectations. This finding aligns with Labeling Theory (Becker, 1963), which suggests that labels assigned by significant figures, such as being the "responsible one," "the caregiver," or "the non-problematic child", become internalized and shape self-concept. The rigidity of these roles often extended beyond childhood, influencing career choices, relationship patterns, and emotional regulation strategies in adulthood.

While some participants described their families as sources of stability, others experienced identity imposition that left little room for self-exploration. This aligns with research highlighting the dual nature of familial expectations, where structure can provide

a sense of belonging but can also restrict autonomy (Nichols et al., 2015). The expectation to embody resilience, self-sacrifice, and emotional restraint was not simply encouraged—it was enforced through both direct instruction and behavioral modeling. Many participants found that their mothers, having internalized similar expectations from previous generations, reinforced these roles through both explicit guidance and implicit messaging. This dynamic reflects Bowlby’s Attachment Theory (1969), which emphasizes that early relational experiences shape emotional patterns and identity formation, particularly in relationships where expectations are rigidly defined.

Beyond direct parental instruction, maternal modeling played a pivotal role in shaping identity. Participants observed how their mothers navigated societal and familial expectations, influencing their own beliefs about self-worth, strength, and emotional expression. The SBW Schema, rooted in historical narratives of Black womanhood (Collins, 1991; Harris-Perry, 2011), was often reinforced not just through verbal reinforcement but through the everyday behaviors mothers exhibited. As daughters internalized these models, their own self-perception became filtered through a maternal lens, shaping how they responded to success, failure, and vulnerability. Denise’s reflection “*Whenever I do something, I can hear her saying, ‘That was stupid. Why did you do that?’*” demonstrates how maternal expectations became an internalized voice that shaped decision-making and self-evaluation. This process aligns with psychological research on self-concept development, which suggests that internalized parental voices contribute to an individual’s self-narrative and self-judgment well into adulthood (Rogers, 1951).

However, identity formation was not solely a passive process of internalization. Some participants actively challenged and redefined the roles imposed upon them, demonstrating the capacity for self-concept to evolve beyond childhood conditioning. This resistance often required boundary-setting, rejecting generational norms, and prioritizing personal fulfillment over familial expectations, actions that, while necessary for self-discovery, were frequently met with familial resistance. Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) provides insight into these tensions, as the pressure to conform to gendered and racialized expectations of strength and resilience often made deviation from these roles particularly difficult. The study findings suggest that breaking generational cycles of identity imposition requires both self-awareness and a willingness to disrupt long-standing family narratives about duty, strength, and sacrifice.

By examining the interplay between family dynamics and identity formation, these findings expand the understanding of how Black women's self-concept is shaped, reinforced, and, in some cases, renegotiated within familial relationships. The influence of familial expectations does not merely dictate childhood roles; it extends into adulthood, where it must either be upheld or actively redefined.

Breaking Cycles

The process of breaking intergenerational cycles required participants to challenge the deeply ingrained models of strength, sacrifice, and identity they had internalized from their upbringing. This study highlights how participants did not merely reject these inherited roles but actively redefined strength to include emotional well-being, boundary-setting, and self-compassion. Their experiences align with Labeling Theory (Becker, 1963), which suggests that assigned roles are not only internalized but

can also be consciously resisted and rewritten. Participants described how breaking cycles was both an individual and relational process, where pushing back against these roles had ripple effects within their families.

A key finding in this study is that the transmission of the SBW Schema was not strictly unidirectional. While prior research has largely focused on how mothers pass expectations of resilience and self-sacrifice to their daughters (Nichols et al., 2015; Watson-Singleton, 2017), participants in this study described instances where their resistance to these expectations influenced their mothers to reassess their own beliefs. Jackie shared, *“When I finally started saying no and setting boundaries, my mom didn’t understand at first... But then I saw her start saying no too”*. Similarly, Amy described how her mother became more self-compassionate, stating, *“And now I think I can be more like, it’s okay if we do mess up... but get back up, because that’s what my mom struggled with. And she’s [become more kind to herself]. Since I’ve been a therapist, she’s understanding it a little bit better”*. Elsa also reflected on this shifting dynamic, explaining, *“I learned independence and strength from my grandmother more than my mother... Now, my mother learns from me”*. These examples highlight how daughters actively reshape intergenerational narratives of strength, challenging traditional beliefs about perfectionism and emotional suppression.

