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Moving in Between Choices and Conflicts: Grandmothers and Granddaughters' Intergenerational Narratives of Embodied Gender and Race

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Research Report

Master's in Social and Psychological Research

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Moving in Between Choices and Conflicts: Grandmothers and Granddaughters' Intergenerational Narratives of Embodied Gender and Race

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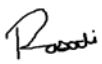
A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Social and Psychological Research in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 2024.

Declaration

I, Relebogile Rasodi, declare that "**Moving in Between Choices and Conflicts: Grandmothers and Granddaughters' Intergenerational Narratives of Embodied Gender and Race**" is my own work. It has not been submitted to this or any other university for any other degree or examination. All the sources used in this report have been stated and referenced according to the APA 7th edition referencing guide.



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Relebogile Rasodi

Abstract

The legacy of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa has complicated the construction of racial and gender identities of Black women in this country. Grandmothers play pivotal roles as matriarchs of the family by helping to raise their grandchildren and significantly influencing the transmission of family history, culture, and religious values. Granddaughters then make use of these family narratives to construct their identities as Black women. This study explored the intergenerational narratives of embodied race and gender between grandmothers and their granddaughters to explore the continuities and changes around narratives of Black womanhood pre- and post-democracy. A narrative and Feminist theoretical framework was adopted to guide the interpretation and analysis of the interviews with the cohort of 6 grandmother-granddaughter pairs located in Gauteng. The study reported on the choices that empowered participants to access more opportunities for agency and included narratives about education and careers. The conflicts that participants encountered were primarily in managing their mental health and navigating racism which related to the continuities in the narratives about experiencing adversity. The findings suggested that to navigate these choices and conflicts, the participants shared narratives of evolving womanhood based on traditional and contemporary religious and cultural notions of womanhood. Ultimately, from these narratives, we learn that the construction of the racial and gendered identities of Black grandmothers and granddaughters continue to be significantly impacted by systematic racial and gender discrimination including intergenerational trauma, however, grandmothers and granddaughters embodied resilience, resistance, and agency in pursuing self-determination and changing intergenerational cycles.

Keywords: **narratives, intergenerational, gender, race, womanhood**

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To all my family and friends who have encouraged me throughout my academic journey, I have been empowered by your unwavering love and support.

Dedication

Dedicated to my late grandmothers Thokwayo Ethel Sechotlho and Evelyn Ntundu Rasodi, your love, wisdom, and strength endures with me forever. I am cloaked by the power and protection of your prayers. Kea leboga bo Koko.

To my mother Mavis, no words can ever express my love and gratitude for you. Thank you so much for nurturing me, loving me, and protecting me. Your sacrifices have given me life and made all my dreams possible. To my othermothers, Rakgadi Nkele, Mamane Mmonye, Nyana, Mamane Vince, and Sesi Matlhodi, I have been lifted by your love, your motherly care, and guidance. You are all the embodiment of God's love.

To my sisters, Kutlwano, Lesego, Boitumelo, and Thebe, I look up to you all and I hope this makes you proud.

To my cousins Tshenolo, Malephatsi, Keorapetse, Onkarabile, and my nieces Cebolenkhosi and Botshelo, this is for you girls, I hope you are inspired to be fierce and to live authentically.

Table of Contents

Chapter One **1**

Introduction **1**

Research Aims and Objectives 4

Rationale 5

Research Questions 6

Chapter Two **8**

Literature review **8**

Patriarchal, Cultural, and Religious constructions of Gender 8

Structural and Political Influences on Black Womanhood in South Africa 12

Contemporary Acts of Resistance and New Challenges 14

Intergenerational Narratives and the Role of Grandmothers in Granddaughters' Lives 17

Changing Narratives of Black Womanhood 20

Chapter Three **22**

Theoretical Framework **22**

Narrative Theory 22

Feminist theory 23

Intersectionality 25

Chapter Four **27**

Methodology **27**

Research Design 27

Cohort of Participants 28

Sampling 30

Methods 31

Data Collection 31

Data Analysis 32

Trustworthiness 33

Challenges during data collection 34

Ethics 34

Reflexivity 35

Chapter Five **37**

Findings **37**

Education and career : "It's nice but it's painful because our children are going to school, but they are unemployed" 37

Race : "Julle moet uit gaan!" 40

Culture: "Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi" 44

Mental Health : “That's why I don't like it because we are also humans” 48
Religion: “Efa modimo mathata a gago” 53
Intergenerational impact: “So I’m passing down whatever I went through” 55
Chapter Six 59
Discussion 59
Personal and Intergenerational Agency 59
Social and Systematic Challenges 62
In Between Choices and Conflicts 66
Intergenerational Lessons on Black Womanhood 70
Chapter seven 73
Conclusion 73
Limitations 75
Recommendations 76
References 77
Appendices 89
Appendix A: Participation information sheet 89
Appendix B: Consent Form 91
Appendix C: Interview Schedule 93
Appendix D: Ethics Certificate 94

Chapter One

Introduction

This study emerges from an interest in understanding the intergenerational narratives that influence the construction of the embodied racial and gender identities of Black grandmothers and their granddaughters in South Africa. Given the history of colonialism and apartheid, the experiences of Black womanhood should be seen as constructed by a complex matrix of domination as they have been subjected to interconnected forms of oppression (Collins, 1990; Gouws, 2017). Black women in South Africa have been subjected to navigating the intersections not only between being Black and female but are also influenced by other aspects of identity such as class, religion, sexuality, and education.

Intergenerational narratives can be used to inform how individuals construct their identities as the concept of the self typically emerges from the roles they assume within the home and interactions that they encounter with caregivers and guardians (Ergün, 2020). For Black families in South Africa, the nuclear family unit is not the standard and family systems often take shape in various forms that are not informed by this patriarchal and capitalist notion of the family (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016). The caregiving responsibilities are often shared and occur mostly between the family's female members. Grandmothers are likely to take up the role of guardian and have a significant contribution to the parenting responsibilities in cases where the biological parents are unable to assume the parenting roles whether due to neglect, financial constraints, labour migration, low-marital rates, illness, or parental mortality (Button & Seekings, 2018; Hatch & Posel, 2018). This emphasizes the role of the grandmother as the maternal figure and matriarch within numerous families and that has created a need to understand the impact and relationship between grandmothers and their grandchildren. Given the generational gaps between grandmothers and grandchildren, where grandmothers grew up during the era of apartheid and grandchildren in the era of democracy, it is particularly interesting to track the continuities and the changes in the narratives that are shared regarding gender and race among Black women.

Having grown up in a different time, grandmothers were required to survive the apartheid government. Being subjected to the brutality of a racist regime, they were

openly regarded as secondary citizens and subjected to live in poverty and violence (Segalo, 2015). The grandmothers were denied access to education and opportunities for class mobility were restricted due to limitations of the Bantu education system and a lack of access to funding for further education and training (Unterhalter, 1990). During these times, Black women in the workforce primarily occupied the roles of domestic workers, farm, and factory workers (Romany, 1995). Women who were not involved in the workplace often took up the responsibilities of maintaining the homestead, caring for the children, the sick, the elderly, and the destitute who were left behind when migrant labour demanded the movement of men and women, thus contributing to the separation of Black families (Jaga, Araband, bagraim & Mdlangwa, 2018; Romany, 1995).

In addition to being involved in building the family and participating in the labour force, Black women during the Apartheid era were actively involved in participating, creating, and leading social activist and resistance movements (Healy-Clancy, 2017). This activism was not only embodied in the ways that Black women participated in resistance movements, but it also manifested in the ways that they constructed their own narratives that defied hegemonic notions of Black womanhood. These hegemonic notions of Black womanhood depicted Black women as being defined primarily by their capacity for caregiving (Helman & Ratele, 2016). The traditional gender roles of women as nurturers and caretakers were emphasized not only within the home as they took up the roles of wives and mothers, but it was also extended into the types of work that they offered in society as domestic workers and in helping professions (Gaitskell, 1988). Paradoxically, hegemonic notions of Black womanhood also involved narratives of Black women as being strong, aggressive, and rebellious (Davis, 2018; Matsila, 2020).

The period within which granddaughters grew up differs greatly from the period within which the grandmothers grew up. The generational gaps between grandmothers and granddaughters gave rise to a range of experiences in the possibilities for agency and resistance within the South African context. Whereas apartheid denied Black people their dignity and access to basic human rights, post-apartheid South Africa promised the ideals of a rainbow nation that embraced diversity and demanded equality for all (Mafoko, 2017; Ngwenya, 2020). Grandmothers grew up being socialized primarily to perform roles of domesticity, whereas the granddaughters have been more exposed to

narratives of female empowerment and independence. However, despite the transformation that has occurred and narratives of women empowerment, Black women in South Africa continue to experience various forms of racial and gender discrimination (Groenmeyer, 2011; Parry & Segalo, 2017 & Mbithi-Dikgole, 2023).

As the country has transformed, so have the embodied racial and gendered experiences of Black women in South Africa. Expressions of Black womanhood therefore should not be viewed as static but represent a dynamic identity that moves along the spectrum of traditional and contemporary expressions informed by culture and religion and influenced by social, political, and economic transformations. Subsequently, to illustrate the unique position of Black women in South Africa and the complexities of their identities in the democratic era, their stories should be studied in tandem with the stories of the generations of women before them. A focus on intergenerational narratives, therefore, can be useful in illustrating the changes and continuities in the construction of Black women's embodied racial and gendered identities.

Samples of work have been done on the changing gender experiences of Black women. Thomas, Hacker, and Hoxha (2011) sought to explore the gendered racial identities of young Black African American women and found that instead of reflecting on race and gender as single constructs influencing the construction of their identities, participants reflected on 'gendered race' which highlighted the significance of the intersections between race and gender. Jones and Day (2018) conducted another study among African American women to explore their racial and gendered identities through a multidimensional intersectional lens. The findings from this study suggested that even though they assign varying importance to identity markers, Black women may perceive their racial and gender identities to have to similar importance as they influence each other (Jones & Day, 2018). Furthermore, Black women's own perceptions of their racial and gender identities are impacted by personal and social expectations of Black womanhood (Jones & Day, 2018). These studies were conducted in the American context and focused on single generations. Smith (2012) conducted an intergenerational narrative analysis of African American mothers and their daughters to examine the intersections of race, gender, age, and location informing girlhood and the lived experiences of Black women.

In South Africa, Matsila (2020) explored mother-daughter narratives to examine the intergenerational constructions of the Black feminine identity and concluded that for Black women in South Africa, femininity is informed by a complex matrix of racial and cultural practices and involves traditional and non-traditional notions of femininity. A different study that centred intergenerational narratives was conducted by Paul (2020), focusing on the racialized and gendered narrative identities of a cohort of White women, involving granddaughter, mother, and grandmother narratives. The study explored how the intergenerational cohort of women reported on the continuities and changes in their narrative identities as women within the same family and having experienced the social and political transformation of South Africa as generations born before and during democracy. The current study emerges from a gap in the literature concerning the intergenerational narratives of Black women, that occur outside of the mother-daughter relationships. The study aims to engage in a similar inquiry as Paul (2020), by exploring the intergenerational narratives informing women's racial and gendered identities, however, the focus is particularly on the narratives of Black grandmothers and their granddaughters. The focus on Black women is significant because of the contrasting social, political, and economic experiences of Black and White women, during and after apartheid in South Africa.

Research Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to understand the intergenerational narratives amongst Black women regarding the construction of their gender and racial identities, with a specific focus on grandmothers and granddaughters. The study aimed to explore the choices available to an intergenerational cohort of Black grandmothers and granddaughters who grew up in South Africa. Furthermore, it aimed to explore the conflicts present among this intergenerational cohort of Black women who grew up in South Africa before and after its democracy. This included understanding how the intergenerational cohort of Black women in South Africa navigate the choices and conflicts surrounding narratives of embodied gender and race. Lastly, the study also aimed to provide a discussion on what we can learn about the evolving identities of Black women from the intergenerational narratives of gender and race that were constructed among the cohort of grandmothers and their granddaughters.

Rationale

The legacies of colonialism and apartheid continue to have implications for how Black women access various freedoms. These systems have informed how Black women fit into familial roles, how they operate in occupational spaces, and gain access to education, healthcare, and law enforcement services (Unterhalter, 1990; Romany, 1995). Consequently, the identities of Black women in this country have proven to be quite complex due to their positioning as Black people and as women who face the burdens of racial and gendered oppression (Romany, 1995). A comprehensive grasp of gender and race, therefore, requires consideration of social structures like capitalism and patriarchy, and their influence on individuals' gender and racial identities, expressions, and the intersections with other social identities such as class (Crenshaw, 1990). This is especially significant in countries like South Africa where various forms of gender, racial, and class inequality prevail. Recognizing gender and race as rooted in unequal power dynamics is essential given the disparities within social and economic systems based on privilege and oppression. Therefore, there have been historical social, and systematic constraints on how Black women in South Africa navigate the world around them and how they develop their sense of expression. This has implications for how society sees Black women and how much agency or autonomy they can exercise in the construction and embodiment of their racial and gender identities. To account for the complexities and nuances within the construction of Black women's racial and gender identities, while also placing the stories that they tell about themselves at the core, an intersectional, feminist narrative lens was adopted to illustrate how they negotiate experiences of growing empowerment and continued marginalization.

This study focused on the intergenerational narratives of embodied gender and race amongst a cohort of Black grandmothers and granddaughters living in South Africa. The study is significant because it provided an opportunity to centre the narratives of Black women in a society that does not always prioritize their voices or their experiences. Blackness and womanhood are markers of identity that have been marginalized and considered as secondary or subordinate to Whiteness and manhood (Davis, 2018; Matsila, 2020). Pendla (2004) has therefore suggested that we consider Black womanhood as a complex matrix of domination that requires further unpacking and investigation into the complexities that inform their lived experiences. Subsequently, this research was an attempt to provide a more nuanced account of the

intergenerational narratives of a cohort of Black women in South Africa and how they construct embodied identities of gender and race that are authentic and consider both the ways that they have been marginalized in conjunction with how their identities reflect more empowered narratives of Black womanhood, if at all.

The narratives that Black women tell us about who they are and how they construct their gender and racial identities are not only personal accounts, but they tell the stories of the Black women before them and those coming after them (Ergün, 2020; Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Therefore, an intergenerational approach to understanding narratives was prioritized in this study, focusing on narratives between grandmothers and their granddaughters, to get a comprehensive understanding of narratives amongst Black women belonging to different generations within the same family. This intergenerational approach allowed us to see how the identity of Black womanhood continues to evolve, the changes and continuities, and how these narratives transform as Black women gain access to more forms of empowerment in our society and in the home. The narratives sought to explore ways that intergenerational narratives about race and gender for Black women have been impacted by cultural and religious values, access to education, the political, and economic transformations in South Africa. Furthermore, this study can provide a more apt illustration of the choices that Black women have in constructing their identities in addition to the conflicts that may arise when navigating traditional and contemporary gender expressions. By understanding how an intergenerational cohort of women construct and navigate the choices and conflicts around their identities, we can examine the intergenerational impact regarding the evolution of Black womanhood.

Research Questions

1. What *choices* do Black grandmothers, and their granddaughters narrate in their accounts of embodied gender?
2. What *conflicts* are narrated in Black grandmothers and granddaughters' narratives about their gendered lives?
3. How do participants account for their navigation of these choices and conflicts?
4. What can we learn about the continuities and divergences in these intergenerational accounts of embodied gender and race?

The first chapter of the report presented the introduction and outlined the aims, objectives, rationale, and research questions that guided the study. The second chapter will provide a literature review exploring the concepts of gender, race, the social, political, and economic transformations in South Africa, and how this influences the intergenerational narratives between Black women. The theoretical framework, which is informed by feminist narrative theory and incorporates an intersectional lens, will be discussed in the third chapter. The fourth chapter will outline the methodological approach and the authors' reflections on this study. The report will then present the findings of the study in chapter 5 and provide a discussion of the narratives that have emerged from this cohort in chapter 6. Finally, chapter 7 will provide a conclusion that will include the strengths and limitations of the study as well as the practical and theoretical implications of the findings.

Chapter Two

Literature review

This chapter will define and discuss the key concepts of gender, womanhood, and race and how these markers of identity have been influenced by the social and political systems and transformation in South Africa. This will be followed by a review of the transmission of intergenerational narratives between grandmothers and granddaughters and how these narratives are used to construct Black women's embodied gender and racial identities. The chapter will conclude with a discussion about how the changing realities of Black women in this country result in evolving expressions of Black womanhood.

Patriarchal, Cultural, and Religious Constructions of Gender

Hegemonic notions of gender were created during times when systems such as patriarchy and racism were not as overtly challenged as they are now. Consequently, these systems of inequality and oppression have influenced how ideas of womanhood have been constructed. This study makes use of the definition of gender based on the concept offered by Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin (1999). They define gender as a "system of social practices within society that creates significant differences between people and organizes relations of inequality based on these differences" (p. 192). This implies that gender not only encompasses distinctions within and between the sexes, but it also involves societal practices that ascribe privilege, primarily to cis-gendered men, and grants them greater access to power. These social practices are influenced by historical, religious, and cultural factors influencing constructions of gender identities (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin, 1999), and impose gender roles and expectations on individuals according to their assigned sex at birth.

