

CRANES IN THE SKY: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN ARCHETYPE AND  
MENTAL HEALTH HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIORS OF BLACK  
WOMEN

A DISSERTATION  
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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my ancestors and spirit guides

Joseph B. Provost Sr.

Mary Louise Dorn Jackson

James Lamar Provost

Wilbur Daniel Moore

Thank you for always being with me.

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First, I must acknowledge The Creator, through which all blessings flow. I could not have embarked on this journey without the presence of the Lord in my life, Ashé.

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ABSTRACT

MIA KIRBY

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WOMEN

MARCH 2019

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the strong Black woman archetype and the self-image of Black women as well as their mental health help-seeking behaviors. Specifically, I am exploring if a relationship between strength and receiving professional mental health services exists. The results of the study provided insight into these concepts and implications for future research and mental health intervention strategies for Black women. Previous research has provided some insight on the Strong Black woman image (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Harris-Lacewell, 2001; Holmes et al, 2001; Collins, 2000; Wyatt, 2008) in addition to the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women (Pyant & Yanico 1991; Thomas, 2004; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Levine, 2015; Sosulski & Woodward, 2013). However, little research exists examining the relationship between the strong Black woman archetype and mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women (Beauboeuf-

Lafontant, 2007; Holmes et al, 2001; Watson & Hunter, 2015). This study was conducted using two forms of qualitative data collection. The first aspect of the study analyzed music from the Black Power and Feminist movements of the (1960's-1970's) as well as music from the Black Lives Matter movement (2013- present day). The second aspect of the study was conducted through semi-structured interviews. A historically, underrepresented group in academia (Collins, 2000). Black women's voices and experiences in seeking mental health services warrant investigation due to the prevalence of mental health issues and lack of help-seeking behaviors within the Black community.

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My skin is black  
My arms are long  
My hair is woolly  
My back is strong  
Strong enough to take the pain  
Inflicted again and again  
(Simone, 1966)

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The strong Black woman archetype is a cultural myth that has existed for generations, with implications of hard work, independence, and perseverance in the face of adversity (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Harris-Lacewell, 2001; Young, 1989). However, the positive attributes of the cultural myth have negative repercussions, as indicated by Harris-Lacewell's (2001) research of the Strong Black Woman:

Her courage in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversity emboldens Black men and women when facing their own life challenges. But in her perfection, the Strong Black Woman is also harmful. Her titanic strength does violence to the spirits of Black women when it becomes imperative for their own daily lives. (p. 24)

The strong Black woman archetype (SBWA), was developed to be a positive expression of Black Womanhood as an effort to combat negative images of Black women from the dominant society (Collins, 2000). Negative controlling concepts of Black women have their roots in slavery as the dominant culture developed these concepts for the African American Woman to

adhere (Collins, 2000). As Collins explained, the negative stereotypes of the Black Woman as a "Jezebel, Hoochie, Mammy, and Matriarch" were derived from slavery in an effort to further oppress the Black community (2000). Taken together these prevailing idea of Black Womanhood represent elite White male interests in defining Black women's sexuality, fertility, parenting, and social class status. This misconception specifically undermines the unity of Black men and women within the empowerment movement.

These stereotypes of Black women have remained throughout history though efforts have been made to reclaim the concept of the Black Woman and create a positive narrative. For example, the Black Woman as a matriarch symbolizes a negative image of the Black Woman describing her as a bad mother and one that emasculates the Black men (Collins, 2000). The concept of matriarch not only divides the Black community in the efforts of empowerment also denies Black women aspects of what is considered the feminine ideal (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Sewell 2013). As a result, new concepts were created to resist the controlling images of Black women as they are negative and divisive within the Black community. These images have not only impacted the way Black women are oppressed but also their self-image (Wallace, 1980).

During the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement Era, positive concepts of Black women were developed to combat the negative images from slavery and the Jim Crow Era. The "Strong Black Woman" was developed by the African American community, specifically by African American men, to counteract the negative mammy and matriarch images of African American mothers developed by the dominant culture. The Strong Black Woman, or Super Strong Black mother, however, has been conceptualized as a "happy slave" as African American mothers are expected to "put their needs behind those of everyone else" (Collins, 2000, p. 188). The cost of the internalization of the Strong Black Woman has been depression "characterized as

silencing of a range of her human needs" (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007, p. 20). The Strong Black Woman role is associated with internalized and suppressed emotions while denying the severity of depressive symptoms and refusing to seek professional intervention to address these symptoms (Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Thomas et al., 2004).

One way in which the images of Black women are constructed is through music. Music allows Black women the freedom to create their own identities. Music has been seen as a form of resistance as it demonstrates a sense of empowerment in the Black community while publicly exclaiming what for so long was privately experienced (Dixon, 1989; Rose, 1994; Kitwana, 2004). A tenet of Black Feminist Thought is the power of the Black Woman to create their own identity through self-definition (Collins, 2000). For Black musical artists, specifically Black female musical artists, music presents as an opportunity to resist previously ascribed ideas of the Black Woman. The freedom of expression afforded to musicians allows Black women to freely construct identities through shared experiences (Chepp, 2015; Keyes, 2000; Lidskog, 2017). Music allows for self-definition, provides a space of freedom of expression and the opportunity for self-awareness and reflection (Chepp, 2015; Keyes, 2000). Black women who create music speak to the masses of Black women in a way of oral tradition, magnifying the experiences of Black women while creating a sense of solidarity among Black women. Music has a long history of cultural meaning and connection particularly to the Black and African Diaspora (Cidra, 2015; Lidskog, 2017). Scholars may discipline recognize the importance of the study of music in understanding the connection between the many peoples of the Black African diaspora (Cidra, 2015). To this end, music can be understood as a form of making meaning and identity among the Black community. Therefore, using music in a narrative analysis can allow for a deeper understanding of the experiences shared by the collective of Black women in the diaspora.

## **Research Dilemma**

In this project, I sought to explore the relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black Woman. This research examined the development and maintenance of the SBWA through narrative analysis of music and interviews of Black women. Further, this research explores the Black Woman's attitudes towards mental health concerns and mental health help-seeking behaviors. This research seeks to understand if a relationship between the idea of the Strong Black Woman and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black Woman exists. The implications of the study will provide greater insight into the Black Woman's experiences, how these experiences have shaped her identity, ideas about mental health, and ideas about mental health help-seeking behaviors. Though the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women have been examined in prior research, little research seeks to explore if a relationship between the Strong Black Woman and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women exists (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Holmes et al., 2001; Watson & Hunter, 2015).

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) shared a 2012 report from the Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, which stated that African Americans are 20% more likely to experience serious mental health problems than the general population. African Americans are commonly diagnosed with a major depressive disorder, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which is due to experiences in urban living that expose African Americans to more violent crimes (NAMI, 2012). Though these

disorders are all cause for concern in the African American community, this paper seeks to focus on depressive disorders among African American women.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) 2010 report on minority depression found that women are more likely than men, and African Americans are more likely than non-African Americans, to report symptoms consistent with major depressive disorder (CDC, 2010; MMWR, 2010). African American women experience higher rates of depression than the general population (Miranda et al., 2005; MMWR, 2010). However, African Americans are also less likely to seek treatment for depression symptoms (CDC, 2010; MMWR, 2010). This report warrants further investigation into the possible barriers related to African American women seeking treatment for depression.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition, (DSM-5) the disorders included within the category of depressive disorders are disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, major depressive disorder , major depressive episode, dysthymia, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, substance/medication-induced depressive disorder, depressive disorder due to another medical condition, other specified depressive disorder, and unspecified depressive disorder (DSM, 2000). Common symptoms of these disorders are irritable mood, sadness, cognitive and somatic changes which negatively impact an individual's ability to function. The duration, cause, and onset differ amongst each disorder justifying specific diagnosis. Williams et al., (2007) found that African Americans with major depressive disorder suffered greater impairments to their everyday functioning than whites. The study also concluded that African Americans, though presenting with more severe major depressive disorder symptoms more often than whites, sought treatment less than half as much as whites. Further, African Americans who did receive treatment for major depressive disorder had a poorer



prognosis than whites receiving treatment (Williams et al., 2007). These findings suggest a need for further research in the area of seeking professional intervention among African Americans suffering from depression.

Depressive disorders are most likely caused by a combination of genetic, biochemical, environmental, and psychological factors (Psychology Today, 2015). Though research demonstrates that African Americans relate depressive disorders to external factors that must be fought rather than clinically treated (Black et al., 2011). This view is correlated to common misbeliefs in the African American community regarding depressive disorders and mental health treatment.

As previously discussed, Black women are more likely to experience depressive disorder symptoms than the general population. They are also more likely to allow these symptoms to go untreated professionally. Institutional barriers include lack of familiarity with treatment options, ineligibility for services, low income, and lack of insurance (Davis et al., 2008; Sosulski & Woodard, 2013). In addition, individual barriers such as stigma, community disapproval, disbelief in receiving treatment from the “white” healthcare system, disapproval of psychotropic medications, prevent the professional treatment of depressive disorders (Black et al., 2011; Davis et al., 2008; Nicolaidis et al., 2010; Whaley, 2001). Though institutional barriers are worth further investigation, the focus for this project will remain on the individual barriers that prohibit seeking professional intervention among African American women with depressive disorders.

Previous research has provided some insight on the Strong Black Woman concept (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Harris-Lacewell, 2001; Holmes et al., 2001; Collins, 2000; Wyatt, 2008) as well as the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women (Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Thomas et

al., 2004; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Johnson et al. 2009; Levine et al., 2015; Sosulski & Woodward, 2013). However, little research exists examining the relationship between the concept of the Strong Black Woman and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Holmes et al., 2001; Watson & Hunter, 2015). A historically underrepresented group in academia (Collins, 2000), Black women's voices and experiences in seeking mental health services warrant investigation due to the prevalence of mental health issues and lack of help-seeking behaviors within the Black community.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to examine the development and maintenance of the SBWA in the Black Community. Further, this study sought to explore the relationship between the SBWA and the self-image of Black women as well as their mental health help-seeking behaviors. Specifically, I explored if a relationship between strength and receiving professional mental health services exists.

I examined how the archetype was shaped and disseminated in the Black community using music during the Black Power and Black Feminist Movements, from the early 1960s to the late 1970s. Additionally, I examined how the concept has been maintained throughout the years by analyzing music from the present day Black Lives Matter Movement (2013-present). Finally, using semi-structured interviews of Black women, I validated the common themes of the SBWA, previously determined by the musical analysis, and ascertain new themes to provide insight on the meaning of the SBWA for modern-day Black women. The results of the study provide insight into the present-day impact of the SBWA on the Black Woman's psyche as well as the relationship between the SWBA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women.

For the purpose of this study, the terms African American and Black will be used interchangeably throughout this study. African American and Black will be defined as descendants of the African Diaspora, who identify themselves as such, presently living in the United States.

### **Research Questions**

The goal of this study is to explore the relationship between the SBWA, the concept of strength, and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women. To accomplish this goal, the following questions will guide my research:

1. How is the Strong Black Woman defined in the music from the Black Power Era?
2. How is the Strong Black Woman defined in the music from the Black Lives Matter Era?
3. How do interview participants define the Strong Black Woman?
4. What general themes between the music and interviews exists regarding the Strong Black Woman?
5. What aspects of the Strong Black Woman do participants possess?
6. How does this archetype affect the participant's identity?
7. How does the archetype impact participant's mental health?
8. Does the archetype inform decisions for seeking mental health treatment?

## **Theoretical Framework**

Intersectionality, a concept initially presented by Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), is a theory that considers discrimination against race, gender, class, religion, and sexual orientation as systematic and interconnected as each characteristic impacts the next. Specifically, the concept of intersectionality was introduced as a means of describing the interaction of discrimination experienced by African American women in the judicial system. Crenshaw argued that women of color were “frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism” (Crenshaw 1991, p. 1243). However, she found that these patterns were never explored in the feminist and antiracism discourse that marginalized women of color in both groups. When researching African American women, the theory of intersectionality must be incorporated as it takes into consideration the construct of oppression considering gender, sex, class, race, religion, and sexual orientation as systematic and interconnected. The theory asserts that these characteristics must be viewed as interconnected as each characteristic impacts the next (Crenshaw, 1991).

Collins (2000), further developed the theory of intersectionality by introducing the concept of the Matrix of Domination, which examines how intersecting oppressions are organized. Collins also believed that oppressions work together to produce discrimination and injustice. Collins applied this concept to further the black feminist theory, as a means of the study of the oppression and discrimination experienced by Women of Color. Collins demonstrated how the Matrix Domination informed the oppression of African American women as it relates to the controlling ideas of African American women. The labels of “Jezebel, Hoochie, Mammy, and Matriarch” sought to dehumanize African American women during and after slavery impacted the way African American women view themselves. Spurred by the publication of Collins (1990), researchers were urged to recognize that intersectionality must be

included within the scholarly inquiry of people of color (Lutz, 2015). The intersectionality framework requires that oppressions are not reduced to a rudimentary type but instead the complexities of intersecting oppressions must be evaluated to understand injustice.

Black Feminist Theory has emerged over time, beginning during the first wave of feminism and continuing to present day. Collins's *Black Feminist Thought* (2000) defined the theory of Black Feminism by describing it as a "critical social theory committed to the justice of the U.S. Black Woman and other similarly oppressed groups" (Collins, 2000, p. 2). Angela Davis further explained that the theory is vital to "understanding the complex ways race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and ability are intertwined" and provide a path to "move beyond these categories to understand the interrelationships of ideas and processes that seem to be separate and unrelated" (Davis & Barat, 2016, p. 4).

The feminist approach historically excluded the Black Woman's experience due to its denial of the intersections of race and class as a means of oppression which also impacted the African American Woman. For this reason, African American women began advocacy groups and the Black Feminist approach was developed as a way to better represent the experiences of the Black Woman in the United States. E. Francis White, quoted in Guy-Sheftall's (1995), described the emerging school of thought evolving to incorporate the experiences of Black women as providing a perspective on the Black Woman's experience without the "white filter" of previous studies (Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. 18).

As a research approach, BFT attempts to incorporate the Black Woman's unique experiences while recognizing the intersectionality of oppression. BFT recognizes the diversity of class, age, sexual orientation as areas that also shape the Black Woman's experience. Though

common experiences are recognized it does not deny that differences exist between Black women and attempts to encompass all experiences but recognizing not only scholarly work but also music, literature, film, and other forms of artful expression as a means to better understand Black women.

The experiences of Black women have long been excluded from the traditional sites of knowledge such as academia, government, and mass media. BFT urges the study of Black women through the lens of music, film, art, poetry, and literature, areas in which greater knowledge of the Black Woman's collective experience can be understood (Collins, 2000). This research was guided by Black Feminist Theory as a means to explore the SBWA in the non-traditional sites of knowledge by examining the articulated definitions of the Black Woman's reality as expressed through music and personal experience.

### **Significance of Study**

The findings of this study are beneficial to understanding the Black community's views on Strong Black women and the ways in which this archetype is used in modern society. The implications of the study will provide a better understanding of how the concept of strength impacts Black women in present-day society as well. Prior research has demonstrated how the SBWA can be a positive image for Black women (Abrams, Maxwell, Pope, & Belgrave, 2014; Baker et al., 2015; Etowa et al., 2017). However, researchers have also found a link between the SBWA and Black women's internalization of depressive symptoms (Etowa et al., 2017; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Thomas et al., 2004). This study seeks to expand on the prior research and explore if a relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women exists. Contributing to the knowledge in this area and advising on specific efforts

necessary to improve services for Black women this study, therefore, will provide a significant contribution to the sociological and social work literature.

### **Dissertation Overview**

Chapter Two provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and BFT and their connection to the SBWA. Chapter Two also provides an overview of the current literature on the cultural significance of music in the Black community and the prevalence of mental health issues. Chapter Three discusses the epistemological and methodological approaches, research design, and data. Chapter Four submits the findings and implications. Chapter Five offers a discussion and conclusion.

“R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Find out what it means to me”

(Redding, 1967)

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the contextual foundations of this study by first examining the theoretical frameworks of Intersectionality and BFT from which the study is positioned. These theoretical positions are of vital importance when examining the experiences of Black women due to their focus on the oppression experienced by Black women. Black people have experienced innumerable amounts of oppression from slavery to the present day. Black women, in particular, experience oppression in several aspects of life and for this reason, the theory of intersectionality was developed and used when studying the oppression of people of color (Crenshaw, 1991). The BFT developed a deeper understanding of the oppression of Black women while also providing implications for studying and empowering Black women (Collins, 2000). An aspect of the BFT is reclaiming and redefining cultural concepts of Black women. Likewise, this chapter will continue by discussing the historical construction of the Strong Black Woman concept, while exploring the impact of the ideal on the Black Woman’s psyche. BFT also calls for the understanding of the Black Woman’s experience outside of traditional academic means of study (Collins, 2000). Specifically, through exploring the cultural connection between art, music, and literature and the Black Woman’s experience. The use of music as a form of resistance in the Black community makes music a valuable form of study when examining the



self-definition of Black women (Martin, 2005). This chapter will continue by exploring the cultural connection between music and Black people. Additionally, music allows for the expression of the experiences, which makes it a valuable tool in providing culturally competent mental health services for the Black community (Avent, 2016; DeJesus, 2011; Martin, 2005). The chapter will conclude by discussing the therapeutic nature of music and ending with the prevalence of mental health symptoms among Black women.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

**Intersectionality.** The long history of the oppression of Black women in the United States is rooted in slavery. In 1619 the first 20 African slaves were removed from their homelands, against their will, and brought to the United States forced to work (Cummings, 2008; Laughlin-Schultz & Andrea, 2011). From the beginning of slavery, Black people were oppressed, working for survival while being brutalized, tortured, raped, and killed. Black women, in particular, experienced unique oppression during this period often raped and forced to see their children sold off as slaves while raising the white plantation owners children as an “other mother” (Collins, 2000; Lorde, 1984; Guy-Shefthall, 1995). Bought, sold, raped, and beaten, Black women have long dealt with a history of being seen as less than women, and possibly less than human (Collins, 2000; Guy-Shefthall, 1995).

The ratification of the 13th amendment to the United States Constitution in 1865 abolished slavery however, the impact of the racism and oppression against Black people continued (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). After slavery was abolished Black people continued to feel the effects of oppression and racism through Jim Crow laws. From roughly 1883 to 1954 Jim Crow Laws enforced segregation in the United States prohibiting equal treatment of Blacks

and Whites in all public and private institutions in the United States (Lagasse, 2018; Kamalu, 2013). During this time faced additional forms of oppression as they were typically excluded from Civil Rights debates due to gender norms of the era and excluded from the First Wave of Feminism, as white women denied leadership to Black women in the movement due to racism (Collier-Thomas, 2001; Guy Sheftall, 1995; Lorde, 1984). As Sojourner Truth proclaimed in her famous "Ain't I a Woman" speech, the disregard for the Black Woman's experience of oppression was felt even within the First Wave Feminist Movement (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). To this end, long before the terminology of intersectionality was developed the multilayered experience of oppression was felt and recognized by Black women.

The case of *Brown vs. The Board of Education* 1954 was a landmark case for Civil Rights and could be thought of as the beginning of the end of Jim Crow (Lagasse, 2018; Kamalu, 2013). Though Jim Crow Laws no longer exist, they have set the tone for race relations in the United States, in particular between Blacks and Whites. Racism and institutional discrimination have taken the place of Jim Crow laws so the impact of slavery on the Black community remains. Four hundred years after the first African slaves were brought to the United States, the violence and institutional oppression established during the era remains a constant in the Black community, and more specifically in the lives of Black women.

As previously discussed, the oppression of Black women in the United States dates back to slavery however, it was not until the 1990's when the oppressive experiences of Black women on multiple levels were considered. The concept of intersectionality sought to focus on the fact that the life experiences of women of color, specifically Black women, was ignored by both feminists and civil rights discourse (Davis, 2008). Race, gender, and class have long been studied by sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists specifically focusing on race relations and

stratification. Traditionally, race, gender, and class were studied separately as independent variables. However, in proposing the concept of intersectionality Crenshaw (1991) argued that the interactions between gender and race needed to be examined as they “interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s experiences” (p. 1244). Intersectionality considers an individual’s multiple identities as both fluid and dynamic (Torres, 2018). As a dimension critical race theory, intersectionality suggests the construct of oppression considering gender, sex, class, race, religion, and sexual orientation as systematic and interconnected. Intersectionality theory asserts that these characteristics must be viewed as interconnected as each characteristic impacts the next (Crenshaw, 1991). Though these variables do intersect they can be experienced differently at different times. For some class may be a more pressing issue while for others race and gender present the greatest challenges, this must also be considered when researching Black women.

Further expanding on the concept of intersectionality, Collins (1990) introduced the matrix of domination theory, asserting that the oppression of race, gender, sex, class, religion, sexual orientation are not only systematic and interconnected but should also be measured and viewed as a whole. In her text, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1991), Collins cultivates the theories of intersectionality and the matrix of domination discourse by analyzing the oppression experienced by Black women through the stereotypical images depicted of them in the United States as it relates to sexuality and motherhood.

Intersectionality, initially used in criminal justice scholarly exploration, maintains that women of color experience patterns of intersecting racial and sex discrimination recognizing the marginalization of women of color within their intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 1991). In

academic inquiry intersectionality as a method provides researchers with a theoretical framework to approach research and analysis as it considers both the researcher and the interviewee's position within a study (Lane, 2011; Lutz 2015; Torres et al., 2018). As a theory of study, intersectionality has been considered to be a concept only applicable to US Black feminism (Davis, 2008; Okolosie, 2014; Torres et al., 2018). However, the theory has also been found useful in feminist theory discourse as it provides a link between critical feminist theory and the effects of class, sex, and race, allowing for a greater exploration of the oppression experienced by women (Davis 2008).

Intersectionality as a theoretical method of research has demonstrated to be an invaluable theoretical approach when researching the mental health of people of color (Lane et al., 2011; Torres et al., 2018). Specifically, feminist researchers seek to employ intersectional frameworks as it considers the complexity and intersections of multiple identities and how they influence health and behaviors (Cairney et al., 2014; Leavy & Harris, 2001). Applying an intersectional framework to mental health studies has demonstrated a correlation between multiple minority statuses, mental illness, and determining factors when seeking mental health services (Cairney et al., 2014; Holley et al., 2016; Lane et al., 2011; Rosenfield, 2012; Torres et al., 2018). Intersectionality, when applied specifically to Black women and mental health, has demonstrated a connection between discrimination, perceived racism, and mental health outcomes for Black women (Jerald et al., 2017; Lewis et al., 2017). Therefore, as theoretical framework intersectionality is ideal for examining the mental health symptoms and help-seeking behaviors of Black women.

**Black feminist theory.** The experience of the "outsider within" in the feminist movement and lack of inclusion in the Black Power/ Black Liberation movements provided fuel for The

Combahee River Collective, an organization of Black feminists who joined together from 1974-1980, and developed the Combahee River Collective Statement specifically outlining Black Feminism and the collective feelings of disillusion of the feminist movement because of the lack of shared racial discrimination between Black and White women (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). The manifesto of 1977, from the Comanche River Collective meeting, argued that feminist analysis of power and domination must also incorporate gender, race, class, and sexuality (Hull et al., 1982).

BFT has emerged through an intellectual history of experiences of Black women dating to at least the second wave of feminism but present as early as the first wave of feminism, as expressed by Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman", in which Truth asserted her desire to be considered as valuable as the white Woman within the suffrage movement (Collins, 2000; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). As an approach, BFT attempts to incorporate the Black Woman's unique experiences while recognizing the intersectionality of oppression. BFT recognizes the diversity of class, age, sexual orientation as areas that also shape the Black Woman's experience. BFT is ultimately committed to the justice of the United States Black Woman and other similarly oppressed groups (Collins, 2000). Though common experiences are recognized, BFT does not deny that differences exist between Black women.

This study employed aspects of BFT to explore and validate the experiences of Black Woman and the ways in which they construct the Strong Black Woman and the concepts connection if any to the Black Woman's mental health-seeking behaviors. One feature of BFT is examining the controlling images experienced by Black women. Collins explained that controlling images such as "mammy, the matriarch, welfare recipients, and hot mammas" help justify the oppression of Black women in the United States (Collins, 2000). These labels are used

by the dominant culture as a means to suppress Black women's vocal resistance to their subjugation and inequality. Through the dissemination of these labels, Black women are often defined as the "other" or a threatening strangeness that needs to be controlled, suppressed, and excluded. Therefore, BFT is utilized to examine the degree to which the alternative concepts to the previously ascribed oppressive labels have impacted the Black Woman's psyche and self-image. BFT argues that as Black women subscribe to Black Feminist thought, they will also gain knowledge about themselves by understanding the oppressive images that have defined them in an effort to develop more empowering self-identification labels (Collins, 2000).

The second feature of BFT is recognizing the necessity of the scholarly exploration of Black women in alternative institutions. As noted by Collins (2000), Black women have long been considered an "other" in scholarly exploration. Collins (2000) described the Black Woman's position in the United States as one of the "outsiders within." This perspective is reflected in the exclusion of Black women from gaining prominent roles within the Black Power and Feminist movements, as well as their exclusion from academic inquiry related to those movements. Meanwhile, Black women have been described as some of the most oppressed people in the country (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Marable & Mullings, 2000). Due to the Black woman's exclusion from traditional scholarly research, BFT asserts that institutions outside of academia should also be considered. Music, film, art, poetry, and literature, are areas in which greater knowledge of the Black Woman's collective experience can be understood as these are considered some of the only sites of expression for the Black Woman (Collins, 2000).

Finally, the third feature that is addressed within this study is the construction and redefining of self and Black Womanhood by Black women and the Black community. Specifically, BFT calls for the Black community to empower themselves through reevaluating

the concept of self and worth within the Black community. Collins (2000) expressed that “the importance of self-definition, the significance of self-valuation and respect, the necessity of self-reliance and independence, and the centrality of a changed self to personal empowerment” (Collins, 2000, p. 119). It is believed that the Black Woman’s ability to create their own definition of self is essential to their existence (Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; James & Sharpley-Whiting, 2000). The exploration of Black women’s concept of self through interview analysis will provide a rich understanding of the Black Woman’s experience. Though it must be noted that BFT recognizes that the concept of self evolves over time, it must be recognized that Black Womanhood may take many forms over time (Collins, 2000). This places the framework of black feminist thought as an evolving approach as it continues to expand to incorporate the many identities of the Black Woman.

BFT as a theoretical application has been applied to music, as it is considered an alternative means of knowledge production (Collins, 2000; Decoste, 2017; Morgan, 2005). The theoretical approach provides insight into Black women through lyrics and performances demonstrating how Black female musical artists actively construct and perform identities (Decoste, 2017; Morgan, 2005). When applied, BFT has found how these women have challenged the controlling images of Black women as well as the intersecting oppressions they face (Chaney, 2016; DeCoste, 2017; Morgan, 2005). As it relates to a mental health therapeutic approach BFT has demonstrated to be a necessary approach to combating the psychological stressors felt by Black women due to the complex nature of intersecting oppressions (Jones 2015). Researchers have found that employing BFT when providing therapy for Black female substance abuse and mental health patients has assisted patients with redefining their identities empowering them in recovery while reducing symptomology (Jones & Warner, 2011; Roberts,

Jackson, & Carlton-LaNey, 2000). These findings indicate the value of BFT as a theoretical approach when examining the construction of identities, mental health symptoms, and help-seeking behaviors of Black women.

## **The Strong Black Woman Archetype**

### **Historical construction and definition of the strong black woman archetype.**

Following the slowed momentum of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1960s, a new movement sparked among young Black activists. The Black Power movement began after young activists and Black students began to feel a sense of disenchantment with the previous Civil Rights tactics of nonviolence to bring about continued social change and through this, the Black Power Movement was developed (Brown-Rose, 2008; Simmons, 2009; Odlum, 2015). The term Black Power was coined by Stokely Carmichael, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader, in 1966 at a rally in Mississippi (Brown-Rose, 2008; Simmons, 2009; Odlum, 2015). The term was believed to encourage a feeling of pride, beauty, and self-respect within the Black community (Brown-Rose, 2008; Grigsby-Bates, 2014). The Black Power movement continually sought to counteract the negative and detrimental images of Black people in America by encouraging Black people to adopt an Afrocentric ideology (Brown-Rose, 2008; Guy-Sheftall, 1995).

The image of the Strong Black Woman developed by African American men, during the Black Power Era, to counteract the negative mammy and matriarch images of African American mothers previously expressed by the dominant culture. The Strong Black Woman, or Super Strong Black mother, is conceptualized as a "happy slave" as African American mothers are expected to "put their needs behind those of everyone else" (Collins, 2000, p. 188). Many male



leaders in the Black Power movement commonly began using the term Strong Black Woman as a positive narrative to combat oppressive images of Black Women on the national stage; however, within the movement and Black Power organizations the Black Woman's strength was often seen as a challenge or threat against the Black man (Lorde, 1984). To this end, Black women's voices were often oppressed in the Black Power Movement as Black men were put in the forefront. Often, Black women were told that their role within the movement was to support their men further marginalizing Black Woman and minimizing their struggles (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Developing the common theme that the role of the Strong Black Woman was that of support of the Black man, the family, and the community (Collins, 2000). The role of the Strong Black Woman began to emerge as a Black Woman who demonstrated behaviors that are capable of handling hardships without seeking support (Collins, 2000). Black women identify the SBWA as displaying many forms of strength, possessing self and ethnic pride while being anchored in spirituality (Abrams et al., 2014). Thus, The SBWA became a “culturally salient ideal” prescribing that Black women maintain a demeanor of self-reliance, selflessness, and psychological, emotional, and physical strength (Baker et al., 2015, p. 51). Though this image was developed to represent the positive aspect of the African American woman's resiliency it also has caused damage to the African American woman's psyche.

**The impact of the SBWA.** The SBWA construct has been described as both “descriptive and prescriptive” as Black women have described themselves as taking on the role of the caregiver for their families, community, and for some, their entire race, at the expense of their own welfare (Etowa et al., 2017, p. 390; Romero, 2000). Simultaneously, the “prescription” of the SBWA is damaging to the Black Woman as it is expected she is willing to sacrifice for the good of others, able to endure all burdens, and be self-sufficient without ever demonstrating

externally the challenges she experiences (Etowa et al., 2017; Romero, 2000; Watson & Hunter, 2016). The SBWA, an image of perfection that Black women seek to attain, leads to the internalization of emotions (Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Thomas et al., 2004). As the internalization of the role increases the unattainable archetype becomes a form of gender role strain for Black women. Role Strain is defined as the stress which accompanies attempts to fulfill societal role demands (Merton, 1957; Goode, 1960). While gender role strain is the stress one feels resulting from discrepancies between their perception of their personal characteristics and their personal standards derived from gender role norms (Garnets & Pleck, 1979; O'Neil et al., 1986).