This study expands existing literature by demonstrating that intergenerational influence within Black mother-daughter relationships is more dynamic and reciprocal than previously assumed. While Collins’ (2000) Black feminist thought emphasizes that knowledge production within Black families is not strictly top-down, these findings provide concrete examples of how daughters model new frameworks of resilience that

disrupt inherited patterns of over-functioning and self-denial. Furthermore, Boyd-Franklin (1989) underscores the role of intergenerational healing in Black families, aligning with participants' experiences of setting boundaries as both an individual and relational transformation. The act of rejecting deeply ingrained roles of self-sacrifice not only allowed participants to redefine their self-worth but also created space for their mothers to engage in their own redefinition of strength and self-care.

The concept of breaking cycles can be further understood through the lens of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) as theorized by DeGruy (2005). DeGruy argues that the trauma endured during slavery, and perpetuated through generations, has led to a legacy of survival strategies rooted in hyper-resilience, emotional suppression, and self-sacrifice (2005). These survival-based behaviors, while adaptive in hostile environments, have become internalized as identity traits in subsequent generations. Participants in this study described behaviors such as self-sacrifice, emotional caretaking, and perfectionism, which are consistent with DeGruy (2005) conceptualization of intergenerational trauma responses. As participants grew more aware of these patterns, they began to challenge the belief that self-worth is tied to endurance, reflecting a conscious effort to break the cycles of historical trauma that have shaped their families' narratives.

For many participants, breaking cycles started with rejecting self-sacrifice as a core identity trait. Every participant described engaging in self-sacrificial behaviors at some point in their lives, whether through emotional caretaking, people-pleasing, or enduring stress without complaint. These behaviors align with the historical and cultural expectations of Black womanhood, where survival has often depended on emotional labor and unwavering resilience in the face of adversity (Collins, 1991; Harris-Perry, 2011).

However, participants reported that as they gained greater self-awareness and emotional autonomy, they began to challenge the belief that self-worth is measured by endurance. This process is particularly relevant to Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), as the ability to redefine relational patterns often emerged when participants established more secure and affirming connections, either through therapy, mentorship, or peer relationships that reinforced alternative ways of being.

Breaking cycles was also deeply intertwined with intergenerational change. Many participants described how their redefinition of strength influenced the ways they parented their own children, ensuring that their daughters would not inherit the same rigid expectations of perfectionism and resilience. This reflects Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989), as the pressure to conform to racialized and gendered expectations of strength often made it difficult for participants to reject these roles without resistance from family members, elders, or broader cultural narratives. Some participants described experiencing pushback from their mothers or extended family when they attempted to assert boundaries, illustrating how challenging long-standing survival mechanisms can create familial tension.

At the center of this process was the mother-daughter relationship, where participants witnessed firsthand the toll that self-sacrificing behaviors had on their mothers. Some described the pain of seeing their mothers perpetuate the same cycles they were trying to break, while others felt a deep responsibility to create a different legacy for future generations. Those who were mothers themselves emphasized an intentional effort to raise their daughters differently, teaching them that strength does not require silence, perfection, or self-neglect. This aligns with research on the evolution of self-concept,

where identity is not only shaped by past experiences but can be actively redefined through conscious resistance and relational change (Rogers, 1951).

These findings reinforce the ongoing tension between cultural survival strategies and individual well-being, highlighting how breaking intergenerational cycles is not just an act of personal transformation but also a shift in the broader narrative of Black womanhood.