Traditionally, constructions of womanhood have been based on the identities of Western, upper-middle-class, White women and have served as the standard for decades. These ideas about womanhood are largely Eurocentric, ableist, centred on cissexism and heterosexism (Hoskin & Blair, 2022). Women are typically thought of as being beautiful, modest, sexually available to men, nurturing, compassionate, emotional, and submissive (Hoskin, 2017). Consequently, women are often seen as

natural caretakers and are expected to play out the roles of mother and wife within their families. Furthermore, femininity is often infantilized, considered to be subordinate to masculinity, and has thus been subjected to various forms of gender oppression which complicate women's relationship with gender identity (Chodorow, 1995; Matshila, 2020). According to Chodorow (1995), women may grapple with shame and guilt related to the performance of their gender presentation, being good wives and mothers, and the expectations placed upon them by society. These feelings may reflect concerns about falling short in meeting societal standards of womanhood while dealing with the belief that femininity is subordinate to masculinity, thus contributing to feelings of inadequacy both internally and externally (Chodorow, 1995). Within these patriarchal constructions of womanhood, Black women face unique challenges navigating their gender identities in addition to grappling with the experiences of navigating a marginalised racial identity. The lack of representation in the patriarchal conceptions of womanhood has ultimately led to a divergence from the traditional, hegemonic ideologies and has called for a separate exploration of gender to understand the constructions of Black womanhood. For this study, narratives of embodied gender and race will be explored particularly through the lens of the narratives of Black women.

Black women have been subjected to gender and racial oppression, ultimately affecting their interactions with others and their self-perception, thus constructing a unique identity for Black womanhood. The pressure to acknowledge femininity as secondary to masculinity in conjunction with acknowledging Blackness as low ranking within the racial hierarchy can have detrimental effects on one's sense of self. They are expected to embody traditional expressions of hegemonic femininity which are informed by Eurocentric standards of familial care and beauty (Davis, 2018). Paradoxically, within the context of hegemonic femininity, Black womanhood is considered to also embody typically masculine traits such as strength, independence, and stoicism (Buckley & Carter, 2005; Davis, 2018; Matshila, 2020). Because Black women have had to endure centuries of institutionalized racial and gender oppression through systems such as colonialism and apartheid, the embodiment of strength, independence, and resilience has become imperative for the survival of Black women (Davis, 2018) and has thus become tied to the concept of Black womanhood. Consequently, Black womanhood seems to lack the elements of softness and sensitivity that hegemonic ideas of womanhood seem to possess.

In different African cultures, traditional perspectives of womanhood have been influenced by religious, cultural, and patriarchal beliefs, often conceptualizing women as the mother and wife (Akujobi, 2011). Culture is used to organize a dynamic set of practices, values, and beliefs and is considered an integral part of the construction of the identities of Black South African women (Clark, 2006). The role of women is not the same across all African cultures, however, there are similarities. Typically, the roles of women as wives and as mothers are seen as fundamental for the functioning of families and there has been great value placed on the women who fulfil these roles.

Stepping into marriage and motherhood have historically been considered sacred rites of passage for womanhood and at times, those who were not able to assume these roles, whether by choice or by circumstance, were ostracised or subjected to various forms of judgment. Consequently, as stated by Akujobi (2011), women who did not conform to these traditional roles were viewed as having failed to live up to their duties. Akujobi (2011) highlights the significance of women's capabilities in relation to reproduction and fertility within African cultures. The woman is seen as empowered by her ability to bear children and there is an overemphasis on her ability to nurture (Masenya, 1996). Akujobi (2011) suggests that motherhood signals a moral transformation in the woman's identity where nurturing and caretaking become their deifying traits, thus making motherhood a central aspect in shaping womanhood. To further illustrate the significance of this transformation, a popular narrative about womanhood in South African cultures is *mosadi o tshwara tipa ka bogaleng*, which translates to a mother holds a knife at its sharpest point (Molobi & Mzondi, 2022). This phrase is used to relay the message that a woman will do anything to fiercely protect her family. This proverb represents the strength and resistance that Black women embody, along with the faith and courage that they must channel to be able to face the challenges they encounter as wives and mothers (Pendla, 2004). For this reason, Black womanhood has been heavily associated with one's ability to play the role of the caretaker and their capacity for strength and resilience.

Women are seen not only as the keepers of their families in their ability to bear children and nurture their husbands, but they are also involved in building the community by caring for the sick, elderly, or destitute. For African women, mothering occurs in the private spaces of their homes as well as in the public spheres of society (Healy-Clancy,

2017). From both religious and cultural perspectives, the transition to motherhood places women in a unique social position (Akujobi, 2011). Within religions, the transition to motherhood is considered with high regard by the community because pregnancy is seen as a sacred rite of passage that is bestowed upon a woman by a higher power (Segueda, 2015). Many religions have elevated motherhood beyond just womanhood; portraying mothers as saints, goddesses, or deities with extraordinary abilities and societal significance (Akujobi, 2011).

Another defining role for one's emergence into womanhood according to Western and African notions of gender roles is being a wife. In African tradition, newlywed couples often resided with the husband's family, whether or not they had children. Instead of prioritizing the concept of the nuclear family, African communities considered the clan as the core family unit (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998; Wane, 2000).). The bride, known as *makoti*, assumed the role of caring for her children and in-laws. The relationship between *makoti* and mother-in-law holds significant importance within Black families according to Nganase and Basson (2019), where the new bride encounters a pivotal transformation in their emergence as a woman. Upon marriage, *makoti* is integrated into her husband's family under her mother-in-law's guidance to adapt to their traditions and rituals while also preparing to lead these practices and continue the family line (Nganase and Basson, 2019). The bride is expected to remain devoted to her duties as a wife and another popular proverb, *lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*, suggests that a woman's final resting place should be along with her husband's family (Mothoagae; 2015). According to Masenya (1996), fulfilling cultural rites of marriage and motherhood marks the transitions from girlhood to womanhood, bearing new responsibilities and signalling the full realization of womanhood. Moloko-Phiri (2015) reported that this proverb was used as a cultural tool to instruct women to value marriage, be submissive and resilient in order to affirm their womanhood. While some women may see this proverb as a source of encouragement to remain committed to their marriages and care for their families, this proverb can also be seen to perpetuate patriarchal constructions of gender expectations within culture that subject women to stay in their marriages even when they are being ill-treated or abused (Moloko-Phiri, 2015).

Structural and Political Influences on Black Womanhood in South Africa

During the colonial and apartheid eras, Christianity was used as a tool to legitimize these oppressive systems and to control the identities of Black women and the roles they played in society. Hostels run by missionaries were prepared for Black women to not only limit their freedom but to also prepare them for the roles of motherhood and domesticity (Gaitskel, 1979). Moreover, under the apartheid regime, there was an increase in migrant labour which enforced the structural separation of Black families (Romany, 1995). This resulted in more female-headed households without fathers, leaving Black women to rely on the help and support of other Black women within their families and communities for childcare (Jaga et al., 2018; Mbithi-Dikgole, 2023). Temporary labour migration, which continues to increase among African women, low marital rates, and parental mortality all contribute to the need for shared caregiving responsibilities within Black communities today (Hatch & Posel, 2018). Ultimately, as suggested by Button, Moore & Seekings (2017) in cases where the child's biological parents are not available, it is more likely that an older sibling, the aunt, or the grandmother from the maternal family will assume the role of primary caregiver. It is from this emphasis on the nurturing or mothering expectations on Black women that the idea of othermothering emerges (Wane, 2020).

Communities in pre-colonial Africa were often founded upon the principle of collectivism, therefore, other mothering has existed as an inherent value system through which family and community are created and sustained (Wane, 2000). This concept refers to women within Black communities that are willing to assist biological parents and take on motherly roles, helping to cater to the needs of the children in their families and their neighbourhoods (Smith, 2012; Lonne, 2014). The effects of othermothering result in there being multiple expressions of gender identities exposed to the children in Black communities. These expressions become a mix of traditional and non-traditional gender expressions and help to paint the unique and complex constructions of Black womanhood among South African women today.

In the South African context, a popular slogan, "*wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo*" has been used to challenge notions about Black women's passivity and translates to you strike a woman, you strike a rock. This phrase originally emerged in the 1956 women's protests to the Union Buildings in Pretoria against oppressive apartheid laws that

required Black women to carry passbooks (Clark, Mafokoane & Nyathi, 2019). Women are compared to rocks, *mbokodo*, because they are strong and resilient. Ultimately, it speaks to the power that women hold, their potential for nation building, and their ability to fight for themselves and their families (Healy-Clancy, 2017; Clark, Mafokoane & Nyathi, 2019). Such phrases were used to illustrate that women's capabilities for caretaking were not only expressed through nurturing, but they are also capable of engaging in force and violence. The complex expression of Black womanhood is partly explored by Pumla Gqola (2001) who writes about the experiences of Black women during the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) under the apartheid regime. During this time, it was assumed that race was the primary basis on which all Black people experienced oppression, and issues such as gender inequality were not prioritized in the movement (Gqola, 2001). According to McFadden (1992), just like the men, South African women were involved in nationalist organizations, they mobilized, marched, were arrested, and died for the liberation of their country. Black women were expected to be conservative in their activism and seen as secondary to the men in these movements, thus making them invisible in the fight for liberation. On the other hand, Black women who displayed more militant behaviour were viewed as "honorary men" (Gqola, 2001) thus further illustrating how Black women that challenged traditional gender expressions were removed from the category of womanhood altogether and were perceived as masculine. This demonstrates the complex interaction of gender and race that Black women must navigate and shows the importance of taking an intersectional approach to understanding the identities of Black women.

The experience of Black women in BCM is just one example of how women continued to be marginalized in spaces that were meant to be revolutionary and committed to the emancipation of all Black people. Another example of the gendered marginalization experienced by Black women in South Africa can be seen through the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Segalo (2015) writes about the gender blindness of the TRC and how it failed to truly account for the trauma that was experienced by Black women during the apartheid regime. Whereas Black women had been susceptible to poverty, discrimination, and suffering, the proceedings of the TRC were focused primarily on fostering an environment for the acknowledgment and forgiveness of past transgressions without requiring reparations for those who had been

made victims of oppression (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003). Instead, the TRC proceedings focused on setting a compromise that offered amnesty to perpetrators of crime during apartheid in exchange for the truth. As the country made attempts towards transformation, equality, and democracy, the Black women who had endured extreme trauma were required to remain resilient to care for their families, remain involved in community building, and to work towards economic survival (Segalo, 2015). The inability of the TRC to consider the intersections within the class, racial, and gendered impact of apartheid on Black women limited how these women could move toward true reconciliation and was an indication of how Black women were afforded less access to power in the public domains.

Contemporary Acts of Resistance and New Challenges

The generations of women who endured racial and gender oppression during colonialism and apartheid are the women who have inspired and raised the young generation of women that would form part of #FeesMustFall, #RU Reference list, #RhodesMustFall, #EndRapeCulture, #MenAreTrash and #TotalShutDown, all movements dedicated to bringing awareness to and dismantling systems of oppression based on racial, class and gender inequality (Gouws, 2017). The young generations of women who participated in these movements further illustrate the changes and the continuities of Black women's position in South Africa. While many young women are still socialized into traditionally feminine roles, many have also been exposed to expressions of womanhood that model resistance and attitudes that are more focused on notions of racial and gender equality. These narratives redefining the identities of Black women have been passed down from one generation to the next and the ways we engage with Black womanhood continue to evolve and is thus worthy of further inquiry.

The #RhodesMustFall (#RMF), #FeesMustFall (#FMF), and #RU Reference list were some of the student movements in contemporary South Africa where young women were actively involved in driving change within universities, and ultimately, the broader South African society. During these movements, young Black women embodied radical feminism, turning the university into a site of resistance and political mobilization (Xaba, 2017). The university was seen as maintaining colonial and racist cultures which were institutionalized during the colonial and apartheid eras and the #RMF and #FMF movements were calling for the decolonization and transformation of these institutions

(Ndelu, Dlakavu & Boswell, 2017; Xaba, 2017). Similar forms of discrimination that were present in anti-apartheid movements such as BCM were present in contemporary student protest movements where issues affecting women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, students with disabilities and mental health issues were seen as a distraction in the pursuit of Black liberation and were either ostracized or erased from the movements (Xaba, 2017). The student movements that emerged during this time were a great indication that South Africa's transformation into a truly democratic and equal society was incomplete and this was an opportunity to investigate the flawed ideologies of the 'rainbow nation' and the 'born-free' youth.

According to Mafoko (2017), the idea of the rainbow nation was initially constructed at the end of apartheid to indicate a transformation into the democratic South Africa that celebrated the diversity within this nation instead of using it as a tool for segregation and oppression. The purpose of the rainbow nation was to bring attention to the diverse racial, cultural, linguistic, religious, and sexual identities, among other social categories within South Africa, thus showcasing the differences that exist in this society and alluding that there is a sense of unity among these varying groups (Mafoko, 2017). Children born after 1994 are known as the "born-free" generation because they were born into the rainbow nation and are 'free' from having to experience the racial oppression and violence of the apartheid regime (Frankish & Bradbury, 2012). However, South Africa continues to experience gross disparities based on class, gender, and racial identity and previously marginalized groups (e.g. women, Black people, and those who are differently abled) continue to experience structural and social inequalities that have serious implications for how they navigate the world. The university protests in South Africa during the latter parts of the 2010s emerged from the frustrations of university students, and the Black radical feminist women who were burdened by these social and structural inequalities that persisted into democracy. Therefore, current generations of the youth are still unsettled and question the validity of the ideologies of the rainbow nation and the existence of a generation that is truly 'born-free' (Ngwenya, 2020).

To advocate for balance and equality within the student movements, feminism and intersectionality were used as frameworks for protest action and to advocate for those who were marginalized within the movements. Black feminists within universities

around the country were doing their work to fight for the dismantling of systems and cultures that perpetuated racism, cisnormativity, heteronormativity, patriarchy, sexual abuse, and gender-based violence (Ndelu, Dlakavu & Boswell, 2017).

South Africa is also known to have alarmingly high rates of gender-based violence where women are assaulted and murdered every day by their intimate partners, friends, family, and strangers within their communities (Morrel et al., 2012). Boonzaier (2023) claims that the narratives around femicide in South Africa have been racialized and focuses on positioning Black women as victims of violence perpetrated by Black men. From this, Boonzaier (2023) suggests that femicide and gender-based violence need to be viewed as systematic issues that have emerged from colonial relations to power that privilege patriarchy, racism, sexism, and heteronormativity. Protests have emerged in response to the femicide and gender-based violence crises in South Africa. One example of this is the #AmINext protests that emerged after the brutal rape and murder of university student, Uyinene Mrwetyana (Morshedi, 2020; Harris, 2021) to bring attention to the fact that all women in South Africa live in fear of being victims to sexual abuse, violence, and murder. Another way that Black women have contributed to the revolutionizing of protest action and resistance in this country has been through their involvement in naked body protests. As stated by Mathebula and Canham (2022), by engaging in naked body protests, Black women showed resistance and disrupted patriarchal systems and notions of respectability.

Le Roux and Oyedemi (2022) conducted a study to explore intergenerational, post-colonial narratives about race, hair, and identity among colonial-born Coloured women in South Africa. The study found that in post-apartheid South Africa, colonial-born Coloured women continue to be impacted by lasting racist colonial and apartheid ideologies of Black and Coloured women's hair and physical appearance (Le Roux & Oyedemi, 2022). There are intergenerational narratives and hair care practices that are passed on from generations of women and colonialism and apartheid have informed racist ideologies regarding the politics of Black women's hair and beauty. In Black cultures, hair is not only a marker of racial identity, hair care is also used as a gender-affirming practice for women and can be used to indicate their class status (Erasmus, 1997). Among the born free generation, not only were there protests emerging in the university spaces, but protests also erupted in high schools to challenge racist school

policies against students wearing their natural hair. This was seen particularly in the school protests involving young female activist, Zulaikha Patel who led a protest at Pretoria Girls High School in retaliation to racist hair policies in the school code of conduct in multiracial schools (Mbilishaka & Apugo, 2020). Thus, black women and girls from different generations and different backgrounds have been inspired to take protest action, to use their voices and to stand against oppressive systems as an ongoing effort to obtain equality and representation.

In as much as young Black women in democratic South Africa have continued in the spirit of resistance towards the pursuit of equality and liberation, they have also called for a transformation in the narratives around the construction of their identities. As stated by Clark, Mafokoane, and Nyathi (2019), unlike the previous generations, young Black women are opposing the identity of the *mbokodo* and are weary of the 'strong Black women' and 'superwoman' tropes. Younger generations of Black women are increasingly rejecting these tropes because they fail to account for the structural injustice that subjects Black women to racial and gender discrimination, ultimately forcing them to frequently embody strength and resilience for survival.