As Black women cope with the role strain of the SBWA they prioritize the needs of others while neglecting their own self-care (Jerald et al., 2017; Watson & Hunter, 2016; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). The SBWA is associated with internalized and suppressed emotions while denying the severity of depression and anxiety symptoms and refusing to seek professional intervention to address these symptoms (Harrington, Crowther, & Shipherd, 2010; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Romero, 2000; Thomas et al., 2004). Black women who attempt to embody the standards of the SBWA report increased stress, depressive symptoms, and increased anxiety (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Watson & Hunter, 2015; Romero, 2000; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). The cost of the internalization of the SBWA has been characterized as "a silencing of a range of her human needs" (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007, p. 20). Additionally, the internalized negative emotions associated with the SBWA have also been associated with irregular sleep, binge eating and smoking (Harrington et al., 2010; Jerald, 2017; Woods-Giscombe, 2010). Besides the role strain of the SBWA, African American single mothers can also experience provider role strain, (Bowman & Sanders, 1998) which are associated with low-income, joblessness, and increased provider role expectations. Provider role strain can cause

discouragement and increased vulnerability and distress (Mendenhall et al., 2013). The intersection of race, gender, and class further complicate the extent to which African American Woman and girls are impacted by gender role strain.

**Strong black woman music and pop culture.** Much of what is understood about the concept of the SBWA has been developed and disseminated among the Black community through oral tradition, literature, music, and Black pop culture (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2003; Harris, 1995; Romero, 2000). One of the first authors to examine the plight of the Black Woman in America, Zora Neale Hurston, stated in her 1937 novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, “De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see” (Hurston, 2006, p.44). Illuminating the experiences of Black women during and after slavery as a woman who must bear the weight of the world. Countless authors after Hurston would follow suit, providing characters that further normalized the Strong Black Woman as a cultural icon in the Black community. From Alice Walker’s *Color Purple* to Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, or even Terry McMillan’s *Waiting to Exhale*, the role of the Black Woman has been exemplified through literature as a woman that endures all of the life challenges for herself and her family. While in films, the SBWA can be seen as early as Hattie McDaniel’s character in *Gone With the Wind* (1939) and Dorothy Dandridge’s *Carmen Jones* (1954). Additionally, the SBWA was depicted in many characters on television, such as Diahann Carroll’s (1968) Julia, a single working mother, which made history as the first Black female lead character on a television series. Other notable characters such as Esther Rolle’s Florida Evans of *Good Times* (1974) or Phylicia Rashad’s Claire Huxtable of *The Cosby Show* (1984), also portrayed the image of the SBWA as it relates to motherhood, family, and support of the Black community.

As the image is perpetuated through music, literature, and pop culture it becomes culturally salient and a fixed representation of the Black Woman within and outside of the Black community (Romero, 2000; West, 1995). West (1995) stated of the images of Black women “mental representations or images are difficult to alter and can occur without conscious intent or awareness” (West, 1995, p. 458). Thus, examining the SBWA through an analysis of music in the Black Power era, thought to be the beginning of the archetype, provides insights on how the Black community shaped the stereotype. Further, the analysis of modern-day music allows for an understanding of the initial concepts of the SBWA still exist or if new themes have emerged within the Black community.

## **Music**

**Cultural expression.** Music has expressed the cultural experience for African Americans for years as it became the spoken history, reflection of pain, love, hopes, and dreams for the Black culture (Stein, 2017; Hamlet, 2011; Martin, 2005). Praise songs, a form of poetry set to music, have been sung throughout Africa as ceremonial rituals for celebrations of life and death (Dillard, 2012). For African Americans music remained a vital part of life throughout the Transatlantic Slave Trade (Stein, 2017). Beginning in the 15th century, Africans were taken captive by Europeans who enslaved and transported them first to Europe and later to the Americas (Hamlet, 2011; Martin, 2005; Salaam, 1995). Millions of slaves traveled through the transatlantic slave trade route in the centuries to follow. Captive slaves were forcibly stripped of the heritage and culture, separated from their tribesman and restricted from speaking their languages. Once in America music took on a deeper meaning for the African community connecting them to their memories of their homelands and familial roots (Dillard, 2012). Music became a representation of culture as it communicated the oral tradition and experiences of the

Black community. At times the only connection between slaves, due to lack of a shared spoken dialect, was music (Hamlet, 2011; Martin, 2005; Salaam, 1995). Over the years music has developed from the voices of the enslaved to the experiences of the enraged throughout the civil rights movements.

Demonstrating rituals and resistance, music from the slavery era allows a deeper understanding of the African American's experiences of oppression and resistance (Dillard, 2012; Lidskog, 2017; Martin, 2005). As illustrated through Negro Spirituals, African American slaves utilized the African tradition of music to share their history and culture, express their emotions of anger and frustration, and their desires of freedom from slavery (Martin 2005; Nielson, 2011; Robinson, 2015; Snodgrass, 2008; Wright, 2006). Music demonstrated a physical and mental escape for slaves. Researchers have noted that spirituals provided a mental outlet for slaves from the daily brutality they faced (Guenther, 2017; Martin, 2005; Nielson, 2011; Robinson, 2015; Wright, 2006). Music expressed desires of freedom, lamentations of pain and loss, and held secret messages for meetings and escape routes for slaves (Guenther, 2017; Martin, 2005; Nielson, 2011; Robinson, 2015; Wright, 2006). For slave-owners, these would be considered innocent songs of praise however, for those enslaved they held deeper meanings of eventual freedom. For example, it is believed that the song "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," describes the escape from slavery to the Canadian border (Snodgrass, 2008). Other songs such as, "Steal Away" and "Let Us Break Bread Together" has been said to describe resistance meetings (Guenther, 2017). While the song "Wade in the Water" eluded to escape routes using waterways such as rivers (Guenther, 2017). The modern-day genres of African American music have its start in these songs of resistance. Much of what is expressed in hip-hop, rap, R&B, jazz and gospel of today is closely tied to that of the music of the African American slave (Martin,

2005). Providing an outlet for self-expression, encouragement, pain, frustration, and triumph music of today continues the oral tradition that began when African slaves were brought to America.

Music as a form of sociological study can be dated back to Max Weber's *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*, in which sociologists began to understand that the music of a particular culture or group is shaped by the experiences of that group (Weber, 1958). Early researchers in the sociology of music have viewed music as "related to the whole of human life, to the mosaic of human understanding and culture in a counterpoint of continuously changing relationships" (Riedel, 1962, p. 39). Music as a form of cultural expression and can be studied similar to other cultural artifacts as the study of lyrics, and performances demonstrate patterns of representation providing insights on society (Eyerman, 2002; Leavy, 2009). Eyerman (2002) quotes W. E. B. Dubois, sociologist, an African American civil rights leader, as stating he "believed that the role of arts was to represent the best possible image of Blacks in order to counter the negative image portrayed in the dominant popular culture" (p. 445). Music provides a space for expression, resistance from the dominant culture's values, and can represent the collective view of subgroups devoid of the suppressive narrative of the dominant culture (Leavy, 2009). The emotional connotations of music create a new identity for groups seeking to assert positive images (Baily & Collyer, 2006).

**Movements.** Much of the music that set the soundtrack for the civil rights movement can be described as gospel or church music. However, the Black Power music resembled more of the popular music of the 1960s and 1970s considered funk, soul, and jazz music (Independent Lense, 2015). Little scholarly work exists examining music the use of music in the Black Power Era though many popular artists of the time voiced their concerns about the state of the Black

Community. Artists such as Nina Simone with her controversial live recording of "Mississippi Goddam" following the killing of Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers in Mississippi and the bombing of the 16th street Baptists Church in Birmingham, Alabama which killed 4 young girls (Staggs, 2013). Other popular artists such as James Brown, Etta James, and Sam Cooke used their platform as artists to shed light on the plight of Black Americans during the period.

In the mid-1960s, a new sound emanated from the music scene. Soul music became the soundtrack for the evolution of the Civil Rights to the Black Power Era. Soul music had been a form of expression for the African American community for years (Peters, 2014). However, following the violence experienced in the Civil Rights era, the music began to take on a different message. A message of power, unity, and justice began to spread in soul music calling for a change in the Civil Rights movement (Peters, 2014). With lyrics like, "A Change is Gonna Come," (Cooke, 1964) and "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" (Brown, 1968), musicians created, captured, and reflected the soul of the evolution of the Civil Rights and Black Power era.

While soul music can be described as the soundtrack of the Black Power Movement, in the mid-1990s a new wave of Black music became the collective voice of the younger generation. Neo-soul, or new soul, developed as a new sound of the Black youth who paid homage to the soul music of the past while building on the nuances of the rap and hip hop culture of the 1990s (Ashe, 2007; Fila-Bakabadio, 2014). Neo-soul music, similar to that of its antecedent, reflects the voices of the Black youth of America, while in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement (Loss, 2015; McNair, 2016; Spanos & Grant, 2016). Black Lives Matter (BLM) has been described as the modern day Civil Rights Movement addressing the continued oppression, discrimination, and killing of Black people in the United States (Black Lives Matter, 2013; Clayton, 2018; Dávila, 2017). A grassroots activist group founded by Black women

between 2013 and 2014 to address the killing of unarmed Black men in the United States, BLM has now become a global activist network seeking to empower the oppressed worldwide.

Comparable to the lyrics of the Civil Rights Movement, Neo Soul artists such as Janelle Monae with her 2015 release “Hell You Talmbout” reflects the demand for justice within the BLM as various artists on the song shout names of the Black American victims of murder by the police (Monae, 2015).

**Therapy.** Beyond representing and expressing Black culture and movements, music in recent years has been incorporated into therapeutic treatment. Music therapy is a form of therapeutic intervention, which is used to address mental health goals (Howland, 2017). Music therapy has been found to improve moods as it also is a reflection of mood and emotions for listeners (Bruscia, 1991; DeNora 2007; Maratos, Gold, Wang, & Crawford 2007; Saarikallio, 2010). Music, for this reason, has also been a successful treatment to depression and mood disorders (Bruscia, 1991; DeNora, 2007; Maratos, Gold, Wang, & Crawford 2007). Specifically, music has been seen as a form of culturally sensitive practice when treating African American mental health patients (Elligan, 2000; Mondanaro, 2016; Avent, 2016). Employing culturally sensitive and innovative approaches to treating Black mental health patients is critical in their continued success in treatment. Black people have historically held a cultural mistrust for mental health treatment due to the lack of trust in the dominant culture’s treatment systems (Cokley et al., 2013; Whaley, 2001). By approaching mental health treatment with music, mental health therapist is recognizing the cultural significance of music within the Black community.

As previously noted, music can be viewed as a form of cultural expression as it provides a greater understanding of the experiences of the Black community. For this reason, it is an appropriate tool for researching the concept of SBWA and mental health. This study will provide



greater insight into the importance of music in the cultural expression of the Strong Black Woman as well as the importance of music in mental health. The results will yield a greater understanding of the connection between music and Black women's identity, mood, and mental health. Implications will provide indications for further study in the area of alternative and cultural competence practice with Black women and mental illness.

### **Mental Health**

NAMI shared a 2012 report from the Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, which stated that African Americans are 20% more likely to experience serious mental health problems than the general population. African American adults are commonly diagnosed with a major depressive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, which is due to experiences in urban living that expose African Americans to more violent crimes (NAMI, 2012).

Additionally, women are more likely than men, and African Americans are more likely than non-African Americans, to report symptoms consistent with major depressive disorder (USDHHS 2016; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2010). African American women experience higher rates of depression than the general population (Miranda et al., 2005). However, African Americans are also less likely to seek treatment for depression symptoms (Pratt & Brody, 2014). These statistics demonstrate that further investigation into the possible barriers related to African American women seeking treatment for depression is warranted.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition, (DSM-5) the disorders included within the category of Depressive disorders are disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, major depressive disorder , major depressive episode, dysthymia, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, substance/medication-induced depressive disorder, depressive

disorder due to another medical condition, other specified depressive disorder, and unspecified depressive disorder (DSM, 2000). Common symptoms of these disorders are irritable mood, sadness, cognitive and somatic changes that negatively affect an individual's ability to function. The duration, cause, and onset differ amongst each disorder justifying specific diagnosis. Williams et al., (2007) found that African Americans with Major depressive disorder suffered greater impairments to their everyday functioning than whites. The study also concluded that African Americans, though presenting with more severe Major depressive disorder symptoms more often than whites, sought treatment less than half as much as whites (Williams et al., 2007). Depressive disorders are most likely caused by a combination of "genetic, biochemical, environmental, and psychological factors" (Psychology Today, 2015). Though research demonstrates that African Americans relate depressive disorders to external factors that must be fought rather than clinically treated (Black et al., 2011). This view is correlated with common misbeliefs in the African American community regarding depressive disorders and mental health treatment.

**Barriers to treatment.** As previously discussed, African American women are more likely to experience depressive disorder symptoms than the general population. They are also more likely to allow these symptoms to go untreated professionally. Institutional barriers include lack of familiarity with treatment options, ineligibility for services, low income, and lack of insurance (Davis et al., 2008; Sosulski & Woodard, 2013). In addition, individual barriers such as stigma, community disapproval, disbelief in receiving treatment from the "white" healthcare system, disapproval of psychotropic medications, prevent the professional treatment of depressive disorders. (Black et al, 2011; Davis et al., 2008; Nicolaidis et al., 2010; Whaley, 2001). Though institutional barriers are worth further investigation the focus will remain on the

individual barriers that prohibit seeking professional intervention among African American women with depressive disorders.

Individual barriers should be considered as those developed within the African American community, such as negative attitudes and beliefs associated with receiving mental health services. It is a common belief that problems should not be discussed with white people or the dominant culture (Hays, 2015; Nicolaidis, et al., 2010; Ward et al., 2009; Whaley, 2001). In addition to the lack of trust in seeking professional intervention, African American's report a stigma of weakness associated with seeking professional mental health services (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Johnson et. al. 2009; Levine et al., 2015; Sosulski & Woodward, 2013). In particular African American women face the task of living up to the SBWA, developed within the African American community, which commands a behavior that is capable of handling emotional hardships without seeking professional support. The SBWA is associated with internalized and suppressed emotions while denying the severity of depressive symptoms and refusing to seek professional intervention to address these symptoms. (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Thomas et al., 2004).

**Coping strategies.** The barriers to seeking professional treatment to depressive disorders have led African American women to seek alternative routes to treating depressive symptoms. Research demonstrates that most women seek social support from family, kinship relationships, friends, church, and spirituality. However, the SBWA dictates the level of disclosure African American women are willing to provide when discussing depressive symptoms (Chatters et al., 1989; Nicolaidis et al., 2010; Ward et al, 2009). Further fear of being seeming to be personally and spiritually weak prevented Black women from seeking treatment for depressive symptoms (Johnson et al., 2009, p. 216).

Likewise, sole reliance on family, friends, and kinship networks may strain these relationships, limiting the individual's ability to get sustained help with symptoms (Levine et al., 2015). Though it has been found that reliance on social supports may be limited, there is a correlation between social support and seeking professional intervention, among African American women with depressive symptoms. Women who did seek professional intervention did so at the advice of friends, family, and kinship networks (Nicolaidis, et al., 2010; Snowden, 1998; Sosulski & Woodard, 2013).

In addition to seeking out family, friends, and kinship relationships for assistance with depressive symptoms African American women also rely heavily on religion and spirituality. Literature supports the notion that African Americans relate depressive symptoms to spiritual weakness and as a result, seek out spiritual guidance through prayer, worship services, and pastoral counseling (Black et al., 2011; Cokley et al., 2013; Hays, 2015; Ward et al., 2009). This reliance on church and spirituality can be related to the African American community's long history of the church as a source of assistance. Though the utilization of church and spirituality is a strength for African American women with depressive symptoms the church and pastoral employees may not be formally trained and capable of handling severe symptoms (Hays, 2015). As previously discussed it is the least common path sought to address depressive symptoms however, it has been found that most African American women seek professional treatment after first seeking support from friends and family (Nicolaidis et al., 2010; Snowden, 1998; Sosulski & Woodard, 2013).

## Summary

The concept of the Strong Black Woman, initially introduced during the Black Power Movement, to combat negative images of the Black Woman, has remained a cultural ideal in the Black community since this time (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2003; Collins, 2000; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Harris, 1995; Romero, 2000). Dictating self-sacrificial behavior, research has indicated that the women who subscribe to the SBWA believe they must demonstrate a Strong exterior while coping with depressive symptoms on their own and refusing to seek professional intervention to address these symptoms (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). Demonstrating a need to further examine the Black Woman's self-image, particularly as it relates to the SWBA and their mental health help-seeking behaviors. As previously noted the prevalence of Black women with depression and anxiety and the lack of seeking professional treatment is a point of concern (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Holmes et al., 2011; Nicolaidis, et al., 2010; Thomas et al., 2004; Watson et al., 2015; Woods-Giscombé, 2010; Ward et al., 2009). Further, research has found that, for Black women, seeking professional intervention for depressive symptoms would be contradictory of the role of Strong Black Woman (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). Literature supports the notion that African Americans relate depressive symptoms to spiritual weakness and as a result, seek out spiritual guidance through prayer, worship services, and pastoral counseling (Black et al., 2011; Cokley et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2009). Yet little research has examined the relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Holmes et al., 2001; Watson & Hunter, 2015). Additionally, much of the Black Woman's experience and voice has not been heard in traditional academic means so this research seeks to utilize music and interviews in a narrative form to inform how the SBWA

was shaped and maintained and gain greater insight on the mental health-seeking behaviors of Black women (Collins, 2000; Leavy, 2009).

“Even if it makes others uncomfortable

I wanna love who I am”

(Robinson, 2013)

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the contextual foundations of this study by examining the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and black feminist theory from which the study is positioned. As previously noted these theoretical positions are essential to the study of Black women due to their inclusion of multiple oppressions, examining Black women through non-traditional means, and position regarding the reclaiming of the Black woman’s identity. Therefore, this study is grounded in black feminist theory, which informed the use of black feminist epistemology, triangulation, ethnomusicology, grounded theory and thematic analysis as analytical and methodological frameworks for this study. This chapter will explain how the study was conducted, outlining how data was collected and analyzed. The outline of this chapter is as follows: (1) epistemology, (2) methodology, (3) position of the researcher, (4) research design, (5) data collection.

## **Epistemology**

**Black feminist epistemology.** Epistemology, a theory of knowledge, used to assess why we believe what we believe to be true and ways in which power relations shape who is believed (Collins, 2000). Black women's experiences have been routinely distorted or excluded altogether from "what counts as knowledge" within and outside of academia (Collins, 2000, p. 269). For this reason, a study of the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women requires an epistemological framework that reflects the voice and perspective of this study's participants. Black feminist epistemology validates the intersectional oppressions while expressing the shared experiences and "wisdom" between Black women (Collins, 1986; 2000). Based on social constructionism Black feminist epistemology shares commonalities with both Afrocentric and feminist epistemologies however, it remains unique as it considers experiences which are distinctive to Black women (Collins, 1986). Black feminist epistemology seeks to understand how marginalized groups, specifically Black women, create a knowledge that empowers them to overcome oppression (Collins, 1986). Black feminist epistemology allows Black women the opportunity to be understood through their experiences and knowledge attained in these experiences (Patterson, Kinloch, Burkhard, Randall, & Howard, 2016).

Black feminist epistemology is centered around four tenets, the first of which is meaning through lived experiences. This is related to the idea that Black women value lived experiences over those who have just researched or studies a phenomena others (Collins, 2000; Dotson, 2015; Few, 2007). This wisdom of lived experience is crucial to African American people as it is wisdom that has been key to their survival. As stated by Collins (2000, p. 276), "Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the



subordinate.” Black feminist epistemology recognizes the wisdom Black women acquire through life experiences, and how this wisdom shapes they understand and approach to the world (Collins, 2000; Dillard, 2012; Dotson, 2015). The second tenet is that assessment of knowledge through community dialogue recognizes that knowledge claims are developed through interactions with others (Collins, 2000; Dotson, 2015; Few, 2007). Specifically, community dialogue among Black women has its roots in the African oral tradition in which community discussion is of most importance as it relates to knowledge (Bell et al., 2000; Collins, 2000; Dillard, 2012). Community dialogue represents a sense of sisterhood and connectedness between Black women that has demonstrated to be a necessity in their survival (Bell et al., 2000; Collins, 1986; Few, 2007).

The third tenet, required competence for members of the community of knowers, related to the first and second tenets, demonstrates that through communication has been key to survival, yet Black women recognize that the wisdom and knowledge of the communicator is of utmost importance (Bell et al., 2000; Collins, 2000; Dotson, 2015; Few, 2007). Finally, the fourth tenet of Black feminist epistemology is knower adequacy, which stipulates that knowledge claims be made by individuals with a moral or ethical connection to those claims (Collins, 2000; Dotson, 2015; Few, 2007). Directly correlated to the concept that much of the previous knowledge that has been disseminated, in regards to the Black community, has been through the lens of White male researchers who took a positivist approach to inform their research (Few, 2007; Patterson et al., 2016). This tenet asserts that Black women should be the creators of any discourse on Black women. For this reason, it is important that this research examining the possible relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women, allows Black women to have a voice in how their image is being crafted in academic discourse (Few, 2007;

Dotson, 2015). As a component of black feminist theory, this research seeks to allow Black women the opportunity to self-define rather than impose an identity.

Black feminist epistemology calls for understanding the Black woman through experiences and communication. Understanding Black women must also incorporate knowing through several different means. As previously, stated Black women have been excluded from traditional means of academia and thus much of their experiences and knowledge has been expressed through other means. Communicated through poetry music literature and art Black women have documented their experiences history wisdom and knowledge in a variance of ways. Likewise, Black feminist researchers have traditionally utilized a variety of means from interviews and surveys, to poetry, music, and creative art, to examine the lives of Black women (Collins, 2000; Few, 2007; Patterson et al., 2016). Consequently, it is important that this research examining the possible relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women must examine the Black woman through multiple means utilizing triangulation as an epistemology of knowing and understanding the Black women's experience.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation, described as a strategy of employing multiple approaches to research, which establishes the validity of the research (Denzin,1970; Padgett, 2008; Patton, 1999; Pitre & Kushner, 2015). The four types of triangulation are as follows: (1) theory- the use of multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data; (2) methodological - using different data collection methods which allow the researcher to check the consistency of findings; (3) observer- the use of multiple analysts of the findings; (4) data- the use of multiple data sources within the same method (Padgett, 2008; Patton, 1999). To fully explore the complexity of human behavior and attitudes triangulation is a preferred approach to research as it studies concepts through multiple lenses (Denzin, 1970; Pitre & Kushner, 2015).

Data triangulation improves validity through verification of findings as it compares the consistency of information (Denzin, 1970; Patton, 1999). By utilizing triangulation and selecting settings that are dissimilar, the researcher can ascertain commonalities across settings (Denzin, 1970). Likewise, incorporating interviews in a triangulated study allows participants to validate the accuracy of the information collected in other means (Denzin, 1970; Patton, 1999). I used data triangulation in this study as a means of understanding the experiences of Black women through multiple points of view. The data collected in the musical analysis was crossed checked with the themes yielded in the semi-structured interviews to validate and strengthen the information gathered. Collins stated of research: “Traditionally, the suppression of Black women’s ideas within White-male- controlled social institutions led African American women to use music, literature, daily conversations, and everyday behavior as important locations for constructing a Black feminist consciousness” (200, p. 270). Examining the Black woman through music and semi-structured interviews provide multiple points of view to better grasp the relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women. It is understood that differences in the data collected between the music and interviews will arise as a result of triangulation, however, the study seeks to expand the knowledge on the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women so the differences are welcomed as they provide greater insight on the topic (Patton, 1999).

### **Methodology**

**Ethnomusicology.** This study was led by the framework of ethnomusicology, which is a form of musical study that is situated in the cultural context of the art form. The approach seeks to understand what music is and means to the artists and audience and how these meanings are conveyed (Nettl, 1964; Shelemay, 1992). The approach is grounded in an anthropological and

musicological method as it studies music in its cultural context (Nettl, 1964; Merriam, 1960; Shelemay, 1992; Rhodes 1956). Ethnomusicology seeks to examine music as a custom and tradition that can provide insight into cultural concepts of those who produce and consume the music (Merriam, 1960; List, 1979; Shelemay, 1992). Within the context of ethnomusicology, the critical approach will be used while analyzing the data. A critical method in ethnomusicology interprets and evaluates music within the historical, political, and economic contexts (Miles, 1997). This approach is applicable to the study of the concept of the creation, development, and maintenance of the SBWA within the Black community through the music of the Black Power and Black Lives Matter Movements. For the purpose of this study Leavy's approach to arts-based research was employed. Specifically, I attempted to examine patterns of representation through the lyrics of the identified music (Leavy, 2009). Firmly grounded in ethnomusicology I sought to determine how the music of the Black Power Era fit into the culture of the movement.

**Interviews.** For the semi-structured interviews within this study I was guided by the grounded theory approach, specifically, the constant comparative method was employed for this study, resulting in an open-coding process (Leavy, 2009; Savin & Major, 2013). Grounded theory is the most appropriate approach when the researcher is seeking to analyze and theorize about a topic (Leavy, 2009; Savin & Major, 2013). This study is analyzing the concepts of the SBWA among Black women and if there is a correlation between the concept and the Black women, in the study, and their mental health help-seeking behaviors. In addition to researching the concept of the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women, I maintained reflexivity throughout the research process as I myself am a Black woman and a Clinical Social Worker. Reflexive thinking throughout the interview and analysis process helps me to identify my assumptions and biases regarding the SBWA and the mental health help-

seeking behaviors of Black women. Understanding my position as both a Black woman and Clinician, while interviewing other Black women, allows me the opportunity to ensure that I am subjective in my questioning and analysis (Burawoy, 1998). Additionally, by means of the extended case method, I utilized knowledge of the historical and present-day influences on the construction of the strong Black woman during the data analysis (Burawoy, 1998). In consistency with the Black feminist epistemology I made every effort to maintain reflexivity and “suppress self” throughout the process to ensure that the voice of those I interviewed was heard, and not misrepresented (Dotson, 2015; Few, 2007; Gullion, 2018; Sparkes, 1995).

### **Position of the Researcher**

I am a Black woman whose parents raised me to have a great love and appreciation of being Black and to understand the intricacies of racism in the United States. Though I grew up in Northern California, which is for the most part liberal, I spent a great deal of time in the South. My father was born in Jackson, Mississippi towards the end of Jim Crow. He moved to New Orleans, Louisiana at the age of three and often tells me stories of how he and his family were the first Black family to live in their desegregated neighborhood. His father was the first Black man to have a membership at the previously “whites only” golf course across the street from his childhood home. He even remembers going to the lake to swim when Black people were first allowed to swim in a lake that is walking distance from his childhood home. Through these stories and learning from my other family members who lived in Texas and Mississippi, I was able to understand the plight of Black Americans in the United States. I learned quickly that living in Northern California, with a lack of covert racism, was a luxury that was not afforded to Black Americans nationwide.

As a woman, I have personally experienced and learned from others the challenges that women face. Growing up my mother was the first sales manager of color at the Yellow Pages in Northern California. In addition to being the first manager of color, she was also one of very few women in a leadership role at the company. She would share stories with me about harassment and discrimination that took place at work. She was always strong in the face of adversity, at work, and at home as a single mother. Witnessing this shaped my understanding of the challenges Black women face in the workplace as well as the plight of single mothers. In addition to my mother, I was fortunate enough to have a community of strong Black women who assisted in raising, guiding, and mentoring me throughout my life. I have been taught by these women, the hardships that Black women have historically faced. I have watched as these women experience hardships, and overcome challenges of their own. I was raised to believe that as a Black woman I have to work twice as hard to get half as far, so my understanding of the SBWA was instilled in me at a very young age. My knowledge of the concept was not only taught from my mother and grandmothers but from other influential women who granted me the opportunity to sit at their feet and gain wisdom. I recognize how my position as a Black woman and my personal experiences, prior knowledge of Black history and culture will influence my analysis of the data. Though I am considered an insider to the Black community, I am an outsider due to my knowledge and experience as a researcher. As a researcher, I am in a position of power as I have the ability to analyze and interpret the data based on my knowledge. In employing the Black feminist perspective, I have a responsibility to my community to conduct and analyze the research in an ethical manner, which represents Black women appropriately (Collins, 2000).

My experiences led to my becoming a Social Worker and working with low-income children and families. In this work, I learned more about the institutional racism that plagues the Black community. I saw generations of poverty and undereducated people who struggled to provide for themselves and their families. I also saw how poverty, addiction, and low socioeconomic statuses impact the physical and mental health of Black people. Though these issues have plagued the Black community, I was often met with resistance to mental health treatment. Many times in practice I heard “we don’t go to therapy” in reference to the resistance of Black people to seek mental health treatment. I believe this is a result of the historical discrimination, the poor treatment of Black people in healthcare, and the stigma associated with seeking mental health services. I do realize that in order to address the mental health concerns of members of the Black community the stigma and mistrust of healthcare services must be addressed. Still, I remain a firm believer in mental health therapy not only as a clinician but also as a Black woman who has sought mental health services. My personal growth is a testament to my seeking treatment, as a result, I am an advocate for treatment in the Black community. However, my personal and professional biases towards professional mental health therapy must be managed, as my position may differ from the participants.

Reflexivity throughout the writing process allows the researcher to become aware of their power and position (Gullion, 2018). In this way, it was my duty to not misrepresent the participants in this study. My position as a member of many groups that experience discrimination leads me to feel deeply about adequate representation in research. I am most sensitive to the fact that mental health disorders, people of color, and women, have all been exploited in one way or another in research. I remained cognizant of this and my personal biases regarding mental health treatment to ensure that the narratives presented are genuine, not

unethically influenced, and not exploitative in nature. As a Black feminist researcher, I seek to illuminate the authentic voice of Black women who have previously been ignored in academic research.

### **Research Design**

**Musical analysis.** For this study, I gathered the lyrics of 25 songs (see Table 1) identified as music from the Black Power Era, Black Feminists Movement, and Feminists movements between the 1960s and early 1970s, along with 25 songs of the Black Live Matters Era, 2013-present ( see Table 2). These time frames were chosen to provide some comparison between when the SBWA was said to be developed and modern day (Collins, 2000). The songs were limited to R&B, Soul, Funk, and Neo-Soul, as these genres have been identified as influential during these movements (Billboard, 2018; Bologna, 2016; Cade, 2015, Independent Lens, 2015; Spanos & Grant, 2016). The songs chosen reflect that of the Black community situated against the backdrop of activism.

These songs signal the era of the Black community as it sought to develop definitions of what it meant and means to be Black and more specifically a Black woman. Additionally, the songs chosen reflected a conscious voice of the Black woman, family, and community, themes identified as a core component to the SBWA (Collins, 2000). It must be noted that the songs from the 1960s and 1970s included male and female artists. In researching music from this era much of the music that provided insight to that of the Black woman, family, and community was male, this could be a result to gender and racial norms in the era that limited Black female artists at the time. For the modern-day musical analysis, I chose to use music from Black female artists only, as they are far more present in the music industry. In addition, it is important to examine how the archetype is expressed and encouraged by and to Black women.



Further, for the purpose of examining music that provided lyrical content that most adequately represents the modern day Black woman, hip-hop and rap genres were excluded from this study. Though rap artists such as Cardi B and Nikki Minaj, have had Billboard chart topping careers, the lyrics of their music provide little substance in gaining a greater understanding of the SBWA. After selecting the songs that best represented the voice of the Black woman based on the BFT tenets, the lyrics were examined in a poetic prose format to which I analyzed the data from the viewpoint of the interviewer while the lyrics represented the voice of the interviewee (Leavy, 2009).