Literature Support for Subtheme: Spirituality

Although not initially anticipated, spirituality emerged as a critical factor in self-concept development. This aligns with Kavar (2015), who emphasized spirituality as a core dimension of identity, shaping moral frameworks, relationships, and personal growth. Participants described spirituality as both an internal guide and a communal resource, helping them navigate challenges and align their values with their actions. Kosarkova and Roubalova (2024) further supported this, finding that spirituality enhances self-esteem, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose, even in secular contexts. Their research complements the current study by demonstrating that spirituality plays a key role in identity formation across life stages.

Rather than functioning solely as a coping mechanism, spirituality served as a lens through which participants interpreted their experiences, reconciled family expectations, and challenged the GG and SBW frameworks. Its emergence in this study expands existing discussions on identity formation, underscoring spirituality's role in fostering self-understanding, resilience, and authenticity among Black women. These findings not only offer insight into identity development but also have significant implications for counseling and future research.

Implications

This study provides critical contributions to counseling, education, and supervision, particularly in understanding the identity development of Black women. By centering the lived experiences of Black women who identify with the SBW Schema, this research offers valuable insights into how intergenerational labels shape self-concept and how cycles of resilience and self-sacrifice can be disrupted. The findings highlight the role of maternal influence in reinforcing or challenging these identity frameworks, underscoring the need for culturally responsive counseling interventions that address the complexities of racialized gender identity development.

For mental health professionals, these findings emphasize the importance of helping Black women deconstruct societal and familial expectations in therapy. Counselors must recognize the emotional labor associated with the SBW Schema and support Black women in developing a self-concept rooted in authenticity rather than inherited resilience. Integrating therapeutic approaches such as narrative therapy, inner child work, culturally affirming practices, and Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy can effectively address the complex interplay of identity, resilience, and vulnerability in Black women. Narrative therapy empowers individuals to reframe limiting self-perceptions and reconstruct identity narratives that foster empowerment and emotional well-being (White & Epston, 1990). Inner child work supports the healing of unresolved trauma by reconnecting individuals with early emotional wounds, fostering self-compassion and breaking cycles of inherited distress (Bradshaw, 1990). Culturally affirming practices that validate the lived experiences of marginalized groups enhance therapeutic effectiveness by addressing racialized and gendered trauma while promoting

self-care as an act of resistance against oppressive narratives (Watson-Singleton et al., 2021). Additionally, IFS therapy acknowledges that traits such as strength and obedience, often observed in Black women, are not inherently negative but have developed as protective mechanisms for survival. IFS posits that the mind comprises multiple subpersonalities or "parts," each with its own perspectives and roles, which can be harmonized to promote healing and self-compassion (Schwartz, 1995). By recognizing and working with these parts, individuals can transform protective behaviors into more adaptive functions, fostering emotional well-being and resilience.

It is imperative that counselors-in-training develop a critical awareness of how identity labeling impacts self-concept and psychological well-being, particularly in marginalized communities. While Black women navigate the SBW, every racial, gender, and religious group has its own set of labels, schemas, and archetypes that influence self-perception and behavior. However, Labeling Theory (Becker, 1963) is not emphasized enough in counselor education programs, despite its relevance in understanding how individuals internalize societal and familial expectations. Many people grow up being labeled as "smart," "bad," "dumb," "athletic," or "good," but there is often little discussion on the long-term implications of these labels and how they shape self-concept, coping mechanisms, and identity formation.

To address this gap, theories courses in mental health counseling graduate programs could incorporate discussions on Labeling Theory and its application to identity development, helping students recognize how labels become ingrained and affect mental health. Diversity courses can move beyond general discussions of oppression and privilege to explore how each cultural or social subset has its own identity constraints,

which can limit authentic self-expression. Couples and family therapy courses should examine how relationship roles and family expectations contribute to rigid identity structures, leaving individuals feeling trapped in roles that no longer align with their true selves. By integrating these themes across the curriculum, counselor education programs can better prepare future clinicians to help clients deconstruct identity boxes, challenge internalized narratives, and embrace self-concepts rooted in authenticity rather than societal expectation.