Intergenerational Narratives and the Role of Grandmothers in Granddaughters' Lives

According to Merril and Fivush (2016), narratives come from everyday social interactions and are the stories of people's personal and shared experiences. These stories can help individuals make sense of themselves, their families, their past, present, and future. The construction of narratives typically begins in childhood, within families, and is based on the modelling exhibited by caregivers (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Within the family, we begin to learn more about ourselves as gendered beings and navigate our expressions of masculinity and femininity based on what we see (Fivush, Bohanek & Zaman, 2011; Helman & Ratele, 2016). The family can be a space where the hierarchical notions of gender are reproduced and ideas around feminine expression as nurturing and being primarily concerned with domestic labour are perpetuated. According to Helman and Ratele (2016, p.5), "domestic chores, caring for children and providing emotional support continue to be regarded as women's work" and fall primarily on the female children and caregivers in the family. Children grow up with

these narratives as a lens through which they begin to construct and make sense of their own gender identities. These narratives are not only personal, but they are also intergenerational. Therefore, narratives about gender expression are built over generations and are influenced by the intergenerational narratives from multiple family members to construct narrative identities (Zaman & Fivush, 2011).

Intergenerational narratives are stories that older generations tell younger generations to share their experiences and family history (Ergün, 2020). Merril and Fivush (2016) define the intergenerational self as integrating both the individual as well as their identity belonging to a larger family or group that shares the same set of beliefs. In a study done by Fivush, Bohanek, and Zaman (2011) to explore personal and intergenerational narratives among adolescents concerning their wellbeing, it was found that girls tell personal narratives that are more likely related to maternal intergenerational narratives. Furthermore, the study suggests that girls are likely to mirror their mothers' narratives when constructing their own (Fivush, Bohanek & Zaman, 2011). When we consider the aspect of other mothering, this illustrates how young girls make use of the expressions of gender portrayed to them not just by their biological mothers, but also by multiple maternal figures within their families to help their own narrative identities. In a different study conducted by Paul (2020) to examine the intergenerational racial and gender narratives among a cohort of White grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, the findings suggested that the younger generations both reproduced and challenged the racial and gendered narrative identities of their mothers and their grandmothers by interrogating family history and traditions and deciding on what was useful to bring into the present. This indicates that personal narratives about race and gender are shaped by the modelling of other family members and shared intergenerational narratives about race and gender.

Those tasked with the responsibility for teaching young women about their culture and their roles were often elderly women in the family. The elderly are held sacred as they are considered to hold knowledge regarding the progression of culture and tradition and pass it on through oral stories from generation to generation (Mmila, 2006). They assume positions of leadership within their families and contribute greatly to raising children. As mentioned above, migrant labour during the colonial and apartheid eras caused a disruption in the structure of the family in Black communities. For years, many

Black families in South Africa did not function according to the definition of the nuclear family unit, and that continues to be the case in the democratic era (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016). Given the history of South Africa and the responsibilities placed on grandmothers as matriarchs of their families and their communities, the impact that they have on their granddaughters can have significant implications for how this younger generation identifies themselves. In having relationships and caring for their granddaughters, grandmothers can provide guidance and teach them about culture, tradition, family history, and womanhood (Cattell, 1997; Button & Seekings, 2017). The lessons shared between grandmothers and their grandchildren have been explored in a study conducted by Møller and Sotshonyane (1999) who examined the views of Zulu grandmothers and their grandchildren regarding respect for older people. The study reported that respect is a vital component of Zulu culture and as the keepers of culture and tradition, grandmothers play a significant role in instilling these values in their grandchildren. Grandmothers grew up being expected to engage in helping behaviour as an expression of respect, this included caring for the elderly, those who were considered frail, and the disabled. However, the study found that despite grandmothers' attempts to pass on these lessons, grandchildren showed respect towards their grandmothers but were less likely to engage in helping behaviour and extend this to strangers as prescribed by Zulu customs and principles of Ubuntu (Møller & Sotshonyane, 1999). Therefore, the cultural expressions of womanhood by granddaughters are informed by grandmothers' teachings, however, they also diverge from traditional expectations.

A study conducted by Mangalparsad (2007) looking at teenage granddaughters living with their pensioner grandmothers found that grandmothers had a positive impact on the girls' gender and sexual identities by encouraging independence, education, and discourses of resistance to patriarchy. The influence of grandmothers on their granddaughters' gender identities showcases how women navigate traditional and non-traditional expressions of gender while also navigating gender and racial oppression. However, these intergenerational narratives are not only significant or useful for adolescents, but adults and elders also use these narratives to make sense of their own identities and to share these lessons with younger generations (Merrill & Fivush, 2016). Another study conducted by Seponski and Lewis (2009) reported that there can be a reciprocal and bidirectional relationship between grandmothers and granddaughters

where they both learn from each other, and each contributes to the identity formation of the other. This suggests that positive relationships between grandmothers and granddaughters provide a space for co-learning and can strengthen shared values and give way to the evolution of family customs and beliefs (Seponski and Lewis, 2009). Therefore, there is a transmission of narratives regarding gender identity between younger and older generations of women that reflect personal and familial experiences and expectations.

Changing Narratives of Black Womanhood

So far, this chapter has explored how Black women can experience various constraints or be subjected to limitations in their expression of their gender identities. It is important to note though that this does not mean that the expressions of Black womanhood are completely without agency. As illustrated above, Black women have had to endure multiple forms of oppression, however, Black womanhood as a construct is continuously evolving as Black women can access more opportunities for growth and self-determination (Van Vlaenderen & Cakwe, 2003). Consequently, there is a negotiation between the choices that Black women make about their gender identities versus the conflicts that arise when navigating traditional and contemporary expressions of womanhood.

In recent years, Black women have been able to acquire more power in the spaces that they exist in. More women have been able to obtain tertiary education, gain success in occupational spaces, achieve financial independence, and become empowered in their sexual and reproductive choices (Van Vlaenderen & Cakwe, 2003). According to Jaga et al (2018), this has not only granted women the ability to be more independent, but it also provides an opportunity for them to become more self-confident and exercise their autonomy in decision-making. Therefore, the expressions of Black women are not solely defined by people or systems that are external to them but are also constituted by intergenerational family narratives and their personal desires. This has allowed more women to reject tradition and move more in the direction of individual success and self-preservation (Jaga et al., 2018). Graham and Mphaphuli (2018) conducted a study to explore young people's narratives of gender and sexuality and found that more young women are exploring non-monogamous relationships, especially when they are

financially independent. A different study conducted by Majali (2016) exploring Black women's gender expression in relation to beauty practices found that instead of just trying to emulate Eurocentric ideas of beauty, Black women are continuously constructing their own ideals that embody influences from both Western and African beauty standards. Lastly, a study done by Matsila (2020) focused on intergenerational constructions of femininity, particularly within mother-daughter relationships and found that motherhood, respectability, and selflessness were seen as central to Black womanhood. These studies have contributed to the growing body of knowledge regarding Black women's embodied experiences of gender and help us to better understand and unpack this complex identity.

This study aims to expand on the existing literature with a particular focus on the interaction between race and gender and how this influences the intergenerational narratives among Black grandmothers and granddaughters in South Africa. The study takes a feminist narrative approach with an intersectional lens at understanding the narratives of grandmothers and granddaughters by considering how class positions also impact women's gendered and racial identities. As Gqola (2001, p. 145) states, "It is important for women writers to write about those things which are important to them. These will inevitably include their own lives". This study therefore also served to provide a space where Black women could engage with the narratives around womanhood and how they navigate the choices and conflicts that come with this identity for themselves and not solely based on the expectations of those outside of themselves.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

This chapter will discuss the use of Narrative and Feminist theory as the theoretical frameworks guiding this study. Narrative theory as a lens to view people's stories and how they relate to dominant social, cultural, and political narratives is useful in examining how Black women construct their gender and racial identities. Furthermore, feminist theory complements this approach in that it allows for the centring of women's voices and studying their lives through the context and experiences of the participants.

Narrative Theory

Narrative theory focuses on the use of stories to reflect on the experiences and identities of participants and serve as a representation or re-enactment of an individual's internal memories, cognitions, and thoughts (Squire et al., 2014). In narrative research, stories can serve the purpose of exposing the voices of marginalized groups and showcase how hegemonic discourses inform people's experiences and the constructions of their identities (Chatman, 1975; Squire, 2005). These stories are offered by participants who assume the role of the storyteller, presenting themselves to an audience who in the case of this study, was the researcher. Stories can function to enable individuals to organize and express their experiences, thus facilitating the process of meaning-making for the individual themself and their audience (Pitre, Kushner, Raine & Hegadoren, 2013). As the storyteller, the participant chooses how to present their narratives in relation to their relationship with their audience, the researcher. Therefore, the stories that are shared are not only about the ways that storytellers position themselves in relation to their narratives but also how they position themselves in relation to their audience. Consequently, narratives are a collaboration between the participants and the researcher, representing the space where storytellers recreate events and memories in ways that hold meaning to them and are co-constructed by both the “tellers and hearers” (Squire, 2005).

Narrative theory helps to put together the social and the psychological to theorize the psychosocial experiences of participants to construct a narrative identity where individuals gain a better understanding of the self and how it relates to others (McAdams, 2018). It provides a space that allows us to make sense of how identities

are socially constituted and how we make sense of the social world (Somers, 1994). Personal narratives are informed by social, political, and cultural norms within particular contexts and through the expression of their narratives', individuals showcase their agency in upholding or disrupting the norm (Fivush, Merrill & Marin, 2014). From narratives, we can gain more understanding regarding how certain identities are reproduced and how they also embody resistance and change.

According to Sullivan and Stevens (2010), narrative accounts reflect how hegemonic and subordinate gendered and racial relations have been enforced in society and show how individuals are assigned to certain expectations based on their social positioning. Additionally, as stated by Smith (2012), narratives have been linked to oral tradition and hold great cultural significance. Masenya (1996) and Mmila (2006) suggested that oral narration and the use of African proverbs can function to teach children about their cultural backgrounds, moral codes, and values. The narratives of the participants not only reflect their personal experiences, but their stories embody broader discourses of power and knowledge (Sullivan & Stevens, 2010; Squire et al., 2014), thus taking people stories and engaging them with broader narratives. This serves as more than just an opportunity to investigate the past, it helps us understand how identities evolve and places them in present and future contexts.

Feminist theory

Feminism aims to achieve social, political, and economic equality and justice for all the sexes by addressing power imbalances and advocating for the empowerment of women (Shields, 2008). Since its emergence in the 1830s, feminism has evolved to address various issues affecting not only women but all individuals oppressed by patriarchal systems (Dorey-Stein, 2018; Norwood, 2013). The theory focuses on uplifting the marginalized voices of women by allowing them to tell their own stories about themselves and their experiences (Kiguwa, 2019). The movement emerged at a time when women were largely considered subordinate to their male counterparts and were not afforded equal rights and opportunities for agency and self-determination. A large focus of the movement was to advocate for the ability of women to have full participation and leadership in all aspects of society, beyond just the family (Hill Collins, 1996). The theory aligns with the intentions of this research by prioritizing marginalized voices, particularly those of women, and emphasizes an intersectional approach to understanding identity and equality (Gouws, 2017). However, since the

emergence of the movement and with the development of society, feminism has been through various transitions to account for some of its problems and to ensure that the theory grows to fit its focus on social justice and equality for all.

When the theory first emerged, it was largely viewed as a movement associated with Whiteness and prioritizing the experiences and challenges faced by White women in Western contexts (Collins, 1996). The early feminist movements lacked the awareness of women's experiences outside their gender identities and did not account for how gender intersects with other markers of identity such as race and class. This era of feminism did not consider that Black women had been working outside their homes and actively participating in the labour market for centuries. Black women not only faced oppression based on their position as women, but they also had to navigate issues including unequal pay/workplace inequality, racism, classism, and poverty (Newman, 2005). This created a need to establish a theory for Black feminism that incorporated an intersectional approach to account for the combined influences of racial and class experiences of Black women and how this intersected with their gender experiences, thus disrupting the idea that feminism was a "for-Whites-only ideology" (Collins, 1996, p. 13). Therefore, as stated by Pendla (2004), this approach rejected the Eurocentric dichotomy of either/or when viewing the formations of identity and the functions of gender by accounting for the interlocking of gender, race, class, ethnicity, language, and culture which fall within the same matrix of domination. Black feminist approaches are thus useful in investigating the political, social, legal, and economic inequalities that disempower women.

It is important to note that Black Feminism was not the only attempt to prioritize the history and experiences of Black women in the context of gender and social equality. Womanism is a theory that was introduced by Alice Walker and acknowledged the racism, sexism, and classism experienced by Black women (Collins, 1996). Thus, making the theory inherently intersectional and accounting for the differences in the experiences of Black women and White women. Furthermore, Womanism placed significance on the empowerment of women for the benefit of whole communities which include Black men and women. This theory endorses the idea of solidarity within Black communities however, both Black Feminism and Womanism place the experiences of Black women at the centre of its focus (Gqola, 2001). One of the critiques of Womanism is that the theory is largely framed from a heterosexual

perspective, thus it may not allow for thorough engagement with the narratives of queer Black women (Coleman et al., 2006). For this reason, this study has opted to align with a Black Feminist framework to enable the full exploration of non-heteronormative narratives of gender identities.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality has become an integral principle of feminist theory by recognizing the intersecting nature of confounding systems of oppression (Frame, 2016; Weldon, 2008). Intersectionality was a term first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to examine the experiences of Black women with violence and the law in the United States of America (Crenshaw, 1990). This theory emerged as an attempt to bring light to the workings of unequal power relations and the fact that women belonging to marginalized groups often face multiple forms of oppression based on the intersections of race, gender, and class (Crenshaw, 1990; Yuval-Davis, 2006). As the theory has evolved, its use has expanded to include different forms of oppression experienced by marginalized people across race, class, disability, and sexuality among other social identities. Intersectionality thus discourages perspectives portraying all women's experiences as uniform; acknowledging different ways in which privilege and marginalization are experienced (Frame, 2016; Shields, 2008). Therefore, it requires understanding how identity categories influence each other in constructing distinct experiences for different groups of Black women.

Adopting an intersectional approach creates an opportunity to move away from static notions of identity and to acknowledge the dynamic subject positions that Black women embody. Intersectionality brings forth the nuances necessary to engage with the complex experiences of Black womanhood. Previous feminist and racial justice movements have tended to prioritize either gender or race without considering the significance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990). Acknowledging this complex interplay of identity categories helps us better understand the systemic oppression faced by marginalized groups (Gouws; 2017). An example of a study that made use of the theory of intersectionality was conducted by Groenmeyer (2011). This study examined the narratives of two women working in post-apartheid South Africa and took on an intersectional lens to understand the complexities of working in casual, short-term employment in male-dominated industries. An intersectional approach to

understanding the narratives of Black women in South Africa takes into consideration the realities of gender, racial, and class discrimination, everyday resistance, and survival.

The Feminist narrative framework allowed the research to engage with issues of power, the self and others through an intersectional approach that opened the women's stories even more to expose aspects of their identities that might have been otherwise overlooked (Fraser & MacDougall, 2017). While feminist narrative approaches can expose the agency in women's stories, Smith (2017) states that they also allow for engagement with how these stories are influenced by dominant narratives. In their study, Smith (2017) made use of a feminist narrative approach to understand the narratives of women seeking asylum and show how they embody resistance, resilience and change in their stories. Furthermore, narrative feminist research required that the researcher pay attention to the emotions of participants as they exposed further knowledge about the meaning that narratives held to narrators and researchers (Squire, 2005; Fraser & MacDougall, 2017). A study was conducted by Mbilishaka and Hudlin (2023) using narrative and critical black feminist theory as a framework to explore the narratives of Black girls' early experiences with relaxing their hair in order to understand how these stories influenced the construction of their racial and gender identities. A focus on the mental and emotional conflicts that the participants narrated in Mbilishaka and Hudlin (2023) study revealed the distress that the girls had experienced and how they reconciled this with the processes of permanently altering their natural hair curl pattern and texture. Ultimately, the combination of narrative and feminist theory works to centre women's voices while unearthing the ways that they speak to dominant narratives and helping us realise where their agency lies (Woodiwiss, 2017). This approach required that the researcher was aware of the power dynamics in the co-construction of narratives within the interview context to ensure that the stories and voices of participants were prioritized (Varga-Dobai, 2012). According to Kiguwa (2019), Feminist approaches place heavy significance on the practice of reflexivity to expand the awareness of the researcher's own positionality, the power dynamics that exist between themselves and the participants as well as the potential implications of the research.

Chapter Four

Methodology

The study was guided by a qualitative methodological approach that was embedded in an interpretivist research paradigm. Using narrative interviews as the method for data collection, in-person and telephonic interviews were conducted with 6 grandmother-granddaughter pairs from 6 different families. These interviews were conducted to obtain the intergenerational narratives of embodied gender and race between Black grandmothers and their granddaughters, and this chapter provides insight into some of the challenges that were encountered during data collection. The study engaged in a thematic narrative analysis to identify the continuities and the changes in the intergenerational narratives between grandmothers and granddaughters and identified 6 major narrative themes. This chapter will also engage with issues relating to trustworthiness and provide an overview of the ethical clearance obtained for this study. The chapter will conclude with a section on reflexivity, thus upholding feminist narrative principles of doing qualitative research.