**Interviews.** For this study 18 semi-structured, voice recorded interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted at neutral locations chosen by the interviewee, mostly restaurants and coffee shops; however, one interviewee chose to be interviewed in her home. Though this research proposed no intended harm to the participants, each researcher read a statement of ethical consideration and confidentiality to the participants. Participants were given contact numbers to national mental health services for follow up, should the interview lead to a need for therapeutic intervention. Participants agreed to the voice recording; however, each was informed that their name and identifying information would remain confidential. After each interview was transcribed, the voice recordings were deleted.

The interview questions were developed based on the research questions:

1. How is the Strong Black Woman defined in the music from the Black Power Era?
2. How is the Strong Black Woman defined in the music from the Black Lives Matter Era?
3. How do interview participants define the Strong Black Woman?
4. What general themes between the music and interviews exists regarding the Strong Black Woman?

5. What aspects of the Strong Black Woman do participants possess?
6. How does this archetype affect the participant's identity?
7. How does the archetype impact participant's mental health?
8. Does the archetype inform decisions for seeking mental health treatment?

While conducting the interviews I encouraged open-ended responses and solicited additional information when necessary. The interview questions began with demographic questions to establish the basic information of the participant such as the participant's age, identified gender, ethnic group affiliation, marital status, education, occupation, and whether they have children. Additional questions were used to prompt participants to discuss their concept of strength and if their concept is connected to the themes identified within the musical analyses. Further, questions to explore the participants' concept of mental illness and their own personal mental health symptoms. Participants were also asked about their help-seeking behaviors when facing mental health issues or personal crisis. Finally, participants were asked to identify how the strong Black woman should address the mental health and personal issues they face (Interview Tool see Appendix A).

### **Data Collection**

**Procedures.** After obtaining permission to conduct this study from the Institutional Review Board at Texas Woman's University. I began recruiting through word of mouth, emailing recruitment letters to Black women organizations and asking women in my social networks for referrals to possible participants. Snowball sampling was utilized as participants were asked to refer friends that they believe may be interested in participating in the study. I contacted each participant through email to set up an interview date, time, and location. After the initial contact, the participant and researcher decided upon face-to-face interview locations that

were convenient and safe for both the participant and the researcher. All interviews were conducted in restaurants or coffee shops, except one, which was conducted in the interviewees' home as she has a baby and it was most convenient for her to be interviewed in her home. Prior to the start of the interviews, each participant was asked to sign a consent, which explained confidentiality and the purpose of the study. Participants were also asked if they agreed to have their interview audio recorded so that the researcher may transcribe and further review the interview. All participants agreed and the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using the transcription service REV, after prior approval from the Institutional Review Board. Participants were told that they may stop or reschedule the interview at any time during the interview process. Interviews were expected to take approximately one hour, which was dependent on the depth to which the participants respond to each question. The actual interview times ranged from 25 minutes to 1 hour and 13 minutes. The interviews took place between the months of November 2018- January 2019.

**Participants.** All of the interview respondents identified as African- American/Black female. Exclusions were made based on gender and race as the study seeks to understand the perspective of the Black woman the participants had to identify as African American/Black women. The respondents ranged in age from 19-60 years old with a mean age of 40.3 years old. Eight of the respondents identified as married or engaged, while 10 identified as single or divorced. One respondent had a high school diploma, two indicated some college as their educational background, six obtained a Bachelor's Degree, seven obtained a Master's Degree, and two of the respondents have a Medical Doctor degree. No exclusions based on age, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, sexuality or sexual orientation, religious affiliation, were made as it was my hope to have a variance in age and background (see Table 3).

For the purpose of analyzing and discussing the findings of this study, participants were asked to provide pseudonyms. To maintain confidentiality participants will be referenced as such throughout the remainder of this paper. The de-identified transcripts were kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's locked office. All identifying information was shredded after the results of the study was written.

**Data analysis.** Employing thematic analysis, I coded the data in a hybrid of deductive and inductive coding. This approach to coding complements the research of the SBWA and mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women as it allows the BFT tenets to be an integral aspect of the analysis through deductive coding while allowing emergent themes to be incorporated through inductive coding (Creswell, 2013; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Saldana, 2009).

Previous research provided the basis of the deductive coding, as Romero (2000) identified (1) self-reliance, (2) affect regulation and (3) caretaking as attributes of the SBWA (Romero, 2000). Additionally, Thompson (2003) validated those findings in a study which utilized focus groups of African-American women to test the psychometric properties of the measures developed by Romero (Thompson, 2003). While Abrams et al., (2014) integrated overlapping attributes of the existing constructs of the SBWA through thematic analyses of focus groups of Black women identifying characteristics of the SBWA as (a) Embodies and Displays Multiple Forms of Strength, (b) Possesses Self/Ethnic Pride in Spite of Intersectional Oppression, (c) Embraces Being Every Woman, and (d) Anchored by Religion/Spirituality (Abrams et al., 2014). Allowing for themes to emerge through inductive coding I looked for patterns and themes as a way of deconstruction to find the Black woman's voice in the lyrics and interviews to determine how the message of the Strong Black Woman is expressed and

understood (Beins 2017). Finally, I looked for themes in the lyrics and interviews that demonstrated the performative nature of the SBWA (Beins 2017). Building on the previous research and incorporating emergent themes the data was coded in the categories of (1) Strength (2) Independence (3) Pride (4) Care for others (5) Spirituality/Religion (6) Mental health and Mental health-seeking behaviors (7) Hardships (8) Woman/Girl (9) Identity and Identity representation (Abrams et al., 2014; Romero, 2000; Thompson 2003).

Using NVivo 12, a computer program for qualitative data analysis which assists in coding and analysis, I coded and organized the lyrics and interview responses based on the identified categories. A word frequency query was run on each coded category to demonstrate the frequency of words and phrases. The word frequency query also produced word clouds to determine the repetition of words within each theme (Ahearn 2014; Fell & Sporleder 2014; Heimerl 2014) (see Figures 1-14). Word clouds are computer-generated images artistically arranged to demonstrate word frequency within a text, by highlighting the most frequent as the largest within the word cloud (American Heritage Dictionary, 2016). The repetitive words were listed to represent the general themes based on each coded category (see Tables 1.2-1.8 and 2.2-2.8).

### **Summary**

In summary, this qualitative study employed triangulation by exploring the development and maintenance of the SBWA while examining a possible relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women through musical analysis and semi-structured interviews. Fifty songs and 18 interviews of Black women regarding the concept of SBWA and mental health provided the data for this study (see Table 3). Multiple rounds of inductive and deductive coding were utilized to connect the data to previously literature while

allowing for new themes to emerge. In the following chapter, the findings of this study will be discussed.

“I’m a mama, freedom fighter, I’m a queen

But if I don't speak up then tell me what it means” (Mohlabane, 2017)

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the development and maintenance of the SBWA in the Black community. Further, this study sought to explore the relationship between the SBWA and the self-image of Black women, and if a relationship between SBWA and receiving professional mental health services exists. The study utilized a mixed qualitative methods approach using arts-based musical analysis and semi-structured interviews for data analysis. As previously noted, 50 songs from the Black Power Era and Black Lives Matter Era were utilized for data analysis, specifically to answer the first two research questions:

1. How is the Strong Black Woman defined in the music from the Black Power Era?
2. How is the Strong Black Woman defined in the music from the Black Lives Matter Era?

I examined the lyrics in a poetic prose format to which I analyzed the data from the viewpoint of the interviewer while the lyrics represented the voice of the interviewee (Leavy, 2009). In addition to the musical analysis, the remaining research questions were addressed using 18 semi-structured interviews of Black women:

3. How do interview participants define the Strong Black Woman?
4. What general themes between the music and interviews exists regarding the Strong Black Woman?
5. What aspects of the Strong Black Woman do participants possess?
6. How does this archetype affect the participant’s identity?

7. How does the archetype impact participant's mental health?
8. Does the archetype inform decisions for seeking mental health treatment?

This chapter will convey the participant's responses while maintaining their voices and correlating the responses to that of the musical analysis. Themes in the musical analysis were identified through the NVivo 12 word query that provided a list of most commonly used words, stemmed words, and synonyms. After coding the interviews I identified themes when the concept was expressed by more than half of the participants. This chapter reports the findings of the study including data analysis and presenting of emerging themes from the deductive coding.

### **Research Question 1**

*How is the Strong Black Woman defined in the music from the Black Power Era?*

The first research question seeks to understand how the song lyrics during the Black Power Era communicated to the larger Black female audience of the time the qualities of the SBWA. Several themes emerged from the word frequency queries of the deductive coding analysis of the music lyrics. The coded categories of Care for Others, Hardships, Independence, Pride, Spirituality or Religion, Strength, and Woman/Girl, which provided insight on how the qualities of the SBWA were conceptualized during the inception of the term. From the queries, I created word clouds to demonstrate the most frequently used words in each coded category (see Figures 1-7), similar words were grouped and themes were developed from each word grouping (see Tables 1.2-1.8).

**Care for others.** Songs such as Nina Simone's Mississippi Goddam written about the Jim Crow South provided lyrics such as "All I want is equality For my sister my brother my people and me" (Simone, 1964). These lyrics demonstrate the caretaker aspect of the SBWA



with repetitive words of Free, Right, Equality, Freedom, Justice, Better, Need demonstrating how caretaking improves the lives of others, specifically of those in the Black community. The words Woman, People, Brother, Sister, Self demonstrates the unifying aspect of the caretaker role for the Black community. While Love, Respect, Truth, Share, Give provides principles of caretaker behaviors.

**Hardships.** Stevie Wonder's Living for the City illustrates the hardships experienced by the SBW with the lyric "His mother goes to scrub the floors for many And you'd best believe she hardly gets a penny" (Wonder, 1973). The hardships experienced by Black women and the Black community found in the musical analysis revealed the frequently used words of Holding, Back, Never, and Pain demonstrates how challenging the hardships are for those in the Black community. The words Black, Skin, People, Mother, Folks, Somebody, Color, Brother, and Brown signify how these hardships are faced by the entire Black community. While the words Hard, Different, Power, and Little represent the challenges of these hardships and feelings of inadequacy as a result. The words Living and Life represent how hardships are typical occurrences in the Black community. Similarly, the words City, World, Mississippi, and Alabama demonstrate how racism and discrimination have impacted the world and local communities, specifically referencing the Jim Crow South. Despite the hardships faced by the Black community the words Love and Give represent an ideal of maintaining positivity towards others.

**Independence.** Considering the independent and self-reliant nature of the SBWA the words Give, Need, Free, Equality, and Respect express the desires of the independent Black woman. Respect is a theme highlighted throughout Aretha Franklin's 1967 album I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You, with one of the most popular songs RESPECT stating repeatedly

“All I'm askin' Is for a little respect when you get home” (Franklin, 1967). While the terms People, and Somebody demonstrates the concern for the entire Black community. The words Freedom, Mind, Better, Somehow, and Believe represent having faith that independence will be achieved. Though the words Stop, Hard, and Tried express the difficulties associated with being an independent Black woman. Finally, the words Move, Make, Find, Askin', Tell, Gotta, and Marching represent the actions of an independent Black woman.

**Pride.** One of the most influential songs of the BPM era was James Brown's “Say it Loud I'm Black and I'm proud” urging the Black community to gain self-love as they have been taught opposing messages for so long (Brown, 1968). Analyzing the pride displayed by the strong Black woman despite the hardships and oppression they faced during this era. The frequently used words of Black, Young, Gifted, Winner, Proud, and Brown demonstrate positive imagery of the Black community. The words Loud, Sing, and Tell demonstrate how the positive imagery should be expressed and verbalized. Respect, Free, Dream, Freedom, and Better illustrates how pride improves emotions and feelings. While the words Move, Going, Marching, and Stand represent the actions associated with having pride in oneself and the Black community.

**Spirituality/Religion.** Reflective of the strong sense of spirituality in the Black community lyrics such as “We're gonna move on up Seven by seven We're God's children And we got to get to Heaven” encouraged the Black community to maintain their spiritual faith through the hardships they faced (Paul, 1972). Exploring the spiritual and religious connection to the Strong Black woman Give, Prayer, Believing, Bible, Christian, and Heaven demonstrate how much of the foundation of spirituality and religion in the Black community is that of the Christian faith while also indicating how those who ascribe to Christianity behave. The words

Love, Blessed, Light, and Mercy are the results of ascribing to spiritual or religious practice. While People, Brother, Father, Lord, Person, Friends, Gentleman, and Children express the unity in spirituality and religion of the Black community.

**Strength.** Strength is demonstrated throughout several songs in the BPM analysis as lyrics like “Sticks and stones, May break my bones, But in the end, You're gonna' see my friend, oh! No matter how hard you try, you can't stop me now” encouraged the Black community to remain strong against harassment and discrimination (The Temptations, 1969). Exploring the multiple forms of strength of the SBWA provided the repetitive words of People, Somebody, Mother, and Black referencing how all members of the Black community need to display strength, however, the word mother also links the strength characteristic to the caretaker role of the Black woman. The words Freedom, Hard, Tried, Free, Respect, Right, and Fight indicate the necessity of strength in fighting for equality. While the words Make, Move, Tell, Need, Going, Understand, and Marching reference using one's strength to take action. Whereas, Power and Love demonstrate what can be gained through strength in adverse situations.

**Woman/Girl.** The final category representing Black women and girls highlighted words such as little, plaything, and nothing, in the context of songs such as "Do Right Man/Do Right Woman" "Tell it Like it is", "It's a Man's World", and "Respect" these words represent the images that can be viewed as adverse but are actually favorable. For example, the word nothing, though seemingly negative it is a reference from James Brown's It's Man's World which states, "But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing without a woman or a girl", demonstrating the worth and value of a woman. Thus, strength can be viewed as to be taken seriously and have value or worth, as seen in those lyrics. While words such as Girl, Sister, Mother, Woman, and Strong represent the roles and expectations for women and girls. The words Freedom, Free, Respect,

Love, Equality, and Better indicate the desires of the Black women of the era. Further, the words Tell, Find, and Askin' represent how the strong Black woman verbalizes these desires.

### **Conclusion**

The music examined from the Black Power Era provided some insights on how artists chose to inspire and encourage while expressing the sentiments of the Black community during the Black Power Era. Themes of frustration and anger towards segregation and brutality can be seen throughout many songs. However, additional messages are specific to the Black community. Words to encourage pride, push towards continued fights against the struggles, and have self-respect can also be seen throughout these lyrics.

Additionally, the analysis reveals how the SBWA was defined during the Black Power Era, believed to be the time when the term was introduced and became universally accepted term (Collins, 2000). The lyrics reveal that Black women were expected to be strong and supportive of her "brothers" and "sisters" in the Black community. Often times "Mama" or "Mother" was referenced reinforcing the theme of the Black woman as a caretaker of her family and community. Further, the themes of pride in oneself and community and a strong sense of spirituality and religion were also important aspects of the SBWA conveyed through the lyrics (Abrams et al., 2014). Reinforcing the previous literature that the image of the SBWA is that of a Black woman who is expected to do everything necessary to be a support to the Black family and community and placing value and worth in her duties and responsibilities associated with caretaking (Collins, 2000; Romero, 2000; Abrams et al., 2014).

### **Research Question 2**

*How is the Strong Black Woman defined in the music from the Black Lives Matter Era?*

This research question seeks to understand how the song lyrics of modern day, represented by the Black Lives Matter Era, have communicated to the larger Black female audience the qualities of the SBWA. This question examines if the SBWA themes from the Black Power Movement remained in the psyche of the Black community or if new themes emerged. Similarly to the Black Power Era musical analysis the lyrics of the BLM Era utilized word frequency queries of the deductive coding analysis of the music lyrics (see Figures 8-14). The coded categories of Care for Others, Hardships, Independence, Pride, Spirituality/Religion, Strength, and Woman/Girl which provided insight on how the qualities of the SBWA were conceptualized during the inception of the term. From the queries word clouds were created to demonstrate the most frequently used words in each coded category, similar words were grouped and several themes emerged in the analysis (see Tables 2.2-2.8).

**Care for others.** Jill Scott's Run, Run, Run illustrate the caretaker role of the SBW with the lyrics:

"I gotta run run run run, baby

Gotta put food on the table

Mama's workin' and know mama's able

I've gotta run run run run

I'm Superwoman Flying through the city" (Scott, 2015)

Specifically, referring to herself as Superwoman Scott demonstrates the SBW characteristic of caretaking as a single mother. Further exploration of the caretaker aspect of the SBWA yielded the repetitive words of Woman, Mama, Rock, Strength, Ladies, and Fighter demonstrating the characteristics of a caretaker. Specifically, the terms Strength and fighter provide insight into how the caretaker role is portrayed. While the words Love, Giving, Feed,

Needed, Deal, Cope, Help and Hope establish the behaviors of the caretaker. The words Run, Stand, Endured, Climb, Pain, and Fall represents the experiences of the caretaker. Finally, Free, Freedom, and Equal demonstrate how caregivers aid in the achievements of the community.

**Hardships.** Examining the hardships experienced by Black women and the Black community the frequently used words of Mama, Woman, Mother, and Girl demonstrate the roles of those who endure hardships. As expressed in the lyrics “Momma was a G, she was cleanin’ hotels” Janelle Monae highlights the challenges of her mother as a caretaker and provider (Robinson et al., 2018). The words Feel, Hard, Pain, Hell, and Tired express the emotions of those enduring hardships. Words such as Need, Freedom, and Away express the desires of the Black woman facing hardships. While the words Tell, Teach, Look, Going, and Made express what should be done to combat the hardships that are faced by Black women. Finally, Tried, Giving, Hold, Loose, and Keep represent the efforts made to overcome hardships.

**Independence.** Many of the lyrics demonstrated independence in face of adversity with lyrics like “and I never needed nobody never needed no one” artist demonstrated their independence in their personal and professional lives (Chilombo, 2017). Assessing the independent and self-reliant nature of the SBWA the words Flawless, Ladies, Girl Shine, and Rise demonstrate positive descriptive attributes of the independent woman. The words Need, Keep, Made, and Mine encourage Black women to gain and remain independent. While the words Tell, Look, and Live encourage demonstrating independence through words and actions. However, the words Give and Care indicate that though the Black woman is encouraged to be independent she must also remain concerned and helpful towards others.

**Pride.** One of the most iconic songs from the BLM music that demonstrates pride in Beyoncé's *Flawless* to which she exclaims:

"I woke up like this I woke up like this  
We flawless, ladies tell 'em  
I woke up like this I woke up like this  
We flawless, ladies tell 'em  
Say I, look so good tonight  
God damn, God damn  
Say I, look so good tonight  
God damn, God, damn" (Martin et al., 2013)

An anthem of Strong Black Woman encouraging pride in oneself and appearance the despite hardships and oppression. An analysis in pride revealed the frequently used words of *Flawless*, *Shine*, *Diamond*, *Bright*, *Light*, *Masterpiece*, *Beautiful*, *Eyes*, and *Hair* describes the positive attributes of the proud. *Girl*, *Black*, and *Ladies* explains that the positive attributes are specifically relating to Black women and girls. Additionally, the words *Tell*, *Work*, *Touch*, *Gave*, *Likes*, *Want*, *Believe*, and *Look* encourage pride through words and actions.

**Spirituality/Religion.** Though the songs in the analysis were restricted to R&B, Soul, and Neo-Soul the song "If You Don't Mind" performed by Ledisi is a crossover R&B/gospel song which has gained popularity in both genres. The encouraging lyrics "Spent many nights on my knees 'Cause that's the key for me to be free" demonstrate the strong connection to religion and spirituality (Franklin 2017). Exploring the spiritual and religious connection to the SBWA *Heaven*, *Devil*, *Soul*, *Pray*, and *Prayin'* indicate the foundation of spirituality and religion in the Black community are rooted in Christianity. The words *Approve*, *Give*, *Deserve*, *Build*, and

Come demonstrate the actions of those who ascribe to spirituality and religion. Finally, Black, Brother, Sister, Woman, and Many connect spirituality and religion to the Black community.

**Strength.** Examining the multiple forms of strength of the SBWA provided the repetitive words of Woman, Black, Mama referencing the Black woman, in a motherhood/caregiver role as strong. Love, Flawless, Rock, and Rose demonstrate the characteristics of strength. More specifically the word Rose in the context of the song “Rose in Harlem” represents the idea of strength in adversity while maintaining the traditional standards of womanhood. Finally, the words Live, Stand, Keep, Tell, Look, and Move demonstrate the actions of the strong.

**Woman/Girl.** While woman and girl referenced the Black woman it also must be noted that these lyrics also demonstrated pride, strength, and caretaking. For example, Janelle Monae’s “I Like That” states:

“I don't care what I look like but I feel good

Better than amazing, and better than I could

Told the whole world, I'm the venom and the antidote

Take a different type of girl to keep the whole world afloat” (Robinson et al., 2018)

Monae expresses pride in herself but also the need to “keep the whole world afloat” demonstrating the caretaker role of the SBW. This category further emphasized words such as Woman, Black, Girl, Ladies, and Mama referencing the labels and roles of Black women and girls. Again the word Mama speaks more specifically to the caregiver role of Black women and girls. While Strong, Flawless, Proud, and Rock describes the characteristics of Black women and girls while describing them in a positive light. Finally, the words Work, Prove, Stand, and Love demonstrates the actions or expected actions of Black women and girls.



## Conclusion

The analyzed music of the BLM Era offered some insights on how Black female artists express the modern day sentiments of the Black community. These artists demonstrate concern for the state of the Black community today, which seems to have not much difference from the Black Power Era. Themes of continued hardships faced by the Black community and specifically Black women were expressed throughout the lyrics. However, many lyrics also encourage pride, positive self-images and worth, and independence.

Additionally, the analysis provided a greater understanding of how the SBWA is currently defined and correlates between the themes of the BPM and modern day. The lyrics reveal that Black women continue to be expected to maintain a caregiver role in their homes and communities referenced several times as “Mama” or “Mother” throughout the lyrics. Further, the themes of pride and a strong sense of spirituality and religion remain as important aspects of the SBWA (Abrams et al., 2014). However, pride differed between the music in the two eras. Pride in the BPM analysis demonstrated pride in the community as illustrated in the song To Be Young, Gifted And Black with the lyrics:

“ To be young, gifted and black  
Oh what a lovely precious dream  
To be young, gifted and black  
Open your heart to what I mean  
In the whole world, you know  
There are billion boys and girls  
Who are young, gifted and black  
And that's a fact!” (Hathaway,1970)

However, in the BLM era songs such as Beyonce's Flawless boasts lyrics like "We flawless, ladies tell 'em, I woke up like this" or Jazmine Sullivan's Masterpiece proclaiming "And I finally see I'm a work of art, A masterpiece" demonstrating a stronger sense of self-pride (Bell & Sullivan, 2015; Martin et al., 2013). The modern day music, though concerned with the community as a whole, placed more value on the personal pride of the SBW rather than that of the Black community. The lyrics of the BLM era build on the Black Power Movement (BPM) era maintaining the concept that the SBW is a caretaker for her community and family however, she maintains her independence and demonstrates a greater sense of self-pride.

### **Research Question 3**

*How do interview participants define the Strong Black Woman?*

This research question seeks to understand how the research participants define the strong Black woman. Prior research indicates that the SBWA displays multiple forms of strength (Abrams et al., 2014). Thematic analysis of the interview responses yielded several themes related to the characteristics associated with displaying multiple forms of strength. Participant's responses when defining the SBWA focused on resilience, independence, and caretaking substantiating previous research on the SBWA (Collins, 2000; Romero, 2000; Abrams et al., 2014). Additionally, participants discussed the themes of mental and emotional stability while maintaining a positive image for the outside world substantiating previous literature on the role strain and suppressed emotions of the SBWA (Harrington, 2010; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Romero, 2000; Thomas et al., 2004). Further many of the participants discussed having learned the concept from observing women they deem to be strong Black women, pop culture, and music.

**“To me, it speaks of resilience”.** When asked directly of the characteristics of the SBWA, participants responded by discussing resilience as a key factor in the concept. Related to the historical challenges faced by Black women from slavery to present day participants believed that resilience was an innate characteristic in Black women.

Tanya: “To me, it speaks of resilience and endurance and courage.”

Nicole: “Resilience, of course strength, beauty, fortitude, culture, tradition.”

Sandra: “It means to me a woman who's resilient in the face of any adversity.”

Sheri: “The term strong black woman means someone who's confident, with agility, with grace.”

Sara: “I think what it means to me is more so identifying with Black as a race, not just a strong woman. Being a resilient people. And when you think about a strong Black woman, I'm thinking of being able to be the backbone of the family or being able to overcome adversities and trials and tribulations that may occur within the family, or within themselves.”

Participants focused on resiliency, the ability to recover from difficulties as an aspect of strength. Confirming the research that Black women and the Black community have a developed resilience as an aspect of strength due to the hardships of slavery, Jim Crow, and the civil rights era (Collins, 2000; Romero, 2000). Participants discussed that Black women “have to be” resilient in order to face daily challenges and experiences as a “double minority”.

**“I think independence”.** In addition to resilience, participants discussed the characteristic of independence as an aspect of the SBWA. Similar to Romero's (2000) identification of self-reliance as a characteristic of the SBWA the participants believed that emotional, physical, and financial independence was an important aspect of the SBWA.

Renee: “Person who's a go-getter in what she wants. Maybe relentless is not the right word, but, definitely, ambitious.”

Stephanie: “I think independence, financially independent and perhaps otherwise.

Resilient and unafraid. I think mostly a Black woman who is not physically, emotionally, financially is so dependent on anyone or anything.”

However, a few participants discussed how the independence characteristic of the SBWA leads to the breakdown of the Black family and community.

**“unintended consequence”.**

Mary: “I don't think there's anything wrong with it but I think that if you take culture outside of religion too far, you're out of balance. It's nice to be strong but independent and seek what's best for yourself, but then coming back to religion, you have to think about the family.”

Michelle: “So I think the concept of a strong black woman does tear down the family unit in the African American community because it puts her on top, and it puts the man pretty much in line with the children. Like he has to fall in place with the kids because she's got it. She can carry you and them on her back, and she could do a lifting like Beyoncé. She can cook a pot of greens and do the taxes. So it just for me that concept it really does destroy just kingdom order, period.”

Renee: “I think that within the community, I think that it has given an unintended consequence. And that black men have rejected it. In the sense that when you give this label, and the way we have perceived it, then it leaves no room for someone else to come into your life. It's like, you handle it all, you got it all. So, you do everything. The

unintended consequence of while you're lifting and celebrating a woman, it has, in turn, the consequence has been there's no room for a helpmate. Or a partner. Or someone to support you.

Stephanie: "I do wonder if that what affects our relationships. I think when you're trying to make life living there is sort of a duality that you're trying to live that's hard. So, like - how do I boost up my man's ego? How do I make him feel needed and important? When, I'm trying to reflect the strength all at the same time. I think it's a difficult; I think it creates a difficult double role that we have to play."

Though participants believed that independence is an important component of the SBWA, some also believed that so much focus on independence negatively affects the Black family and community. Further demonstrating the role strain of the Black woman as noted by Stephanie, it creates a "double role" speaking directly to the role strain of Black women.

**"Superwomen"**. In addition to resilience and independence, participants discussed the caretaker role of the SBWA. Participants discussed that the SBW is supportive of the family and community; however, many participants discussed that the SBW must maintain her emotions no matter the strain of her role as a caretaker.

Nikki: "The first thing that always pops up as a mother, hard working inside the house as well as outside the house. Mentally strong to take on everybody's emotion, sickness, issues. Honestly she has the role of multiple different occupations from nurse to teacher, lover, mother."

Tammy: "A woman who is fearless. A woman who takes on all of the problems of everyone around her. A woman who is emotional but can keep it together for everyone

around her especially her immediate family and her husband or partner, if she has one.

Someone who has it together for the outside as well, whether they do or they don't."

Lisa: "Pretty much a woman who does everything. Superwomen. That's what we are. We hold down a family. Pretty much everything. Cook, clean, shop, take care of business. I think every black woman or every woman has to be strong at some point in their life. It just means a super woman."

Alex: "To be able to persevere through anything. Being able to support other people, specifically Black men. Be it father figure, romantic relationship, raising sons. I think a lot of a strong black woman's world is supporting the men in her community and uplifting the women as well."

Maggie: "Perseverance, optimism, when things look down ... I want to say not unfeeling, but you kind of have to be able to mask your feelings to some extent, to make sure that things get done."

The concept of the Black woman as the caretaker or doing "mother" and "other mother work" is directly related to slavery in which the Black woman was forced to care for her children, the mater's children, and the plantation community (Collins, 2000). This concept continues on today as the participants noted the caretaker responsibilities of the SBWA. Participants discussed the Black woman taking care of herself, her family, and her community. Described as "superwoman" the SBW is unable to show emotion in order to remain strong for those in her care.

**"Have it all together all the time"**. Directly correlated to emotional stability participants discussed the SBW maintains a façade of perfection to the outside world. Participants discussed that emotional stability also meant that the SBW does not allow others to see her as unable to

handle challenges. Confirming previous literature that Black women “cry in solitude” and demonstrate the outward appearance of having it together (Romero 2000, p.227).

Renee: “Probably someone who is pulled together. Somebody who is in charge, measured. I guess pulled together emotionally, mentally, in the terms of outward appearance.”

Tanya: “Because just the feeling of you have to have it all together all the time, you got to look fabulous. You got to be fabulous. You have to have everything lined up. You have to keep all the balls in the air all the time, and you can't admit necessarily that you're sad or you're anxious or you're depressed. Speaking to that whole issue of mental health, if you let yourself stay there in this, ‘I've got to be perfect. I can't let anyone down. I can't let the whole African American race down.’ It becomes a heavy burden, and I don't think any of us were meant to carry a race or carry a culture.”

Sara: “Being able to take care of themselves as well as other people. And despite things happening throughout the Black woman's life, they're still able to keep going and not really let that stop them ... no matter what challenges have been faced.”

As discussed by Romero (2000) the Black woman presents an “illusion of control” because “showing vulnerability is unacceptable” (Romero 200, p. 227). The participants believed that showing an outward expression of emotions was not demonstrating strength. Participants believed that “having it all together” meant to keep emotions in check and to maintain the image of resiliency in the face of obstacles.

**“Shown itself in the various generations”.** Much of what is understood of the SBWA has been taught and demonstrated from one generation to the next by Black women. Collins (2000) discussed the relationship of mothers and daughters as a place where resistance of

negative images are taught (Collins, 2000). Thus, the participant's confirmed the prior research and discussed learning about the characteristics of the SBW through examples within their families and communities. However, some participants also discussed how the image was solidified through music and pop culture.

### **Families and Communities**

Sasha: "Strong Black woman to me means my mother. I think that she is the epitome of strength. I think, because of her strength, I mean she's educated, she worked, she took care of three kids. She fought a crazy husband and all of his, whatever. He was out there and she retired beautifully and she's amazing."

Whitney: "I consider the strong black woman not one ideal, but its shown itself in the various generations that have come before me I guess you could say. Like my grandmother's idea of a strong black woman is a very different idea of what my mother's idea of a strong black woman and then my idea. And it's evolving as time evolves. So for my grandmother the strong black woman was being able to provide for her family. Make sure there's a home cooked meal on the stove, make sure their kids are getting their education, making sure their kids are well off."

Lisa: "Well my grandmother. My grandmother, it's funny because she started having kids, she got married like 16, started having kids at 16. Pretty much worked all her life. I had the opportunity to move in with her. I got to watch her on a daily basis and she did housekeeping for Neiman Marcus. But her little paycheck, I mean she would still able to provide to other people. I'm like, 'How do you provide on your small means to others ...' I mean everyone in my family, my mother, my aunt, me, and then every Tuesday, her off day, she would cook a really good dinner. I would walk home, and down the end of the



street I would smell the fried chicken, the mash potatoes, corn or green beans. The thing is she was, she still is God fearing. She went to church on a regular basis, she took care of her husband even when he got ill. He had to have legs amputated, she was still there.”