Beyond clinical settings, this study has implications for real relationships, mothers, daughters, and families. Healing does not have to occur in isolation, and these findings provide a foundation for intentional conversations between mothers and daughters about identity, strength, and emotional expression. Parents, educators, and mentors can use this research to create spaces for self-exploration and affirmation that encourage young Black girls to define themselves beyond societal expectations. Parents, educators, and mentors can foster self-exploration and affirmation among young Black girls by engaging them in open-ended conversations that encourage personal expression and self-definition. Asking questions like, "Who do you want to be?" allows these young individuals to articulate their aspirations beyond societal expectations. Affirming behaviors that align with their self-identified goals reinforces their sense of agency and authenticity. For instance, if a young girl expresses a desire to be creative, adults can support this by providing opportunities for artistic expression and celebrating her creative efforts. It's crucial to recognize that many young Black girls may feel pressured to embody perfection or avoid mistakes; creating a safe space where they can explore various facets of their identity without fear of judgment is essential. Engaging in

discussions about what specific traits mean to them can deepen adults' understanding and support of their individual journeys.

Incorporating positive affirmation practices from an early age can significantly boost self-esteem and confidence. Research indicates that when children regularly engage in positive self-affirmations, it can lead to increased self-confidence and self-belief. For example, repeating affirmations like, "I am capable," or "I am brave," helps in planting seeds of confidence that lead to a healthy self-concept (Wilkins, 2020). By integrating these practices, adults can help young Black girls develop a resilient and positive self-concept, empowering them to define themselves on their own terms.

The findings of this study extend far beyond individual identity reconstruction—they challenge how families, therapists, educators, and counselor training programs conceptualize self-worth, resilience, and authenticity. By illuminating the ways identity is shaped through intergenerational narratives, societal expectations, and psychological frameworks, this research underscores the urgency of creating spaces where individuals are not confined by labels but empowered to define themselves. In counselor education, this means critically examining how theories perpetuate rigid identity structures and integrating approaches that honor lived experiences. In therapy, it calls for interventions that move beyond pathology to validate identity exploration as an essential part of healing. In classrooms and families, it requires a commitment to fostering curiosity and affirmation over assumption and prescription. Ultimately, these findings emphasize that dismantling restrictive narratives is not just about personal transformation, it is about reshaping the systems that define how we see ourselves and each other, ensuring that authenticity is not just permitted but truly embraced.

Potential Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. With a sample size of 16 participants, the depth of insight is high, but the findings may not be widely generalizable to all Black women who identify with the SBW schema. However, qualitative research prioritizes depth over breadth, aiming to provide rich, nuanced understandings rather than statistical generalizability. Additionally, the study focuses on a specific population: Black women over 18 who identify with the SBW Schema and who were labeled as the GG in childhood. This excludes interracial women who identify as Black, transgender women, and Black girls under the age of 18, limiting the findings to a particular subset of Black womanhood.

Furthermore, the use of purposeful and snowball sampling may introduce selection bias, as participants were primarily recruited through professional networks, counseling spaces, or referrals from existing participants. While this approach allowed for rich narratives from those who have deeply engaged with the GG and SBW Schema, it may have excluded perspectives from Black women with different developmental pathways. Efforts were made to include diverse geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, but future research could benefit from randomized or community-based sampling to expand representational diversity.

Another limitation lies in the reliance on self-reported data from interviews and focus groups, which can be influenced by memory biases, present emotional states, and retrospective reinterpretations of past experiences. While reflexivity and bracketing were employed to mitigate researcher bias, it is important to acknowledge that participants' reflections may be shaped by their current perspectives rather than an objective

recollection of their experiences. Additionally, since the study focuses on adult reflections, it may not fully capture how Black girls today experience self-concept development amid shifting societal norms, media representation, and cultural discourse.