Research Design

This study made use of qualitative methodology which focused on getting to understand more about human behaviour by looking into the perspectives of those being studied and providing detailed accounts of the data that was collected (Silverman, 2003). This approach tried to prioritize the voices and experiences of participants by considering the socio-historical context in which they come from and how this shaped their experiences and identities (Greenstein, Roberts & Sitas, 2003). With this approach, the narratives of participants were studied with their psychosocial context in mind and provided an opportunity to explore the nuances in their embodied gender and racial identities.

The study fell under the interpretive research paradigm. This paradigm rejects the existence of an objective reality and rather sees reality as being socially constructed through “language, consciousness and shared meanings” (Gichuru, 2017, p1). This paradigm allowed the study to explore the nuances in each of the narratives without subjecting the participants to a homogenous perspective by first observing the subjective experiences of participants and then understanding the meaning behind

participants' experiences to provide rich narratives of the phenomena under study (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Under this paradigm, Nuryatno (2003) claims that knowledge is created through interpreting and understanding human phenomena from the perspectives of participants, and in this study, the focus was on illuminating the narratives and perspectives of participants based on the everyday experiences of their embodied gender and racial identities. Through the interpretivism paradigm, there was an understanding that multiple realities exist in the world and knowledge is gained through observing these realities. The qualitative approach under the interpretivist paradigm allowed for the research process to be flexible, thus enabling the researcher to continuously adjust and refine the research questions as they conducted data collection and became more immersed in the data (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This is one of the benefits of using qualitative methodology because it leaves room for the researcher to engage with unanticipated insights as they emerge throughout the process.

Cohort of Participants

To provide intergenerational narratives, the cohort of participants for this study involved women from two generational groups. The sample was made up of matching pairs of grandmothers and their adult granddaughters. A total of 12 women located in Gauteng were considered, hence, six women from each generation provided a variety of narratives which enabled in-depth engagement with the narratives of all participants. To participate in the study, participants had to identify as Black women and form part of the grandmother-granddaughter pair. The study was open to participants from different sexual orientations, class status, religions, and cultural backgrounds. All the grandmothers who participated in the study, except for one grandmother, happened to come from the granddaughters' maternal families. Tables 1 and 2 provided below illustrate all the participants' demographic information. All but one grandmother was retired, and their ages ranged from 64 to 70 years old. They had all been married and at the point of data collection, however, three of them had been widowed and one was divorced. All the granddaughters were registered as students enrolled for tertiary degrees except for one granddaughter who was a grade 12 high school student with intentions of furthering her education the following year. From this cohort, two of the granddaughters were balancing their studies and working part-time in the retail industry. Only one of the granddaughters had a child whom she was raising with the support of her grandmother. Two of the granddaughters self-identified as members of

the LGBTQIA+ community by disclosing that they identified as lesbian and bisexual women. The cohort of participants included women from Tswana, Sotho, and Zulu cultural backgrounds and they all identified with different denominations of the Christian church (Anglican, Methodist, and Seventh-Day Adventist). Furthermore, the cohort of participants represented women from working to middle-class social groups. Therefore, despite the participants' shared identity as black women, it was important to consider the intersectional identities of the participants. Ultimately then, this was a heterogeneous cohort of participants given their differences in their Christian denominations, marital status, sexualities, class positions, and cultural backgrounds.

Table 1: Grandmothers demographic information

Grandmother	**Location**	**Age**	**Marital Status**	**Culture**	**Children**	**Religion**	**Employment**
GM#1	Vosloorus	66	Married	Tswana	3	Christian	Retired
GM#2	Soweto	65	Divorced	Tswana	3	Christian	Seamstress
GM#3	Pretoria	70	Widowed	Sotho	6	Christian	Retired
GM#4	Soweto	68	Widowed	Tswana	2	Christian	Retired
GM#5	Soweto	68	Widowed	Tswana	3	Christian	Retired
GM#6	Soweto	64	Married	Tswana	2	Christian	Retired

Table 2: Granddaughters Demographic information

Granddaughter	**Location**	**Age**	**Culture**	**Children**	**Religion**	**Education**	**Employment**
GD#1	Vosloorus	23	Tswana	0	Christian	Honours in HR/ Industrial	Student and working in retail

						Psychology (Current)	
GD#2	Soweto	19	Sotho	0	Christian	Mechanical Engineering (Current)	Student
GD#3	Heidelberg	22	Zulu	0	Christian	IT (Current)	Student
GD#4	Soweto	22	Tswana	0	Christian	Bachelor of Education - Foundation phase (Current)	Student
GD#5	Soweto	28	Tswana	1	Christian	Diploma in business management (Current)	Student and working in retail
GD#6	Soweto	18	Tswana	0	Christian	Matric (Current)	Student

Sampling

A poster including information about the study was posted on social media as part of the strategy to access participants, however, none of the participants were accessed directly from this post. Instead, participants were accessed through referral and the study made use of non-probability purposive sampling where women who fit the criteria were approached and informed of the study. The nature of qualitative

methodology allowed for nuanced and detailed accounts of subjective experiences rather than focusing solely on trying to represent an entire population. The women who participated in this study provided insight into some of the ways that Black women made use of intergenerational narratives in their families to construct their personal identities.

Methods

Black women from different class and cultural backgrounds were interviewed about their narratives regarding gender and race and how they navigate the choices and conflicts that arise in the construction of their identities as Black women. This was a cross-sectional study and semi-structured, open-ended narrative interviews were conducted to explore the narratives of the participants. According to Legard, Keegan, and Ward (2003), interviews can provide a way of accessing information about the social world by engaging participants in a 'special' conversation to talk about their lives. The narrative approach to interviews allowed the participants to respond to open-ended questions by constructing a story of their experiences in ways that they thought were most appropriate. The data collected in the interview was co-constructed by both the interviewer and the participant as there was an interaction between them where both were required to be active in sharing their knowledge and narratives about their experiences (Holsetin & Gubrium, 2004).

Data Collection

Participants were informed of the study through a participant information sheet and informed consent was obtained before the interview. Interviews were conducted in person at the homes of the participants apart from one interview that was conducted telephonically. Interviews conducted at home were an advantage as they allowed participants to be much more comfortable as they were sharing personal narratives in their own space and did not incur any traveling costs. In-person interviews considered COVID-19 protocol by ensuring that sanitizing of hands and social distancing was observed. The interviews were recorded and stored in a password-protected computer that only the researcher had access to. The audio recordings were then transcribed and translated by the researcher. In addition to the audio recordings of the interview, the researcher also took notes during the interviews to provide more detail about the participants' demographic information, their narratives, and the interview setting.

Data Analysis

A narrative thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected. A narrative analysis focused on the content of what was disclosed in narrative accounts and how these stories were structured. This form of analysis works to connect the stories of everyday life to broader social discourses and according to Risseman and Quinney (2005, p. 394), narrative analysis is concerned with "how and why events are storied" and how language is used to construct narratives. Attention was given to which events were selected, how they were sequenced, whom the story was constructed for, and what meaning they held for the participants who shared these narratives (Risseman & Quinney, 2005; Risseman, 2008). A narrative data analysis was carried out by Segalo (2011) to explore the narratives of Black women in an embroidery project to understand their shifting identities through the stories they told about their lives. Similarly, to this study, the use of narrative data analysis was identified as beneficial because the method allows for the prioritization of the narrators' use of language, the meaning they ascribed to their stories, and how their narratives illuminate issues of power, agency, and the women's renegotiation of their gender identities (Segalo, 2011).

Additionally, thematic analysis was used to identify dominant or consistent themes across the narratives provided by two generations of women who participated in the study. The thematic narrative analysis provided an opportunity to focus not only on how narratives were structured but also focused on the dominant and recurring themes in the narratives. The thematic analysis followed that outlined by Braun and Clark (2006). Boonzaier (2023) made use of a thematic narrative approach in analyzing articles about femicide, and violence perpetrated by men, against women in South Africa. This method was used to identify patterns in the stories and to focus on the contexts within which the narratives are situated, bringing attention not only to what is being said but also to what is being silenced. This approach, therefore, works to uncover the micro and macro discourses that inform people's experiences and shape their narrative identities.

Once the interviews were concluded and the data was collected, the interview recordings were transcribed and translated by the researcher one at a time to be used for analysis. During the process of transcription and translation, the researcher made

notes of emerging themes as part of the initial stages of data analysis. Once all the transcripts were complete, each one was read multiple times in search of themes that related to the research questions. During this process, transcripts from the grandmothers were coded in conjunction with the transcripts from their granddaughters to showcase the continuities and changes in the intergenerational narratives of each pair. The codes were then initially organized into eight themes which were then collapsed into six dominant themes to avoid repetition. These were education and career, race, culture, mental health, religion, and intergenerational impact. Analysis of each transcript allowed for new and already identified themes to emerge. Furthermore, in addition to pairing the appropriate grandmother/granddaughter transcripts, the researcher connected themes across all transcripts as well as within each generation of participants.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is judged according to standards of trustworthiness which refer to the level of confidence that can be entrusted in the data, interpretation, and methods used in the study. This study made use of the criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the truth in the representation and interpretation of data provided by participants (Cope, 2014). To manage this, engaging in a thematic narrative analysis required close and consistent contact with the data while generating narrative themes, thus allowing for prolonged engagement with the data to provide truthful representation and interpretation of the narratives provided by participants. Extensive notetaking was also conducted during the interviews to ensure credibility. This helped to provide thick and detailed descriptions of the participants' narratives and to report these narratives as authentically as possible with the support of adequate quotes. No member checks were done due to time constraints.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), transferability is the degree to which the study can be applied to other contexts and was addressed through a detailed description of the participants' demographic information and the procedures involved in the research process. Lastly, dependability refers to the stability of the findings over time and confirmability is the neutrality of the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To address these last two criteria, an audit trail was kept providing documentation of all decisions made in the research process and included records of research materials, data

collection, procedures for data analysis, data management, and findings. This audit trail illustrated the path taken to conduct the research and the decisions made in this study which made the process of analysis and interpretation more transparent.

Challenges during data collection

There were several challenges during the process of data collection and analysis. The first limitation encountered while collecting the data for the study was the age difference between the researcher and the grandmothers because the researcher, who is still in their early twenties was perceived as young. This influenced how open the grandmothers were and the ability of the researcher to probe further into some of the more sensitive narratives that were shared.

Another challenge was language and literacy barriers. The information sheet and consent forms were in English and some of the grandmothers interviewed in the study could not speak, read, or write in English, therefore the interviewer, with the assistance of the granddaughters had to provide verbal translations in SeSotho and Setswana for the grandmothers to understand what the interviews entailed and provide informed consent. The process of translation for the transcripts in SeSotho and Setswana was also more time-consuming than expected and prolonged the process of preparing the transcripts. Some phrases mentioned in the transcripts did not carry the same meaning when translated into English. For that reason, these phrases were not translated to preserve the integrity of the narratives. Lastly, interviews with two of the grandmothers, one face-to-face and the other telephonic, had to be rescheduled due to recording and scheduling issues.

Ethics

Ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) and the ethics number for this study is MASPR/22/08. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and informed consent was obtained prior to their involvement in the study. This included information about the researcher, the duration of the interview, sampling criteria, and the option of doing the interview telephonically or in person. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, there were no rewards in participating in the study and participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to do so.

The researcher did have access to the identities of the participants, so anonymity was not guaranteed, however, confidentiality has been maintained throughout the study. This was done using pseudonyms in the transcription and reporting of the results in the report. The recordings of the interviews were stored in a password-protected laptop that only the researcher had access to, not even the supervisor of the study has had access to these.

There was minimal risk for participants in the study as the magnitude of possible harm was no greater than those experienced in daily life. However, given the sensitive nature of the research and some of the narratives that were shared, the participant information sheet provided contact details for LifeLine in case the participants experienced any emotional or mental distress and required access to free counselling services.

Reflexivity

I am a young, Black woman and the construction of my own gender has been influenced by the choices that I have made through my own agency, and the influences from the multiple Black maternal influences in my family, including my grandmother, mother, and aunts. My own experiences have led to my interest in the narratives that Black women have about their racial and gendered identities and the ways that we experience freedom and limitations in the constructions of these identities. Through my own experiences and the experiences of the women around me, I have come to see that the identities of Black women can be very complex and that there are various choices and conflicts that we must navigate in the construction of these identities. Therefore, I too continue to negotiate these choices and conflicts in my own life and share similar positions and experiences with my participants.

My identity as a feminist has encouraged me to become aware of some of the social, economic and psychological issues that women face in a country like South Africa that still struggles with high rates of structural inequalities. I did not disclose this identity to my participants; however, it has informed my interest in this research topic and influenced the ways in which I interpreted the data that was collected in this process. I understood that even though I may share some similarities with my participants being a Black woman, we did not share the same backgrounds or hold the same beliefs, and I had to be mindful not to impose my own position onto my participants.

Bamberg (2020) asserts that “narrating a story requires a great deal of co-ordination” which combines the curiosities of a researcher with the narratives that they evoke from participants. The stories that were shared by the participants mirrored my own in various ways. Throughout the process of conducting this research, I was able to connect with the narratives shared by the participants and not only saw myself in the stories that they shared, but was reminded of my own grandmother, my mother, and my sisters. I was able to connect with the experience of being raised in a matriarchy and growing up to negotiate what lessons were necessary for me to integrate into my own sense of Black womanhood.

There was also a great sense of openness in the ways that I was received by the participants in this study and with every interview, it was as if I was talking to my own friend or my own grandmother. Throughout the process, I was aware that I was being given insight into the lives of others, I am an outsider in that regard. An outsider with insider knowledge. It has greatly benefitted me in that I was able to be a lot more relatable to my participants and that aided me in building trust and rapport with them. This encouraged the participants to share the details of their personal lives and intimate relationships with their grandmother/mother/granddaughter, but it didn't take away from the fact that I was still someone, a researcher, on the outside looking in.

> “The interviews were on a Saturday morning; I think I arrived at the house around 9am because the granddaughter has some schoolwork to do during the day. When I got there, they offered me coffee and biscuits and we sat in their dining room/TV room and conducted the interviews. Both grandmother and granddaughter were wearing bonnets and as I did the interview with one participant, the other was in the background, cleaning the house, kind of typical for a Black family on a Saturday morning. When the interviews were done, I was a bit taken aback by realizing or thinking about how I’m basically infringing on these people's lives. They’ve woken up early in the morning to show up for the appointment, opened their home and their hearts, their lives, and delicate information about who they are without expecting anything in return. I thought a lot about how these were acts of Ubuntu and was humbled by the warmth and kindness that was extended to me.” (Reflexive journal)

Chapter Five

Findings

This chapter will explore the main themes that have emerged from the narratives provided by the cohort of participants. Following the analysis of the narratives provided by the grandmothers and the granddaughters, 6 main themes were identified by the researcher. This chapter will present a description of each of these themes and provide data extracts from the interview transcripts. The main themes that were identified from the intergenerational narratives of the grandmothers and granddaughters include education and career, race, culture, mental health, religion, and intergenerational impact. In the analysis, these themes were identified as significant to the experiences of Black womanhood through the narratives of embodied gender and race across the transcripts of the cohort of grandmothers and granddaughters.

Education and career: "It's nice but it's painful because our children are going to school, but they are unemployed"

The participants in this study highlighted the importance of prioritizing education and career to increase prospects of financial independence and to provide for their families. Growing up during the apartheid era and having to navigate poverty and low socioeconomic conditions, the grandmothers were unable to complete their high school education or pursue tertiary studies and had to start working as young girls. They shared narratives regarding how difficult it was for them being unable to achieve their dreams of getting an education and how they wanted their granddaughters to have better opportunities. Within these narratives, they reflected on how easy it was for them to find jobs during that time despite not having finished school and how they had a range of employment options to choose from. However, when compared to life after apartheid, they shared narratives that spoke to a sense of despair as some of the grandmothers expressed how prospects of employment were much better during apartheid compared to the post-apartheid era where unemployment is a major issue even though there are more opportunities for granddaughters to pursue higher education.

"I: So you're seeing as if right now it is hard just in terms of life, getting a job…

P: Yes, what I mostly see is that it is hard for getting jobs, especially for our children. They go to school, they don't get jobs unlike that time, we didn't go to school, we didn't have matric but you get a job like it's nothing. Right now our children have gone to school, they have graduated, there are no jobs. They can't work, which is painful. Okay fine there is change, it's good, we can also live in the suburbs, we have relatives in the suburbs we are happy about that, that White people can see that even from our people, there are also those of us who can. It's nice but it's painful because our children are going to school, but they are unemployed." (GM#2)

The above quote was taken from one of the grandmothers who was sharing her frustrations regarding the lack of employment opportunities available to the youth during a time in our democracy where the promises of a better life for all have not been fully materialized. According to the grandmothers, the high unemployment rates are major obstacles to accessing better standards of living and this makes life hard for many families. In the above extract, the grandmother reflected on the class positions of Black families and the ability to access residence in suburban areas. These opportunities symbolize an elevation in a family's socioeconomic class position and greater freedom from the possibilities of generational poverty. However, this increased access does not always equate to a life of absolute empowerment. Grandmothers' narratives expressed concern with increased access to education and seemingly decreased access to jobs, thus potentially contributing to situations of prolonged precarity across generations. In addition to the financial constraints, unemployment also had an impact on the personal well-being of participants and contributed to negative mental health and self-esteem outcomes as illustrated by the following narrative provided by one of the granddaughters.