Nikki: “My mother is the first one. Ms. Butler who was my kindergarten teacher, and also the Delta who wrote my letter when I crossed over into that sorority is another one. My sister's godmother who watched me while I grew up, and I ended up watching her daughters when I was in college. She's definitely the epitome of a strong woman. The studio owners that I've worked for. I've actually only worked for studios that had been owned and ran by African American women, and they are amazingly strong women in my eyes.”

Sandra: “I learned it from my family, my mother. My grandmother. The experiences of other women in my family.”

Tanya: “I guess, looking and watching my mom, listening to her. My mom has a very forceful personality. I never saw my mom really back down ever, not once ever, and so because she has such a strong personality, I don't have that same trait of the assertiveness that she does, so it was somewhat intimidating to me, but again, I definitely learned it through my mom.”

### **Music and Pop-Culture**

Alex: “The original, 1997 version of Soul Food. Yes, that was a very strong movie with a lot of different black women, strong black women, in a completely different background. The Color Purple. Hate to use super stereotypical ones but they're so real. Definitely Claire Huxtable on the Cosby Show. More recently Mary Jane Paul, Gabriel Union's role in the show ‘Being Mary Jane.’”

Anna: “Solange. I love her. That's one of my favorite songs. There just so many. Aretha Franklin. I could just go on and on and on. Whitney [Houston] was strong. I'm trying to think of some off hand. There's just so many. Viola Davis. Right now she's one of my favorites. There's no pretense. She doesn't have all that makeup on. She could be her real self.”

Madison: “ I do like India Arie. I think she's a strong African American woman. I think her lyrics are ... Well, the one's from back in the day, are good lyrics because it's not talking about stuff and having stuff. Stuff making the person, which is totally backwards. I like gospel, like Erica Campbell. Mary Mary songs. I think they're positive and strong. It's all I can think of right now.”

Mary: “ I listen to Jill Scott. I guess Erykah Badu, I think they exemplify independence and strength. Not necessarily, the women that are examples of a traditional family, female roles but very independent.”

Tanya: “What really crystallized this for me was seeing a movie, the Autobiography of Ms. Jane Pittman, and the role played by Cicely Tyson. There was a scene in which she was being mistreated, I guess, by the slave owner, and she was forced to pull a buggy that normally a horse would pull. She was forced to pull it. I remember that imagery. I remember her clenching and struggling, but she actually pulled it. It was certainly a triumph of her spirit over the oppression that surrounded her, but it also gave me this sense of almost needing to be superhuman, which is intimidating, but nonetheless, that was a very, very early image that was cemented in my thinking. When of a strong black woman, I actually think of that scene with Cicely Tyson.”

The participants confirmed that mothers, grandmothers, and caregivers in their life demonstrated the image of the SBWA. Demonstrating the connection between the SBWA and the Black woman's caregiver role in the community and family. Participants also believed that through music and images in television and film they were able to recognize the characteristics of the SBW. Tanya notes "the a triumph of her spirit over the oppression that surrounded her" when discussing the character of Jane Pittman played by Cicely Tyson. Directly correlating the resilient aspect of the SBWA to the imagery portrayed in film.

### **Conclusion**

The thematic analysis of the interviews confirmed prior research of the concept of the SBWA. Participants agreed with theory that the SBW is one who is resilient, independent, and emotionally stable, while maintaining the outward appearance of being in control. The women in the study recognized how this image is challenging to maintain stating, "You have to keep all the balls in the air all the time," illustrating the difficulty of trying to "hold it together" for herself, her family, and her community.

Much of the definition of the SBWA is focused on mothers, grandmothers, or other caregivers in the family and the community. The participants associated SBWA with caregiver, even those who did not have children of their own spoke of caring for brothers, husbands, students, and young relatives. As the image is learned through observing caregiver's participants seemed to also believe, it is demonstrated through becoming a caregiver. The characteristic of independence seemed to divide participant's responses, as some believes independence was a necessary attribute others believed it caused a breakdown of the family and Black community. Additionally, participants believed that the SBWA image portrayal in music and pop culture confirmed and expanded their definition.

#### **Research Question 4**

*What general themes between the music and interviews exists regarding the Strong Black Woman?*

As previously discussed, the music examined in from the Black Power Era define the SBWA as a Black woman who is supportive of Black community. Lyrical analysis found the terms “Mama” or “Mother” used throughout the songs, which reinforced the theme of the Black woman as a caretaker of her family and community. With lyrics like “Say it Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud” or “To be young, gifted, and Black” pride in oneself and community was found to be of great importance to the Black Power Era and SBWA. The music of the BLM Era defines the SBWA similarly again placing great emphasis on the caregiver role of the Black woman. With terms such as Love, Giving, Feed, Needed, Deal, Cope, Help, and Hope the lyrics of the BLM era furthers the concept of the caretaker in modern society by specifying the behaviors of a caretaker. The music of both eras substantiate the literature demonstrating that the SBW is a Black woman who is expected to be a supportive to the Black family and community and placing worth in the responsibilities associated with caretaking (Collins, 2000; Romero, 2000; Abrams et al., 2014). Participants agreed with the musical analysis and discussed the archetype as being associated with a caregiver. Likewise, the participants observed qualities of caregivers in their lives and associated those qualities as aspects of the SBW. Discussing how “looking and watching my mom” other caretakers overcame personal and professional challenges taught them what it means to be a SBW. Additionally, participants believed that they are demonstrating the qualities of the SBWA when they are in a caregiver role as one participant described herself as a

“die-hard mom” discussing how she puts all of her time, energy, and resources into being a single mother.

Though the theme of caretaker has remained consistent, the theme of pride has changed. In modern music pride has shifted its focus from the Black community to the Black woman specifically. The music of modern day focuses on specific aspects of self-pride with terms like Flawless, Shine, Diamond, Bright, Light, Masterpiece, Beautiful, Eyes, and Hair Black women of modern day are urged by artists to focus more on themselves. This pride seemed to resonate with participants as they viewed it as a demonstration of independence.

Mary: “I listen to Jill Scott. I guess Erykah Badu, I think they exemplify independence and strength. Not necessarily, the women that are examples of a traditional family, female roles but very independent.”

Stephanie: “ So, Cardi B talks about what she has. Actually, I don't know a lot of Cardi B songs, but this is just the songs I have heard on the radio. You know the – ‘I don't necessarily need you, because I have it going on over here, kind of songs’.”

Lisa: “I love Beyoncé. I even like Cardi B but, Cardi B is nothing like me. But, she is a woman who's ... she's grinding. She's getting that money. She's like I don't need a man.”

Though participants agreed with the musical analysis that independence and pride are aspects of the SBWA, some disagreed with the portrayal of the SBW by modern day musical artists. Believing that some musical artists negatively portray the SBW, which is damaging to the overall image of Black women.

Tammy: “She's (Cardi B) inarticulate. And for those of us who are trying to be not that, it's like oh my god, you set us back about 40 years, you set us back.”

Alex: “ Nikki Minaj as an artist and a woman who has, you know, continued to work her way up through her career and I support and agree with a lot of the things that she talks about beyond just what her lyrics say in her music but at the same time, I don't necessarily identify with what she's chosen as her image of a Strong Black woman.”

Maggie: “Like Cardi B and Nicki Minaj, they're very proud of their ... I don't know, confrontational behavior, and it's a very negative stereotype of that African American woman. They embody it, and they present it to the world, and they became successful because of it. That's not what should happen. Those characters just needed to become disassociated with black women over time. They only seem to be getting closer together.”

Michelle: “ I know this name is probably going to come up many, many times, Beyonce. You think of how she started off from pretty much a humble beginning to where she is now where everything is like girl power and is over sexualized, and small kids are looking at her thinking that, ‘Well, that's Beyonce, she can do everything. She can have 12 babies and be married and go on tour every other day, and take care of her mom over here, and being cute for a photo shoot. Look at her, she woke up like that.’ No, she didn't. She didn't. And so just with images like that and even some of the lyrics to her songs, it just to me it puts out the concept that you're supposed to do everything, and you got to look good doing it. Which is not reality. For the record I have on a baseball cap this morning.”

Nicole: “Beyonce who could be a very strong character for our time, but you know, I find an issue, now that she's a mom, you know, the way that she may still dress or the way that she may flaunt her booty or you know, whatever. Like I still feel like there are compromises that are made in songs and in television for the man, quote unquote. And those compromises for the man, nine times out of ten, aren't the strong black woman perspective or persona.”

Nikki: “Beyonce probably would have been one of the artists I had used in the beginning, but the way she's evolving, she's still a strong black woman, but she's becoming more sexualized.”

The participants discussed a connection to the lyrics and their ideas of independence however many were discouraged by the portrayal of the artist. Referencing their over sexualized images and confrontational behavior the participants believed that these characteristics feed into the negative stereotypes of Black women. Additionally, the response of Michelle discussing Beyonce “Look at her, she woke up like that. No, she didn't. She didn't.” demonstrates how musical artists ability to set a high standard of the “illusion of control” further strains the typical Black woman who does not have the ability to maintain such a standard.

### **Conclusion**

Examining the lyrics from the BPM era and BLM era and while comparing the participant’s interview response yields defining characteristics of the SBWA. Participants agree with the conclusions of the music as stating that the SBW is deeply connected to a caregiver role. Whether, as a mother or a caregiver in the community the data demonstrated that it is a common belief that the SBW cares for others. Pride was another characteristic found in the music

interviews though over time pride has evolved from pride in the Black community to the Black woman's self-pride. Self-pride for the participants was also associated with the characteristic of independence though participants disagreed with the portrayal of self-pride and independence of the musical artists they agreed with the lyrical content of the songs. As previously mentioned, the interview participants discussed how the SBWA was taught to them through observation. Participants' discontent with a negative portrayal of the Black woman in society was related to how children in the Black community would perceive the SBWA. Discussing how these negative characteristics "needed to become disassociated with black women over time" participants again assume the caregiver role in protecting and preserving the image of Black women for future generations.

### **Research Question 5**

*What aspects of the Strong Black Woman do participants possess?*

This research question sought to establish how the participants viewed themselves as it relates to the characteristics they described of the SBWA. Interestingly, though there were favorable responses to the characteristics of the SBWA, some participants do not personally identify with the SBWA as they found the definition to limit their ability for individuality. Those that did identify with the characteristics did so as it related to the caregiver role. Many participants also believed that they did not have a choice in being a SBW because simply being born a Black female forced them to assume the role.

**"I do not identify with the strong black woman".**

Michelle: "I do not identify with the strong black woman simply because for me as a Christian, the term is a bit out of kingdom order for me. I do believe that women are, we are strong no matter what race we are, but we are not to be in leadership roles ahead of



men. Just personal opinion. You are held responsible to do everything, you don't need anyone, particularly a man, to complete anything, and you're just supposed to have it all together on your own at all times. So it's a bit too independent for my taste.”

Sandra: “I’m like, hmm. Okay. I identify with them in that I think I am that woman. I think my experience and the experience of any woman reflect that, what that strong black woman is, but I don't ... I don't like to think of it as the defining factor of who I am.

Although I see myself as a strong black woman, I don't think it's a defining factor. It's a part of who I am, but that's not all of what defines me.”

Mary: “I consider myself resilient, not necessarily strong. Like, as things come, I find the courage to deal with it. Strength, I think, the idea of traditional black women being strong, they're prepared for anything, any day. It takes no preparation, they just go with it.”

Though few, compared to all of the participants, these women distanced themselves from the SBWA. For Michelle, her deeply rooted Christian faith did not allow her to assert independence, which she believed was the defining feature of the SBW. While Sandra and Mary discussed how the SBW limits their ability to self-define their identity.

**“try to fulfill being as strong of a woman”.**

Tammy: “Being a single parent who did not plan on being a single parent and I don't, I mean I don't know if there are people who do but I certainly didn't. I'm raising two African/American males and it is personified in my house to the point where there are times that I have to stop myself and say, wait a minute it's okay to cry in front of them, they need to see emotions they don't need to see you breaking things or any of that but some emotion is okay. But they also need to see perseverance and they need to see

resilience and they need to see those things. So, personally it's a fine line that you walk between being the rock of the family and the matriarch that you were ingrained to be. And social and emotions and recognizing that that's not weakness, that's just normal.”

Alex: “I definitely try to fulfill being as strong of a woman as possible and then I feel like I'm accountable when it comes to the duties of my version or my definition of general wellness. I have a lot of men in my life. From brothers and young men that I've worked with, whether it's through dance or anything else so I feel like I've drawn a lot of men in my life. Family and friends and romantic relationships where a lot of men consistently are seeking who can help them through a healing process so I think whenever I'm faced with the opportunity, I'm being reminded I need to uphold a level of accountability to those people.”

Nikki: “Wow. I think since I've become a mom, I feel like I encompass them more than I did before. Like a superpower I guess you would say, able to take on just about anything.”

The participants that do identify themselves as SBW relate it to their caretaker role. As previously mentioned, even participants without children focused on caring for brothers, fathers, and men in their lives. Additionally, a few participants believed that being a SBW is synonymous with being a Black woman as strength cannot be separated from Black woman.

**“I've always been”.**

Whitney: “I guess it's a hard question because it ... I've always been, and had to be, so I just identify those qualities as me. Or what I've been raised around and what I've known.”

Stephanie: “Because, I don't feel like I have another option. It's like saying, ‘Is it hard to be Black?’ Like I don't really know because I've never been anything else.”

Anna: “It just means living life every day. Just being able to maneuver in the world that we're in today. Whether that be school, work, just everyday life. Shopping, being able to maneuver and not let things get you down.”

Mary: “I feel like being a double minority, there are things that we've become accustomed to dealing with. It's just part of our everyday life, and so we soldier through, where, I think, some other people maybe wouldn't.”

Of those that identified some found the question puzzling, as they believed they had no choice in being a Strong Black Woman. These participants believed if a woman was born Black it automatically made her a Strong Black Woman due to the oppressions she faces as a double minority.

### **Conclusion**

The participants demonstrated consistency with previous research as they discussed the Strong Black Woman as an innate concept related directly to their being a Black woman who faces oppressions daily. Additionally, adding to the discourse of the Strong Black Woman as one who enacts these characteristics through the caretaker roles. Participants discussed a sense of responsibility to their families and the Black community as a whole. Those who did not define themselves as a SBW felt that the term was limiting. Previous research does assert the Strong Black Woman as one who is deeply rooted in religion and spirituality however, one participant still felt the concept encouraged values differing from her Christian values.

### **Research Question 6**

*How does this archetype affect the participant's identity?*

The research question seeks to examine how the SBW characteristics previously identified by participant's impact their identity. Participants identified their personal and

professional challenges as it relates to the SBWA, role strain, and restraining themselves and their voices in an effort to better appease those around them. The themes of this analysis highlight the participant's desires to be careful in their behaviors, wish to no longer be strong, or to suppress their emotions.

**“you have to kind of walk on eggshells”.**

Whitney: “What's hard about being a Black woman is debating on how you want to be perceived. Deciding, you know, well ... Okay, that was too much. I'm telling you the times that have tried me and I'm like, look. I can keep it cute, but don't get it twisted because ... don't get it twisted. I can keep it cute, but don't get it twisted. I'm not going to let you walk over me. I'm not gonna let you treat me like trash.”

Sheri: “In the working environment, trying to show number 1, that despite the fact that you may not be the one who asks a question every 30 seconds, that you still have an understanding of what is needed and what you're required to do and to be able to accomplish that task. Also, in a sense that you are able to be assertive in a different way without being loud and boisterous. I think also, just in general, we're prejudged. In reality, a lot. In a sense that if a person sees you, if you're not pristinely dressed at that particular moment, you decided to be more comfortable, they automatically think negatively of you. But if you are dressed up a lot, then in a sense they also think negatively of you. They think you're being too uppity.”

Sasha: “I have worked in for the most part, it predominantly white culture and yeah. I mean, a lot of people, I mean it takes a lot to understand other people's cultures and it's so easy to, ‘Oh God, she's angry.’ Well, you know, that kind of thing. I read a book and I cannot remember the artist or the author she wrote also, she wrote a book, it's called Mad

At Miles, and she talked about these black women having this ‘Nigger Bitch Fit’ and you have to kind of walk on eggshells so you are not seen as this angry, hostile, you know that kind of thing.”

These participants focused on how the SBW is associated with angry Black woman, as a result these women believed it was best to “walk on eggshells” to seem less aggressive. Demonstrating that the SBW walks the thin line between assertiveness and aggressiveness daily. Additionally, for some participants this role strain has shown to be overwhelming as some wished to no longer have to display a strong exterior.

**“sometimes I don't want to be strong”.**

Anna: “Sometimes you get tired of having to always be on the defensive. That's the way I feel I always feel like I have to have that guard up. Because you just never know what's going to be thrown at you. I document every little thing, and people laugh. So many times, I've been able to go back to the folder, and say, ‘You said right here.’ Other people do that as much. They're not that vigilant. I am, because I know, they just always try you.”

Sasha: “I think I'm happy with who I am. It's not hard, although sometimes I jokingly say, ‘I wonder what it would be like to be Kelly for a day,’ right when we say it as joke, but you know, they say things in jest or in some true. I'm like, ‘I wish I was you for one day,’ because I have this thing where, and maybe a little prejudice on my side. I think that white women are going to be okay. That's what I think. I think they're fine. I think they're crying and they lost their job and whatever. I'm like, don't worry, society is going to take care of you. You're going to be okay and I say that to my Black friends of course. I'm like, ‘She'll be fine. Trust me. Nobody is going to let little Kelly go without,’ they gonna

Woo, what's wrong? They're gonna make sure she's okay. They gonna hold her, they going to understand Kelly is hurt right now.”

Sara: “I mean, I think that ... I think with the whole term 'strong Black woman,' sometimes I think it's more so thought that we're ... Like, we can't be broken. Or we can do everything. And it's just like ... You have this term strong Black woman, but at the same time ... sometimes I don't want to be strong. And I know it sounds crazy, but sometimes I wanna be weak. I wanna be vulnerable. I wanna be ... I don't know how else to say it. I don't want to be strong all the time. I think it comes as a default more so than a bash. Like, ‘I'm a strong Black woman.’ Sometimes I think it can be a bit much. Not that it changes anything or it turns it off. It's just those moments where it can be overwhelming, or it can be a lot.”

Participants discussed the role strain associated with the SBWA. Focusing on the caretaker and emotional stability characteristics these participants felt that the role becomes overwhelming as the SBW is unable to “be vulnerable” or “be weak.” One participant discussed how she believed white women “Kelly” would be cared for by society in times of trouble. Demonstrating how the SBW remains self-reliant as she is not afforded this luxury. Further, participants shared how they suppress their emotions because their emotions are not validated.

**“I want to get passionate, I choose not too”.**

Anna: “In work situations. It's a big deal. So, I asked the one lady, she sent me to the other lady, she sent me to the other lady. So, finally, I get to the fourth person, she hangs the phone up in my face. Yes she did. I went to her office, opened her door. I said, ‘I don't know what the problem is, but I need an answer now.’ So, she starts crying. Then we both get called into the office. Now, I'm tearing up. The other lady said, ‘Look, you

made Mary-Ann cry.’ I said, ‘Are her tears more important than my tears?’ That kind of stuff. That kind of stuff. They look at us like we're the aggressors. All I'm trying to do is my job. So, I can't ask you a question? Come on.”

Madison: “If I'm at work, I have to in my head say, ‘Just let this one slide.’ Because, always speaking up ... Because there's stuff that I've been like, that's not right, or incorrect. But, pick and choose your battles when you're in a relationship, I do it same at work. I don't think it's right, but I'ma let them have it, 'cause I'm not going to be the one that's always bringing up the issue. Always saying, ‘That's not right.’ Or always saying the negative things... Because of the negative perception of, ‘Here she is again. Here's the black woman.’ And, most times, I'm the only black woman. Sometimes, only black person on the team.”

Nikki: “I think most other cultures are threatened by the black woman, especially those who are strong and take up the wordy. I know I personally tried to make sure that I'm always kind of calm and composed when I'm around other cultures because I don't want to feed into their stereotype of what they've already may have experienced from somebody else. But yeah, I think they are somewhat intimidated.”

Sasha: “I have worked in for the most part, it predominantly white culture and yeah. I mean, a lot of people, I mean it takes a lot to understand other people's cultures and it's so easy to, ‘Oh God, she's angry.’ Well, you know, that kind of thing. I read a book and I cannot remember the artist or the author she wrote also, she wrote a book, it's called Mad At Miles, and she talked about these black women having this ‘nigger bitch fit’ and you have to kind of walk on eggshells so you are not seen as this angry, hostile, you know that kind of thing.”

Nicole: “At work, because I'm one of the only black people there. So, it's like in times where I want to get passionate, I choose not too because I don't ... I think people already have a perception of us and I think that that perception could be a misconception if they were to see my passion because they don't understand it.”

These participants shared the challenges faced as the SBW is intimidating to others. The women spoke of suppressing their ideas and opinions at work. Anna mentioned how her emotional vulnerability was ignored stating, “are her tears more important than my tears?” Reinforcing the notion that the SBW is one who must demonstrate an outward appearance of emotional stability.

### **Conclusion**

Participants discussed how the SBWA impacted their identity. Some participants focused on how the perception of others caused them to shrink themselves so as to not appear as the “Angry Black Woman.” Though as Whitney explained “don’t get it twisted” these participants would defend themselves against those who tried to take advantage of them. Other participants focused on the weight of the SBWA asserting that they were tired of being strong with all the expectations that are required. Even wishing to be “Kelly” referencing the white privilege that is not afforded to Black women. Finally, participants discussed the inability to be assertive or express their opinions at work because they were ignored and not validated. As Anna stated, “are her tears more important than my tears?” when expressing frustration at her inability to be validated in a workplace issue. The participants discussed role strain as the themes of feeling overwhelmed, ignored, and unable to be vulnerable were the most impactful aspects of the SBWA on the participant’s identities.



## **Research Question 7**

*How does the archetype impact participant's mental health?*

As previously mentioned participants have discussed suppressing emotions and shrinking themselves so as to not come off as the “Angry Black Woman.” This coupled with the characteristic previously mentioned of suppressed emotions, has impacted the participant’s mental health and views on mental health in different ways. Some participants identified personal mental health issues of their own while others spoke to how the SBWA conveys messages about mental health issues.

### **Personal Mental Health Issues**

Tammy: “I think I go in and out at different times. I think the longest I've been there probably about a year. And it's just, you look around and your like, oh my gosh. And I swear everything is gray, even sunny days have like an overcast to them. I think I catch myself now and so I come out of them a little bit more now because my kids will be like momma, you're alright. And I realize how I affect the house, how my moods affect their's. And so it's like we got to get yourself together because they're starting to feel whatever this is and that's not good.”

Maggie: “You can feel depressed because you set an expectation in life that you feel like you're never going to reach. You can feel constantly anxious trying to pursue those goals of being the strong black woman that people expect you to be. That puts a lot of pressure on and I feel like that's what made me anxious going into college just because people expected me to be this person that I wasn't yet. Not to say I couldn't become that person, but I just wasn't there yet. That made me feel like I'm constantly under pressure and I'm behind. I feel like a lot of other people feel like that too. Like they're missing out on

something. That's where the depression and anxiety comes from because you're trying to be this strong black woman, but you feel depressed, you feel anxious, and that makes you feel like you're not a strong black woman. So, you're going to mask that. You're going to not feel those feelings, and keep pursuing after your goal, and it's like a vicious cycle of trying not to feel that and, pursuing your goal, but still feeling it, and it's getting worse.”

Stephanie: “I do feel like that it is an impression that the strong black woman is not supposed to cry about. When I have had moments that I wanted to cry, like you don't cry at work, that's unprofessional. You don't cry in front of your spouse, that's not strong. So, even if you are depressed, even if you are anxious, even if you are sad, you need to keep on moving.”

Renee: “When I got laid off, the first thing that I did was, my natural inclination is to be proactive. Then, try to identify, ‘What am I going to do next? What is that supposed to look like?’ That kinda thing. My coping was I worked out. I've always done that and was pretty active. Slowly, I kinda withdrew a little bit. I didn't cope that well. With my sister, I don't know if I would say that I'm coping well as much as I am coping. I would say that sometimes I'm not happy. I don't see that that's not coping well. I see that that's okay, I'm grieving. Especially for that. That's still in a constant, persistent struggle.”

Lisa: “But the anxiety comes with ...The unknown. Being a mom, a single mom, thinking 'what if something happens to me, who is going to take care of my baby', can I afford to feed us today. She likes to eat. Just and then, I have had anxiety attacks, case in point, one time I dropped her off. She was ... had a role in [a play]. I dropped her off and I couldn't go any further than the door. I walked down the steps and pew! I was like,

hysterics. It's like I was frozen. I'm like, I just dropped my child off with strangers.

What's wrong with me? Am I a bad mom? What the hell?"

Madison: "Let me see. That's hard because no matter what's going on, I'm still going to function, and move. So, taking out that part inability to function, probably so, because I've been down and went, "I don't really want to do this." Or, I really don't feel like doing life. I just want to sit in the house, snuggle up. So, yes, but because of who I am, I am going to get up, and move. And, do what I have to do. So, I think that's part of, okay, you can be down, but you still got to get stuff done. So, the inability to function, I don't have that part. I haven't had that part. I have to function."

These participants discussed having varying experiences with mental health issues however, they seemed to all agree in moving forward no matter the circumstance. Tammy discussed her behaviors impacting her children "so it's like we got to get yourself together because they're starting to feel whatever this is and that's not good." While Stephanie talked about the inability to cry in front of others stating, "you need to keep on moving." Validating the research of resiliency as a characteristic of the SBWA. Maggie discussed how the SBWA leads to a "vicious cycle" of feeling inadequate and depressed or anxious while also attempting to achieve. Speaking to the independence of the SBWA. Additionally, some participants spoke in general about how the SBWA conveys messages to Black women about mental health issues.

### **SBWA Message about Mental Health Issues**

Alex: "I used to think that having those feelings meant having those feelings meant you weren't strong at all because you're too vulnerable, and you're falling victim to those types of things, but as I'm older, I realize those are just, they come with the territory, the

strength of a black woman, if all are going to go through periods of feelings of anxiety. It comes with the territory. If you look it up in the dictionary. That's gonna be a side effect of being a strong black woman. You feel anxious sometimes. Definitely feel depressed. It just comes with the territory no matter what your experience is.”

Maggie: “I feel like a strong black woman doesn't have mental health issues, either because she's already dealt with them, or because she's pushed them down so far that she can't feel them. But either way, she doesn't ... she may like briefly say, ‘Oh, I struggled with this, but I came out of it.’ You see the success. You don't see the struggle. So, either way, you don't see ... even if she had mental health issues, they're either in the past and dealt with them, and she moved on and she's successful. Or, she still feels it but she masks it so well that you wouldn't even know because part of that strength, that shield that never comes down.”

Mary: “I think because people look to you or they have this expectation, that you're going to be able to get through it...I don't think you're allowed to feel depressed or anxious based on the music. You just soldier through or you tell somebody off, and you just keep moving.”

Madison: “Don't spend a lot of time on it. That you still have to perform, you still have to do everything that you're supposed to do, and do it with excellence. So, the anxiety or whatever else may be there, you just need to work around it.”

Nikki: “It is kind of like a by passing emotion, not one that you are encouraged to explore deeply, but to get over quickly.”

Tanya: “It would suggest to you that you can't feel depressed and anxious. You're not supposed to. You're supposed to have it all together all the time. You're supposed to have

all the answers. It's not supposed to make you cry. I think that was what was intimidating about that image of Cicely Tyson and her pulling that wagon is because I saw her bearing that burden and straining, just this intense experience and feeling like, 'Oh my goodness,' that she's super human. How can I ever possibly be that?"

Michelle: "She doesn't, it breaks her. It breaks her daily, she cries about it, she rocks the chair about it, she stares off into space about it, and she dies from it, with no one ever knowing why. And she passes those same traits onto little girls behind her that are taught to do what they saw mommy do. And they raised little boys that they have in the same qualities, and no one ever talks about it so when we get out in society and there is something wrong, and we're lashing out on everybody and everyone's looking at what's wrong, that whole family is like that, why are they like that? Because there's a generational curse that's been passed down, and no one ever dealt with it."

Nikki: "Alone. Alone, tears, prayer, putting that negative energy into something else, whatever that may be for this specific person."

Renee: "Oh, suck it up. It's hard, it's part of it, just deal with it. Because you're strong, you can handle it. You will always have that ... that you're superwoman."

The participants also identified how the SBWA has suggested Black women handle mental health issues stating that depression and anxiety "come with the territory" and the expectation is that you "get through it." As stated by Madison, "you still have to do everything that you're supposed to do, and do it with excellence" leaving no room for dwelling on mental health issues.

## Conclusion

Participants discussed the SBWA impacting their mental health as they felt anxious or depressed trying to live up to certain expectations. Further they discussed masking their feelings and moving forward because depression and anxiety were “part of the territory” and they have “keep moving”. Supporting the literature that the SBW is resilient, independent and suppresses emotions Michelle discussed how depression “breaks her daily” as the SBWA does not allow Black women the space for healing. Mary stated “I don't think you're allowed to feel depressed or anxious based on the music. You just soldier through or you tell somebody off, and you just keep moving” while Tanya said of Cicely Tyson, “She's super human. How can I ever possibly be that?” both connecting the SBWA’s resiliency and suppressed emotion to the imagery of music and pop culture.

## Research Question 8

*Does the archetype inform decisions for seeking mental health treatment?*

When examining the SBWA in the BPM analysis there is no specific reference to seeking mental health services. This is most likely due to the era the 1960s and 1970s; mental health services were available they were not publicly promoted and accepted. However, as noted before, the musical analysis revealed a strong tie to Christian faith as music of the era encouraged prayer and relying on God.

The songs of the BLM analysis reveal themes of negative coping strategies. Jhene Aiko’s “Nobody” speaks to the self-medicating behaviors in her attempt to heal herself:

“Since I was under the age

I've been under the influence of pain

And I never needed nobody

Never needed no one

I don't need no one, shit, I don't need no one

Fucking up my chakras again

My father is a doctor, I've been talking to him

All the shit I'm taking, coulda got it from him

I don't have no patience, prolly got it from him

Just a product of him

Pop one, pop two, pop three, four pills

These pains tell me how life should feel” (Aiko et al., 2017).

While Solange’s “Cranes in the Sky” describes several negative coping mechanisms the singer has attempted to deal with her mental health challenges:

“I tried to drink it away

I tried to put one in the air

I tried to dance it away

I tried to change it with my hair

I ran my credit card up

Thought a new dress make it better

I tried to work it away

But that just made me even sadder

I tried to keep myself busy

I ran around circles

Think I made myself dizzy

I slept it away, I sexed it away

I read it away

(chorus repeated)

I tried to run it away

Thought then my head be feeling clearer

I traveled 70 states

Thought moving around make me feel better

I tried to let go my lover

Thought if I was alone then maybe I could recover

To write it away or cry it away (don't you cry baby)” (Knowles, 2016).