Future Research

This study provided valuable insights into how the SBW Schema is transmitted and negotiated within the mother-daughter relationship. Future research should expand on these findings by incorporating mother-daughter dyads to explore intergenerational dynamics in real-time. Secondly, a longitudinal study with mother-daughter dyads or individual Black women could track whether rejecting or redefining the SBW identity leads to lasting shifts in family relationships and expectations for future generations. Additionally, spirituality emerged as a significant but underexplored factor in self-concept development. Future studies should examine how spirituality intersects with identity formation across different cultural, religious, and generational contexts. This could be done by conducting qualitative studies that explore personal narratives specifically surrounding spirituality in identity development, incorporating intersectional analyses of race, gender, and religion, or using longitudinal research to examine how spiritual beliefs evolve across generations and influence self-concept.

Research focusing on Black girls under the age of 18 could offer insight into how contemporary influences, such as social media, shifting gender roles, and evolving cultural narratives, shape identity formation. Broadening the scope to include interracial Black women, transgender women, and individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the GG and SBW Schema manifest across different lived experiences. Longitudinal studies tracking

these identity frameworks from adolescence into adulthood could further illuminate the long-term effects of inherited expectations.

Beyond family, societal pressures also shape self-concept, reinforcing or challenging the SBW Schema. Future research should examine how Black women navigate these expectations in education, workplaces, and social spaces, and whether their evolving identities disrupt or uphold familial norms. Additionally, the role of father-daughter relationships warrants further exploration, as paternal influence was present but less emphasized in participants' narratives. Finally, studying the factors that facilitate or hinder breaking generational cycles, including self-awareness, external support, and family structure—could deepen our understanding of what enables Black women to redefine strength, responsibility, and identity on their own terms.

Conclusion

This study highlights that self-concept among Black women who have internalized the GG archetype and the SBW Schema is not static but an evolving negotiation between inherited expectations and personal agency. Participants' identities were shaped not only by direct messages from their families but also through modeling, the observed behaviors of their mothers, grandmothers, and other influential figures. Watching their mothers navigate strength, sacrifice, and resilience provided an implicit blueprint for how they, too, were expected to move through the world. While many internalized these lessons, others actively resisted them, challenging the notion that strength must come at the expense of emotional expression and self-care. Breaking cycles emerged as a pivotal act of redefining strength—participants moved from passive

recipients of identity expectations to active authors of their own self-concept, demonstrating that identity is both inherited and reconstructed.

A key contribution of this study is its exploration of how coping mechanisms, family expectations, and societal narratives intersect to shape self-concept. Coping strategies initially developed for survival became defining aspects of identity, yet as participants gained self-awareness, they began reshaping their sense of self. Family expectations, while central to identity development, were not confined to the mother-daughter relationship alone; fathers, extended relatives, and societal influences reinforced or disrupted these roles. Modeling played a crucial role, not only in reinforcing the GG and SBW labels but also in providing a path toward change. As participants rejected inherited labels and embraced authenticity, some noticed that their mothers, too, began shifting their behaviors, highlighting the bidirectional nature of identity development. Additionally, spirituality emerged as an unexpected yet significant factor, providing a framework for participants to navigate family expectations and redefine inherited narratives, underscoring its role in identity reconstruction.

These findings have profound implications not only for mental health professionals but also for parents, families, and individuals navigating their own identity journeys. This study sheds light on how inherited labels shape self-concept, but more importantly, it offers a pathway for intentional healing and transformation. Mothers and daughters can use these insights to engage in deliberate conversations about identity, expectations, and emotional well-being, breaking cycles that have persisted for generations. Beyond clinical interventions, this research speaks to the real relationships that shape identity, affirming that self-concept is not just about therapy or mental health

frameworks but also about how individuals and families engage in daily acts of self-definition. By recognizing that self-concept is formed through both direct messaging and modeling, families can begin to cultivate relationships that prioritize authenticity over obligation, emotional expression over suppression, and self-worth beyond resilience. Breaking cycles is not just about rejecting the past, it is about intentionally building a future where self-worth is defined not by endurance but by the freedom to exist fully and unapologetically.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. How did the labels your mother used during your childhood shape how you viewed yourself and your identity?
2. How do you think your relationship with your mother influenced your understanding of strength and independence as you grew up?
3. I'm curious about your experience transitioning from childhood to adulthood. How do you think the "Good Girl" label influenced your identity as you grew older?
4. How do you believe being labeled as the "Good Girl" in childhood has coincided with the Strong Black Woman identity?
5. In what ways do you think identifying with the Strong Black Woman Schema has impacted how you see yourself today?