"I: Okay, so outside of here at home, have you experienced any challenges as a Black woman? Just anything in regards to your race or your gender where you feel that it has disadvantaged you somehow?

P: Okay, the job I work, when it comes to race there is some kind of separation, but I don't have much of a problem because they are mostly looking for Whites more than Blacks. And the rate for White people is higher than ours, and our hours are too much on top of that, but that's life, we are learning so it doesn't give me

too much problems. And then also unemployment, it also lowers self-esteem sometimes, it makes you feel that out of everyone your life isn't going well so that also downgrades your life. But I taught myself to be patient, one thing for sure, I am patient. I am very, very patient. A lot of times I don't drown myself in my problems, no, I have told myself that life and everything in it has its time, so I am a free soul. When the time comes, it comes." (GD#5)

This narrative indicates the racial challenges that Granddaughter #5 faced in their workplace where there was better treatment given to White employees compared to Black employees. The granddaughter expressed how even though this places her at a disadvantage because she is expected to work more hours for less pay, she has come to accept this as the reality for Black workers because it has persisted since the time of apartheid. This is particularly illustrated in the reassurance offered in her statement "I am a free soul". Even though there may be unfair treatment between different races in the workplace, it is evident that the granddaughter found it better to learn how to navigate these inequalities rather than to be unemployed and be subjected to the financial and emotional challenges that may result from that.

Navigating racial issues was not only prevalent in narratives concerning the workplace but participants also experienced issues within the formal schooling spaces as well. Unlike the grandmothers, the granddaughters were able to complete their high school education and all of them were able to access tertiary education and had to navigate racial issues within their school environments. Some of the granddaughters had attended schools that were comprised of a multiracial student body that was very different from the Bantu and colonial schooling systems present in pre-democratic South Africa. The following narrative was provided by a granddaughter who reflected on experiences where a Black girl in a multiracial school was singled out by a teacher and policed for their appearance.

"P: Yoh I remember they told one girl with such peace, a White teacher, with such peace in her heart, she came and pulled her out the line because she had her afro all combed and neat, pulled her out of the line and was like "*your hair is a little too big, I think you might have to relax when you leave school*". I don't know if she knows what relaxer is and what type of impact it has on someone's hair.

I: Yeah, casually telling someone to relax their hair.

P: With such peace yet she doesn't know what it is, she has never done it in her life, not even know how hard… Like do you know how much your scalp burns while they're doing that?

I: The teacher was White?

P: White. Not a Black teacher, we had Black teachers that also had the same issue, and they were like *"No girls, if you have your hair out and it's an Afro it becomes problematic so you have to tie it"*, but it's the same thing, even if you tie the afro you have a poof anyway up here, so they'd say it doesn't really change it. All you can do is ask us to sit more on the side or in the back because of the hair being big and in the way, which we do understand. But you can't say we must go cut it or we must go relax it whereas… Because we had a (White) girl who had knee-length hair and they left her because what? Her hair is straight, so it's down here." (GD#3)

Here, the granddaughter was reflecting on one of the experiences that they had in high school where the physical appearance of Black girls was frequently scrutinized against school policies that considered the natural hair of Black students as being problematic or disruptive to the school environment. The school code of conduct for various multiracial schools includes hair policies that consider afro hair to be a distraction for other students and sets measurements stipulating how big the hair can be before it must be tied or braided down into a flat or straight style. These rules regulate how thick and how long the hair should be and what colours are acceptable. The rules often apply to the whole student body, however, because these rules are mostly adopted and designed based on Western standards of formal education and presentation, the codes of conduct can often discriminate against Black students and enforce racist policies and attitudes.

Race : "Julle moet uit gaan!"

Narratives about race were of significant interest in this study, as demonstrated by the research questions stated in previous chapters. As reflected by the generational gaps between grandmothers and granddaughters, the South Africa that each cohort grew up in looked very different, where granddaughters can access rights and opportunities that were previously denied to grandmothers due to their racial identities. However, despite

the social, political, and economic transformations, being Black in South Africa still offered complexities in how each generation navigated issues of racial marginalization back then and now.

"P: To be honest, well racism, we used to experience it at work, in the towns, when we went to the towns but when I look at life during that time of apartheid, to be honest, life was much better.

I: Really?

P: Even though we were oppressed, but there weren't people sitting in the locations because they were unemployed… People would get arrested because they weren't working. They would arrest you, "*loafer skaap. Jy is 'n loafer, jy moet gaan werk. Jy kan nie net so bly nie*." You are arrested and taken to jail. When they'd walk past you on the street, they would ask you *"Are you looking for a job?"* They would ask you while walking past you on the street. You'd leave working from this company to go to that one because of R2, you get paid R2 more. You leave here on Friday, Monday you're starting at the other one. The only time you would feel oppression is when you are traveling by train, they would get full, and you'd find that it's full to the extent where you end up in the White people's coaches. When you get to the White people's coaches, there are even signs, Whites only, Blacks only. When you get there, you don't know who called or who did what, you'll just see White people coming in with dogs coming to get you, to remove you with dogs, *"Julle moet uit gaan!"* (GM#2)

(*loafer skaap. Jy is 'n loafer, jy moet gaan werk. Jy kan nie net so bly nie*. *Julle moet uit gaan!* loosely translated: You are a lazy sheep, you must go to work. You cannot just stay like this.

Julle moet uit gaan! loosely translated: You must get out!)

The narrative provided by the grandmother reflects life during and after apartheid. Initially, the grandmothers spoke of apartheid as a better time because of the access to numerous job opportunities that were available for Black people. She offers a moment to acknowledge the oppression that was brought on during that time but maintains that it was still better that Black people had access to employment and weren't left at home with nothing to keep them occupied. However, this narrative provides an opportunity to consider the complexity offered by the position of being

Black. Apartheid is seen as a time when Black people were offered employment, however, it is also framed as a time when Black people were often stripped of their dignity and their lives under the constant scrutiny of a segregationist government.

In the earlier sections of this chapter where the participants' narratives on education and career are discussed, a narrative was provided by a granddaughter speaking of the racial discrimination she experienced in her workplace. The granddaughter had shared her experience where the Black employees at her workplace were often expected to work longer hours while still receiving lower pay than their non-Black counterparts. The following extract was provided by a grandmother who, decades before the granddaughter's experience, encountered her own experience of racial discrimination in the workplace. This was when she entered the workplace in her teenage years, assisting her grandmother who was working as a domestic helper for White families, in what is colloquially referred to as *"the kitchens"*.

"I: How was it growing up during the apartheid era? Did you experience any racism during that time?

P: It was there. When my grandmother found a job, she was working as a kitchen girl. When schools closed… I didn't finish school, that's why I say in all things, God was with me. I didn't even finish school because I'm sure I was working when I was about 14, 15 years old.

I: That's when you started working?

P: And where was I working at that time? I wasn't working in the kitchens; I was helping my grandmother and the boss. Speaking of apartheid, their surname was van Niekerk, her name was ****. I'm talking about something from 40-something years ago. She used to work in town and in Florida. Do you know Florida?

I: Yes.

P: There was a train track here and then right over there was her house. When she goes to work, she would take the train. She can see her house, when she comes back from work, if you haven't polished her stoop… Isn't it I'm still a child? Maybe my grandmother didn't go to work, and she said because the schools are

closed, "*go and work"*. I was with my aunt, the last born. So, we'd say we're not going to polish the stoop, we're tired and we have to polish the stoop at home and then come polish this one. The White people's stoop is always clean, so we'd take a broom and sweep there and go over it with a cloth. When she walks through the gate, she'd come back around 6 o'clock, and when she comes in, she'd say *"My stoop hasn't been polished, I saw it while I was in the train!"*

I: She was watching?

P: She couldn't see it!

I: Oh!

P: She'll sniff or do whatever, I don't know. She'll say, *"the pots are burning, what did you do to burn the pots? I could smell it while I was…"* She's saying all these things as she is walking in through the door. That woman, the way that she was, the way that she had apartheid!" (GM#4)

Here, the grandmother spoke of the strict working conditions that she was subjected to by her grandmothers' boss, and her grandmother who would step in as a disciplinarian on the occasions when she was accused of upsetting or disobeying the madam. The grandmother shared an encounter with the madam who displayed actions of micromanaging and intimidation when critiquing the young girls' work. In addition to providing their labour as domestic workers for her grandmothers' employer, the grandmother was also expected to complete her domestic duties at home, thus emphasizing her role as a caretaker/helper both inside and outside the home. These duties resulted in her leaving the formal education system to focus her time on performing her duties as her grandmothers' apprentice and launching her into the labour market to join the long line of Black women who had been involved in this work.

The pervasiveness of the impact of racial discrimination moves beyond the realms of the economic and the political and makes its way into the personal and psychological experiences of people. The granddaughters grew up in a South Africa that embraced the ideas of the rainbow nation and claims Ubuntu as the philosophy of the people. In the face of such change, the nuances of Black love and self-acceptance bubble to the surface as the born-free generation grapples with the constructions of a Black and

African identity in a post-apartheid society. In addition to navigating the complexities offered by class and gender positions, the identities of Black South African women are riddled with struggles informed by colourism and body shaming.

> "P: So like honestly, growing up, I'm not even going to lie to you, the insecurities that I have now still stem from growing up because like… Yoh guys! it was always you're too dark, you're too fat, you're too this, you're too that… You understand? So at a certain point in my life, it was like I was never just good enough, I was never just… Yeah, because I only started loving my skin colour. Can I tell you, I only started loving my skin colour last year.
> I: Really?
> P: I'm not going to lie to you, I've only just accepted that I love melanin. I love how… I love it! Because at first it was kind of like "Oh my God, why can't I be light?" (GD#2)

The granddaughter in the above narratives displays the challenges of presenting a dark skinned, fat body that does not seem to fit in with the Eurocentric ideals of a slim, fair skinned, feminine body. The participant is transparent and offers her truth in sharing that she has only just started loving her skin and embracing her complexion at the age of 19, thus suggesting a struggle with accepting her appearance in her formative years. The impact of a racist regime does not only place a burden on the economic lives of Black people, but it can also be used to inform narratives on Blackness that breed self-loathing and discomfort in one's own skin. This in turn has impacted the self-esteem and self-image of the participant and has required some awareness of this trauma and the ability to engage in practices that have worked to affirm the racial identity and physical appearance of the participant while instilling a sense of self-love and healing.

Culture: "Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi"

For the cohort of women who participated in this study, the expression of their gendered identities was strongly tied to the cultural notions of womanhood. These notions included the view that the ultimate expression of womanhood is manifested through a woman's ability to assume the role of a wife and a caretaker. The grandmothers in this study shared the teachings that had been passed on to them by their mothers and their

grandmothers who prepared them to perform the duties of good wives and to become respectful, culturally aware daughters-in-law. The grandmothers shared some of the guidance that they had received as new brides and the following excerpt showcases the use of a cultural proverb that reminds women to be resilient in their marriages.

> "P: So, she told me, "*As long as you're at his home, stay strong".* Do you know what they used to say? *"lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi'*. You will die there, there is no going back home. At home you don't have a place anymore, you don't have a bed, your bed was taken by the younger kids, you don't have anything in the bedroom that you all used to share. So, where you are, you just have to be strong and know to keep going forward because going back, you become a return soldier and your peers laugh at you." (GM#1)
>
> (*lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi* loosely translated: A wife's grave is at her in-laws)

Women who got married were encouraged to remain committed and to ensure that they stay in their marriages regardless of any situation. The grandmother in the above narrative spoke on the strength that is embodied by women who lived with their husbands and took care of their in-laws as part of their responsibilities as wives. This narrative was shared as she spoke of the advice that was given to her by her older sister as she was about to get married. She explains that once a woman is married, she no longer has a place in her maiden home and must accept her identity within a new family. So much so, that when the woman dies, she must be buried along with her husband's family and live according to their cultural practices and beliefs. The grandmother spoke of strength because this transition to being a new wife is not devoid of obstacles as the women are initiated into a new cultural identity as the daughter-in-law and the emerging matriarch of her husband's family. Furthermore, the choice to leave one's marriage to return to her maiden home instead of remaining resilient in the face of marital challenges was considered as a failure in one's embodiment of womanhood. This would even be used to mock the women who returned home from divorced marriages and shame or discriminate against them as those who were unable to fulfil their purpose as wives.

The grandmothers in this study displayed a shift in the traditional, cultural attitudes towards marriage and womanhood and expressed more modern narratives when

presenting their desires for their granddaughters. Having endured the challenges of being a wife herself, Grandmother #2 expressed that she hoped that her children would not rush into marriage and encouraged them to resist cultural expectations that subjected new brides to the potential scrutiny and overworking of their in-laws. The grandmother rather suggested a revised version of cultural practices that would be open to a process of initiation for the new bride while also allowing the new bride more space and agency in these processes of emerging into a new identity. Furthermore, the grandmother makes clear the importance of a supportive partner who can advocate for and empower his wife's voice, thus helping to facilitate the integration of the bride into his family.

"P: For me, I want to be honest with you, if it were up to me, my children, if I was them right now, I wouldn't go after getting married because of what I have experienced, you see? Because when you are in marriage, they take you as, I don't know what… You have to do everything according to culture, you are a bride, you get 4 people in the house, you are brought there by 1 person. So, you have to be responsible for all those people, all 4 of them, you see? You have to cook for them, okay that is normal, that's a woman's job, you have to do it. But now, coming to think that you have to wash their laundry, all 4 of them and you came there for 1 person and you found them doing the washing for themselves, now they leave you to do the whole job.

I: All of that work falls on you.

P: It falls on you because you are the bride and not a child of that house.

I: It's your responsibility.

P: It's your responsibility, I feel like it's unfair. Or it's either, if she gets married, she must not go live with their family, she will be initiated or welcomed into their family the non-traditional way. Because it's culture, she will go stay there for 2 weeks and then after those 2 weeks, gone, back to her house. That is much better than having to stay with their family because we did it the traditional way and lived with our in-laws. It's not good, I wouldn't be happy for someone's child to do that even though it's not every family that will treat you the way I was treated, but prevention is better than cure. Don't go live there, go there to visit, get along with them, don't leave there and get into arguments. They must get to know you whenever you meet for gatherings, your husband must be the one that knows you

and tells them "*My wife is like this…*", at the end of the day, he's the reason you're there." (GM#2)

From the narrative provided by Grandmother #2, it is evident that her concerns about marriage and the cultural expectations placed on women in Black families are based on her own experience of marital strife. Her cautionary narrative warned that "prevention is better than cure". Thus, the narrative worked to inform the reader that the impact of a negative relationship with one's in-laws could potentially have a detrimental effect on one's personal and marital well-being. While this narrative reflects a modern attitude towards marriage customs, it still holds on to the traditional belief that in the home, women are primarily responsible for domestic duties. The women in the family are expected to perform these duties regardless of their marital status, however, these duties become amplified when a woman gets married. Grandmother #4 also shared narratives upholding a more traditional expression of womanhood that moved beyond solely being positioned as a wife. The narratives involved the importance of cleanliness, respect for elders, self-pride, and independence in defining the roles of women.

"P: Yes, *mosadi ke metsi*, you have to bath. A woman baths, a woman cleans, even when there is no food, no furniture in the house, when you have cleaned and you've bathed, people that walk by in the streets will say *"yoh, this house is so clean"*, they don't know that there is no food, they just assume that the way that there's polish… Plus we grew up with the red polish and we used to polish the stoop, when the stoop is shiny they assume there is food even when there isn't any because it must always be clean.

You must be clean, and the yard must be clean, and the house must be clean. You must make your pots shiny using steel wool, your pots must be clean. When you make tea for an elder person when they visit, you warm up the milk, you don't make tea with cold milk, you warm it up so that they can drink tea and your tea must not be like dishwater. They used to be strict before, very strict, now I don't know… I wasn't raised by my mother, I was raised by my grandmother, they were strict, and that strictness taught me because even today, I do things for myself, people don't do things for me. Here's my daughter, I taught her, she went to school,

there she is now she's bought herself a house. You see that I've done it all by myself, it's been years since their father passed, it's been 16 years since he passed and I've been by myself. I saw with my grandmother when my grandfather passed on, my grandmother didn't go around taking men and putting them in the house. I saw with her that the one that God gave you, he has now taken him…" (GM#4)
(mosadi ke metsi loosely translated: A woman is defined by her relationship with water)

The narrative above presents more traditional and conservative expectations as Grandmother #4 shares a lot of what she had learned from her grandmother about what it means to be a woman. The narrative opens with "*mosadi ke metsi*" which translates to a woman is water, suggesting that a woman is defined by her cleanliness and hygiene practices. Maintaining a practice and aesthetic of cleanliness is important because it helps to uphold the appearance that one is well and ward off the judgments of others. The grandmother expressed that in addition to being invested in personal hygiene, it was also a woman's responsibility to ensure that the home is clean as well. The external appearance of the woman's body and the woman's house stands to represent the woman's potential to fulfil the duties associated with maternal and matriarchal roles. Furthermore, respect for one's elders and the ability to be of service are brought up as important attributes to have. Lastly, the ability to be independent is seen to be an integral element of navigating life. As the grandmother recalled her life experiences, she also reflected those of her grandmother as they both lost their husbands and had to raise their families as single mothers. The grandmother attributes her success in raising her children to these teachings that were instilled by her grandmother. These were lessons and teachings that also included the capacity for resilience in times of poverty and suffering. Independence is identified as a key trait to have for the grandmother and her family. These ways of embodying womanhood are passed on to daughters and granddaughters, ultimately informing intergenerational notions on gender roles and the capacity of a woman's strength and resilience in the family.