Both songs reinforce the self-reliant nature of the strong Black woman as the artists attempt to use their own coping strategies to address their mental health concerns. Similar to the singers some participants discussed their efforts in employing their own coping strategies rather than seeking professional help. Some participants believed racial and cultural differences stopped them from seeking professional mental health. Others believed professional mental health services would be or have been helpful in coping with mental health issues. Finally, others discussed alternative approaches to seeking mental health services such as prayer, music, talking to friends or alternative healing strategies.

**“you gotta get through this”.**

Anna: “I drank, partied. Try to just black it out. I would just drink my beer and turn on my music on.”

Maggie: “Extra-curriculars such as running. Painting. And, hanging with my friends.”

Alex: “I try to listen to a positive music. I try to keep myself busy. I've learned I'm more susceptible to that feeling if I'm just sitting by myself. Cause I do overthink and I can



definitely make some different things up in my head and they're not necessarily good. I try to stay busy. Usually I try to do some kind of physical activity so I can focus on putting my energy physically somewhere else.”

Madison: “I may read the Bible more. I should, anyway. I may listen to some music. But, most times, I reflect more and think that, ‘Okay, what have you done, and, before that, it came out positive.’ So, sometimes I just have to remind myself and look back and say, ‘Okay. You're a perfectionist. So, what have you done before? Let's look back. And then, get out of this.’”

Nicole: “I read *The Five Love Languages* and ate soup. And I watched TV shows. That's my coping mechanism for almost anything.”

Nikki: “Reminding myself, okay, you gotta get through this. So I have moments of prayer, submit it to God, try to focus on something else. Having a moment to step away from the situation and step out of the situation fluidly. Try not to think about it. Go have a good meal, listen to some music, go work it off.”

Sara: “I just really depended on the Lord during that time. I just made sure that I did a lot, spending a lot of time in prayer, and reading the word, and really just drawing off for God's strength. Because I knew that at that time I just did not have it.”

Michelle: “There was this song, Tye Tribbett has out, and it says, I'll just concur everything. And that was like my, it was my place of worship. Because in the song he just talks about how God is everything, and how nothing is so small that we can't bring it to him, and a lot of times we're ... Just bring the big stuff to him. The little stuff that's petty. He don't want to hear about that, he just wants to hear about if you're sick, or if you're back to go to prison, or if you're just in really, really deep financial dig and you're about

to lose your house, that's the stuff that you pray for. But it's not, it's not. He wants us to come to him in all things, and he said this work through prayer supplication, he wants us to do that, to make our request known to him. And that's what I had to do. I had to bring everything to him just as the title of that song.”

Whitney: “So if I thought it was something I couldn't handle, then I would seek help.”

Demonstrating the self-reliant nature of the SBWA similar to the Jhene Aiko song, Anna discussed some unhealthy coping strategies of drinking. While Whitney’s statement “So if I thought it was something I couldn't handle, then I would seek help” demonstrates how the self-reliant aspect of the SBWA may led her to not seek professional treatment. While many other participants discussed praying or reading the bible, “Submitting to God” or “drawing off God’s strength” when handling depression or anxiety symptoms. All of which supports the literature of the SBWA being deeply tied to spirituality and religion. Other participants discussed how cultural influences impact their decision to seek professional mental health services.

**“Because I’m Black”.**

Madison: “No. Because I'm Black. 'Cause, you know, we don't do that. Growing up, you never heard about it. Whatever happens in this house, stays in this house. We'll figure it out, or just sweep it under the rug, doesn't matter. We don't talk about it. Let's just shut it. Keep movin' like nothing happened. But, as an adult, I think that it's a good thing. And, I tell me friends, and I have friends that have gone and go, but for me, I don't think it would help.”

Nicole: “And I feel like just in general, within our culture, I don't think asking for help is something that's talked about. You know, so if it's not talked about I don't know if my parents would even know who to ask.”

Michelle: “I think the strong black woman negates that. I don't think that phrase welcomes anyone who is really struggling with their peace, I think that it troubles them. Because as African American culture, we've been pretty much hindered from counseling, we've been taught that, that's something that rich white people do, that have money for it and we don't seek counsel. We go to church, we sit on the 'mourning bench' until passes, which is just a wooden bench that you just sit there, and there's no magic in that bench, there's no healing power in that bench, you're just sitting on a block of wood with all of these just whatever it is, all these mental issues buried inside. And when you get up from it, it's like now you don't talk about it, because you sat there on that bench, and it's gone now. So you just move on with life as though you know it doesn't exist anymore. And that strong black woman phrase, that's what it does.”

Renee: “I think that, generally speaking, what we do is we tend to lean on prayer. I think that we're, not everyone, even if you are a practicing Christian or not, I think that that's our go to. That we can pray it away.”

Participants felt that Black culture dictated not seeking mental health services. As Madison stated “because I’m Black” as a reason to avoid mental health treatment. Similarly, Michelle discussed how culturally “we've been taught that, that's something that rich white people do” connecting not only cultural but financial hindrances in seeking mental health services. Michelle and Renee spoke to the religious and spirituality aspects of the SBWA discussing “what we do is we tend to lean on prayer” as a means for coping with anxiety and depression. Though the cultural bias towards prayer rather than professional treatment for mental health services exists, some participants still felt that professional treatment was best in dealing with mental health challenges.

**“No mommy, you’re not your own best therapist”.**

Sasha: “I remember going through that rough patch mentioned [to her mother], ‘I’m just going to go see a therapist.’ ‘What? You’re your own, best therapist. You don’t need to see no therapist.’ I think my sister told her, I just talked to somebody and she like totally panicked, freaked. I think that mental health and seeing a therapist, I am all for that and I attribute that to my professional experiences that I’ve had. ‘No mommy, you’re not your own best therapist,’ sometimes if you have issues coping and you know, there are things that are support systems and if that coping goes beyond those support systems, that’s why they have professionals. They have therapists, people that you can bounce things off. Right. And they have been trained as such. And that is due to my direct experiences as a healthcare professional, nothing wrong with seeing a therapist.”

Sara: “At the end of the day, you can’t be a strong Black woman if your mental health is not right.”

Tammy: “And that does not make me not strong. If anything it makes me stronger because I’ve realized the need for something outside of myself to help me with myself. So, yeah.”

Lisa: “So, I was on medication for 10 months at that particular time. It helped. I’m a believer in mental health. Whatever you need to do.”

Mary: “I think, after the first marriage ended, I went through a depression and I sought, I got some counseling. I also was taking antidepressants. That had maybe lasted six to eight months. In order for me to maintain my strength, there’s going to be times where I’m going to need to take care of myself, I’m going to need some down time. If it’s

counseling or medication, whatever it is I feel like I need. I need to do that to be there for my daughter.”

Renee: “I think it's a good idea to seek help. Even when my sister was diagnosed, I told her to seek a counselor. One of master's degrees is in counseling, oddly enough. She has been the better for it because of her journey. I think it's a good idea. Do I think that people do that, especially, in the black community, black women? I do not. In the interim, perhaps, it's a good idea to have a safe environment, where you can talk to other women.”

Tanya: “ I think there's a way in which we got to understand it's okay to be afraid. It's okay to be scared. It's okay to be hurt and to be willing to reach out because it is okay. Then you can reach out and get help. That's critical.”

Nikki: “I find it so peculiar that when it comes to like seeking help, that going to a therapist wasn't the forefront of my mind. And so I think I hope for my daughter and the future of strong black women, it doesn't make you weaker if you need that extra help. And if you feel like you cannot get through something by yourself, it's probably wisest to get that extra help.”

Participants discussed being open to seeking professional mental health services or having done so in past difficult situations. Sasha again reflected on the fact that it was not culturally accepted as her mother told her “You're your own, best therapist”; however, due to her background in the medical field she believed seeking a professional counselor was the best form of treatment for her. Sara, Tammy, and Renee discussed as a SBW it is imperative take care of their mental health through seeking professional treatment when necessary. While Tanya and Nikki advocated for a change in the stigma associated with Black women seeking professional

mental health treatment. As a result many of the participants discussed alternative forms of treatment for mental health concerns.

**“therapy can be take on multiple different forms”.**

Renee: “Meditation. Exercise. If you have the opportunity. Spending time with people. Again, not just for the ... Not the surface of it. With safe people, I would say. And sometimes you don’t even recognize when that is safe.”

Sandra: “Supplements. I think, any kind of therapy that not only involves counseling but, use of music, either use of art, the use of sports. I think therapy can be take on multiple different forms. I do think things like music, like meditative music, are powerful, along with other forms of music. So, I think that there's ... treatment is not only limited to seeking professional medical help. I think there's other forms that ... you know, depending on that person's interest, that you can use.

Alex: “Although we're not professionals, I think there's a lot of power when we come together and talk about things. It could start off as ‘yeah girl, lets meet up and work on editing this music’ and then we end up talking about things that are going on with each other. I think it helps to A) put them out there and get them out of your head and bounce them off of another woman who has had a more similar experience to you or a woman you can identify with, like as a black woman who had a completely different experience than you and can give her perspective on the situation. I think we will, we're not all mental health professionals but definitely each others therapists. In that same energy as far as being able to share problems or bounce information off of another person, I think it's the same relationship when we listen to music because even though you're not

verbally talking to your phone or your Bluetooth speaker, or in the car, it's almost like music can respond to or validate what you're going through.”

Tanya: “Just listening to positive music, hopeful music, and uplifting music. I just find it very helpful.”

Lisa: “I'd love to do a retreat. Get around other women who may suffer depression or anxiety. I don't want to be into a study because it's like, well ... I don't ever want to be a woe is me type of person, or feel sorry for me because there's people going through worse situations than I am. But, swimming. Like I say, any form of exercise and I would love to take swim lessons. Walking, clear your ... like meditation. I don't think I can be still for that long, but I'm try. At least try. Reading. That's why I love movies, especially like I said, female kick ass movies because I'm like, I'm behind her. Like yeah! Okay, get him, get him!”

Madison: “I guess maybe some self help books, there are podcasts about any and everything. I would not do medication. I know it's out there. But, I think with medication unless it's something like schizophrenia, bipolar, stuff like that, I think the medication only puts a Band-Aid on a problem. And that, it's self-medicated, so you don't think about whatever it is, so it's not fixing the problem, it's just getting you ... I don't want to say addicted, but addicted to the medicine so you don't feel whatever you're feeling. So, yeah.”

Mary: “I think church should be. I know that the church has a course for divorce and separation, but also has a course for people who are in some form of recovery, if it's addiction, or any form of addiction, or anger. That has to be an option, not everyone can

afford counseling. Not everyone has the programs through work, so church has to be, I think in our community an option for improving your mental health.”

Nicole: “I really enjoyed hot yoga. Just because it was hard and it was hot. But, like, that I think ... those two situations I think make it a great scenario for it because you have to push yourself through it and then sometimes when you have to push yourself through something that triggers something else that you may push yourself through and so you know, as you conquer that 60 minutes of true heat and you come out of it, it's just something about being encouraged to be able to say that you went through that and find that that source of strength to go through whatever it is that popped up in there.”

Sara: “I think meditation is good. Whether you pull a spiritual part into that or not, I think the meditation ... just turning your brain off, or trying to anyway, is very beneficial.”

Sheri: “I think exercise is always good. I do a lot of aromatherapy myself. And I also think just trying to be with positive people. Positive friends, positive people around you. And if I'm totally by myself, I just pull out my whoever at that moment and put them on. My music.”

Stephanie: “I think, you know, the mindfulness exercises, the yoga, essential oils and diffusers, sex, whether it be real or masturbation, massage therapy, reflexology, what's it called Reiki?”

### **Conclusion**

Participants provided several examples of ways to improve mental health issues.

Focusing on the self-reliant aspects of the SBW the participants believed in helping others as Alex stated, “Although we're not professionals, I think there's a lot of power when we come together and talk about things” and Sheri, Lisa, and Renee stressed the importance of being with



positive people. Additionally, participants also discussed prayer, and attending church group counseling further substantiating the literature of the importance of religion and spirituality. Finally, many participants discussed coping strategies that differed from traditional western healing practices such as yoga, meditation, reflexology, supplements, music therapy and reiki these ideas differ from previous literature that focuses on treating Black women with traditional treatment approaches.

### **Summary**

In summary, the music examined in from the BPM Era and the BLM Era provided insights on the creation and maintenance of the SBWA through popular music. The lyrics demonstrate the caretaker aspects of the SBWA as the terms “Mama” or “Mother” were referenced. During the BPM era the caretaker role was demonstrated through taking care of ones family and the community. While in the BLM era, the caretaker role has shifted to reflect more independence as the SBWA maintains her independence by taking care of herself. The themes of pride in oneself and community were also demonstrated however, the BLM era, music focused less on community and family pride and focused more on the self-pride of the SBWA. Additionally, spirituality and religion were also important aspects of the SBWA conveyed through the lyrics (Abrams et al., 2014).

The thematic analysis of the interviews confirmed prior research of the concept of the SBWA. Participants agree with the conclusions of the music stating that the SBW is a caregiver, even those who did not have children of their own spoke of caring for brothers, husbands, students, and young relatives. Additionally characteristics of resilience, independence, and emotionally stability were correlated between the musical analysis and interviews. Further, the interviews revealed that the characteristics of the SBWA were learned through observing family

members or from music and pop culture. The interviews also revealed the negative impacts of the SBWA on the identity and mental health of participants as they felt anxious or depressed trying to live up to certain expectations. However, for some this was part of being a SBW so they believed they had to “keep moving”. Further substantiating the self-reliant aspect of the SBWA participants seemed to overwhelmingly be in support of employing their own coping strategies in dealing with mental health issues. Though some had been to professional mental health treatment, others believed that culture prohibited their participation. Most interestingly, participants discussed alternative methods to traditional mental health treatments such as yoga, meditation, reflexology, supplements, music therapy, and reiki. Prior literature is limited on exploring these alternative forms of healing with Black women. In the following chapter findings will be summarized, implications, and limitations will be discussed.

“To write it away or cry it away (don't you cry baby)

Away, away, away, away, away, away

Away, away, away, away, away

But it's like cranes in the sky

Sometimes I don't wanna feel those metal clouds” (Knowles, 2016)

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the summary of the findings of the study, discusses the implications of these findings, assesses the limitations of the study, and discusses recommendations for future research.

#### **Summary and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the development and maintenance of the SBWA in the Black community. Additionally, this study sought to determine if a relationship between the SBWA and receiving professional mental health services exists. Prior research has primarily focused on the construction and characteristics of the SBWA (Abrams et al., 2014; Collins, 2000; Harris-Lacewell, 2001; Holmes et al., 2001; Romero, 2000; Wyatt, 2008). Other researchers have examined the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Johnson et al., 2009; Levine et al., 2015; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Sosulski & Woodward, 2013; Thomas et al., 2004), though little research exists examining the relationship between the concept of the Strong Black Woman and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007; Holmes et al., 2001; Watson & Hunter,

2015). Black women are more likely to experience depressive disorder symptoms and to allow these symptoms to go untreated professionally (CDC, 2010; Miranda et al., 2005; MMWR, 2010). Thus, Black women's voices and experiences in seeking mental health services warranted further investigation. Through the use of musical analysis and semi-structured interviews, this study is the first to explore these concepts using arts-based qualitative methods.

As previously discussed, this study utilized 50 songs from the BPM and BLM Eras, as well as 18 semi-structured interviews to answer the research questions. The findings substantiated previous research while also expanding on the knowledge of the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women. Black feminist theory guided this research to allow for the voice of the Black woman to be consistent throughout the study. Asserting that Black women's lives and experiences be examined through non-traditional means of inquiry this study sought to explore the construction and maintenance of the SBWA through popular music from the 1960s-70s and present day (Collins, 2000). The musical analysis provided some foundational characteristics that were further expanded upon in the interview analysis. The interviews added to prior knowledge of the SBWA by providing insight into the relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women. Based on the black feminist epistemology, ethnomusicological, and grounded theory approaches the eight research questions were addressed.

The analyzed music of the Black Power Era provided some insights on how the SBWA was constructed. During a time of conceptualizing what it meant to be Black, much of the analyzed music expressed themes of frustration and anger towards segregation and brutality of the time period. The lyrics encouraged pride while emphasizing a unified front against the struggles of racism and prejudice. More specifically the analysis reveals how the SBWA was

defined during the era. The lyrics reveal that Black women were expected to be a caretaker in her home, family, and community. Further, the SBWA asserted that as a caretaker, the Black woman assists in unifying the Black community as they fought against the injustices of the era. Additionally, strength is embodied in the caretaker role demonstrated through the several references of “Mama” or “Mother” reinforcing the theme of the Black woman as a caretaker of her family and community. Supporting the “other mothers” concept Black women have historically been charged with caring for both their children and the community at large (Collins, 2000). Additionally, the lyrics supported previous research on the characteristics of the SBWA revealing themes of personal and community pride while maintaining a strong sense of spirituality and religion (Abrams et al., 2014). Substantiating the previous research that the SBWA is an image of a Black woman who is obligated to be a support to the Black family and community while finding her value and worth in her duties and responsibilities associated with caretaking (Collins, 2000; Romero, 2000; Abrams et al., 2014).

Building on the musical analysis from the BPM Era the analyzed music from the BLM Era of the modern day provides further insights on how Black female artists express the characteristics of the SBWA. Though the music continues to describe themes of hardships faced by the Black community much of the lyrical analysis revealed themes of pride, positive self-images, and independence. Further, the lyrics reveal that Black women continue to be expected to maintain a caregiver role in their homes and communities as “Mama” or “Mother” were referenced several times as throughout the lyrics. Specifically, the repetitive terms of “strength” and “fighter” demonstrate specific characteristics of the caretaker. Similar to the lyrics from the BPM era the musical analysis reveals that the SBW as a caretaker aids in the overall success and achievements of the Black community. Additionally, the lyrical analysis demonstrates that the

caretaker role endures many hardships however, it also emphasized resilience in the face of hardships with words such as “Live”, “Stand”, “Work”, and “Prove” repeated throughout the music. Differing from the BPM musical analysis the BLM lyrics encourage a sense of independence and self-pride as aspects of the SBWA. In the BPM analysis, the music seems to focus on the SBW as only a support to the Black community while the BLM era music suggests that the SBW also be focused on her own goals and achievements. While encouraging self-confidence throughout the lyrics highlighted by terms such as “Flawless”, “Diamond”, “Masterpiece”, and “Beautiful” the lyrics of the BLM era turn much of the focus of the SBW inward. Consistent with that of the BPM musical analysis the BLM musical analysis also demonstrate validates the previous literature supporting the concept that the SBWA maintains a strong sense of spirituality and religion (Abrams et al., 2014; Romero, 2000).

In addition to the musical analysis, the semi-structured interviews of 18 Black women provided further detail on the construction and maintenance of the SBWA. The interview participants agreed with the characteristics of the SBWA as defined by the musical analysis describing the SBW as one who is resilient, independent, and emotionally stable while maintaining the outward appearance of being in control further substantiating the previous literature (Abrams et al., 2014; Romero, 2000). Adding to the literature on the topic of the SBWA the participants provided greater insight on how the SBWA is maintained and disseminated to Black women. Collins (2000) asserted that the Black woman’s knowledge is based on the Black women’s rich history of oral tradition and sisterhood. As such, the participants spoke to the dissemination of the SBWA through observing mothers, grandmothers, and other mothers in their communities. As a result, the participants associated SBWA with a caregiver, even those who did not have children discussed their role as other mothers in the

community. As one participant described herself as a “die-hard mom”, illustrating how the participants put value in their efforts of caring for their children. In addition to observing mothers and grandmothers, participants also believed that the music and pop culture solidified and expanded their definition of the SBWA.

The responses of participants provided greater detail regarding the dissemination of the SBWA through music and pop-culture. Music and pop-culture has illustrated the characteristics of the SBWA providing a greater understanding for Black women. The themes of independence through musical artists such as Beyoncé, Jill Scott, and Cardi B. resonated with participants. While in film in television Gabrielle Union, Viola Davis, and Cicely Tyson capture the essence of the SBWA through their resilient characters. As highlighted by Tanya’s interview response regarding Cicely Tyson’s character in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, “a triumph of her spirit over the oppression that surrounded her” solidified the resilient aspect of the SBWA through its portrayal in the film. Interestingly, though some participants felt empowered by the musical artists such as Beyoncé, Cardi B, and Nikki Minaj and their independent lyrics others struggled with their over-sexualized image and confrontational behavior as it feeds into the negative stereotypes of Black women. As Tammy stated, “it's like oh my God, you set us back about 40 years” The interviewees also opposed the misnomer of the image of some of the artists as they set an unachievable standard in their demonstration of the “illusion of control”. As Michelle states regarding Beyoncé’s musical lyrics in the song *Flawless*, “Look at her, ‘she woke up like that’ No, she didn't. She didn't” further illustrating the role strain of Black women who attempt to achieve the high standard set by musical artist and pop culture icons.

As mentioned, the caregiver aspect of the SBWA was consistent across music and interviews. Those who identified as SBW associated that identity to their role as a caregiver.

Those without children even discussed other mothering in the community or within their families. However, the women of the study also expressed a feeling of exhaustion from being strong. As Sara states “and I know it sounds crazy, but sometimes I wanna be weak. I wanna be vulnerable. I wanna be ... I don't know how else to say it. I don't want to be strong all the time” capturing the weight of the pressure associated with demonstrating a strong exterior. To this end, the interview responses substantiate the research that identifies the SBWA as caretaker for her family and community (Collins, 2000).

Additionally, of those who did identify themselves as a Strong Black Woman some believed that the title was synonymous with being Black as they had no choice in the matter. These participants believed if a woman was born Black it automatically made her an Strong Black Woman due to the oppression she faces as a double minority. As a result, for the women who identified themselves as Strong Black Woman, many associated it with role strain as themes of feeling overwhelmed, ignored, and an inability to be vulnerable were seen as the most impactful aspects of the SBWA on their identities. Specifically, participants were concerned with how the image has been perceived by others, resulting in the women being intentional in their actions and behaviors, particularly at work. Participants discussed the inability to show emotion or express themselves for fear of being assumed to be the “Angry Black Woman”. Likewise, as illustrated by Anna’s statement, “are her tears more important than my tears?”, when their emotions were expressed their feelings were ignored. Though a majority of the participants did associate with the SBWA one participant did not identify with it at all sighting that the archetypes characteristics were “out of kingdom order”. She believed that the SBWA asserts Black female independence ahead of men which is not in line with her Christian beliefs. Though research has found that the SBWA is rooted in spirituality and religion Christian values for this



participant it opposed her Christian values (Abrams et al., 2014; Romero, 2000). Overall, the women validated the previous literature on the identity of the Strong Black Woman as they discussed the SBW woman as an inherent aspect of the Black woman, as she is faced with intersectional oppressions daily (Abrams et al., 2014; Collins, 2000; Romero, 2000).

As the Strong Black Woman is an inherent aspect of the Black woman's identity the role strain of attempting to "keep all the balls in the air all the time" coupled with suppressed emotions impacted the women of the study in different ways. Where some identified mental health issues related to the Strong Black Woman, others believed the mental health issues "come with the territory" consequently they did not register their mental health challenges as problematic. Those who believed the role strain has impacted them negatively all agreed that they had to "keep on moving" regardless of the situation, speaking to the resilient nature of the Strong Black Woman (Abrams et al., 2014; Romero, 2000). Demonstrating the SBWA's belief that "showing vulnerability is unacceptable" participants shared that even when they feel emotional there is "an impression that the strong black woman is not supposed to cry" further illustrating the suppressed emotions associated with the Strong Black Woman (Romero 200, p. 227). Furthermore, participants discussed having to demonstrate a strong exterior for their children or spouse as the reason for the suppressed emotion. This idea correlates to the caretaker role of the SBWA as she suppresses her own emotion for the sake of her family (Abrams et al., 2014; Collins, 2000; Romero, 2000). In addition, the participants discussed how these ideas of suppressed emotions and the "illusion of control" are demonstrated through music and pop culture as explained by Mary, "I don't think you're allowed to feel depressed or anxious based on the music. You just soldier through or you tell somebody off, and you just keep moving" highlighting the influence of music and pop culture on the mental health of the Strong Black

Woman. Leading to the “vicious cycle” of feeling inadequate and depressed or anxious while also attempting to adhere to the characteristics of the Strong Black Woman displayed in music and pop culture.

Though participants differed in how they viewed the impact of the SBWA on their mental health most of the women agreed in employing self-reliant skills to improve their moods and mental health. As demonstrated through the musical analysis and the interviews the SBWA dictates a level of self-reliance when associated with mental health issues. The songs of the BLM analysis reinforce the self-reliant nature of the SBWA illustrated by Jhene Aiko’s “Nobody” and Solange’s “Cranes in the Sky” which describe self-medicating and negative coping strategies in dealing with her mental health challenges. Similar to the musicians many of the participants discussed their own strategies of coping with mental health issues. Some unhealthy strategies such as drinking alcohol were discussed. However, most of the participants discussed positive coping strategies such as praying or reading the bible, “Submitting to God” or “drawing off God’s strength” when handling depression or anxiety symptoms. As prior research demonstrates Black women tend to lean on social support networks to address their mental health needs, though the SBWA limits the level of disclosure of depressive symptoms (Chatters et al., 1989; Nicolaidis et al., 2010; Ward et al., 2009). Many of the participants discussed talking to friends or attending group activities to address their mental health needs. As Alex stated, “Although we're not professionals, I think there's a lot of power when we come together and talk about things”. Likewise, the participants stressed the importance of surrounding themselves with positive people in positive environments.

The women in the study were divided on their views of seeking out professional mental health services. Some believed race and culture dictated their inability to seek professional

mental health services sighting “Because I’m Black” as a reason for not seeking out professional help. These participants discussed being taught in their family that “that’s something that rich white people do” or to maintain the privacy of family matters within their homes. Additionally, some women supported prior research which states that African Americans rely on spiritual guidance through prayer, worship services, and pastoral counseling, as one woman stated “what we do is we tend to lean on prayer” as a means to address her mental health needs (Black et al., 2011; Cokley et al., 2013; Hays, 2015; Ward et al., 2009). However, though cultural biases and reliance on spiritual beliefs were found among the participants some still felt that professional treatment was best in dealing with mental health challenges. One participant, in particular, Sasha, discussed being told by her mother that “you’re your own best therapist” however, her knowledge of the medical field led her to seek out a professional counselor as she believed it was the best form of treatment to address her needs. Additionally, some of the women believed that taking care of one’s mental health needs through professional treatment was the only way to maintain the strength necessary to cope with the challenges faced by the Strong Black Woman. Further expanding the discourse on mental health treatment for Black women the participants provided several alternative treatments to addressing the mental health needs of the Strong Black Woman. Stating, “therapy can take on multiple different forms” the participants discussed several alternative treatment forms such as yoga, meditation, reflexology, supplements, music therapy, and Reiki. These alternative practices differ from previous literature that focuses on treating Black women with traditional treatment approaches of talk therapy and pastoral counseling needs (Black et al., 2011; Cokley et al., 2013; Hays, 2015; Ward et al., 2009).

The study substantiated and expanded prior research in the area of the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women. The research participants agreed with the

conclusions of the musical analysis discussing the Strong Black Woman as a caregiver of her family and community. Further, the study confirmed previous research that the Strong Black Woman is resilient, independent, and demonstrates emotional stability (Abrams et al., 2014; Collins, 2000; Romero, 2000). The participants built on the previous research by discussing how the SBWA directly impacts their identities and mental health discussing the cycle of anxiety and depression as it relates to their attempt to live up to the standard of the SBWA. However, the characteristics of independence, self-reliance, and caretaking, prohibited the participants to spend much of their time focused on their mental health symptoms. Further validating the self-reliant aspect of the SBWA, both the participants and musical analysis demonstrated the need to employ their own coping strategies in dealing with mental health issues. The participants differed in opinion in seeking professional mental health services in that some viewed it as a sign of strength and necessary, others viewed it as an opposition to their cultural beliefs.

Contrary to research in the area of Black women's mental health participants were not opposed to employing alternative methods to traditional mental health treatments such as yoga, meditation, reflexology, supplements, music therapy, and Reiki. One aspect of alternative healing methods that the study provides greater insight on is music therapy. As stated before music therapy has been utilized in therapeutic strategies such as music listening, songwriting, and lyrical analysis to successfully address anxiety, depression, and severe mental health issues (DeNora, 2000; MacDonald, 2013; Saarikallio, 2011). Music as a relatable medium can be utilized in therapeutic interventions with Black women as it promotes self-regulatory behaviors across the life span (Saarikallio 2011). Participants discussed throughout the study their use of listening to multiple genres of music to improve their moods. Substantiating that music, as a form of self-employing therapeutic intervention, improved participant's mood. Music therapy

and the other non-traditional means to mental and emotional healing discussed by the participants have yet to be explored at great length with Black women and warrants further investigation.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study provided insight into the Black women's view on the SBWA as well as its impact on the Black woman's identity, mental health, and mental health seeking behaviors. The implications of the study will provide a better understanding of how the concept of strength has affected the women of the study. As most of the participants identified as an SBW they also identified with the role strain associated with the ideal. Though prior research has demonstrated how the SBWA is a positive image for Black women this study demonstrates the toll it has taken on the mental health of the Black women (Abrams et al., 2014; Baker et al., 2015; Etowa et al., 2017; Romero, 2000). As participants identified depression and anxiety associated with attempting to achieve a standard set by musicians and pop culture they also reflected on suppressing emotions as a result of adhering to the SBW concept. This study found that a relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors did exist for some women, as they believed that their suppressed emotions and the need to "keep moving" led to their choices in not seeking mental health services.

Additionally, the study substantiated prior research, which identifies religious and cultural beliefs as hindrances in seeking professional mental health services (Black et al., 2011; Cokley et al., 2013; Hays, 2015; Ward et al., 2009). Further, the findings of this study expand prior knowledge on mental health treatment for the Black woman as the participants discussed alternative healing methods, which has yet to be thoroughly researched, providing a greater

understanding in culturally competent practice with Black women. As previously discussed participants valued music as a self-employed strategy for mood regulation. To this end, mental health clinicians employing cultural competent practice when treating Black women could encourage listening to music and musical analysis as a therapeutic analysis. Due to the guarded nature of Black women in traditional talk therapy incorporating listening to music and musical analysis would allow patients to further explore their emotions in a less formal method (DeNora, 2000; MacDonald, 2013).

### **Limitations**

The SBWA is associated with a sense of spirituality or religion though some participants mentioned religion and gospel music a limitation of the study was the lack of gospel music analyzed in the study. Previous research does support the idea that African Americans relate depressive symptoms to spiritual weakness and as a result, seek out spiritual guidance through prayer, worship services, and pastoral counseling (Black et al., 2011; Cokley et al., 2013; Hays, 2015; Ward et al., 2009). Consequently, gospel music may have expanded knowledge of the spiritual and religious aspects of strength. Likewise, the musical analysis of the study was limited to that of the Black Power Movement era, said to be the inception period of the SBWA. However, music from the Harlem Renaissance may have yielded data on the SBWA from a woman's perspective. The Harlem Renaissance, 1920s-1930s, known as a cultural surge in literature and art for African Americans featured female blues artists like Mamie Smith, Ma Rainey, and Bessie Smith, who wrote and performed their own songs (Hutchinson, 2001). These songs of these artists would have provided greater knowledge of how Black women viewed themselves during that time period. The final limitation is the small sample size of 18 participants. Though the data was saturated this does not represent a national sample and is not

generalizable to the Black female population. This study sought to provide a rich understanding of the SBWA and the mental health help-seeking behaviors of Black women which could be utilized for future research in the area. The triangulation of the study and consistency with prior research demonstrates that this study has validity and some reliability though it is unable to be generalized.