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

1. How did the Good Girl label influence how you behaved as a child and how you viewed yourself?
2. Reflecting on your relationship with your mother, how did her expectations and interactions contribute to your understanding of strength and independence?
3. How, if at all, do you see connections between the "Good Girl" label from your childhood and the Strong Black Woman Schema you identify with as an adult?
4. In what ways has identifying with the Strong Black Woman Schema shaped how you view yourself today?
5. How has internalizing the "Good Girl" label in childhood and the Strong Black Woman identity in adulthood shaped the way you navigate your life?

Appendix C

Screeners Questions

☐ **Consent:** By completing this form, you are consenting to be contacted by PhD research student Maya Cobb.

☐ **Participant Name**

☐ **Email Address**

☐ **Phone Number**

☐ **Age**

☐ **Preferred Method of Contact**

☐ **Please read the definition below and indicate whether or not you identify with the following:**

- **Daughter of a Black Mother:** A person who is a Black female and was raised by a biological parent who is also a Black female.
- **Black Female:** A person who self-identifies as female and is of African descent. This includes individuals who identify as Black, African American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino/a, or from other African diasporic backgrounds. The term "Black" is used to describe individuals whose racial identity is rooted in African ancestry, and "female" refers to those whose gender identification aligns with their assigned sex at birth.

☐ **Please read the following description of the Good Girl and indicate whether or not you identified with this label during childhood (ages 5-17).**

- **Good Girl:** The Good Girl label refers to a socially and culturally constructed identity that imposes expectations on a girl to conform to ideals of obedience,

compliance, and perfectionism. She is expected to prioritize others' needs, be well-mannered, emotionally restrained, and uphold a sense of responsibility, often at the expense of her own desires or authenticity (Simmons, 2009; Turkel, 2000).

- **Examples:**

- At a family gathering, the child quietly sits by her parents instead of playing with other children. Her parent proudly tells relatives, “She’s such a good girl. She always listens and never makes a fuss.” This reinforces the expectation that being quiet and compliant makes her a “good” child.
- When the child refrains from expressing frustration after her younger sibling accidentally breaks her toy, her parent responds with, “You’re such a good girl for being so patient and understanding.” This reinforces the idea that suppressing emotions and prioritizing harmony over expressing her own feelings makes her “good.”

☐ **Please read the following description of the Strong Black Woman Schema and indicate whether or not you currently identify with the label of a Strong Black Woman.**

- **Strong Black Woman Schema:** The Strong Black Woman Schema is a cultural ideal that emphasizes resilience, independence, and emotional self-sufficiency among Black women, often leading them to suppress vulnerabilities and prioritize others over themselves. Internalizing this expectation may result in avoiding support, pushing aside personal needs, and feeling pressure to present as "strong" at all times, which can contribute to chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and

mental health challenges (Abrams et al., 2014; Beauboeuf-Lafontsant, 2009; Watson & Hunter, 2016).

- **Examples:**

- *"I am strong and capable, so I shouldn't need help, even if I feel overwhelmed. If I can't handle this alone, it means I'm not as resilient as I should be."* A Black woman at work or college may take on multiple responsibilities without asking for help, believing that showing any sign of struggle or vulnerability could make her appear weak. She might work extra hours or handle difficult tasks alone, often sacrificing her well-being to meet these expectations.
- *"I am supposed to be self-sufficient and shouldn't burden my partner with my problems. If I show my emotions or need support, I'll seem weak and unworthy of the 'strong' identity I'm expected to uphold."* In a romantic relationship, a Black woman may avoid sharing her emotional struggles or asking for support from her partner, fearing that doing so would make her seem dependent. She may suppress feelings of sadness or frustration to maintain an image of strength, leading her to shoulder emotional weight alone.