Mental Health: "That's why I don't like it because we are also humans"

Some narratives regarding Black womanhood are often associated with strength and resilience which can function as tools for empowerment and be used to motivate and

uplift women. However, these narratives can also place a heavy burden on Black women to become hyper-independent in ways that can compromise their personal well-being and mental health.

> "I: You bring up a very important point because I've also kind of… It comes up a lot, the idea that we are strong and I think you know the sayings '*strong Black woman*' or '*mbokodo*', how do you feel about that? Do you relate to that? Do you feel like you challenge that?
> P: I challenge it a lot because one thing… One thing that made me hate that whole stereotype is the fact that most Black women don't talk about what they are going through, whenever we face hardships, we don't actually open up about it and hence why people say we're strong because we don't show that we are dealing with it internally and that doesn't necessarily make us strong, it just means we are bottling it up. So it gives this whole idea that women should just take, take, take. Take the pain, take everything and just, I don't know, I don't even know where it's going to fit, but yeah. That's why I don't like it because we are also humans." (GD#2)

In the above quote, one of the granddaughters shared how the '*strong Black woman*' and '*mbokodo*' tropes can work against Black women by disconnecting them from their emotions, particularly during difficult times when they are unable to share their troubles. The granddaughter rejected these expectations and implied that these tropes could potentially be harmful to Black women. Instead of seeking help, some of the participants would engage in silence as a coping mechanism to mask their struggles and uphold the image that they are strong. According to this narrative, Black women are expected to independently manage their own experiences of oppression and adversity while providing safe spaces for their loved ones, thus sacrificing their own need for support in order to show up for others.

While some of the grandmothers in this study shared narratives of silence and self-reliance as imperative for survival, the granddaughters largely expressed how they were taught to engage in these behaviours but acknowledged how this can also harm one's personal well-being and how it partially works to dehumanize Black women. Across

all the narratives shared in this study, mental health was a difficult subject to navigate as it was viewed as taboo or as a topic that was misunderstood and undiscussed.

> "I: Okay, so as a mother, as you are raising your kids and as all these challenges come up, how are you coping as well, because I can imagine that it can't be easy…
> P: It's not! It's not easy, I don't want to lie because I also become stressed on my own, to be honest. Even now, I don't know where the strength comes from, to be honest, it's difficult to a point where sometimes we go a week without speaking to each other, just passing each other and there is that tension but I tell myself, okay let me as a parent be cool up until she also becomes cool. When I speak to her and hear that she is fuming, I calm down but still tell her, *"This is not the way, don't be rude, you see? I understand your situation but instead of responding to me in a rude manner, rather keep quiet."* It's not easy, to be honest, it's hard, you are always crossing your fingers that, *"Eish, what if she thinks of something"*, okay I can't say *"Don't do this",* but it comes to you as a parent, that what if she thinks of this horrible thing, this child, how will I answer for myself? I pray and ask God, *"Can you please ease her mind so that it doesn't go to where I think it might go as a parent"*, the way that I see she is so depressed, she could do anything because even I have been depressed to a point where there was a certain stage where I wanted to do something that was wrong, something that today when I look at it, I think but I was stupid. You see things like that?" (GM#2)

The quote is taken from one of the grandmothers who discussed the difficulties of being a single parent and navigating conflict with her granddaughter. In this extract, the grandmother explained how she was required to be mindful of her own emotions and the stress that comes with parenting while also caring for the mental and emotional needs of her granddaughter. The grandmother took note of the importance of being able to engage in effective conflict management and shared a concern about her granddaughter's mental health which was not common among the narratives provided by the other grandmothers in this study. Here, there is an acknowledgment of mental health issues including depression and suicide ideation, which are experiences shared by both grandmother and granddaughter respectively. Due to her own past experiences, the grandmother in this narrative intentionally works to encourage open dialogue between her and her granddaughter to create a space where they are conscious of their

internal thoughts and emotions and how those manifest in their relationship with each other and their personal well-being. It was also evident in the extract that there was some fear and hesitation in the grandmothers' attempt to confront mental health issues, however, this narrative indicated a willingness towards actively dealing with mental health issues within the family.

The above narrative provided by the grandmother was unique compared to those shared by the other grandmothers in this study. While the other grandmothers mostly spoke of strength and resilience, they did not directly speak to mental health issues despite alluding to experiences where they had to face racial oppression, abuse, and domestic violence. On the other hand, the granddaughters were more open in sharing their experiences navigating mental health and the narratives that they shared indicated an inability to openly discuss and bring attention to struggles with mental health issues with their family members.

> "P: Yoh, in Black families it's like, when you talk of mental health, it's like you are speaking of demonic things. You could be like "*No but guys depression is real*" and they'd be like "*What is depressing you when you have food and there is bread in the house? you sleep in a…*" You know? I feel like as much as they make jokes about it on social media but those are the things that we really live with. Like how are you depressed when…
>
> I: You have a roof over your head.
>
> P: You have a roof over your head and it's really not about the material things, it's not. Like after I lost my friend, I wasn't suicidal, but I cut my wrists, I have marks here. So my mom picked up on it, she saw it and I was expecting her to be like what's going on, I was shouted at.
>
> I: Seriously? Was she shouting at you that you're doing something wrong?
>
> P: She was shouting at me because "*Why would you want to end your life?*" She didn't get to the root of why are you doing this. She even called my granny; my granny was like I have some demonic cult maybe that I've joined that leads to cutting my wrist…" (GD#4)

In the above extract, the granddaughter was reflecting on her personal experiences with navigating a mental health crisis and how the response from her mother and

grandmother spoke to the lack of mental health literacy as well as the stigmatization of mental health issues. The participant expressed that within Black communities, any mention of mental health issues, more especially when there is active self-harm can be misunderstood as spiritual maladies and mislabelled as demonic or cult-like behaviour. The granddaughters expressed how individuals who may be experiencing difficulties with symptoms of mental distress can often face judgment and are either intentionally or unintentionally silenced and shamed for their struggles. This can, in turn, intensify the symptoms and levels of distress being experienced by individuals and have a detrimental impact on the relationships that individuals have with those around them, contributing to a sense of mistrust with others and a greater desire to isolate.

The following narrative was provided by one of the other granddaughters who shared her experiences dealing with an eating disorder and how the behaviours and comments from her family required her to be more protective of herself. Attending family gatherings meant that she would have to face the possibility of encountering an experience that would trigger her mental health. The lack of adequate mental health literacy within the family resulted in the need to be hypervigilant about her appearance and her behaviours in a context that is often thought of as the primary source of safety, love and support. Despite receiving support from her immediate family and receiving treatment from a mental health practitioner, the criticism she received from her extended family about her body had a negative impact on how the granddaughter was managing her mental and physical well-being.

"I: Okay does that still affect you now? Because I can imagine that when you're in a set up like that or especially with the situation that happened with your aunt right, when you're young and being exposed to those things sometimes it can be harmful, or it brings certain ideas about what kind of bodies are acceptable for instance right? And those things have an impact on how you see yourself, your own self-esteem, how you choose to dress, all of those things. Are you in any way still affected by that or do you feel that there's maybe a difference now?

P: Yeah, I am affected by it, I won't lie. Because how I dress, it depends on where I am going because I know that if I am going out with friends or someone I am comfortable with then I have no issue in wearing whatever I am comfortable with. But I know when I go to family gatherings, I wear super baggy things because

I don't want anyone trying to comment on my weight because there was a point where I had an eating disorder. So, I would eat and then I would throw it all up. So basically, that did kind of ruin the way I see things because I'd feel guilty after eating that I'd imagine the most disgusting things and then I'd just throw it all up." (GD#3)

Religion: "Efa modimo mathata a gago"

Religion was identified as a prominent theme within the narratives of both grandmothers and granddaughters as all the participants identified as belonging to different denominations of the Christian church. The grandmothers in this study had been raised by their mothers and grandmothers to commit to a consistent practice of praying, reading the bible, and attending church. These are the same values that had been passed on from one generation of women to the next as a manner to connect to God. Additionally, maintaining a spiritual practice was considered a mechanism for survival and support through the hardships that they encountered in life. Their reading of the bible and their devotion to the Christian religion were presented as vital elements of their strength and resilience. The following extract illustrates the significance of religious practice for Black women and how the impact of this spiritual connection is taught and carried through a lineage.

"P: …She taught us that you go to church, you pray for everything that you want from God. When you want something, you ask God to give you strength, I want 1, 2, 3. God will take time but one day he will answer you. She taught us that when you wake up in the morning, you pray, when you go to sleep at night, you pray. Sunday, you don't clean your house, you don't cook, where do you go?

I: You go to church.

P: You go to the cross. You take your troubles to the cross. When they had chained Jesus and he was carrying the cross, we must tell our problems to God. That's what she taught us." (GM#4)

The above narrative from Grandmother #4 illustrated the lessons about the importance of religion that were instilled by the family. Their narrative spoke to how their relationship with God was constructed as a safe space through which they could

release their burdens. In times where they were unable or hesitant to confide in others, the grandmothers and the granddaughter's identified religion as their main source of comfort and guidance.

"I: So can you maybe reflect a little bit on how that has impacted you, you know? This idea of sometimes I can't necessarily speak to other people but maybe using church or religion as a safe space?

P: So the thing is, you know when you grow up they say " *Efa Modimo mathatha a gago*", friends will backstab you so when you are a person… And that's how my granny talks.

I: Really?

P: I don't think it has affected me because it's all I've known. I've never been maybe to a therapist or maybe sat down and felt that this type of counselling to release my problems works. I've only known that, I've only known OK, just pray. I don't know "*Can you just help me*" because we place God as your one and only. God will fight your battles for you. They give you quotes and scriptures, I've only known that. I think if I would have known or been to a therapy session or something then I'd be able to compare that, yes, throw your problems there but also go release with someone else. So, I don't think it affects me as much simply because that's all I've known." (GD#1)

(*Efa Modimo mathatha a gago* loosely translated is give your problems over to God)

The granddaughter in the above extract expressed how she had been instructed by her grandmother not to place her trust in friends as they can have malicious intentions. She also indicated that seeking therapy is a foreign concept. Whereas some would seek counsel from other people, the granddaughter has learned to turn to scriptures in the bible and trust God to resolve her troubles. These narratives were shared by granddaughters and grandmothers who participated in this study. One's relationship with God was considered to have the miraculous potential to transform adverse situations. The following narrative was provided by Grandmother #5 and details how she learned to use prayer and faith to manifest opportunities for help or support in times of poverty.

"P: In life, no one can help you. I can tell you… Even your family, no one can help you, there are a few families that can help you, that know there is some trouble… So, in this world, you have to stand up for yourself and not rely on people will help me, or my brother will help me. When my brother comes to see me, he will come out of his own will and say *"Rakgadi take this"* and I will be grateful. So, a lot of the things we did, we saw it fit do them so that we can have life, because I can take my problem and tell my neighbour about 1,2,3, *"I slept without eating last night"*, before the sun sets the whole world knows that I didn't eat. So, in life, I was taught in the church that your problems, you tell only to God and after you tell him, God is the one that will bring someone who will say *"I haven't seen you in such a long time, take this, you'll buy yourself some cold drink."* I've already noticed that I don't have maize meal, I don't have meat, I'll take that money and buy maize meal and meat. You see that? So when you live in the world, there aren't things that you can tell to people because some people… You see with me, if someone tells me their business, I was taught at church that my heart is a grave. When you come and tell me your problem, when you are done, I open my heart which is a grave, I place those problems there, I kneel down and pray for you so that your problems are resolved. You see that?" (GM#5)

Intergenerational impact: "So I'm passing down whatever I went through"

Each generation has its own experiences and there are differences in the ways that grandmothers and granddaughters grew up, particularly given the transitions from colonialism and apartheid to democracy in South Africa. Each generation of women had their contribution in creating an impact in their own lives and subsequently influencing their family lineage, past, present, and future. The grandmothers were taught by their grandmothers and the church to value and respect their relationship with God and they have passed that on to their granddaughters. The grandmothers were unable to focus on their education, therefore in raising their daughters and granddaughters, they rearranged the significance of narratives about becoming a mother and a wife and placed more significance on their granddaughters focusing on their education and independence. The granddaughters learned the importance of having an education from their grandmothers and some of them balance both their studies and

jobs at the same time. This indicated the impact that one generation has in learning through their own experiences and how the next generation uses these as lessons and stepping stones in the decisions that they make about their own lives.

For the grandmothers and granddaughters in this study, it was evident that they were highly aware of the generational impact from one generation to the other. The granddaughters in particular were outwardly intentional about making decisions on how to structure their own lives and how to engage with the younger generations in their family based on the lessons that they received from their mothers and their grandmothers.

> "P: It's complicated, it's really complicated because you'll try, let's say help my mom unlearn what her mom taught her, it's hard for her to unlearn those things because she saw them from her mom. So it's also going to, if I am going to be a mother…
> I: So it will be like a cycle.
> P: I always tell them that I don't want children. And me not wanting kids is not because I don't like kids or I don't have the heart for kids, no. I love children, but I don't see myself being responsible for another human being as well as indirectly hurting my child and them growing up trying to heal my trauma whereas I am also trying to deal with my past trauma from my mom. So I'm passing down whatever I went through, through my child and now my child is also going to grow up, maybe hiding things from me or being scared to talk to me because now I can't talk to them because I couldn't talk to my mom as well. So, I just don't want those things." (GD#4)

The narrative provided in the extract above was from one of the granddaughters who has identified patterns of generational trauma and the significance of unlearning things that may be harmful to personal and familial well-being. This is a reflection on the issues that exist in the family and how choices made by the granddaughter are impacted by generational wounds. Notably, the granddaughters also expressed narratives about lessons on culture, religion, and survival that had been significant to the narratives about their identities. In the following extract, Granddaughter#5

expressed how pivotal her grandmother had been in imparting lessons that would contribute to a sense of pride in herself and her relationship with her grandmother.

"P: She is my mother because even my mother, she is still young. As you see me, we have a resemblance, we look the same, more especially people will say "*you look like your grandmother*". Our relationship, so far so good, it's nice, it's very smooth, it's sweet. She raised me properly, I have learned a lot of things through her, so many things, more especially how to cook. So many things, even people are surprised, "*At your age you already know so much*", like I know how to cook things that people my age don't know how to cook, things like dumpling, making traditional beer, like my stew is best.

I: Wow, you can even make traditional beer?

P: Yes, so many things, they even say my pap is the best, it's delicious. She will be the one to say that pap should made in the SeSotho way, so the way my pap is, when I cook it, everybody enjoys it, so I give myself 100% when it comes to pap. She was the person who taught me, and then she also taught me how to pray, to fear God. Then when something is bothering me or if I have problems or when I reach that point where I can't continue, she taught me to pray, how to pray and then the way she taught me how to relate to God, I feel so blessed because I am not challenged, God will not give me something that I won't be able to handle." (GD#5)

While the grandmothers largely shared stories of the lessons that they had learned from their grandmothers, they also shared stories of passing these lessons on to their granddaughters. Continuing the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the other, the granddaughters also then shared stories of how they were shaping the generation of women following them. Granddaughters were using the lessons learned from their grandmothers and making use of their own experiences and self-awareness to impact emerging generational narratives of Black womanhood in their families.

"P: On that matter of race, I've noticed that my sister, yoh it hurts, because my little sister **** is 7, she just turned 7 in July. So my aunt, you know mothers, I want to give you the best, you know? She started learning English at a very young

age so right now she's pretty much fluent, not there yet, but pretty much. So one thing that I don't like though about that, it's like now we are teaching you to accept this part but not love the others. Because there was a time where she didn't love her skin, she's like "*I'm White*", you know? I'm like "*No*", I would literally, this is her phone, I would be like, "*This is a White person, this is you*" you know? So we just kind of started doing things, like even when we buy her shirts, or when we buy her dolls, it's a Black doll. She has to get used to the fact that…

I: You have to be intentional now?

P: Yes. Even the shirt, because now when she wears her shirt, she will literally look at herself in the mirror and she's like "*This looks like me!*" You know? That kind of thing that, you're beautiful, this is you." (GD#2)

The above narrative was provided by Granddaughter #2 as she was reflecting on the upbringing of her younger cousins growing up as young Black girls. While on one hand there is this intention to teach the child English to empower them to navigate the globalized world around them, the family has also had to make greater efforts to affirm the child and teach them about their identity as a Black child. The granddaughter shared affirmations with her younger siblings to challenge any Eurocentric ideals of beauty that may interfere with the child's capacity for self-love and self-acceptance. These acts were inspired by the granddaughter's own experiences of navigating self-acceptance as a Black girl which involved struggles in learning how to care for and embrace her dark skin and her natural hair. The granddaughter shared the importance of surrounding herself and her younger siblings with images that positively represented Black women and girls to help them along their own journeys of self-discovery.