### **Future Research**

The findings of the study are an important aspect of culturally competent practice with Black women. Traditional treatment of Black women in mental health settings has focused on talk therapy or pastoral counseling (Black et al., 2011; Cokley et al., 2013; Hays, 2015; Ward et al., 2009). However, the participants in this study discussed employing non-traditional coping strategies such as yoga, meditation, reflexology, supplements, music therapy, and Reiki. These approaches have not been explored at great length and should be investigated as alternatives to traditional therapeutic interventions with Black women. The participants also discussed the community of Black women as they relied on each other for support and healing. Future research in mental health practices with Black women should incorporate group therapy or “Sister Circles” in an effort to provide a culturally competent intervention approach.

### **Conclusion**

There remains a great need to study the Black woman in non-traditional means in an effort to capture the authentic experience of Black women. Black women’s experiences must also be considered in providing mental health interventions as they have been intersectionally oppressed for centuries. Though this study has provided greater insights, further examination on the effects of oppression on Black women and the Black community is necessary. By allowing

the Black community the opportunity to be heard researchers will develop a more meaningful understanding of how to appropriately address the needs of the community.



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## Tables and Figures

Table 1

*Black Power Movement  
Era Songs*

Artist	Song
Sam Cooke	A Change Is Gonna Come
Nina Simone	Mississippi Goddamn
Donny Hathaway	To Be Young, Gifted And Black
Aretha Franklin	Respect
James Brown	Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud
The Impressions	We're A Winner
Sly & The Family Stone	Everyday People
The Temptations	Message From A Black Man
The Staple Singers	Respect Yourself
Etta James/Nina Simone	Tell It Like It Is
Donny Hathaway	Someday We'll All Be Free
Curtis Mayfield	Mighty Mighty – Spade And Whitey
The Isley Brothers	Fight The Power – Part 1 & 2
The O'Jays	Give The People What They Want
The Chi-Lites	Give More Power To The People
Billy Paul	Am I Black Enough For You?
Stevie Wonder	Living For The City
The Temptations	Ball of Confusion
Eddie Kendricks	My People ... Hold On
Syl Johnson	Is It Because I'm Black
James Brown	It's a Man's World
Aretha Franklin	You Better Think
Nina Simone	Four Women
Aretha Franklin	Do Right Woman/Do Right Man
Nina Simone	Aint got no, I got life

Table 2

*Black Lives Matter Era Songs*

Artist	Song
Janelle Monae ft. Erykah Badu	Q.U.E.E.N.
Janelle Monae	Django Jane
Janelle Monae	I Like That
Beyoncé	Flawless
Beyoncé	Formation
Beyoncé	Freedom
Mary J Blidge	Love yourself
Mary J. Blidge	Strength of a Woman
Mary J. Blige	Doubt
Solange	Cranes in the Sky
Solange	Don't Touch my Hair
Solange	Borderline
SZA	Normal Girl
Jhene Aiko	Nobody
Jill Scott	Run Run Run
Jill Scott	Can't Wait
Alicia Keys	Girl Can't be Herself
Goapele	Stand
Goapele	Strong as Glass
Ledisi	High
Ledisi	If You Don't Mind
Kelly Price	It's My Time
Teyana Taylor	Rose in Harlem
Chrisette Michelle	Strong Black Woman
Jazmine Sullivan	Masterpiece

Table 3

*Participant Demographics*

Demographic	Amount
Age	
18-21	1
22-30	4
31-40	3
41-50	7
51-60	3
Education	
<i>Some College</i>	3
<i>Bachelor's Degree</i>	6
<i>Master's Degree</i>	7
<i>PhD/MD</i>	2
Relationship Status	
<i>Married/Engaged</i>	8
<i>Single/Divorced</i>	10
Number of children	
<i>Children</i>	
0	6
1	8
2	3
<i>3 or more</i>	1

**Tables 1.2-1.8 BPM Word Frequency Theme Tables**

Table 1.2 BPM

*Word Frequency Query Care for Others*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Free, Right, Equality, Freedom, Justice, Better, Need	Improving the lives of others through caring
Woman, People, Brother, Sister, Self	The Black community caring for each other
Love, Respect, Truth, Share, Give	Principles of caretaking

Table 1.3 BPM

*Word Frequency Query Hardships*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Holding, Back, Never, Pain	Hardships impact on the Black community
Black, Skin, People, Mother, Folks, Somebody, Color, Brother, Brown	Hardships are faced by the entire Black community
Hard, Different, Power, Little	The challenges of hardships and feelings of inadequacy as a result
Living, Life	Hardships are a typical occurrence
City, World, Mississippi, Alabama	Racism and discrimination has impacted the world and local communities, referencing Jim Crow South
Love, Give	Through the hardships continue to maintain positivity towards others



Table 1.4 BPM

*Word Frequency Query Independence*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Give, Need, Free, Equality, Respect	Expressing the desires of the independent Black woman
People, Somebody	Concerns for the entire community
Freedom, Mind, Better, Somehow, Believe	Having faith maintaining positivity for independence
Stop, Hard, Tried	Difficulties associated with being and independent Black woman
Move, Make, Find, Askin', Tell, Gotta, Marching	Actions of an independent Black woman

Table 1.5 BPM

*Word Frequency Query Pride*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Black, Young, Gifted, Winner, Proud, Brown	Encouraging ideas of the Black community, how Black community members should view themselves
Loud, Sing, Tell	Demonstrating how the positive imagery should be expressed and verbalized.
Respect, Free, Dream, Freedom, Better	Pride makes space for improved emotions
Move, Going, Marching, Stand	Acting on the thoughts and feelings of pride

Table 1.6 BPM

*Word Frequency Query Spirituality / Religion*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Give, Prayer, Believing, Bible Christian, Heaven	Foundations of spirituality and religion are that of the Christian faith. Behaviors/actions of those who ascribe to Christianity
Love, Blessed, Light, Mercy	results of ascribing to a spiritual or religious practice
People, Brother, Father, Lord, Person, Friends, Gentleman, Children	unity in spirituality and religion of the Black community.

Table 1.7 BPM

*Word Frequency Query Strength*

Repetitive Words	Themes
People, Somebody, Mother, Black	The Black community displaying/needing to display strength
Freedom, Hard, Tried, Free, Respect, Right Fight	Strength is necessary in the fight for equality
Make, Move, Tell, Need, Going Understand, Marching	Using strength to take action
Power, Love	Gained from strength

Table 1.8 BPM

*Word Frequency Query Woman or Girl*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Girl, Sister, Mother, Woman, Strong	Roles and expectations of the woman/girl
Freedom, Free, Respect, Love, Equality, Better	Indicating what women desired during this era
Tell, Find, Askin'	Women verbalizing their needs and desires
Little, Plaything, Nothing	(Conveyed as Opposite) Value, worth, to be taken seriously

**Tables 2.2-2.8 BLM Word Frequency Theme Tables**

Table 2.2 BLM

*Word Frequency Query Care for Others*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Woman, Mama, Rock, Strength, Ladies, Fighter	Caregiver roles
Love, Giving, Feed, Needed, Deal, Cope, Help Hope	Caregiver responsibilities
Stand, Endured, Climb, Pain, Fall	Caregiver behavior and experiences
Free, Freedom, Equal	Caregivers aid in achievements of the community

Table 2.3 BLM

*Word Frequency Query Hardships*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Mama, Woman, Mother, Girl	Roles which endure the hardships
Need, Freedom, Away	The desires of the Black woman in hardships
Tell, Teach, Look, Going, Made	What should be done to combat the hardships faced
Tried, Giving, Hold, Loose, Keep	Efforts made to overcome hardships
Feel, Hard, Pain, Hell, Tired	Emotions of those enduring hardships

Table 2.4 BLM –

*Word Frequency Query Independence*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Need, Keep, Made, Mine	To gain and remain independent
Tell, Look, Live	Demonstrating independence through words and actions
Flawless, Ladies, Girl Shine, Rise	Descriptive of the independent woman
Give, Care	Though independent remain concerned and helpful towards others

Table 2.5 BLM

*Word Frequency Query Pride*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Flawless, Shine, Diamond, Bright, Light, Masterpiece, Beautiful, Eyes, Hair	Positive descriptions of those who are proud
Girl, Black, Ladies	Pride specifically relating to Black women
Tell, Work, Touch, Gave, Likes, Want, Believe Look	Demonstrating pride through words and actions

Table 2.6 BLM

*Word Frequency Query Spirituality / Religion*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Approve, Give, Deserve, Build, Come	Actions of those who ascribe to spirituality and religion
Heaven, Devil, Soul, Pray, Prayin'	Deeply rooted in Christianity
Black, Brother, Sister, Woman, Many	The spirituality and religion of the Black community

Table 2.7 BLM

*Word Frequency Query Strength*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Woman, Black, Mama	Referencing the Black woman, in a motherhood/caregiver role as strong
Love, Flawless, Rock, Rose	Characteristics of strength
Live, Stand, Keep, Tell, Look, Move	The actions of the strong

Table 2.8 BPM

*Word Frequency Query Woman or Girl*

Repetitive Words	Themes
Woman, Black, Girl, Ladies, Mama	Specific to Black women or girls
Strong, Flawless, Proud, Rock	Describing Black/Women and girls positively
Work, Prove, Stand, Love	How Black women/girls behave



Figure 3. Word Cloud of BPM Frequency Query Independence



Figure 4. Word Cloud of BPM Frequency Query Pride

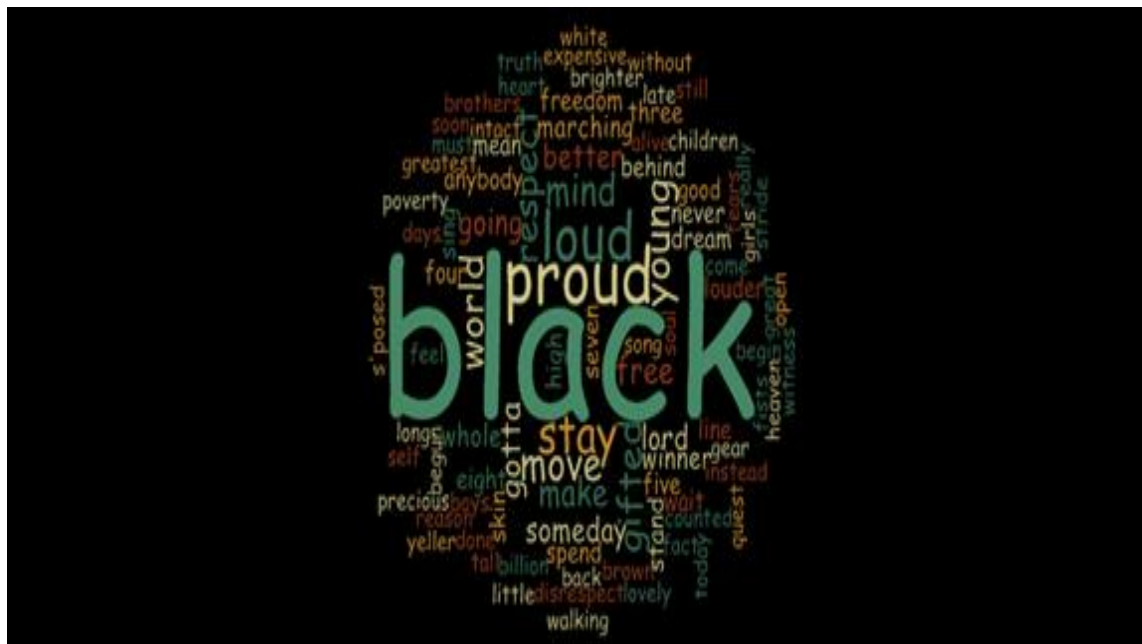












Figure 13. Word Cloud of BLM Frequency Query Strength



Figure 14. Word Cloud of BLM Frequency Query Woman or Girl



## **Appendix A**

### **Black Power Movement Music Lyrics**

## **1. Sam Cooke -A Change Is Gonna Come**

I was born by the river in a little tent  
Oh and just like the river I've been running ev'r since  
It's been a long time, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will  
It's been too hard living, but I'm afraid to die  
'Cause I don't know what's up there, beyond the sky  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will  
I go to the movie and I go downtown  
Somebody keep tellin' me don't hang around  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will  
Then I go to my brother  
And I say brother help me please  
But he winds up knockin' me  
Back down on my knees, oh  
There have been times that I thought I couldn't last for long  
But now I think I'm able to carry on  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change is gonna come, oh yes it will

## **2. Nina Simone -Mississippi Goddamn**

The name of this tune is Mississippi goddam  
And I mean every word of it  
Alabama's gotten me so upset  
Tennessee made me lose my rest  
And everybody knows about Mississippi goddam  
Alabama's gotten me so upset  
Tennessee made me lose my rest  
And everybody knows about Mississippi goddam  
Can't you see it  
Can't you feel it  
It's all in the air  
I can't stand the pressure much longer  
Somebody say a prayer  
Alabama's gotten me so upset  
Tennessee made me lose my rest  
And everybody knows about Mississippi goddam  
This is a show tune  
But the show hasn't been written for it, yet  
Hound dogs on my trail  
School children sitting in jail

Black cat cross my path  
I think every day's gonna be my last  
Lord have mercy on this land of mine  
We all gonna get it in due time  
I don't belong here  
I don't belong there  
I've even stopped believing in prayer  
Don't tell me  
I tell you  
Me and my people just about due  
I've been there so I know  
They keep on saying 'Go slow!'  
But that's just the trouble  
'Do it slow'  
Washing the windows  
'Do it slow'  
Picking the cotton  
'Do it slow'  
You're just plain rotten  
'Do it slow'  
You're too damn lazy  
'Do it slow'  
The thinking's crazy  
'Do it slow'  
Where am I going  
What am I doing  
I don't know  
I don't know  
Just try to do your very best  
Stand up be counted with all the rest  
For everybody knows about Mississippi goddam  
I made you thought I was kiddin'  
Picket lines  
School boy cots  
They try to say it's a communist plot  
All I want is equality  
For my sister my brother my people and me  
Yes you lied to me all these years  
You told me to wash and clean my ears  
And talk real fine just like a lady  
And you'd stop calling me Sister Sadie  
Oh but this whole country is full of lies  
You're all gonna die and die like flies  
I don't trust you any more  
You keep on saying 'Go slow!'  
'Go slow!'



But that's just the trouble  
'Do it slow'  
Desegregation  
'Do it slow'  
Mass participation  
'Do it slow'  
Reunification  
'Do it slow'  
Do things gradually  
'Do it slow'  
But bring more tragedy  
'Do it slow'  
Why don't you see it  
Why don't you feel it  
I don't know  
I don't know  
You don't have to live next to me  
Just give me my equality  
Everybody knows about Mississippi  
Everybody knows about Alabama  
Everybody knows about Mississippi goddam, that's it

### **3. Donny Hathaway -To Be Young, Gifted And Black**

To be young, gifted and black  
Oh what a lovely precious dream  
To be young, gifted and black  
Open your heart to what I mean  
In the whole world you know  
There are billion boys and girls  
Who are young, gifted and black  
And that's a fact!  
Young, gifted and black  
We must begin to tell our young  
There's a world waiting for you  
This is a quest that's just begun  
When you feel really low  
Yeah, there's a great truth you should know  
When you're young, gifted and black  
Your soul's intact  
Young, gifted and black  
How I long to know the truth  
There are times when I look back  
And I am haunted by my youth  
Oh but my joy of today  
Is that we can all be proud to say

To be young, gifted and black  
Is where it's at

#### **4. Aretha Franklin -Respect**

What you want  
Baby, I got it  
What you need  
Do you know I got it  
All I'm askin'  
Is for a little respect when you get home (just a little bit)  
Hey baby (just a little bit) when you get home  
(Just a little bit) mister (just a little bit)  
I ain't gonna do you wrong while you're gone  
Ain't gonna do you wrong cause I don't wanna  
All I'm askin'  
Is for a little respect when you come home (just a little bit)  
Baby (just a little bit) when you get home (just a little bit)  
Yeah (just a little bit)  
I'm about to give you all of my money  
And all I'm askin' in return, honey  
Is to give me my propers  
When you get home (just a, just a, just a, just a)  
Yeah baby (just a, just a, just a, just a)  
When you get home (just a little bit)  
Yeah (just a little bit)  
Ooo, your kisses  
Sweeter than honey  
And guess what?  
So is my money  
All I want you to do for me  
Is give it to me when you get home (re, re, re ,re)  
Yeah baby (re, re, re ,re)  
Whip it to me (respect, just a little bit)  
When you get home, now (just a little bit)  
R-E-S-P-E-C-T  
Find out what it means to me  
R-E-S-P-E-C-T  
Take care, TCB  
Oh (sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me)  
A little respect (sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me)  
Whoa, babe (just a little bit)  
A little respect (just a little bit)  
I get tired (just a little bit)  
Keep on tryin' (just a little bit)  
You're runnin' out of fools (just a little bit)  
And I ain't lyin' (just a little bit)

(Re, re, re, re) when you come home  
(Re, re, re, re) 'spect  
Or you might walk in (respect, just a little bit)  
And find out I'm gone (just a little bit)  
I got to have (just a little bit)  
A little respect (just a little bit)

## **5. James Brown - Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud**

Uh! Your bad self!  
Say it loud! I'm black and I'm proud  
Say it louder! I'm black and I'm proud  
Look a-here!  
Some people say we got a lot of malice, some say it's a lotta nerve  
But I say we won't quit movin' until we get what we deserve  
We've been buked and we've been scorned  
We've been treated bad, talked about as sure as you're born  
But just as sure as it take two eyes to make a pair, huh!  
Brother we can't quit until we get our share  
Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud  
Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud  
One more time, say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud, huh!  
I've worked on jobs with my feet and my hands  
But all the work I did was for the other man  
And now we demands a chance to do things for ourselves  
We tired of beatin' our head against the wall  
An' workin' for someone else  
Say it loud! I'm black and I'm proud  
Say it loud! I'm black and I'm proud  
Say it loud! I'm black and I'm proud  
Say it loud! I'm black and I'm proud, oh!  
Ooh-wee, you're killin' me  
Alright, uh, you're out of sight!  
Alright, so tough you're tough enough!  
Ooh-wee uh! you're killin' me! oow!  
Say it loud! I'm black and I'm proud  
Say it louder! I'm black and I'm proud  
Now we demand a chance to do things for ourselves  
We tired of beatin' our heads against the wall  
And workin' for someone else look a-here  
There's one thing more I got to say right here  
Now, now we're people, we're like the birds and the bees  
We rather die on our feet than keep livin' on our knees  
Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud huh!  
Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud huh!  
Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud Lord-a, Lord-a, Lord-a

Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud, ooh!  
Uh! alright now, good God  
You know we can do the boogaloo

## **6. The Impressions -We're A Winner**

We're a winner  
And never let anybody say  
Boy, you can't make it  
'Cause a feeble mind is in your way  
No more tears do we cry  
And we have finally dried our eyes  
And we're movin' on up (movin' on up)  
Lawd have mercy  
We're movin' on up (movin' on up)  
We're living proof in alls alert  
That we're two from the good black earth  
And we're a winner  
And everybody knows it too  
We'll just keep on pushin'  
Like your leaders tell you to  
At last that blessed day has come  
And I don't care where you come from  
We're all movin' on up (movin' on up)  
Lawd have mercy  
We're movin' on up (movin' on up), woo  
Hey, hey  
We're movin' on up (movin' on up)  
Lawd have mercy  
We're movin' on up (movin' on up)  
I don't mind leavin' here  
To show the world we have no fear  
'Cause we're a winner  
And everybody knows it too  
We'll just keep on pushin'  
Like your leaders tell you to  
At last that blessed day has come  
And I don't care where you come from  
We're just go move on up (movin' on up)  
Lawd have mercy  
We're movin' on up (movin' on up)  
We'll just keep on pushin'  
We're a winner  
Lawd, baby  
Everybody  
Hey, you know we're movin' on up, ooo ooo

We're a winner, yeah yeah just keep on pushin'

### **7. Sly & The Family Stone- Everyday People**

Sometimes I'm right and I can be wrong  
My own beliefs are in my song  
The butcher, the banker, the drummer and then  
Makes no difference what group I'm in  
I am everyday people, yeah yeah  
There is a blue one who can't accept the green one  
For living with a fat one trying to be a skinny one  
And different strokes for different folks  
And so on and so on and scooby dooby doo  
Oh sha sha we got to live together  
I am no better and neither are you  
We are the same whatever we do  
You love me you hate me you know me and then  
You can't figure out the bag I'm in  
I am everyday people, yeah yeah  
There is a long hair that doesn't like the short hair  
For bein' such a rich one that will not help the poor one  
And different strokes for different folks  
And so on and so on and scooby dooby doo  
Oh sha sha we got to live together  
There is a yellow one that won't accept the black one  
That won't accept the red one that won't accept the white one  
And different strokes for different folks  
And so on and so on and scooby dooby doo  
I am everyday people

### **8. The Temptations -Message From A Black Man**

Yes, my skin is black,  
But that's no reason to hold me back.  
Why don't you think about it?  
Think about it, think about it, think about it,  
Think about it...  
I have wants and desires,  
Just like you.  
So move on the side,  
'Cause I'm comin' through, oh!  
No matter how hard you try,  
You can't stop me now.  
No matter how hard you try,  
You can't stop me now, ooh...  
Yes, your skin is white...

Does that make you right?  
Why don't you think about it?  
Think about it, think about it, think about it,  
Think about it...  
This is a message,  
A message to y'all:  
Together we stand,  
Divided we fall, oh!  
Black is a color,  
Just like white.  
Tell me: how can a color determine whether  
You're wrong or right?  
We all have our faults...  
Yes we do.  
So look in your mirror.  
Look in the mirror.  
What do you see?  
What do you see?  
Two eyes.  
Two eyes.  
A nose, and a mouth, just like me, oh!  
Your eyes are open,  
But you refuse to see,  
The laws of society  
Were made for both you, and me.  
Because of my color,  
I struggle to be free.  
Sticks and stones,  
May break my bones,  
But in the end,  
You're gonna' see my friend, oh!  
No matter how hard you try,  
You can't stop me now.  
Say it loud!  
No matter how hard you try,  
You can't stop me now.

### **9.The Staple Singers -Respect Yourself**

If you disrespect anybody that you run in to  
How in the world do you think anybody's s'posed to respect you  
If you don't give a heck 'bout the man with the bible in his hand  
Just get out the way, and let the gentleman do his thing  
You the kind of gentleman that want everything your way  
Take the sheet off your face, boy, it's a brand new day  
Respect yourself, respect yourself  
If you don't respect yourself

Ain't nobody gonna give a good cahoot, na na na na  
Respect yourself, respect yourself  
If you're walking 'round think'n that the world owes you something cause  
You're here you goin' out the world backwards like you did when you  
Put your hand on your mouth when you cough, that'll help the solution  
Oh, you cuss around women and you don't even know their names and you  
Dumb enough to think that'll make you a big ol man

#### **10. Etta James - Tell It Like It Is**

If you want something to play with  
Go and find yourself a toy  
Baby, my time is too expensive  
And I'm not a little boy  
If you are serious  
Don't play with my heart, it makes me furious  
But if want me to love you  
Then, baby, I will, girl, you know I will  
Tell it like it is  
Don't be ashamed to let your conscience be your guide  
But I-I-I-I know deep down inside of me  
I believe you love me, forget your foolish pride  
Life is too short to have sorrow  
You may be here today and gone tomorrow  
You might as well get what you want  
So go on and live, baby, go on and live  
Tell it like it is  
I'm nothin' to play with, go and find yourself a toy  
But I-I-I-I-I  
Tell it like it is  
My time is too expensive  
And I'm not your little boy  
Mm mm, tell it like it is

#### **11. Donny Hathaway - Someday We'll All Be Free**

Hang on to the world as it spins around  
Just don't let the spin get you down  
Things are moving fast  
Hold on tight and you will last  
Keep your self respect, your manly pride  
Get yourself in gear  
Keep your stride  
Never mind your fears  
Brighter days will soon be here  
Take it from me, someday we'll all be free, yeah  
Keep on walking tall  
Hold your head up high

Lay your dreams right up to the sky  
Sing your greatest song  
And you'll keep going, going on  
Take it from me, someday we'll all be free  
Hey, just wait and see, some day we'll all be free, yeah  
Take it from me, someday we'll all be free  
It won't be long, take it from me, someday we'll all be free  
Take it from me, take it from me, take it from me

### **12. Curtis Mayfield- Mighty Mighty – Spade And Whitey**

Everybody's Talking  
About This Country's State  
We Get A New Power Every Hour  
Just About In Every Christian Fate  
We're Killing Up Our Leaders  
It Don't Matter None  
Black Or White  
And We All Know It's Wrong  
And We're Gonna Fight To Make It Right  
And Mighty, Mighty Spade And Whitey  
Your Black And White Power  
Is Gonna Be A Crumbling Tower  
And We Who Stand Divided  
So God d\*\*\* Undecided  
Give This Some Thought  
In Stupidness We've All Been Caught  
There Really Ain't No Difference  
If You're Cut You're Gonna Bleed  
Might I Get A Little Bit Deeper  
Human Life Is From The s\*\*\*\* Seed  
Now I'm Gonna Say It Loud  
I'm Just As Proud As The Brothers Too  
And Just Like The Rest  
I Don't Want No Mess About  
Who's Taking Who  
Repeat

### **13. The Isley Brothers -Fight The Power – Part 1 & 2**

Time is truly wastin'  
There's no guarantee  
Smile's in the makin'  
You gotta fight the powers that be  
Got so many forces  
Stayin' on the scene  
Givin' up all around me



Faces full a' pain  
I can't play my music  
They say my music's too loud  
I kept talkin about it  
I got the big run around  
When I rolled with the punches  
I got knocked on the ground  
With all this bullshit going down  
Time is truly wastin'  
There's no guarantee  
Smile's in the makin'  
You gotta fight the powers that be  
I don't understand it  
People wanna see, ya  
Those that got the answers  
Red tape in the way  
I could take you in easy  
That's just half the fun, oh boy  
Seeking satisfaction  
Keeps me on the run  
I can't play my music  
They say my music's too loud  
I kept talkin about it  
I got the big run around  
When I rolled with the punches  
I got knocked on the ground  
With all this bullshit going down  
Time is truly wastin'  
There's no guarantee  
Smile's in the makin'  
You gotta fight the powers that be  
If you I can, we got the power  
Fight it, got the power fight it baby, baby  
Fight it, fight the power

#### **14.The O'Jays -Give The People What They Want**

You got to give the people, now  
Give the people what they want  
Well, well, well, well  
No, don't know you  
You got to give the people  
Give the people what they want?  
But I done been all over the world  
And everybody feels the same  
It's a unanimous decision  
I said they're ready for a change, yeah, yeah, yeah

Don't know you  
Got to give the people, give it up  
Give the people what they want?  
Well, well  
No, don't know? You don't know, no  
Got to give the people  
Well, well  
Give the people what they want  
Well, it's about time for things to get better  
We want the truth, the truth and no more lies  
We want freedom, justice and equality  
I want it for you and I want it for me  
You, you, don't you?  
Got to give the people  
Give the people what they want  
Don't you know that, don't you know you  
Got to give the people, give it up  
Give the people what they want?  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, oh, yeah  
And you got to give the people  
Give it up  
Give the people what they want  
You better  
Don't ya know, don't ya know you  
Got to give the people, give it up  
Give the people what they want?  
Don't you know that you just  
Give the people what, give the people what  
Give the people what  
Give 'em what they want?  
You better, you better, you better  
Give the people what, give the people what  
Give the people what  
Give 'em what they want  
Don't you know, don't you know ya  
Give the people what  
Give the people what  
Give the people what  
Give 'em what they want?  
People want better education now  
People want better food to eat  
People want here better homing  
People need money, money  
People need equality  
People need understanding  
People need freedom

And gotta [Incomprehensible]  
You, you, you, you, you better  
Give the people what  
Give the people what  
Give the people what  
Give 'em what they want  
Don't you know you  
Give the people what  
Give the people what  
Give the people what  
Give 'em what they want?  
Give the people what  
Give the people what

### **15. The Chi-Lites -Give More Power To The People**

For God's sake, you got to give more power to the people  
There's some people up there hoggin' everything  
Tellin' lies, givin' alibis about the peoples, money an' things  
An' if they gonna throw it away, might as well give some to me  
Yeah, they seen an' heard it but never had misery  
There are some people who are starvin' to death  
Never knew but only heard 'em an' they never had happiness  
If you don't have enough to eat, how can you think of love?  
You don't have time to care, so it's crime you're guilty of  
For God's sake, you got to give more power to the people  
For God's sake, why don't you give more power to the people?  
Cut this jive an' see who's got the power to kill the most  
When they run out of power, the world's gonna be a ghost  
They know we're not satisfied, so we begin to holler  
They give us a promise an' throw in a few more dollars  
There's no price for happiness, there's no price for love  
Up goes the price of livin' an' you're right back where you was  
So whatever you got, just be glad you got it  
Now we're gonna get on up an' get some more of it  
For God's sake, you got to give more power to the people  
For God's sake, why don't you give more power to the people?  
For God's sake, you got to give more power to the people  
For God's sake, why don't you give more power to the people?  
For God's sake, you got to give more power to the people  
For God's sake, why don't you give more power to the people?  
For God's sake, got to have it, more power  
For God's sake, got to have it, power, power, power  
For God's sake, why don't you give more power to the people?  
For God's sake, you better give more power to the people  
For God's sake, why don't you try it? Yeah, power, power  
For God's sake, can't deny it, no, no, no, power, power

For God's sake, why don't you give more power to the people?  
For God's sake, you got to give more power to the people  
For God's sake, why don't you give more power to the people?  
For God's sake, you got to give more power to the people  
For God's sake, why don't you give power, power?  
For God's sake, you got to give

### **16. Billy Paul-Am I Black Enough For You?**

Am I black enough for you  
Am I black enough for you  
Am I black enough for you  
Am I black enough for you  
We're gonna move on up  
One by one  
We ain't gonna stop  
Until the work is done  
Am I black enough  
Black enough for you  
Am I black  
Black enough for you  
We're gonna move on up  
Two by two  
And this whole world  
Is gonna be brand new  
Am I black enough for you  
Am I black enough for you  
Get in line  
Stop marching in time  
You better make up your mind  
We're gonna leave you behind  
We're gonna move on up  
Three by three  
We gotta get rid of poverty  
I got to stay black  
Black enough for you  
I got to stay black  
Black enough for you  
We're gonna move on up  
Four by four  
We ain't never  
Gonna suffer no more  
I got to stay black  
Black enough for you  
I got to stay black  
Black enough for you  
Get in line

Stop marching in time  
You better make up your mind  
We're gonna leave you behind  
Make up your mind  
Stop marching in time  
Get in line  
You better make up your mind  
We're gonna get on up  
Five by five  
And this whole world  
Is gonna come alive  
Am I black  
Black enough for you  
Am I black enough for you  
We're gonna move on up  
Six by six  
I gotta use my mind  
Instead of my fists  
Am I black  
Black enough for you  
Am I black  
Black enough for you  
We're gonna move on up  
Seven by seven  
We're God's children  
And we got to get to Heaven  
Am I black enough for you  
Am I black enough for you  
We gotta move on up  
Eight by eight  
Without no witness  
We ain't too late  
Am I black  
Black enough for you  
Am I black  
Black enough for you  
Freedom, freedom  
It got to be spende  
I could take it  
If I could spend it one time  
We got to stay  
Black enough for you  
I gotta, gotta black  
Black enough for you

### **17. Stevie Wonder -Living For The City**

A boy is born in hard time Mississippi  
Surrounded by four walls that ain't so pretty  
His parents give him love and affection  
To keep him strong moving in the right direction  
Living just enough, just enough for the city  
His father works some days for fourteen hours  
And you can bet he barely makes a dollar  
His mother goes to scrub the floors for many  
And you'd best believe she hardly gets a penny  
Living just enough, just enough for the city yeah  
His sister's black but she is sho 'nuff pretty  
Her skirt is short but Lord her legs are sturdy  
To walk to school she's got to get up early  
Her clothes are old but never are they dirty  
Living just enough, just enough for the city  
Her brother's smart he's got more sense than many  
His patience's long but soon he won't have any  
To find a job is like a haystack needle  
'Cause where he lives they don't use colored people  
Living just enough, just enough for the city  
Just enough for the city  
Living for the city  
Just enough for the city  
Enough for the city  
Just enough for the city  
Living for the city  
Just enough for the city  
Enough for the city  
Just enough for the city  
Living for  
Just enough for the city  
Living for the city  
Just enough for the city  
Just enough for the city  
For the city  
Just enough for the city  
For the city  
Just enough for the city  
For the city  
Just enough for the city  
For the city

### **18.The Temptations -Ball of Confusion**

People movin' out, people movin' in.  
Why, because of the color of their skin.