☐ **Please indicate whether you would like to participate in an interview or focus group.** By selecting both, you confirm that you are open to either option. **Please note:** Participants are not eligible to participate in both.

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Consent Form for Research

From Childhood Labels to Adult Identities: Exploring Self-Concept in Black Women
Through the Lens of the Mother-Daughter Relationship

Introduction

You are being asked to be in a research study that is being conducted by Maya Cobb, a doctoral candidate working under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Matthews, a faculty member in the Counseling Department at Oakland University and the faculty advisor for this project.

Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary. You can choose to stop your participation at any time or skip any part of the study if you are not comfortable. Your decision will not affect your present or future relationship with Oakland University, the researcher, the Counseling Department, or any associated institution.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research is to explore how labels like “Strong Black Woman” and “Good Girl,” within the mother-daughter relationship, influence the development of self-concept in Black women.

Who can participate in this study?

You are being asked to participate because you are a Black woman, aged 18 or older, with a Black mother. You must self-identify with the “Strong Black Woman” label in adulthood and the “Good Girl” label during childhood. Individuals under 18 years old, those with non-Black mothers, and transgender individuals are excluded from this study.

How long will I be in the study?

Participation in this study will take approximately 60 minutes. You will either participate in a one-on-one Zoom interview or an in-person focus group. Zoom interviews will be scheduled according to the availability of the participant. The in-person focus group will take place on December 7th at 12:00 PM in Southfield, MI.

Where will this study take place?

The study will take place either online via Zoom or in person in Southfield, MI. The specific location and timing will be confirmed based on your preference.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to participate in either a one-on-one interview or a focus group discussion about your experiences with labels such as “Strong Black Woman” and “Good Girl.” During the session, I will ask you questions about your self-concept, identity, and your mother-daughter relationship. The focus group will be audio-recorded for transcription, and your responses will be kept confidential. The Zoom sessions will be recorded and transcribed. You will also be invited to participate in data checking, where you will have the opportunity to review the themes identified from your interview and provide feedback. This process ensures that the research accurately reflects your perspectives and allows you to add insights or clarify interpretations.

Are there any risks to me?

The known potential risks of participating in this study are primarily emotional and social in nature. While there are no physical risks, discussing personal experiences could bring

up feelings of discomfort or emotional distress. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you are free to skip questions or stop the interview altogether.

Additionally, there are social risks in sharing personal information, as confidentiality is essential in this type of research. To protect your privacy, safeguards will be in place to keep your information confidential. All data collected will be anonymized, meaning that any identifying information will be removed, and no personal details will be published or shared publicly. This minimizes the chance of any social repercussions related to sharing your experiences.

With many studies, there is a risk that someone who is not part of this research may accidentally see your personal information. Safeguards will be in place to minimize this risk by keeping your research records as confidential as possible. When the results of this research are published or presented at conferences, no information will be included that personally identifies you.

The audio and video recordings will be destroyed following the completion of data analysis which will be no later than March 31, 2025.

Only first names should be used during the interview. No group member should tell anyone outside the group anything that was said during the group session. However, we cannot guarantee that any information discussed in the group will be kept private.

Are there any benefits to me?

Although there may be no direct benefits to you, the results of this study may benefit others in the future by improving mental health support for Black women.

What if I want to stop participating in this study?

If you wish to stop participating at any point, you can do so by notifying me. If you are participating via Zoom, simply exit the session. If you are in a focus group, inform the facilitator that you would like to leave. You may also contact me after the session if you decide to withdraw your data.

Will I receive anything for participating?

All participants will receive a copy of Break the Cycle by Dr. Mariel Buque (\$19) or Drama Free by Nedra Glover Tawwab (\$16) AND will be entered into a drawing to win a gift card in the amount of \$50 from the following Black woman owned businesses:

A'Marie's Skin Bar, Glam-Ahaulic Lifestyle, FancyHomebody, FBF Body, Ivory Paper Co., or MeltFit.