Chapter Six

Discussion

This chapter will provide a discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter. The discussion is structured to illustrate the choices, the conflicts, and the lessons that were present in the intergenerational narratives provided by the cohort of grandmothers and granddaughters. The choices that this cohort had in the embodiment of agency in the construction of their gender and racial identities were reflected in their narratives about education and careers and how this related to the empowerment of women and their families. The conflicts presented by this cohort were evident in their narratives about race and mental health which were significantly related to negative life experiences of marginalization and trauma. To navigate these choices and conflicts present in the intergenerational narratives of gender and race between Black grandmothers and their granddaughters, religion on the one hand, was a tool through which the participants were able to source strength and resilience, and culture, on the other hand presented as a dynamic set of practices that can be used to negotiate the practices of 'good womanhood' and enact a sense of resistance. These narratives can be useful in illuminating the intergenerational impact of narratives around trauma and the possibilities for post-traumatic growth and self-determination in the racial and gender identities of Black women.

Personal and Intergenerational Agency

The narratives provided by the intergenerational cohort of grandmothers and granddaughters presented a set of choices that reflected their capacity for personal and intergenerational agency. These choices manifested primarily in the narratives about education and career that were shared by the grandmothers and granddaughters. Within the narratives provided by the cohort in this study, the growing visibility of Black women in educational and occupational spaces was seen as a form of empowerment that would enable the granddaughters as the emerging generation of matriarchs, to attain financial independence and to have the ability to provide for their families. On the contrary, the grandmothers largely reflected narratives that focused on the expectations that had been placed upon them by their families to fit into traditional roles of domesticity. The narratives of their embodied racial and gendered identities spoke to their experiences as mothers and as wives being the most significant markers of their

womanhood. However, in the narratives that the grandmothers shared with their granddaughters, there was evidence of a shift from traditional to more contemporary notions of womanhood.

Between the grandmothers and the granddaughters, education and career seemed to be prioritized over marriage or children to empower the women so that they would be able to build their careers and not have to depend on anyone else financially. The women in this study placed great value on financial independence being vital for their access to agency in their narratives of Black womanhood and these findings were consistent with a study conducted by Segalo (2011). In her study, Segalo (2011) suggested that the participation of Black women in a project making and selling embroideries created opportunities for them to become autonomous and to reconstruct their gendered identities as they became more economically empowered. According to Jaga et al., (2018), having an education and an income can offer Black women more independence, confidence, and greater autonomy in their decision-making. Additionally, Batool and Batool (2018) concluded that education alone is not sufficient to guarantee women's empowerment, however, access to education can increase the potential of autonomously generating an income, which can then improve women's self-esteem and increase their potential for empowerment. Therefore, access to education and economic empowerment feeds into the renegotiation of women's perceptions of their gender roles in the home and society. This gave women the power to re-establish the gender roles and dynamics at home and illustrated the possible changes in the intergenerational narratives shared about women's domestic roles and their capacity for agency in the world.

Discrimination based on race and class was used to create the barriers to education experienced by the grandmothers during the apartheid regime, where Bantu education was neither free nor compulsory and Black people were subjected to extreme forms of poverty (Unterhalter, 1990; Phendla, 2004). This was reflected in the narratives shared by the grandmothers as they shared stories about not being able to complete their education or pursue higher learning. Bantu education was heavily influenced by the work of Christian missionaries and centred the education of young Black girls on domesticity - teaching them how to be good Christian wives and to provide their labour primarily as maids, teachers, or nurses (Gaitskell, 1988). Furthermore, one of the

grandmothers shared stories of participating in school-linked programmes known as the Girl Wayferers Association, which was adapted from the Whites-only Girl Guides and made available to socialize Black schoolgirls and their teachers to aspire towards self-improvement in their mental, spiritual, and physical well-being, value sisterhood and have unquestioning loyalty to authority (Gaitskell, 1988). These were some of the structures that were used to systematically socialize the grandmothers as young Black girls in the apartheid regime into roles of domesticity and submission.

There has been a shift that has been occurring over the past few decades where more Black women have been increasingly occupying spaces in tertiary education and entering the workforce, thus making them the fastest-growing group entering various industries (Jaga et al., 2018; Mbithi-Dikgole, 2023). While the grandmothers had to leave their schooling careers, often prematurely to fulfil domestic duties or to enter the workforce, the granddaughters were expected to prioritize their scholarly responsibilities. This indicated a transition from the grandmothers' narratives who were unable to complete their education to granddaughters who could access tertiary education. Women who have had access to education are more likely to have autonomy and greater decision-making power in their lives, they are less at risk of poverty, gender-based abuse, early or unintended pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases (Stewart, Rondon, Damiani & Honikman, 2001). Granddaughters were thus encouraged by their grandmothers to commit themselves to their education, pursue higher learning, and focus their youth on developing their careers and becoming financially stable and independent, to the extent that they were sometimes excused from performing domestic household chores that were traditionally considered “women's work”. Subsequently, the shift in the intergenerational narratives between grandmothers and granddaughters suggests that there have been increasing opportunities to gain access to education for Black women post-apartheid, to empower themselves, their families, and the community around them.

Access to education and career opportunities was seen as potentially having a positive impact on intergenerational class mobility (Thomas, 1996). Without the financial security provided by access to jobs, Black women who are responsible for taking care of families become reliant on formal and informal mechanisms of social protection which can limit opportunities for class mobility. These mechanisms include social

grants provided by government departments and societies which are self-organized mutual aid agreements consisting of family and community members who pool together to assist each other in providing for their basic needs (Mumtaz, 2021; Wane, 2000). In part of their findings, Paul (2020) reported on the relationship between White women and their Black domestic workers and how as the domestic worker becomes a 'second mother' to her employer's family, her own family is eclipsed by the needs and values of the White family. Paul (2020) further explains that as White women leave their domestic roles to access greater opportunities for class mobility, due to systems of racial inequality, Black women may not have the same access and experience greater challenges in breaking out of lower socioeconomic class status and traditionally feminine roles. Some of the grandmothers in this study shared stories of their grandmothers, their mothers, or even their own experiences working as domestic workers affirming these findings by Paul (2020) and viewing education as the key for class mobility. However, Mbithi-Dikgole (2023) suggested that even middle-class Black women opt to hire domestic workers when they have increasing educational and workplace responsibilities. Working-class Black women on the other hand are required to balance domestic and workplace duties, however, assistance with childcare responsibilities may be shared with other women in their family or community (Mbithi-Dikgole, 2023). Consequently, middle-class Black women have greater access to opportunities for class mobility and to renegotiate the expectations around domesticity than working-class Black women who might not have as much support in balancing family, school, and workplace commitments. From this, it is evident that the impact of class location cannot be removed from the narratives of Black womanhood.

Social and Systematic Challenges

The conflicts present in the narratives shared by the cohort highlight the challenges in managing their mental well-being and navigating racism. Issues related to mental health were identified as one of the conflicts that Black women in this study encountered in the construction of their womanhood. Stewart, Rondon, Damiani, and Honikman (2001) assert that women's mental health should be considered through a holistic perspective that incorporates their biological, personal, and sociocultural contexts. Studies suggest that patriarchal oppression, unemployment, financial challenges, childrearing, domestic problems, substance abuse, and low self-esteem are some of the

factors that may compromise women's mental health (Moultrie & Kleintjes, 2006; Pillay & Kriel, 2006, Cohen et al., 2020). In addition to their experiences of racial and gender discrimination, the grandmothers and granddaughters in this study shared narratives relating to domestic violence, rape, eating disorders, depression, self-harm, and suicide ideation. In this study, the grandmothers and granddaughters gave different stories regarding mental health with some participants being open to talking about it and receiving professional help while others reflected on a lack of communication and support. For most of the women who participated in this study, reaching out to family and friends was discouraged as other people cannot always be trusted.

The narratives provided by the participants implied that by confiding in others, one is at risk of having their confidential information spread to others in the community, exposing them to the possibility of being judged, or made a mockery. Even for the participants who expressed experiences with eating disorders and suicide ideation, there was reluctance to seek counsel from family and friends, however, there were discussions about the openness to receive professional help in the form of therapy and medication. This contradicts the findings by Hugo et al. (2003), who explored the attitudes and knowledge regarding mental health in a community in Cape Town and concluded that community members were more likely to advocate for talking to others to resolve mental illness or distress as opposed to seeking professional help for mental health issues. In sharing their narratives, the grandmothers and granddaughters in this study not only reflected on the difficulty of experiencing adversity, learning how to communicate and cope with mental health issues but also on the trouble that came with navigating healing and well-being when there was stigma and misinformation associated with mental health. The findings in this study could be further explained by the results reported in a study conducted by Pillay and Kriel (2006) exploring the mental health problems that were present among a cohort of women attending district-level clinical psychology services in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. The study reported that Black women were underrepresented potentially due to the historically limited access to clinical psychological services, low mental health literacy levels, and possibly a preference to consult with traditional healers and engage in traditional healing practices (Pillay & Kriel, 2006).

Intergenerational narratives around Black women's strength and resilience were also contested among the cohort as some participants expressed the need for women to be strong while others resisted these expectations. Narratives regarding being the '*strong Black woman'* and '*mbokodo*' have been constructed to paint Black women as being highly resilient in the face of adversity and oppression (Davis, 2018; Clark, Mafokoane & Nyathi, 2019). Initially, these narratives were constructed to empower Black women and provide them with a space to identify the intersections between being Black and female, thus bringing attention to the double burden of oppression brought on by their racial and gender identities. However, in contemporary times, the use of these narratives has shifted significantly from working to empower and encourage Black women in adverse circumstances, to now being perceived as constructing Black women as embodying a unique ability to independently cope with pain, oppression, and adversity (Clark, Mafokoane & Nyathi, 2019). Studies conducted in the United States of America on African American women have suggested that the endorsement of the strong Black woman narratives can be related to the development of symptoms related to stress, anxiety, and depression (Donovan & West, 2015; Liao, Wei & Yin, 2020). The granddaughters in this study were less eager to embrace the *strong Black woman* and *mbokodo* narratives that have been central to the constructions of Black womanhood. Emerging narratives of Black womanhood from the granddaughters prioritized self-preservation and emphasized narratives around self-love and self-care.

Racism was another conflict present in the narratives provided by each generation. The grandmother's experience of growing up during the time of apartheid reflected stories of being exploited based on their racial identities. The narratives provided by the granddaughters shed light on a different experience in navigating racism in a multiracial society. The ideals of the rainbow nation were questioned, and granddaughters had to navigate how to come to terms with a Black identity in a multiracial society. The codes of conduct within some of these schools impose harsh regulations on afro hair, braids, and dreadlocks where Black students who do not comply with these rules can be removed from their classes, requested to relax, take down or cut their hair, and could even be faced with suspension (Mbilishaka & Hudlin, 2023). Ultimately, this influences the learning experiences of Black female students, it subjects them to constant scrutiny and policing of their physical appearance and problematizes their presence in educational and formal settings.

In their experiences of racial discrimination due to school codes of conducts and navigating a world largely informed by Eurocentric standards of beauty, the granddaughters shared narratives of embarking on journeys of self-love and self-acceptance. Although occurring in a different context, these findings support those by Thomas, Hacker, and Hoxha (2011) in America, who suggested that physical appearance and beauty standards are salient in the construction of the gendered and racial identities of young Black girls. Thompson and Keith (2001) stated that skin colour can be a predictor of self-esteem for Black women. The authors claim that colourism negatively impacts dark-skinned Black women, particularly in lower socioeconomic contexts, potentially resulting in issues with their confidence and self-worth (Thompson & Keith, 2001). The preoccupation with beauty is central to the socialization of young girls and women's personal and social value may be derived from the external validation of their physical appearance.

Through their narratives, the granddaughters expressed how they resisted the negative influences and portrayals of Black women's bodies in society by learning how to care for their natural hair, loving their dark skin, and embracing curvaceous body types. By learning to embrace their natural features, the granddaughters were actively extending the intergenerational narratives about Black women's beauty practices and teaching themselves, their grandmothers, and their younger sisters and cousins about Black pride and self-care. These findings support those by Phelps-Ward and Laura (2016) who suggested that as the place of everyday existence, narratives shared in the home, girls' self-exploration and learning through searching for representation in the media function as "a site of learning, self-love, and critical discourse" (p. 818). This is pivotal in helping women and girls reconstruct their identities and learn to navigate the problematic interactions that inform Black women's identities. The granddaughters in this study shared narratives of resisting negative representations and stereotypes associated with Black women which supported findings by Thomas, Hacker and Hoxha (2011) who suggested that this resistance is vital for Black women to make use of their agency to overcome challenges and move towards self-determination.

As illustrated in the intergenerational narratives about education and career presented in the previous chapter, while there has been change, the grandmothers and granddaughters shared stories of discrimination and inequality at school and in the

workplace. Parry and Segalo (2017) conducted a study to examine the individual lived experiences of female breadwinners in South Africa from various racial and socioeconomic groups and found that despite narratives of female empowerment and increased visibility in the workplace, women continue to struggle for equality in society. According to Parry and Segalo (2017), female breadwinners bear the double burden of care in the home and participating in the workforce where they may experience unequal pay and discrimination. These struggles often remain hidden behind the narratives of women's 'newfound' autonomy and gender equality (Parry & Segalo, 2017). Additionally, Mbithi-Dikgole (2023) stated that regardless of Black women's class status and education, their progress is affected by systematic discrimination based on their racial and gender identities. Discrimination based on gender and race continues to be some of the biggest challenges faced by Black women today, despite their increasing presence in the world of higher education and industry. Therefore, as stated by Groenmeyer (2011) and Segueda (2015), women in the post-apartheid era still encounter challenges in obtaining access to equality in the workplace due to gender and racial discrimination and are thus presented with conflicts within spaces that we typically assume to be empowering them to embody agency and choice.

In Between Choices and Conflicts

Narratives about religion and culture were consistent between grandmothers and granddaughters, with both generations highlighting their significance in navigating the choices and conflicts presented in their constructions of Black womanhood. Religion has been known to play a significant role in the lives of Black women, how they identify themselves, and how they make their way through the world (Mattis, 1997). To navigate the choices and conflicts that the women in this study experienced, being engaged in religious practice and community, as well as maintaining a personal relationship with God had been the primary means of support and strength for them and a central feature of Black womanhood. According to Mattis (1997), Black women base their understanding of gender, femininity, family, and community on religious convictions. The grandmothers and granddaughters who participated in this study represented various denominations of the Christian church, including Anglican, Methodist, and Seventh-Day Adventists. The cohort of participants expressed that believing in God, reading the bible, going to church, and praying had been encouraged and enforced from

generation to generation within their families. These practices were not only used to show devotion to God or Christianity, but their faith empowered them to be adaptable in stressful or difficult circumstances. These findings support those by Copeland-Linder (2006) who examined religion as a protective factor to stress among Black women living in Soweto. The study reported that in contexts where religion is salient and communities have been exposed to stress and discrimination, religion and prayer can act as a buffer against stress. Furthermore, Mattis (1997) suggested that spirituality and religion can help people understand and resolve adversity. By engaging in religious practices, Black women can be vulnerable and receive a source of strength, ultimately having a positive impact on the capacity for individual and community resilience (Copeland-Linder, 2006).

Because some of the participants were weary to seek counsel from family and friends around them, their relationship with God became a platform through which they would be able to release their burdens and find comfort. Haddod (2004) suggests that because prayer allows them to be vulnerable, women may heavily identify as 'prayer worriers', also referred to in Black communities as 'Bomme ba thapelo' or 'Omama Bomthandazo'. The church provided a space where Black women could establish a divine relationship with God, but it was also a space to worship and find fellowship with other women in similar social roles. Despite narratives about Black women resorting to silence and independently coping when in distress, the grandmothers in this study supported participation in the church as an opportunity for women to find a faith-based community with like-minded people and to be engaged in service roles in the church and the community (Lewis, Seponski, & Camp, 2011). As Christian women, acts of service within the church manifested primarily in the stories shared about women's guilds.

The existence of women's guilds in the church made it more accessible for Christian Black women to establish sisterhood and support their spiritual growth. According to Masenya (1996), practices such as reading the bible and singing church hymns are adopted by Black women to provide comfort in their times of trouble. These practices are fundamental for educating individuals about their faith and empowering women who fellowship together in women's guilds. The Manyano movements are an example of a women's guild that functioned as a movement for social welfare and

reconceptualized Christian notions of womanhood in the context of Black, South African women. As part of this movement, women adorned a distinctive uniform and joined forces to participate in prayer, preaching, and fundraising endeavours (Haddod; 2004). The Manyano movement also served as a sanctuary for women of "precarious social status," providing a forum not only for singing and praying but also for fostering a sense of belonging and forging a collective identity (Denis; 2004). Furthermore, these guilds are often responsible for organizing outreach and social responsibility programmes in their church and the community (Mattis, 1997). These programmes include mentoring young girls and women, running soup kitchens, organizing food packages for the less fortunate as well as sourcing school uniforms and stationery for children in need. These actions serve to promote the importance of social justice and addressing inequality within Black communities. Despite the highly patriarchal history of Christianity, Pillay (2017) suggests that in recent years more women have occupied leadership positions and are working to challenge hegemonic gender roles in the church to re-imagine what it means to be a Christian woman. Even without claiming it, these women are engaged in feminist action and shared narratives of resilience and transformation for personal, familial, and communal growth.