Run, run, run, but you sho' can't hide  
 An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.  
 Vote for me and I'll set you free  
 Rap on, brother, rap on.  
 Well, the only person talkin' 'bout love thy brother is the preacher  
 And it seems nobody's interested in learning but the teacher  
 Segregation, determination, demonstration, integration, aggravation,  
 humiliation, obligation to our nation  
 Ball Of Confusion that's what the world is today (yeah, yeah)  
 The sale of pills is at an all time high  
 young folks walkin' 'round with their heads in the sky  
 Cities aflame in the summer time, and oh the beat goes on  
 Eve of destruction, tax deduction,  
 City inspectors, bill collectors,  
 Evolution, revolution, gun control, the sound of soul,  
 Shootin' rockets to the moon, kids growin' up too soon  
 Politicians say more taxes will solve ev'rything, and the band played on.  
 Round and round and around we go, where the world's headed nobody knows.  
 Great googa mooga, can't you hear me talkin' to you, just a  
 Ball of Confusion that's what the world is today. (yeah, yeah)  
 Fear in the air, tension ev'rywhere  
 Unemployment rising fast, the Beatle's new record's a gas,  
 and the only safe place to live is on an Indian reservation,  
 and the band played on  
 Eve of destruction, tax deduction,  
 City inspectors, bill collectors, mod clothes in demand,  
 population out of hand, suicide too many bills, hippies movin' to the hills  
 People all over the world are shouting end the war and the band played on.  
 Round and round and around we go, where the world's headed nobody knows.  
 Great googa mooga, can't you hear me talkin' to you, just a  
 Ball of Confusion that's what the world is today  
 Let me hear you, let me hear you, let me hear you  
 Ball Of Confusion that's what the world is today

### **19. Eddie Kendricks-My People ... Hold On**

My people hold on!  
 My people hold on!  
 My people hold on!  
 My people hold on!  
 People the time has come in its name when lion must lay down with lamb brothers and sisters  
 live side by side hold on to love let its light be your guide  
 My people hold on!  
 My people hold on!  
 My people hold on!  
 My people hold on!

The lord said who ever does the will of the father is my brother the hawk must love let the dove fly high hold on to love let its light be your guide

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

(Music)

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

In peace let us all stand!!

Prevail before we all turn to dust in the wind!

Join hand and hand together we'll rise my people hold on!!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

My people hold on!

## **20. Syl Johnson -Is It Because I'm Black**

The dark brown shades of my skin, only add colour to my tears

That splash against my hollow bones, that rocks my soul

Looking back over my false dreams, that I once knew

Wondering why my dreams never came true

Is it because I'm black?

Somebody tell me, what can I do

Something is holding me back

Is it because I'm black?

In this world of no pity

I was raised in the ghetto of the city

Momma, she works so hard

To earn every penny

Something is holding me back

Is it because I'm black?

Like a child stealing candy for the first time, and got caught

Thieving around life's corner somewhere I got lost

Something is holding me back

I wonder, is it because I'm black?

Somebody tell me what can I do

Will I survive, or will I die?



You keep on holding me back  
You keep on holding on  
You keep on picking on me  
You keep on holding me back  
You keep on holding on  
You keep on holding on  
You're holding me back  
I wonder why, you do me like that  
But you keep on holding me back  
You keep on putting your foot on me  
But I, I've got to break away  
Somehow and someday  
Cause I wanna be somebody so bad, so bad  
I wanna be somebody, I wanna be somebody so bad  
You see, I want diamond rings and things, like you do  
And I wanna drive Cadillac cars  
I wanna be somebody so bad  
But you keep on putting your foot on me  
And I, I believe, I believe I can break away  
And be somebody, somehow, and someway  
Ya see, I heard somebody say one time  
You can make it, if you try  
And some of us, we tried so hard, we tried so hard  
I want you to know that I don't speak for myself  
But I speak for y'all too right now  
Ya see, if you have white-like brown skin and a high yeller  
You're still black  
So we all got to stick together right now  
This I wanna say to you my sisters and my brothers  
Right on sister  
Right on brother  
Dig this:  
And we keep on pushing down  
We've got to make it a little bit further  
We've got to make it a little further  
All we got to do is try, try, try  
And some of us, we've tried so hard  
We've tried so hard, we've tried so hard  
We've tried so hard, so hard to be somebody  
We've tried so hard, although, they're holding us back  
And it stairs the reason, that they're doing us like that  
You know what? It is  
I believe, it is because we are black  
But hey, we can't stop now, we can't stop now  
We've got to keep on, keep on, keep on, keeping on  
We've got to keep on keeping on

I know and I know and I know that you know that I know it ain't right  
Oh, it ain't right, it ain't right, it ain't right  
That they hold us, hold us, hold us back  
They're holding us back, they're holding us back  
I wonder, sometimes I sit down, sit down and I wonder

**21. James Brown- Its a man's world**

This is a man's world  
This is a man's world  
But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing  
Without a woman or a girl  
You see man made the cars  
To take us over the road  
Man made the train  
To carry the heavy load  
Man made the electric light  
To take us out of the dark  
Man made the boat for the water  
Like Noah made the ark  
This is a man's, man's, man's world  
But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing  
Without a woman or a girl  
Man thinks about a little bit of baby girls  
And a baby boys  
Man makes them happy  
'Cause man makes them toys  
And after man's made everything  
Everything he can  
You know that man makes money  
To buy from other man  
This is a man's world  
But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing  
Not one little thing  
Without a woman or a girl  
He's lost in the wilderness  
He's lost in bitterness  
He's lost

**22. Aretha Franklin-You better think**

Think about what you're trying to do to me  
Think (think, think)  
Let your mind go, let yourself be free  
Let's go back, let's go back  
Let's go way on back when  
I didn't even know you  
You couldn't have been too much more than ten (just a child)

I ain't no psychiatrist, I ain't no doctor with degrees  
It don't take too much high IQ's  
To see what you're doing to me  
You better think (think)  
Think about what you're trying to do to me  
Yeah, think (think, think)  
Let your mind go, let yourself be free  
Oh, freedom (freedom), freedom (freedom)  
Oh, freedom, yeah, freedom  
Freedom (freedom), freedom (freedom)  
Freedom, oh freedom  
Hey, think about it, think about it  
There ain't nothing you could ask  
I could answer you but I won't (I won't)  
I was gonna change, but I'm not  
To keep doing things I don't  
You better think (think)  
Think about what you're trying to do to me  
Think (think)  
Let your mind go, let yourself be free  
People walking around everyday  
Playing games, taking score  
Trying to make other people lose their minds  
Ah, be careful you don't lose yours, oh  
Think (think)  
Think about what you're trying to do to me, ooh  
Think (think)  
Let your mind go, let yourself be free  
You need me (need me)  
And I need you (don't you know)  
Without each other there ain't nothing people can do, oh  
Think about it, baby (What are you trying to do me)  
Yeah, oh baby, think about it now, yeah  
(Think about, ah me, think about, ah me)  
(Think about, ah me, think about, ah me)  
Oh, come on, baby

### **23. Nina Simone- Four Women**

My skin is black  
My arms are long  
My hair is woolly  
My back is strong  
Strong enough to take the pain  
inflicted again and again  
What do they call me  
My name is AUNT SARAH

My name is Aunt Sarah  
My skin is yellow  
My hair is long  
Between two worlds  
I do belong  
My father was rich and white  
He forced my mother late one night  
What do they call me  
My name is SAFFRONIA  
My name is Saffronia  
My skin is tan  
My hair is fine  
My hips invite you  
my mouth like wine  
Whose little girl am I?  
Anyone who has money to buy  
What do they call me  
My name is SWEET THING  
My name is Sweet Thing  
My skin is brown  
my manner is tough  
I'll kill the first mother I see  
my life has been too rough  
I'm awfully bitter these days  
because my parents were slaves  
What do they call me  
My name is PEACHES

#### **24. Aretha Franklin- Do Right Woman/Do Right Man**

Take me to heart  
And I'll always love you  
And nobody can make me do wrong  
Take me for granted, leaving love unsure  
Makes will power weak  
And temptation strong  
A woman's only human  
You should understand  
She's not just a plaything  
She's flesh and blood just like her man  
If you want a do-right-all-day woman (woman)  
You've got to be a do-right-all-night man (man)  
Yeah yeah,  
They say that it's a man's world  
But you can't prove that by me  
And as long as we're together baby  
Show some respect for me

If you want a do-right-all-day woman (woman)  
You've got to be a do-right-all-night man (man)  
A woman's only human  
Yes, you should understand  
She's not just a plaything  
She's flesh and blood just like her man  
If you want a do-right-all-day woman (woman)  
You've got to be a do-right-all-night man (man)  
You've got to be a do-right-all-night man (man)

**25. Nina Simone- Ain't Got No (I got life)**

I ain't got no home, ain't got no shoes  
Ain't got no money, ain't got no class  
Ain't got no skirts, ain't got no sweater  
Ain't got no perfume, ain't got no bed  
Ain't got no mind  
Ain't got no mother, ain't got no culture  
Ain't got no friends, ain't got no schooling  
Ain't got no love, ain't got no name  
Ain't got no ticket, ain't got no token  
Ain't got no God  
And what have I got?  
Why am I alive anyway?  
Yeah, what have I got  
Nobody can take away?  
Got my hair, got my head  
Got my brains, got my ears  
Got my eyes, got my nose  
Got my mouth, I got my smile  
I got my tongue, got my chin  
Got my neck, got my boobs  
Got my heart, got my soul  
Got my back, I got my sex  
I got my arms, got my hands  
Got my fingers, got my legs  
Got my feet, got my toes  
Got my liver, got my blood  
I've got life, I've got my freedom  
I've got the life  
I've got the life  
And I'm gonna keep it  
I've got the life  
And nobody's gonna take it away  
I've got the life

## **Appendix B**

### **Black Lives Matters Music Lyrics**

### 1. Janelle Monáe- Q.U.E.E.N.

I can't believe all of the things they say about me  
Walk in the room they throwing shade left to right  
They be like ooh, she's so fun face  
And I just tell em, cut me up, and get down  
They call us dirty cause we break all your rules down  
And we just came to act a fool, is that all right?  
(Girl, that's alright)  
They be like, ooh let them eat cake  
But we eat wings and throw them bones on the ground  
Am I a freak for dancing around?  
Am I a freak for getting down?  
I'm coming up, don't cut me down  
And yeah I wanna be, wanna be  
Is it peculiar that she twerk in the mirror?  
And am I weird to dance alone late at night?  
And is it true we're all insane?  
And I just tell 'em, no we ain't and get down  
I heard this life is just a play with no rehearsal  
I wonder will this be my final act tonight  
And tell me what's the price of fame?  
Am I a sinner with my skirt on the ground?  
Am I a freak for dancing around?  
Am I a freak for getting down?  
I'm coming up, don't cut me down  
And yeah I wanna be, wanna be  
Hey brother can you save my soul from the devil?  
Say is it weird to like the way she wear her tights?  
And is it rude to wear my shades?  
Am I a freak because I love watching Mary? (Maybe)  
Hey sister am I good enough for your heaven?  
Say will your God accept me in my black and white?  
Will he approve the way I'm made?  
Or should I reprogram the programming and get down?  
Am I a freak for dancing around?  
Am I a freak for getting down?  
I'm coming up, don't cut me down  
And yeah I wanna be, wanna be  
Even if it makes others uncomfortable  
I wanna love who I am  
Even if it makes other uncomfortable  
I will love who I am  
Dance 'til the break of dawn  
Don't mean a thing

I can't take it no more  
Baby, we in tuxedo groove  
Monae and E Badu  
Crazy in the black and white  
We got the drums so tight  
Baby, here comes the freedom song  
Too strong we moving on  
Baby there's melody  
Show you another way  
This joints for fight unknown  
Come home and sing your song  
But you gotta testify  
Because the booty don't lie  
No, no, the booty don't lie  
Oh no, the booty don't lie  
Uh, I asked a question like this  
Are we a lost generation of our people?  
Add us to equations but they'll never make us equal  
She who writes the movie owns the script and the sequel  
So why ain't the stealing of my rights made illegal?  
They keep us underground working hard for the greedy  
But when it's time pay they turn around and call us needy  
My crown too heavy like the Queen Nefertiti  
Gimme back my pyramid, I'm trying to free Kansas City  
Mixing masterminds like your name Bernie Grundman  
Well I'm gonna keep leading like a young Harriet Tubman  
You can take my wings but I'm still goin' fly  
And even when you edit me the booty don't lie  
Yeah, keep singing and I'mma keep writing songs  
I'm tired of Marvin asking me, What's Going On?  
March to the streets cause I'm willing and I'm able  
Categorize me, I defy every label  
And while you're selling dope, we're gonna keep selling hope  
We rising up now, you gotta deal you gotta cope  
Will you be electric sheep?  
Electric ladies, will you sleep?  
Or will you preach?

## **2. Janelle Monae- Django Jane**

Yeah, yeah this is my palace, champagne in my chalice  
I got it all covered like a wedding band  
Wonderland, so my alias is Alice  
We gon' start a motherfuckin' pussy riot  
Or we gon' have to put 'em on a pussy diet  
Look at that, I guarantee I got 'em quiet  
Look at that, I guarantee they all inspired



A-town, made it out there  
Straight out of Kansas City, yeah we made it out there  
Celebrated, graduated, made it pass/fail  
Sassy, classy, Kool-Aid with the kale  
Momma was a G, she was cleanin' hotels  
Poppa was a driver, I was workin' retail  
Kept us in the back of the store  
We ain't hidden no more, moonlit nigga, lit nigga  
Already got a Oscar for the casa  
Runnin' down Grammys with the family  
Prolly give a Tony to the homies  
Prolly get a Emmy dedicated to the  
Highly melanated, ArchAndroid orchestrated  
Yeah, we highly melanated, ArchAndroid orchestrated  
Yeah, Gemini they still jammin'  
Box office numbers, and they doin' outstandin'  
Runnin' outta space in my damn bandwagon  
Remember when they used to say I look too mannish  
Black girl magic, y'all can't stand it  
Y'all can't ban it, made out like a bandit  
They been trying hard just to make us all vanish  
I suggest they put a flag on a whole 'nother planet  
Jane Bond, never Jane Doe  
And I Django, never Sambo  
Black and white, yeah that's always been my camo  
It's lookin' like y'all gon' need some more ammo  
I cut 'em off, I cut 'em off, I cut 'em off like Van Gogh  
Now, pan right for the angle  
I got away with murder, no Scandal  
Cue the violins and the violas  
We gave you life, we gave you birth  
We gave you God, we gave you Earth  
We fem the future, don't make it worse  
You want the world? Well, what's it worth?  
Emoticons, Decepticons, and Autobots  
Who twist the plot?  
Who shot the sheriff, then fled to Paris  
In the darkest hour, spoke truth to power?  
Made a fandroid outta yo girlfriend  
Let's get caught downtown in the whirlwind  
And paint the city pink, paint the city pink  
And tuck the pearls in, just in case the world end  
And nigga, down dawg  
Nigga move back, take a seat, you were not involved  
And hit the mute button  
Let the vagina have a monologue

Mansplaining, I fold em like origami  
What's a wave, baby? This a tsunami  
For the culture, I kamikaze  
I put my life on a life line  
If she the G.O.A.T. now, would anybody doubt it?  
If she the G.O.A.T. now, would anybody doubt it?  
Do anybody got it? Do anybody got it?  
I say anybody got it?

### **3. Janelle Monae- I Like That**

Sometimes a mystery, sometimes I'm free  
Depending on my mood or my attitude  
Sometimes I wanna roll or stay at home  
Walking contradiction, guess I'm factual and fiction  
A little crazy, little sexy, little cool  
Little rough around the edges, but I keep it smooth  
I'm always left of center and that's right where I belong  
I'm the random minor note you hear in major songs  
And I like that  
I don't really give a fuck if I was just the only one  
Who likes that  
I never like to follow, follow all around, the chase is on  
Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh my  
Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh my I  
Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh my  
I like that  
I don't care what I look like but I feel good  
Better than amazing, and better than I could  
Told the whole world, I'm the venom and the antidote  
Take a different type of girl to keep the whole world afloat  
'Cause I'm crazy and I'm sexy then I'm cool  
Little rough around the edges, but I keep it smooth  
I'm always left of center and that's right where I belong  
I'm the random minor note you hear in major songs  
And I like that  
I don't really give a fuck if I was just the only one  
Who likes that  
I never like to follow, follow all around, the chase is on  
Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh my  
Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh my I  
Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh my  
I like that  
I remember when you called me weird  
We was in math class, third row, I was sitting by you  
Right before Mr. Ammond's class  
'Cause my mom couldn't afford new Js

Polos, thrift store, thrift clothes that was all I knew  
Do you remember?  
Uh, I remember when you laughed when I cut my perm off  
And you rated me a six  
I was like, "Damn"  
But even back then with the tears in my eyes  
I always knew I was the shit  
I like that  
I don't really give a fuck if I was just the only one  
Who likes that  
I never like to follow, follow all around, the chase is on  
Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh my  
Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh my I (I like that)  
Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh my  
I like that

#### **4. Beyoncé- Flawless**

I'm bout that H, town coming coming down  
I'm coming down, drippin' candy on the ground  
H, Town, Town, I'm coming down, coming down  
Drippin' candy on the ground  
I know when you were little girls  
You dreamt of being in my world  
Don't forget it, don't forget it  
Respect that, bow down bitches  
I took some time to live my life  
But don't think I'm just his little wife  
Don't get it twisted, get it twisted  
This my shit, bow down bitches  
Bow down bitches, bow bow down bitches (Crown)  
Bow down bitches, bow bow down bitches (Crown)  
H Town bitches  
H, H Town bitches  
I'm so crown crown, bow down bitches  
I'm about that H, town, coming coming down  
I'm coming down, drippin' candy on the ground  
H, Town, Town, I'm coming down, coming down  
Drippin' candy on the ground  
You wake up, flawless  
Post up, flawless  
Ride round in it, flawless  
Flossin on that, flawless  
This diamond, flawless  
My diamond, flawless  
This rock, flawless  
My rock, flawless

I woke up like this  
I woke up like this  
We flawless, ladies tell 'em  
I woke up like this  
I woke up like this  
We flawless, ladies tell 'em  
Say I, look so good tonight  
God damn, God damn  
Say I, look so good tonight  
God damn, God damn  
Momma taught me good home training  
My Daddy taught me how to love my haters  
My sister taught me I should speak my mind  
My man made me feel so God damn fine  
You wake up, flawless  
Post up, flawless  
Ride round in it, flawless  
Flossin on that, flawless  
This diamond, flawless  
My diamond, flawless  
This rock, flawless  
My rock, flawless  
I woke up like this  
I woke up like this  
We flawless, ladies tell 'em  
I woke up like this  
I woke up like this  
We flawless, ladies tell 'em  
Say I, look so good tonight  
God damn, God damn  
Say I, look so good tonight  
God damn, God damn

### **5. Beyonce- Formation**

Y'all haters corny with that illuminati mess  
Paparazzi, catch my fly, and my cocky fresh  
I'm so reckless when I rock my Givenchy dress (stylin')  
I'm so possessive so I rock his Roc necklaces  
My daddy Alabama, momma Louisiana  
You mix that negro with that Creole make a Texas bamma  
I like my baby hair, with baby hair and afros  
I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils  
Earned all this money but they never take the country out me  
I got a hot sauce in my bag, swag  
I see it, I want it  
I stunt, yellow bone it

I dream it, I work hard  
I grind 'til I own it  
I twirl on them haters  
Albino alligators  
El Camino with the seat low  
Sippin' Cuervo with no chaser  
Sometimes I go off, I go off  
I go hard, I go hard  
Get what's mine, take what's mine  
I'm a star, I'm a star  
'Cause I slay, slay  
I slay, hey, I slay, okay  
I slay, okay, all day, okay  
I slay, okay, I slay okay  
We gon' slay, slay  
Gon' slay, okay  
We slay, okay  
I slay, okay  
I slay, okay  
Okay, okay, I slay, okay  
Okay, okay, okay, okay  
Okay, okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, 'cause I slay  
Okay ladies, now let's get in formation, 'cause I slay  
Prove to me you got some coordination, 'cause I slay  
Slay trick, or you get eliminated  
When he fuck me good I take his ass to Red Lobster, 'cause I slay  
When he fuck me good I take his ass to Red Lobster, 'cause I slay  
If he hit it right, I might take him on a flight on my chopper, 'cause I slay  
Drop him off at the mall, let him buy some J's, let him shop up, 'cause I slay  
I might get your song played on the radio station, 'cause I slay  
I might get your song played on the radio station, 'cause I slay  
You just might be a black Bill Gates in the making, 'cause I slay  
I just might be a black Bill Gates in the making  
I see it, I want it  
I stunt, yellow bone it  
I dream it, I work hard  
I grind 'til I own it  
I twirl on them haters  
Albino alligators  
El Camino with the seat low  
Sippin' Cuervo with no chaser  
Sometimes I go off, I go off  
I go hard, I go hard  
Take what's mine, take what's mine  
I'm a star, I'm a star  
'Cause I slay, slay

I slay, hey, I slay, okay  
I slay, okay, I slay, okay  
I slay, okay, I slay okay  
I slay, okay  
We gon' slay, slay  
Gon' slay, okay  
We slay, okay  
I slay, okay  
I slay, okay  
Okay, okay, I slay, okay  
Okay, okay, okay, okay  
Okay, okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, I slay  
Okay ladies, now let's get in formation, I slay  
Prove to me you got some coordination, I slay  
Slay trick, or you get eliminated, I slay  
Okay ladies, now let's get in formation, I slay  
Okay ladies, now let's get in formation  
You know you that bitch when you cause all this conversation  
Always stay gracious, best revenge is your paper

#### **6. Mary J. Blige- Love Yourself**

It's been a long way, but I made it here with love  
I made it here with love, love  
Said I've been and up and down and I've been through it all  
Took a while to know my heart  
Oh, yes, it did, yeah  
Before love like this, you go  
Through the fire and valley lows  
But if you just hold on  
Please hold on 'cause love is strong, it'll save yah  
Oh, please hold on, it'll save yah, save yah  
Truth can be the sweetest pain  
It can mess up everything  
It's the only way you know  
I'm payin' for it, I'm changin' for it  
Oh, oh, and it hurts  
But I'll make it work  
'Cause I'm no beginner  
I'm a winner, paid dues, I know my purpose  
Thought they'd put my life on hold  
But I knew somethin' they didn't know  
I know myself too much to ever fold  
Dark clouds are movin' past you  
Oh, you gotta love yourself  
If you really wanna be with someone else  
You gotta feed yourself

Before you feed somebody else  
You gotta stay open, and don't be foolish  
'Cause everybody don't mean you well  
You gotta love yourself  
Before you love somebody else  
Yeah, gotta love yourself  
Uh, you know what I'm sayin'?  
I decided not to use my color as a handicap  
He a designer, artist, producer, and he rap  
Never found virtue from patience  
In a dark room just pacin'  
Precious time is just wastin'  
You do not know what we facin'  
I cannot be complacent  
In my job, be courageous  
Another kid just got shot  
They can't find the assailant  
Made it out of the basement  
Made it out of the underground  
From a time where you outta town  
They might gun you down, blaow  
There goes another round, blaow  
There goes another round  
Came from the Chi and wow, look what the fuck they found  
A young legend, comin' to shut the summer down  
You need to talk to me like you don't when your mother 'round  
Oh, you gotta love yourself, oh yeah  
If you really wanna be with someone else  
You gotta feed yourself  
Before you feed somebody else  
You gotta stay open, and don't be foolish  
'Cause everybody don't mean you well  
You gotta love yourself (you gotta love yourself)  
Before you love somebody else  
I don't feel no one's time  
Can't get restless in the soul  
Hold your heart, the world is cold  
Keep singin', don't you stop prayin', woman  
Yeah, it will come to pass  
Don't worry 'bout nothin'  
God knows that you're worth it  
You deserve it, can't nothin' else hurt you  
Thought they'd put my life on hold  
But I knew somethin' they didn't know  
I know myself too much to ever fold  
Dark clouds are movin' past you

Oh, you gotta love yourself, oh yeah  
If you really wanna be with someone else  
You gotta feed yourself  
Before you feed somebody else  
You gotta stay open, and don't be foolish  
'Cause everybody don't mean you well  
You gotta love yourself (you gotta love yourself)  
Before you love somebody else (somebody else)

### **7. Mary J. Blige- Strength Of A Woman**

I'm a woman, hear me out  
Never claiming to be something I'm not  
Don't want what's yours, just want what's mine  
Not tryna take over, I just want my spots  
How can life go on without me here?  
It's impossible  
All the pain endured to give life  
And we keep giving and giving and giving and that's the  
Strength of a woman  
Is the (is the) I'll be the rock when you needed the pill for your sleep  
I am woman, you know  
And I shouldn't have to prove it 'cause it's just what I do  
I am woman  
Not saying move over, I'm just here to help  
That's what God made me for, you ain't gotta build by yourself  
You got your pride, don't let it make you blind  
Don't need to be walking behind, you're better with me by your side  
How can life go on without me here?  
It's impossible  
All the pain endured to give life  
And we keep giving and giving and giving and that's the  
Strength of a woman  
Is the (is the) I'll be the rock when you needed the pill for your sleep  
I am woman, you know (you know)  
And I shouldn't have to prove it 'cause it's just what I do  
Strength of a woman (what I do)  
Is the, I'll be the rock when you needed the pill for your sleep  
I am woman, you know (I am woman, you know)  
And I shouldn't have to prove it 'cause it's just what I do  
I am woman  
We're the wisdom like a guiding light  
We're the trees left standing through the storms of life  
We've come so high and we've come so far  
Can't hold us back  
Strength of a woman  
Is the (is the) I'll be the rock when you needed the pill for your sleep



I am woman, you know  
And I shouldn't have to prove it 'cause it's just what I do (I am woman)  
Strength of a woman (I am, I am)  
Is the (the strength) I'll be the rock when you needed the pill for your sleep  
I am woman, you know (I am woman, you know, you know)  
And I shouldn't have to prove it 'cause it's just what I do  
I am woman  
I am woman  
Strength of a woman

### **8. Mary J. Blige- Doubt**

You said I'd never be a leader  
You said I'd never wear a crown  
If I wanted to be someone  
I should learn to settle down  
I tell myself  
(You'll never go further) I warn myself  
(You'll never be better) Don't know me that well  
I made it to the end  
I nearly paid the cost  
I lost a lot of friends  
I sacrificed a lot  
I'd do it all again  
'Cause I made it to the top  
But I can't keep doubting myself anymore  
No! No  
I can't keep doubting myself no  
Now you're looking at a leader  
Now you're staring at a queen  
You said I'll never be someone  
But now I'm pulling all the strings  
Won't let me back down  
(You'll never go further) Can't turn me around  
(You'll never be better) So no-one's stopping me now  
I made it to the end  
I nearly paid the cost  
I lost a lot of friends  
I sacrificed a lot  
I'd do it all again  
'Cause I made it to the top  
I can't keep doubting myself anymore  
No! No, no, no, no, oh no no, oh no  
You think you know  
But you don't know the half  
You think you beat me down  
But I'll have the last laugh

I'll keep getting up  
'Cause that's what I'm gonna do yea  
I'm gonna be the best me  
Sorry if it kills you  
I made it to the end  
I nearly paid the cost  
I lost a lot of friends  
I sacrificed a lot  
I'd do it all again  
'Cause I made it to the top  
But I can't keep doubting myself anymore  
No, oh no no no no,  
I can't keep doubting myself no, no no oh no oh no oh no

### **9. Solange- Cranes In The Sky**

I tried to drink it away  
I tried to put one in the air  
I tried to dance it away  
I tried to change it with my hair  
I ran my credit card up  
Thought a new dress make it better  
I tried to work it away  
But that just made me even sadder  
I tried to keep myself busy  
I ran around circles  
Think I made myself dizzy  
I slept it away, I sexed it away  
I read it away  
Away, away, away, away, away, away  
Away, away, away, away, away  
Well it's like cranes in the sky  
Sometimes I don't wanna feel those metal clouds  
Yeah it's like cranes in the sky  
Sometimes I don't wanna feel those metal clouds  
I tried to run it away  
Thought then my head be feeling clearer  
I traveled 70 states  
Thought moving around make me feel better  
I tried to let go my lover  
Thought if I was alone then maybe I could recover  
To write it away or cry it away (don't you cry baby)  
Away, away, away, away, away, away  
Away, away, away, away, away  
But it's like cranes in the sky  
Sometimes I don't wanna feel those metal clouds

Yeah it's like cranes in the sky  
Sometimes I don't wanna feel those metal clouds  
Away, away, away, away, away, away

### **10. Solange- Don't Touch My Hair**

Don't touch my hair  
When it's the feelings I wear  
Don't touch my soul  
When it's the rhythm I know  
Don't touch my crown  
They say the vision I've found  
Don't touch what's there  
When it's the feelings I wear  
They don't understand  
What it means to me  
Where we chose to go  
Where we've been to know  
They don't understand  
What it means to me  
Where we chose to go  
Where we've been to know  
You know this hair is my shit  
Rode the ride, I gave it time  
But this here is mine  
You know this hair is my shit  
Rode the ride, I gave it time  
But this here is mine  
What you say, oh?  
What you say to me?  
Don't touch my pride  
They say the glory's all mine  
Don't test my mouth  
They say the truth is my sound  
They don't understand  
What it means to me  
Where we chose to go  
Where we've been to know  
They don't understand  
What it means to me  
Where we chose to go  
Where we've been to know  
You know this hair is my shit  
Rode the ride, I gave it time  
But this here is mine  
You know this hair is my shit  
Rode the ride, I gave it time  
But this here is mine

What you say, oh?  
What you say to me?

### **11. SZA- Normal Girl**

You love the way I pop my top  
Or how I lose my cool  
Or how I look at you  
Say why?  
It ain't no fighting, no I can't stop it  
This took a while, yeah  
For the way I pump my fist or how I bust my hip  
For your affection, tryna be down  
No fighting and no stoppin'  
Stick around  
Wish I was the type of girl you take over to mama  
The type of girl, I know my daddy, he'd be proud of  
Yeah, be proud of  
Be proud of, be proud, you know, you know  
Wanna be a type of girl, you take home to your mama  
The type of girl, I know your fellas would be proud of  
Be proud of, be proud of, be proud of, boy you know  
Normal girl  
I wish I was a normal girl, oh my  
How do I be? How do I be a lady?  
Normal girl, oh  
I wish I was a normal girl  
I'll never be, no, never be uh  
You like it, when I be, aggressive  
You like when I say to you  
"Get it if you got it, I'm ready and waitin' for it  
I'm callin' to put it on", yeah  
Like it, when I be aggressive  
Love when I say to you  
"Get it if you want it, I'm ready and I'm on fire  
I'm burnin' to put it on", yeah, yeah, yeah  
Type of girl you wanna take home to mama  
Wanna be the type of girl my daddy, he'd be proud of  
Be proud of, be proud of, be proud, you know, you know  
The type of girl you wanna take home right up to mama  
The kind of girl, I know your fellas, they'd be proud of  
I'll be probably, I'll be proud like, I'll be probably a problem, oh  
(No fantasy, no fantasy)  
I really wish a was a normal girl  
How do I be, how do I be a lady?  
Normal girl, oh

I wish I was a normal girl  
I'll never be, no never be, uh  
This time next year I'll be livin' so good  
Won't remember your name, I swear  
Livin' so good, livin' so good, livin' so good  
This time next year I'll be livin' so good  
Won't remember no pain, I swear  
People got you figured out, I was just a normal girl  
Normal girl, what do you say now?  
We own the world, 'cause we not going away now  
Wait on yourself 'cause you can figure your way out  
Normal girl  
Why do you, babe?

## **12. Jhene Aiko- Nobody**

Attention is expensive to pay  
I can't get by on minimum wage (no)  
Been dealing with this venomous rage  
Since I was under the age  
I've been under the influence of pain  
And I never needed nobody  
Never needed no one  
No, I don't need nobody, nobody, nobody  
I don't need no one, shit, I don't need no one  
Fucking up my chakras again  
My father is a doctor, I've been talking to him  
All the shit I'm taking, coulda got it from him  
I don't have no patience, prolly got it from him  
Just a product of him  
Pop one, pop two, pop three, four pills  
These pains tell me how life should feel  
Fuck yeah, fuck you, it's my free will  
So please don't tell me to chill  
'Cause I don't need nobody  
I don't need no one, I don't need no one  
No, I don't need nobody, nobody, nobody  
I don't need no one, I don't need no one  
No one ever listened, no one called me pretty  
Everybody called me Penny, I think I am worthless  
I don't have a purpose  
Who am I enough for?  
Why we always lose what we work for?  
Why we hurt more?  
Why we never see my mother cry?  
She's so tough for us, poor her

She don't need nobody, nobody, nobody  
She don't need no one, she don't need no one  
So I don't need nobody, nobody, nobody  
I don't need no one, I don't need no one  
I don't need  
grab my purse with my prescriptions in it  
(Take this) tiny bursts of optimism in them  
(Take this) I'm reversing my decision to win  
(Take this) take this, take this, take  
(Take this) back to '88 when everything was great  
Then life had just begun  
(Take this) it is '89 now, everything is fine now  
I am only one  
(Take this) wait for the 2000 and summer  
I'ma be a mother, wow  
(Take this) 2000 'til summer, it just got tougher  
I don't have my brother now  
Take this, take six, take pics, faces, famous  
Face it, fake shit, pain is faithless  
Yes, I am aware I am tripping  
I'm here in this hell that I don't wanna live in  
I smoke on my own, I drink on my own  
I know it's wrong  
The people I know, they just wanna know what's going on  
I can't tell a soul, no, I can't tell no one  
Don't need nothing from no one  
No, I don't need nobody  
But you're not alone, you got me  
Look, I know what'll make you feel better  
Here, try this

### **13. Jill Scott- Run Run Run**

Baby, mama be back in a minute  
Gotta hustle and handle my business  
I'll be right back when I'm done  
I gotta run run run run, baby  
Gotta put food on the table  
Mama's workin' and know mama's able  
I've gotta run run run run  
I'm Superwoman  
Flying through the city  
There's only one way to make baby go and get it  
Overworked, underpaid  
Lord knows I need a raise  
But when I walk by the guys say  
"Baby, do you wanna go for a ride?"

We can cruise on down 405  
'Cause it look like you could be the one"  
I gotta run run run run, baby  
Gotta put food on the table  
Mama's workin' and know mama's able  
I'll be right back when I'm done  
I gotta run run run run  
Me, oh my  
Me, myself and I and my baby  
I tell no lie  
I try for my baby  
Every night, I pray for my baby  
Oh  
I swim the deepest sea  
I climb the highest mountain for you, baby  
Oh  
Anything, oh  
Mama's gonna be there when you're  
Mama's gonna be there when you're down  
I love you, baby  
So now  
I've gotta run run run run run run run run run run run run run run run run baby

#### **14. Jill Scott-Can't Wait**

Ah  
There's something on my back  
That I need to get off baby  
The world's been nuts  
Just the other day  
I had to reprimand a grown up  
Who am I to act this way  
But sugar I'm the boss lady  
Busy handling and managing  
But oh  
When I get next to you baby (hey)  
Ain't nobody gonna be there  
But me and you, you, you, you  
I can't wait baby  
(Can't wait to be loved by you)  
I've been working so hard and so long  
(Can't wait to be loved by you)  
I need to come home I do I do  
(Can't wait to be loved by you)  
I do  
I've been going through somethings  
Feeling all kinds of hectic in my space

We all running the same race  
Just to pay some bills  
Staring monsters in their face (with grace)  
You'd be so proud  
Money made, bills to be paid  
Like each and everybody  
But baby I need  
And I need you  
Ooh  
When I get next to you baby  
Ain't nobody gonna be there but me and  
You, you, you  
I can't wait baby (baby)  
(Can't wait to be loved by you)  
I've been working so hard and so long  
(Can't wait to be loved by you)  
I need your arms I do I do  
(Can't wait to be loved by you)  
Come to me soon (hee)  
What you want to get off  
You can get it off right here  
Baby no fear  
Let all that old thing go  
Don't worry 'bout it no more  
Got you baby no  
I got you right here  
Deep in the bedroom  
I got you baby  
Or maybe in the back of a car  
What up  
What up baby  
What's up  
What you wanna get off  
You can get it off right here  
Baby no fear  
Let all that old thing go  
Don't worry 'bout it no more (worry no more)  
Got you baby  
I got you right here  
Got you right here  
Mm hm  
Wooh  
Mm hm  
When I get next to you baby  
Ain't no body gonna be here but me and  
You



Can't wait to be loved by you  
I can't wait baby  
Can't wait to be loved by you  
I'm busy holding the world on my shoulders  
Can't wait to be loved by you  
And baby I know you're out there  
Can't wait to be loved by you  
Doing what you need to do too  
Dooh dooh ooh

### **15. Alicia Keys-Girl Can't Be Herself**

When a girl can't be herself no more  
I just wanna cry, I just wanna cry for the world  
When a girl can't be herself no more  
I just wanna cry, I just wanna cry for the world  
In the morning from the minute that I wake up  
What if I don't want to put on all that make up?  
Who says I must conceal what I'm made of?  
Maybe all this Maybelline is covering my self-esteem  
Whose job is it to straighten out my curves?  
I'm so tired of that image, that's my word  
What if today I don't feel like putting heels on?  
Who are you to criticize when beauty's only in the eyes  
Of the beholder  
So behold her  
Sing, sing, sing, why, oh, oh, oh, oh-oh?  
Yo, yo-yo  
'Cause when a girl can't be herself no more  
I just wanna cry, I just wanna cry for the world  
When a girl can't be herself no more  
I just wanna cry, I just wanna cry for the world  
Uh, uh, I'm so secure with insecurities  
Why is being unique such an impurity?  
Why are the numbers on the scale like a god to me?  
All of these indifferences are based on our appearances  
We please to be appeased  
The truest pleasure is the fact that we can breathe  
Think it into existence, do it, then achieve  
A fairy tale reality, beauty was with a beast  
I, I, I'm the image of your reflection  
Ah, and you're the image of my reflection  
Sing, sing, sing, why, oh, oh, oh, oh-oh?  
Why, oh?  
'Cause when a girl can't be herself no more  
I just wanna cry, I just wanna cry for the world

When a girl can't be herself no more  
I just wanna cry, I just wanna cry for the world  
Oh  
Ay, uh!  
Oh!  
Oh

### **16. Goapele- Stand**

Catch me if you can  
Understand it's a new day  
Life is real, but we still gotta get paid  
Take it back to the simple things  
Like level out the fucked up bullshit games  
Stand up to a man, yes I can take my place  
Don't let that chessmate fool ya  
Put your picture in a frame  
It's time to step into this double dutch game  
Just stand up for something  
Don't fall back for nothing  
If we don't stand for something  
We'll fall for anything  
Life is passing by and it's not gonna sit right  
When you witness the truth but then believe the lies  
I'm a mama, freedom fighter, I'm a queen  
But if I don't speak up then tell me what it means  
And while justice keeps on fading away  
Greed and fear keep on making mistakes  
Police against the citizens, the troops against the youth  
And what amount is legal—tell me what we're gonna do  
Just stand up for something  
Don't fall back for nothing  
If we don't stand for something  
We'll fall for anything  
Just stand up for something  
Don't fall back for nothing  
If we don't stand for something  
We'll fall for anything  
Dream makers, heart breakers  
Freedom fighters, not you haters  
True believers, motivators  
To rise up now  
Yeah there's a new day right outside your door  
If you open it you'll see what's in store  
Yeah there's a new day right outside your door  
If you open it you'll see what's in store

Just stand up for something  
Don't fall back for nothing  
If we don't stand for something  
We'll fall for anything  
Just stand up for something  
Don't fall back for nothing  
If we don't stand for something  
We'll fall for anything

### **17. Goapele- Strong as Glass**

I know I'm strong  
I'll brave the storm  
I know I can take a few hits  
You ain't gotta worry bout this  
Stay in my soul  
Take care of my heart  
Always got my own  
But be gentle with me  
Cause I'm human baby and I break  
You know I might not think it to the next time baby, that you say you're sorry  
I might go away  
Cause I'm only strong as glass  
They say I'm built to last but I could break  
Yeah I'm only strong as glass and I am all I have so if I break, there's no more  
I say I'm good when I'm misunderstood  
I already gave enough, so you can never call my bluff  
I work with no pay but I'll find a way  
Cause I don't wanna ask too much  
But be gentle with me  
Cause I'm human baby and I break  
You know I might not make it to the next time baby that you say you're sorry  
I might go away  
Cause I'm only strong as glass  
They say I'm built to last but I could break  
Yeah I'm only strong as glass and I am all I have so if I break, there's no more oooooh oh oh  
Strong as I am  
Weak as a man I am oooooh  
I'm gonna stand for as long as I can  
Cause I am  
I'm only strong as glass they say I'm built to last but I could break  
Yeah oooooh oh  
I'm only strong as glass and I am all I have so if I break... there's no more oooooh  
I'm only strong as glass they say I'm built to last but I could break, I could break  
Hoooo oh oooooh oh oooooh oh  
Yeah I'm only strong as glass and I am all I have so if I break  
There's no more...

## 18. Ledisi- If you don't mind

Hit me!

if you don't mind, can I be far from perfect?

Just can I be me?

Do you have time to see?

What a work in progress reeled in me

Spent many nights on my knees

'Cause that's the key for me to be free

A thousand tears, a million rose

Just some ingredients that helped me to grow

Got to pay, added some sun and rain

Blended it together with craze

I still I have to wait

'Cause I want and need to be strong, yeah

For the days I know I grow

And all my superpowers, well they're gone

You said I made something better, I'm putting it together

Trust me

If you don't mind

See I know where I'm going

If you don't mind, yeah, wow

If you don't mind, can I be

Honest, it was so hard to see

Every hot day (every hot day), every closed door (every closed door)

Every ingredients that helped me to grow

Got to pay

Add some sun and rain

Bring it together with grace (grace)

Still I had to wait (I had to wait)

'Cause I want and need to be strong

For the days I know I grow

And all my superpowers, well they're gone

You said I made something better, I'm putting it together

Trust me

If you don't mind

Ooh, see I'm now where I'm going

If you don't mind

Hey, if you don't mind

If you don't mind (I'll set you free)

Don't mind (I'll give you fee)

Don't mind (I'll be your source)

Nobody can love you more

If you don't mind (I'll have a fling)

Don't mind (tomorrow isn't my end)

Don't mind (taste and see)  
There'll never be another like me  
If you don't mind  
If you don't mind  
Come on, oh  
Got to pay  
Add some sun and rain  
Bring it together with grace (grace)  
Still I had to wait (oh yeah)  
'Cause I want and need to be strong  
For the days I know I grow  
And all my superpowers, well they're gone  
You said I made something better, I'm putting it together  
Trust me  
If you don't mind (if you don't mind)  
See I know where I'm going  
If you don't mind (oh, yeah, yeah)  
See I know what I'm doing  
If you don't mind (yeah, yeah)  
Get out of my way  
If you don't mind (yeah)  
Thank you, oh, ooh, thank you for everything you've done for me, oh, ooh

### **19. Ledisi- I want to be high**

Oh, feels so good to be back again  
Nah nah nah  
I've been thinking 'bout time  
I've been thinking 'bout space  
I know I might sound crazy  
But I'm tryna get down in a real good space  
I just wanna be safe  
I just wanna feel good every morning, every single day  
Every morning that I wake  
I've been looking for a place  
Where the sun shines all the time  
Good loving in my soul is what I crave  
I ain't worried 'bout the hate (uh-uh)  
Last year was a good year for your girl  
I've been keeping up with the pace  
So don't be coming with the bull  
Had a good year, now you starting to see my face  
Ain't worried 'bout the fate  
Kinda over all he hard times I've been through  
(Love brought me to you)  
And I kinda feel loose  
My heart I choose

My heart been broke down in the dirt and I finally see blue  
Raised hands feel focused  
And I'm done being broken  
And I talked about love, real love  
You the only thing that get me up  
I'm high  
Got me so far off that I could fly  
Watch me fly  
Keep me high in your blue sky  
It's about damn time  
I just wanna be high  
You're making me high (hi-hi-high)  
Oh baby, let's fly  
I just wanna be high  
Don't know what you did to me  
But I know how you feel for me  
I just wanna be high  
Ooh, let me just fly in blue skies  
I just wanna be  
Deep down and I'm feeling  
Finally I'm winning  
Finally I'm feeling real good  
'Cause you're loving deep down, working in my soul  
I ain't never felt this damn whole  
A lot of dicks, they kill me (yep!)  
But your love can heal me  
'Cause your love feel good when I'm down  
You could pick me up  
I ain't never in the dust  
Got me falling deep down in your love  
Oh, and when you never gotta rush  
Kinda over all he hard times I've been through  
(Love brought me to you)  
And I kinda feel loose  
My heart I choose  
My heart been broke down in the dirt and I finally see blue  
Raised hands feel blessed  
I ain't worried 'bout the stress  
I'm talking 'bout love, real love  
You the only thing that get me up  
I'm high  
Got me so far up, I could fly  
Watch me fly  
Oh, keep me high in your blue sky  
Watch me fly

I just wanna be high  
Oh, you're making me high  
I just wanna be high  
High in your blue sky  
I just wanna be high  
You don't know what you did to me  
Making me, making me high  
High, high  
I wanna be high, I wanna be just loved  
Wanna be just loved, wanna be, wanna be  
I just wanna stay right here  
Away from the world

## **20. Teyana Taylor- Rose In Harlem**

A rose in Harlem, a rose in Harlem  
A rose in Harlem, a rose in Harlem  
Been through more than a lil' bit  
Been through more than a lil' bit  
But I ain't callin' no names out  
No, no free promotion  
Naw, naw I ain't late, I don't do due dates  
No sneak diss, no sneak shit  
That's just how I was raised  
Had to get it out the soil  
I been down, I been loyal  
When you really hold it down  
Niggas ain't even really down for ya  
Oh no, what a shame  
Ten years in the game  
Niggas like "You ain't hot? You ain't pop yet?  
What's up wit' you and Ye?"  
Grew out the concrete  
(A rose in Harlem) You know it ain't sweet  
(A rose in Harlem) Can't tell me any any anything  
It be the ones who say they ride for you  
It be the ones, the ones you love, them too  
It be the ones who swear they real, not true  
It be them ones, it be them ones  
Don't get caught up  
It be the ones, the ones you closest too  
It be the ones, the ones you trust, them too  
It be the ones, the ones you look up to  
It be the ones  
Don't get caught up, young girl

Grew out the concrete  
 (A rose in Harlem) You know it ain't sweet  
 (A rose in Harlem) Can't tell me any any any anything  
 Been through more than a lil' bit  
 Been through more than a lil' bit  
 But I ain't callin' no names out  
 No, no free promotions  
 If it ain't 'bout blessings  
 I can't even address it  
 I just bought my third house  
 No album out and I got 'em asking  
 "What do she do?" I do everything  
 I move everything  
 Put that on my wedding ring  
 Put that on my baby name  
 All these fake smiles  
 These chicks must just came from a dentist  
 I can tell it ain't genuine  
 I get so offended  
 Grew out the concrete  
 (A rose in Harlem) You know it ain't sweet  
 (A rose in Harlem) Can't tell me any any any anything  
 It be the ones who say they ride for you  
 It be the ones, the ones you love, them too  
 It be the ones who swear they real, not true  
 It be them ones, it be them ones  
 Don't get caught up  
 It be the ones, the ones you closest too  
 It be the ones, the ones you trust, them too  
 It be the ones, the ones you look up to  
 It be the ones  
 It be the ones who say they ride for you  
 It be the ones, the ones you love, them too  
 It be the ones who swear they real, not true  
 It be them ones, it be them ones  
 Don't get caught up  
 It be the ones, the ones you closest too  
 It be the ones, the ones you trust, them too  
 It be the ones, the ones you look up to  
 It be the ones  
 Don't get caught up, young girl  
 A rose in Harlem, a rose in Harlem  
 A rose in Harlem, a rose in Harlem  
 Don't get caught up, young girl

## 21. Kelly Price- It's My Time



It's my time to rise  
It's my time to shine  
It's my time to live  
It's my time to fly  
It's my time  
It's my time  
I can see it  
I can feel it, time has come now to refill it  
I've been waiting for a long time, gotta do it  
I won't let nothing hold me down, gotta do it  
'Cause I might not get another chance, I believe it  
If I want it, I can have it, I believe it  
Got me falling, done with losing, I can do it  
I think I'll tell myself again, I can do it  
And I'm not gonna stop till I win  
It's my time to rise  
It's my time to shine  
It's my time to live (It's my time to live)  
It's my time to fly  
It's my time  
It's my time  
She is a diva, yeah  
She is a diva, full of drama, don't believe  
Hearing things that people saying, got you twisted  
So much fiction, not much fact, got you twisted  
And ain't nobody got time for that  
See my moment has now arrived  
And I won't let it pass me by  
It's my time  
It's my time to rise (oh yeah)  
It's my time to shine (oh)  
It's my time to live (it's my time to live)  
It's my time to fly  
It's my time  
It's my time  
I decided that I was born to be  
Deep in love and happy  
And my best days are still in front of me  
Everything will be alright  
Cause now it's time for me  
It's my time to rise  
It's my time to shine  
It's my time to live (it's my time to live)  
It's my time to fly  
It's my time  
It's my time

It's my time to soar (it's my time to)  
It's my time for more (I'm singing it's my time to)  
It's my time to be  
It's my time for sure  
It's my time  
It's my time  
(It's my time to)  
It's my time to rise (It's my time to rise )  
It's my time to shine (singing it's my time to shine)  
It's my time to live (it's my time to live)  
It's my time to fly (oh yeah)  
It's my time (it's my time)  
It's my time (my time)  
It's my time to soar  
(Sing along with me now)  
It's my time for more  
(Sing along with me now)  
It's my time to be  
(Hey if you believe it)  
It's my time for sure  
(Sing it with me)  
It's my time (It's my time)

## **22. Chrisette Michelle- Strong Black Woman**

Boy you know how I  
Feel about ya  
I rock witcu  
Can't live without you  
Get on my nerves all the time  
You so crazy  
I ain't lyin'  
I know you got yo' reasons  
My rap sheet ain't squeaky clean  
Every single day I'm working hard  
Just to love myself  
I look in the mirror and I see myself  
I want the next level with you  
All we need is a yes and I do  
Ain't nothin' like a  
Strong black woman  
Ain't nothin' like a  
Strong black woman  
Nothin' like a  
Strong black woman  
That's all you need  
Ain't nothin' like a

Strong black woman  
Nothin' like a  
Strong black woman  
Nothin' like a  
Strong black woman  
That's all you need  
Hold my head up proud and beautiful  
A perfect picture of what love deserves  
I love you cause you understand my worth  
When I don't hold my own you put me first  
I been thru enough to write a book, a movie, memoir!  
You carry me you know I'm worthy of  
Everything I need you're fighting for  
You know the world needs to see  
A powerful and strong black woman  
Strong black woman  
Strong black woman  
That's all you need  
Oh oh oh ho  
Ain't nothin' like a  
Strong black woman  
Nothin' like a  
Strong black woman  
Looking like a  
Strong black woman  
That's all, that's all, that's all you need  
Strong black woman  
Nothin' like a  
Strong black woman  
Nothin' like a  
Strong black woman  
That's all you need  
Wooooh!  
Boy I appreciate you  
For just being you  
When I think about the future  
I thing of me & you  
You help me become who I am  
And babe if loving you is wrong  
Then I don't wanna be right  
You know I love ya  
And I adore ya  
And I acknowledge your sacrifice  
Cause you got a  
(Strong black woman)  
Strong black woman

(Strong black woman)  
You got a strong black woman  
(Strong black woman)  
That's all that's all you need  
You got a strong  
(Strong black woman)  
Black woman  
(Strong black woman)  
(Strong black woman)  
That's all you need  
Woah ho oooooooooooh hoo  
You got a strong black woman  
I know it ain't easy  
I know it ain't easy  
You got a strong black woman  
Yeah-ah  
Yeah-ah  
You got a strong black woman  
That's all you need

### **23. Jasmine Sullivan- Masterpiece**

My eyes ain't used to these rays  
I'm feeling exposed, but I hide no more  
I can't hide  
As the sun shines on all of my glory  
My flaws don't look so bad at all  
What was I so afraid of?  
Every part of me is a vision of a portrait  
Of Mona, of Mona Lisa  
Every part of me is beautiful  
And I finally see I'm a work of art  
A masterpiece  
Who is this I've tried so long fight?  
Filling my heads with lies that I'm not good enough  
Then I heard something in my ear  
Tell I'm perfect, now that I know the truth  
Time to show and prove  
Every part of me is a vision of a portrait  
Of Mona, of Mona Lisa  
Every part of me is beautiful  
And I finally see I'm a work of art  
A masterpiece  
And now I see the pretty colors on my canvas  
I'm a work of art, a Mona Lisa  
I'll share my picture with the world  
Not afraid to let it show anymore

I can light the night, shine so bright  
(Let my colors paint the sky)  
I can light the night, shine so bright  
(There is beauty in my eyes)  
I can light the night, shine so bright  
(And I can see it now, I believe it now, I can feel it now)  
I can light the night, shine so bright  
(Want the world to see, I'm a work of art. I'm a masterpiece)  
I can light the night, shine so bright  
(I am beautiful)  
Every part of me is a vision of a portrait  
Of Mona, of Mona Lisa  
Every part of me is beautiful  
And I finally see I'm a work of art  
A masterpiece

#### **24. Beyonce - Freedom**

Tryna rain, tryna rain on the thunder  
Tell the storm I'm new  
I'mma walk and march on the regular  
Painting white flags blue  
Lord forgive me, I've been running  
Running blind in truth  
I'ma rain, I'ma rain on this bitter love  
Tell the sweet I'm new  
[Pre-Chorus: Beyoncé]  
I'm telling these tears, "Go and fall away, fall away"  
May the last one burn into flames  
[Chorus: Beyoncé]  
Freedom! Freedom! I can't move  
Freedom, cut me loose!  
Singin', freedom! Freedom! Where are you?  
Cause I need freedom too!  
I break chains all by myself  
Won't let my freedom rot in hell  
Hey! I'ma keep running  
Cause a winner don't quit on themselves  
I'ma wade, I'ma wave through the waters  
Tell the tide, "Don't move"  
I'ma riot, I'ma riot through your borders  
Call me bulletproof  
Lord forgive me, I've been runnin'  
Runnin' blind in truth  
I'ma wade, I'ma wave through your shallow love  
Tell the deep I'm new  
I'm telling these tears, "Go and fall away, fall away"

May the last one burn into flames  
Freedom! Freedom! I can't move  
Freedom, cut me loose!  
Singin', freedom! Freedom! Where are you?  
Cause I need freedom too!  
I break chains all by myself  
Won't let my freedom rot in hell  
Hey! I'ma keep running  
Cause a winner don't quit on themselves  
Freedom! Freedom! I can't move  
Freedom, cut me loose!  
Singing, freedom! Freedom! Where are you?  
Cause I need freedom too!  
I break chains all by myself  
Won't let my freedom rot in hell  
Hey! I'ma keep running  
Cause a winner don't quit on themselves

### **25. Solange- Boderline**

We been lovers on a mission  
We been lovers on a mission (all the way)  
But what's love without a mission  
We been lovers on a mission (all the way)  
So let's take an intermission  
You know I have the world to think about  
And you know I gotta go ahead and take some time  
Because the last thing that I wanna do  
Is think that it's time that I leave the boderline  
So let's take it off tonight  
Break it off tonight  
Baby let's know when to let go  
Know when to let go  
Take off tonight  
Break it up tonight  
Baby I know you're tired  
Know I'm tired  
Let's take it off tonight  
Break it off tonight  
Baby it's war outside these walls  
Baby it's war outside these doors, yeah  
It's safe place tonight  
Let's play safe tonight  
Baby I know what you're fighting for  
Baby you know what I'm fighting for

You know I have the world to think about  
And you know I gotta go ahead and take some time  
Because the last thing that I wanna do  
Is think that it's time that I leave the boderline  
So let's take it off tonight  
Break it off tonight  
Baby let's know when to let go  
Know when to let go, oh  
Take off tonight  
Break it up tonight  
Baby I know you're tired  
You know I'm tired  
Let's take it off tonight  
Break it off tonight  
Baby I've been more than a woman  
We've been lovers on a mission  
It's safe place tonight  
Let's play it safe tonight  
Baby we've been lovers on a mission (all the way)  
So let's take an intermission

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Tool**



## Interview Tool

What gender do you identify with?

What race/ethnicity do you identify with?

How old are you?

Are you married or single?

Do you have children? Ages?

What is the highest degree you have received?

Are you currently working on a degree?

Current position of employment?

## Strength Questions

We hear a lot about the Strong Black Woman, what does that term mean to you?

How do you personally identify with the qualities of a strong Black woman?

How did you learn what it means to be a strong Black woman?

Are there women in your life who you would give this label? Who?

How are you modelling these qualities for the next generation?

Are there ANY musical artists that you listen to that reflect these qualities in their music? Who?

What about in pop culture, like movies or TV? Who?

How do these artists influence your thoughts about these (themes from musical analysis)?

So these songs and artists tell us about being a Strong Black Woman and what that means, do you see any problems with that?

What about other people, do you ever see any negative reactions to these ideas?

Is it ever hard to be a strong black woman? Can you tell me more about that?

### Music

I'd like to focus more specifically on music. Do you enjoy listening to music? What kind of music do you like to listen to?

How does the music you listen to reflect your personality?

Which artists or musical genres reflect your personality?

How does the music you listen to reflect your mood?

Which artists or musical genres reflect your mood?

You spoke of (Artist Name) does their music speak your life experiences? How so?

What are some of the themes from their music that speaks to your life experiences?

### Mental Health

Have you ever experienced times of depression (Common symptoms are irritable mood, sadness, physical and mental changes which negatively impact your ability to function)?

When and for how long? How did you cope?

Did you ever incorporate music from the artists you spoke about early or other musical genres to cope with the depression? How?

Have you ever experienced times of anxiety (excessive worry even when there are no signs of trouble, inability to relax, irritability, insomnia, all of which negatively impact your ability to function)?

When and for how long? How did you cope?

Did you ever incorporate music from the artists you spoke about early or other musical genres to cope with the anxiety? How?

Do you believe listening to music that listening to music is beneficial to your overall mental health? Why?

Do you think there is a relationship between music and mental health? (if yes) tell me more about that.

Have you ever sought mental health services for the depression and/ or anxiety? Why? Why not? What do you think is the best form of treatment for a Black woman experiencing the previously mentioned depression and anxiety symptoms?

We talked earlier about that idea of being a Strong Black Woman. What does that idea tell us about feeling depressed or anxious?

What does your belief in the qualities of a Strong Black Woman say about seeking mental health services?

How do you think strong Black woman handle mental health issues?

What types of alternative treatment methods are valuable options for treating depression and anxiety?

Please provide any additional information regarding mental health treatment and Black women that you think might be relevant for this study.

## **Appendix D**

### **Recruitment Email**

### **Recruitment Email**

Dear [*insert name*],

My name is Mia Kirby and I am a PhD student from the Sociology & Social Work Department at Texas Woman's University. I am writing to ask if you would agree to be interviewed for a research project entitled "Cranes in the Sky: Exploring the relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help seeking behaviors of Black women". This research aims to examine the relationship between the SBWA and the mental health help seeking behaviors of Black women.

If you agree to participate, I will interview you for about an hour face-to-face at a previously agreed upon location. During the interview, I will ask questions about your concept of the Strong Black woman, musical influences on this concept, and your mental health help seeking behaviors.

Please note, there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions. The researcher will make every attempt to protect participant confidentiality to the extent that is allowed by law.

If you are interested in participating in the study please respond to this email with dates and times to which you are available. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,  
Mia M. Kirby, LCSW  
Mkirby1@twu.edu

**Appendix E**  
**IRB Approval Letter**



**Institutional Review Board**

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619

940-898-3378

email: IRB@twu.edu

<https://www.twu.edu/institutional-review-board-irb/>

DATE: September 25, 2018

TO: Ms. Mia Kirby  
Sociology & Social Work

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

*Re: Approval for Cranes in the Sky: Exploring the Relationship between the Strong Black Woman Archetype and the Mental Health Help Seeking Behaviors of Black Women (Protocol #: 20227)*

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the Denton IRB (operating under FWA00000178) on 9/25/2018 using an expedited review procedure. This approval is valid for one year and expires on 9/25/2019. The IRB will send an email notification 45 days prior to the expiration date with instructions to extend or close the study. It is your responsibility to request an extension for the study if it is not yet complete, to close the protocol file when the study is complete, and to make certain that the study is not conducted beyond the expiration date.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. Celia Lo, Sociology & Social Work  
Dr. Jessica Smartt Gullion, Sociology & Social Work  
Graduate School