Who do I contact if I have questions about this study?

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact me, Maya Cobb, at mdrobinson@oakland.edu or 313-727-1593. You can also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Jennifer Matthews, at jmatthews@oakland.edu.

For questions regarding your rights as a participant in human subject research, you may contact the Oakland University Institutional Review Board at 248-370-4898.

Signing the consent form

Your signature below means that you have read this form, or someone has read it to you, and you agree to participate in this study. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this consent form. You will be given a copy of this form.

Appendix E

Member Checking Email

Subject: Member Checking

Dear [Participant Name]

Thank you once again for participating in this research study. As part of the research process, I am engaging in member checking to ensure that the findings accurately reflect your experiences. Below is a summary of the specific codes from your interview that align with the six key themes identified in the study. Please review this summary and let myself and my research team know if these codes resonate with your experiences or if there are any additions or corrections you would like to make. Once we receive your feedback, we would be delighted to send you a copy of either *Break the Cycle* or *Family Drama* and enter your name into a drawing for a \$50 gift card. Kindly include your mailing address in your response so we can ship the book to you.

1. Family Expectations and Roles

Codes from Your Interview:

2. Identity Formation

Codes from Your Interview:

3. The Strong Black Woman Schema

Codes from Your Interview:

4. Influence of the Mother-Daughter Relationship

Codes from Your Interview:

5. Spirituality

Codes from Your Interview:

6. Breaking Generational Cycles

Codes from Your Interview:

Next Steps:

Please review this summary and respond with any feedback you have, including:

1. Confirmation that these codes accurately reflect your experiences.
2. Any additions or corrections you believe are necessary.
3. Any other thoughts or insights you'd like to share.

Your feedback is essential in ensuring that the findings of this study truly represent your lived experiences. Thank you for your time and continued participation.

Best regards,

Maya Cobb

313-727-1593

msmayacobb@gmail.com/mdrobinson@oakland.edu

Appendix F



Maya Cobb <mdrobinson@oakland.edu>

IRB-FY2025-158 - Initial: Exempt Decision

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
To: jmatthews@oakland.edu, mdrobinson@oakland.edu

Thu, Nov 14, 2024 at 11:38 AM



Institutional Review Board

Date: November 14, 2024

Study #: IRB-FY2025-158

Study Title: From Childhood Labels to Adult Identities: Exploring Self-Concept in Black Women Through the Lens of the Mother Daughter Relationship

Submission Type: Initial

IRB Decision: Exempt

Research Team:

Maya Cobb

Jennifer Matthews

Amena Khan

Based on applicable federal regulations, the above referenced study has been determined to be Exempt, with the following categories:

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

Notes for Researcher(s):

This submission includes the following approved documents

- Recruitment Email
- Recruitment flyer
- Date Stamp Approved Informed Consent_v11.14.24
- Interview/ Focus Group Questions

Letter and Consent Document:

This letter along with the IRB approved (date-stamped) consent document can be found in Cayuse in the [Submission Details](#) page under [Letters](#) and [Attachments](#), respectively. Please make sure to use the most recent IRB approved version of the consent form in consenting participants.

Permission from Research Site(s):

Please note the following:

- This IRB exemption determination letter means that this research has met one or more of the federal criteria for exemption per 45 CFR 46.104- Exempt Research.
- Before the research is initiated, permission to conduct research at a given site must be obtained from all research locations listed in the IRB submission. You must keep copies of all such permission letters for your files.
- It is the responsibility of each researcher to follow all applicable policies and procedures of any outside institution where the research will be conducted.

Modifications:

Any changes to this exempt project must be reviewed by the IRB prior to initiation by submitting a MODIFICATION request. Do not collect data while the changes are being reviewed. Data collected during this time cannot be used in research.

Record Retention:

Exempt projects will be retained by the IRB office for three years after the last action on the project.

You are approved to start the research. Please retain a copy of this notification for your records.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office.

Thank you.

The Oakland University IRB

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