Grandmothers have a great impact on the religious and spiritual beliefs of their granddaughters. Dolbin-MacNab et al. (2016) conducted a study examining resilience among South African grandmothers who were raising their grandchildren. They reported that spirituality and religion were some of the practices that were central to the strategies for coping and resilience used by grandmothers. In addition to this, the study also found that keeping a positive outlook and seeking emotional support was also significant in building grandmothers' capacity for resilience (Dolbin-MacNab et al., 2016). The findings in this study deviated from Dolbin-MacNab et al (2016) as the cohort of grandmothers and granddaughters were not as ready to seek emotional support from others. However, the claim that religion informs the women’s capacity for coping was supported as grandmothers shared narratives about how religion was a source of strength and resilience in the face of adversity. These were generational lessons that were passed on to the grandmothers, who are also passing them on to their granddaughters. The transmission of spiritual and religious values between grandmothers and granddaughters gave space to the intergenerational continuity of family history and traditions and shaped a sense of self for all involved in the

relationship. According to Lewis, Seponski, and Camp (2011), grandmothers serve as role models who guide their granddaughters and encourage participation in religious activity while also interceding for them in prayer. Role-modelling, indirect communication, and the granddaughters just knowing what is expected of them, informed the transference of spiritual and religious values from grandmothers to granddaughters (Lewis, Seponski, & Camp, 2011) Because of the role modelling granddaughters receive from their grandmothers, particularly in their younger years, the study suggests that there are values that the adult granddaughters are expected to "just know" by virtue of their family history and Christian principles. In this state of "just knowing" the granddaughters make decisions about their actions not only out of the pressure to conform to family values but also to uphold a sense of family pride.

Culture was viewed as a dynamic set of practices and while grandmothers and granddaughters held traditional notions of womanhood as vital, they also shared narratives of evolving gender roles and cultural practices. The cohort of participants shared narratives regarding being socialized into domesticity and how this is used to culturally define the role of a woman in the family. However, the participants also noted that there should be changes in traditional cultural practices that accommodate women's changing roles and identities in and out of the home. These narratives were consistent with the findings presented by Sennott, Madhavan, and Nam, (2021) indicating that families are making space for evolving cultural practices and modern marriages recognize women's shifting positions in society. While the study by Sennott, Madhavan, and Nam (2021) focused on modern practices of marriage and lobola, Nganse & Basson (2019) explored the changing initiation practices of new brides into their husbands' families. The relationship between the *makoti* and the mother-in-law has evolved over the years and the expectations that were placed on the traditional *makoti* are different from the expectations that are placed on the modern *makoti*. The grandmothers echoed the statement made by Nganse & Basson (2019) that in contemporary times, brides are not expected to perform duties such as living with their husband's family where at times, they would be dominated by their in-laws. Considering that Black women have been participating in the workplace for decades, working in factories and as domestic workers in urban areas, many Black women have had to manage the workplace demands along with their household duties (Segueda, 2015). However, compared to the traditional *makoti*, the modern *makoti* is seen as being

more independent because they are allowed more space to attend to work and school demands without being criticized or viewed as neglecting their marital and household duties. This continues to contribute to the evolving structure of Black families today where women are constructing different forms of womanhood and creating more space for resilience, resistance, and self-determination.

Intergenerational Lessons on Black Womanhood

Based on the narratives provided by the intergenerational cohort of women, it is apparent that constructions of Black womanhood have evolved with each generation. This illustrated the significance of intergenerational narratives and how they impact intergenerational cycles. With each generation, there was the potential for the transmission of intergenerational trauma as well as the potential for post-traumatic growth. As caregivers, the grandmothers' narratives were pivotal for the transmission of intergenerational trauma and the creation of new intergenerational narratives rooted in the pursuit of healing and liberation (Lev–Wiesel, 2007; Frankish & Bradbury, 2012). Intergenerational trauma, as described by Stamm, Stamm, Hudnall, and Higson-Smith (2004), involves the transfer of traumatic experiences across generations within families and communities. Eagle (2012) suggests that this transmission could occur unconsciously through parenting styles, shared belief systems, and cultural influences. When parents convey their own traumas to their children either verbally or through behaviour, they may unintentionally pass on feelings of pain and fear. Furthermore, if the older generation struggles to address and heal from their past traumas, it can impede the next generation's ability to do so as well as perpetuating a cycle of distress.

The transmission of intergenerational trauma does not only occur through the active telling of narratives, but it also occurs in the presence of silence. Frankish and Bradbury (2012) conducted a study interviewing women and children from multi-generational homes in Durban, South Africa about how older generations constructed narratives about their lives, in relation to personal trauma experienced under apartheid. The findings suggested that intergenerational storytelling occurred through nostalgic recollection and silence (Frankish & Bradbury, 2012). While nostalgia offered the space to engage with past events, thoughts, memories, and feelings, silence, on the other hand, may function to communicate the unspoken rules by which members are expected to abide. As mentioned above, the grandmothers and granddaughters engaged in silence in times of adversity and conflict, and silence was also considered to be one of the ways

in which granddaughters received the role-modelling from their grandmother's and just learned what was expected of them. Additionally, Frankish and Bradbury (2012) suggest that silence may be used to protect caregivers and children from distress by avoiding discussions of traumatic events (Frankish & Bradbury, 2012; Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). Therefore, according to Segalo (2012), silence can serve the propose of communicating hidden transcripts about family traditions, history, and expectations.

According to Segalo (2012), those who have had to endure prolonged suffering or oppression may engage in withdrawal as a coping mechanism. Silence can be used as a tool for self-protection, concealing the trauma and suffering that may not be easily expressed through words. Conversely, silence can also pose as a barrier to healing and exacerbate feelings of isolation. This relates to the narratives shared about silence and independence where grandmothers and granddaughters preferred to navigate their conflicts by themselves and through their spirituality. Moreover, Nduna and Jewkes (2011) state that silence can be considered as a culturally acceptable approach to dealing with controversial issues or adverse situations. The narratives provided by the participants in this study reflect silence around trauma and conflict, either as an effort to protect the grandmother or granddaughter or even the next generation in the spirit of pursuing reconciliation and leaving the trauma in the past. However, the granddaughters shared stories of how the use of silence can be problematic when past traumas are transmitted to the next generation, and silence is still maintained as it does not bring light or provide insight into the complexity of the trauma and thus acts as a barrier to healing.

Both grandmothers and granddaughters were aware of intergenerational traumas and stress that was transmitted from previous generations. Being aware of these traumas and the stress that had been endured by the generations before them and themselves, the women in this study were able to become more intentional in identifying these patterns and working to actively resolve these cycles. These intergenerational traumas include navigating experiences of racial and gendered oppression and having to embody the "*strong Black women*" or "*mbokodo*" trope. The possibilities for post-traumatic growth, however, were illustrated in the narratives about religion as a tool for resilience and the evolving cultural practices that encourage more balanced domestic roles in the home. Furthermore, the granddaughters shared stories of how they had engaged in

personal journeys focused on self-love and self-acceptance to affirm their racial identities as Black women. This was done by embracing their natural features, having pride in one's culture, and sharing these lessons with the next generation of young women in their families.

Chapter seven

Conclusion

This study extended the existing body of literature on constructions of the racial and gendered identities of Black women and illustrated how this occurs using intergenerational narratives between grandmothers and granddaughters. With the use of feminist narrative approaches, this study has illuminated some of the complexities within the embodiment of Black womanhood in South Africa and the intersections between the various social identities that they embody. People carry the stories of their families, the stories of their country and its people. The stories of Black womanhood here were informed by a mixture of race, class, gender, culture, religion, mental health, and education and illustrated that Black womanhood is an ever-evolving construct. Each generation of women held the potential to change and push the boundaries of their embodied experiences of race and gender. Their narratives indicated the progression of a lineage of women where the stories from each generation of granddaughters were an extension of the stories of their grandmothers, who also extended on the stories of their grandmothers. From these narratives, we learn that the intergenerational impact of narratives about embodied race and gender between Black grandmothers and their granddaughters is in the transmission of traditional and emerging narratives of womanhood informed by educational and economic empowerment, culture, religion, continued cycles of intergenerational trauma and the possibilities for post-traumatic growth. These transformations that occurred in the intergenerational narratives shared by the Black woman were inspired by an evolving sense of self-awareness and self-love in their identities as Black people and as women in a post-democratic South Africa.

This study showcased a range of choices and conflicts that reflected the intergenerational narratives of embodied gender and race between Black grandmothers and their granddaughters. The choices presented by the grandmothers were reflected in the stories they shared about changing the narratives of traditional womanhood, primarily informed by cultural and religious expectations. There were changes in the intergenerational narratives they shared with their granddaughters where they encouraged them to explore career and educational opportunities which would allow them to renegotiate traditional roles of domesticity to grant them greater access to independence and financial security. Furthermore, grandmothers supported the idea of

granddaughters getting married and having children, however, they also expressed the hardships in their own journeys as wives and mothers and hoped their granddaughters would not have to perform the strict practices involved in the traditional religious and cultural practices of marriage and motherhood.

Navigating issues related to mental health was identified as one of the conflicts that the cohort of grandmothers and granddaughters experienced in the embodiment of their gender and racial identities. Narratives related to the *"strong Black woman",* embodying the "*mbokodo*" and restoring to silence in times of distress were shared among the participants. These narratives were informed by discourses of Black women's matriarchal and maternal roles in society and posed challenges to the participants' openness to asking for help and receiving support from others. These narratives spoke to the mental health stigma and a lack of mental health literacy present in Black communities. Another conflict presented by the cohort of grandmothers and granddaughters was in the narratives related to race. The racial issues that were presented in the narratives of the cohort reflected experiences of systematic oppression including apartheid, poverty, school, and workplace discrimination. These narratives about navigating systematic racial discrimination presented challenges in the grandmothers and granddaughters' constructions of their racial identities and their physical appearance.

The continuities presented by the grandmothers in their narratives about gender and race were illustrated in the significance they placed on religion and culture. To navigate these choices and conflicts present in the intergenerational narratives of gender and race between Black grandmothers and their granddaughters, religion on the one hand, was a tool through which the participants were able to source strength and resilience, and culture, on the other hand presented as a dynamic set of practices that could be used to negotiate the expectations of 'good womanhood'. These were not seen as static categories and gave the participants space to establish some sense of resilience and resistance in their pursuit of self-determination. From the narratives provided by the intergenerational cohort of women, we learned that Black women's constructions of their embodied racial and gender identities were informed by intergenerational cycles of trauma and healing. In these cycles, silence functioned as a tool to protect the generations of women from confronting traumatic pasts and situations of conflict,

however, engaging in silence may also create barriers towards intergenerational healing and post-traumatic growth. Through the narratives provided by the granddaughters, it was apparent that the work towards resolving some of the challenges and changing some of the intergenerational narratives about their racial and gender identities was in engaging in practices that would affirm their racial and gender identities through embarking on journeys of self-love and self-acceptance.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that the cohort of participants involved was limited to women residing in township and urban areas located in Gauteng. These locations influenced the narratives participants provided as they informed the contexts within which they were socialized into their gender and racial identities. Sennott and Mojola (2017) suggested that women in urban areas may present femininities that embody the pursuit towards modernity while women in rural areas may be more likely to enforce patriarchal notions of femininity. Therefore, this study was unable to account for the intergenerational narratives of women located in rural contexts in South Africa. Further research can be conducted in other provinces and in rural areas to illustrate if the intergenerational narratives presented in this study will be consistent across geographic locations.

Another limitation of the study is that the participants all identified as Christian which had a significant impact on the narratives shared by the women. The principles and practices of Christianity largely informed their narratives. This did not allow the study to engage with narratives of women beyond the Christian faith. A greater focus on different cultures and religions and how that may impact narratives around Black womanhood may be useful.

Lastly, the participants in this study identified with sexualities across the spectrum, including heterosexual, lesbian, and bisexual women. However, a limitation to this was that a significant portion of the narratives that were shared were framed from a largely heteronormative perspective. Compulsory heterosexuality is a concept that was introduced by Rich (2002) who suggested that sexual and gender identities and differences are not self-made, but they reflect the socialization of gender roles through heteronormative structures and processes (Seidman, 2009). This could possibly inform

the heteronormative lens that the participants had in their narratives where even though they did not personally identify as heterosexual, their narratives were informed by heteronormative constructions of gender and race. Future research can place greater consideration on intergenerational narratives of queer Black women to better understand the intersection of non-heteronormative sexuality in the embodiment of gender and race.

Recommendations

The findings from this study have practical and theoretical implications that can be used to inform family and individual counselling for Black women. Counsellors and mental health practitioners servicing Black women in South Africa can make use of these findings to inform their approach to care and intervention by focusing on how families and individuals relate to the themes identified in this study. This study highlighted the conflicts experienced by Black grandmothers and granddaughters with navigating mental health. Further research in South Africa should be conducted on Black women's mental health to provide literature and recommendations on improving mental health literacy within Black communities and providing culturally sensitive mental health services for Black women. Research on mental health services for Black women in South Africa can also focus on faith-based counselling and interventions to appeal particularly to those who identify as Christian.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used to advocate for and inform initiatives centred around women and girl empowerment. The study suggests that these interventions have a continued focus on women's personal well-being, entrepreneurial or career development, and greater access to equality in school and workplace environments.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participation information sheet

Good day

My name is Relebogile Rasodi. I am a Masters student in Social and Psychology Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Prof. Peace Kiguwa and I am conducting a research study exploring intergenerational narratives of gender. The study title is Moving in Between Choices and Conflicts: Black Women's Intergenerational Narratives of Gender. The study focuses particularly on narratives among grandmothers and their granddaughters.

I am inviting you to take part in an interview. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 45 minutes. Interviews will be conducted in person or online over Zoom, depending on what is available to or at a location most convenient for the participant that will not incur travel costs. In person interviews will consider covid-19 protocol.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored in a password protected and only the researcher will have access to the data.

During the interview, I will need to ask for some personal information about the narratives you've constructed regarding your feminine identity.

The interview will be confidential, and your identity will be kept anonymous in the report. When I share the results of the research study, I will make use of pseudonyms and not include your name or anything else that could identify you.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. There will be no rewards from your participation in the study. The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. Should you feel uncomfortable or not want to answer a particular question, you are at liberty to avoid doing so. If you experience any emotional or mental distress and need some support or counselling services following the interview, Lifeline is available for free telephonic counselling at 0861 322 322.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be stored on a database that will be accessible to members of the university and the data will be

stored in the Narrative Enquiry for Social Transformation (NEST) Archives. There is also a possibility of parts if the report being published in the form of journal articles or conference presentations. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0)11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher:

Relebogile Rasodi, 1345006@students.wits.ac.za , 079 151 1595

Supervisor:

Prof Peace Kiguwa, Peace.Kiguwa@wits.ac.za

Appendix B: Consent Form

Moving in Between Choices and Conflicts: Black Women's Intergenerational Narratives of Gender

Relebogile Rasodi

I, …….., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.

YES NO

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study

YES NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded

YES NO

I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report

YES NO

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report)

YES NO

I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on

YES NO

…… (signature)

…… (name of participant)

…… (date)

…… (signature)

…… (name of researcher)

…… (date)

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

1. How does your culture or other social influences define what it means to be a woman?
2. What does it mean to you to be a woman?
3. In what ways do you think you fit into the definitions of womanhood given to you by your culture and other social influences?
4. In what ways do you think you challenge the ideas around womanhood?
5. Tell me about some of the important events in your life that have influenced the ways you express your gender.
6. Tell me about some of the role models or examples of Black women in your life and how the presence or lack of these figures have influenced your own identity.
7. Tell me how your relationship with your grandmother/granddaughter has influenced your identity as a Black woman.
8. How has your identity as a Black person influenced the ways that you make sense of and express your own womanhood?
9. Tell me about some of the challenges you have experienced being a Black woman.
10. Tell me about some of the ways have you felt empowered by being a Black woman.
11. How do you navigate dealing with some of the familial or cultural expectations of Black womanhood acting on your own desires and making decisions about who you want to be or what you want to do?
12. Can you reflect on the ways in which your expression of gender has evolved throughout your life?

Appendix D: Ethics Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE: **PROTOCOL NUMBER: MASPR/22/08**

PROJECT TITLE:	Moving in Between Choices and Conflicts: Black Women's Intergenerational Narratives of Femininity.
INVESTIGATOR	Rasodi Relebogile (1345006)
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	SHCD/Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	30 May 2022
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Minimal Risk
EXPIRY DATE	31 December 2024

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE **11 July 2022** **CHAIRPERSON** _____

(Dr Sahba Besharati)

cc: Prof. Peace Kiguwa (Supervisor)

_____

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Rasodi _____ _12_____/__07_____/_____2022

Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES