Strong Black Woman Archetype in Organizational Life

By

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M.A., University of Kansas, 2021
B.S., Oklahoma State University, 2019

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Communication Studies and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date Defended: 17 March 2021

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Date Approved: 23 April 2021

Abstract

Black women face multiple jeopardies—racism, sexism, classism—as they navigate American society (King, 1988). With more Black families economically depending on Black women, and as their presence within the U.S. workforce continues to increase, it is vital that we better understand their experiences and communication. The purpose of this narrative thematic analysis is three-fold: (1) to investigate how the Strong Black Woman archetype manifests in the workplace, (2) to understand how Black women are affected by it through the lens of organizational emotionality, and (3) to interrogate how Black women use communication to resist oppression in the workplace. Using the Strong Black Woman Collective (SBWC) framework (Davis, 2015) and organizational emotionality (Miller et al., 2007), the data revealed that there were both internal and external expectations for Black women to embody the Strong Black Woman archetype in the workplace.

Keywords: Strong Black Woman, homeplace, organizational emotion, Strong Black Woman Collective, Black feminist thought, gendered racism, Black women

Acknowledgements

To my parents, thank you for teaching me to love my Blackness. To my sisters, thank you for inspiring me to keep going. To Black women, thank you for showing me how to be my authentic, resilient, and creative self. Your love supported this project.

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Introduction

Black women face multiple jeopardies—racism, sexism, classism—as they navigate American society (King, 1988). These oppressions affect all aspects of Black women's lives; navigating triple oppression has led them to be imbued with the Strong Black Woman (SBW) archetype. Baker et al. (2015) argue that the "Strong Black Woman archetype is a culturally salient ideal prescribing that Black women render a guise of self-reliance, selflessness, and psychological, emotional and physical strength" (p. 51). Scholars suggest that this schema "persists because of the struggles that African American women continue to experience, such as financial hardship, primary care-giving responsibilities, racism, and sexism" (Watson & Hunter, 2015, p. 604). The Strong Black Woman archetype exists for both Black women's home life and at the workplace.

To better understand Black women's workplace communication that occurs in organizations and to assess the impact of the Strong Black Woman archetype within organizations, it is important to understand Black women and their communication patterns, as those patterns convey a sense of strength, which can be accomplished by analyzing Black women's cultural histories and norms. Black women have been historically misrepresented and oppressed in American society. Since organizations are a reflection of society, this oppression is also mirrored in organizational culture (Collins, 1997; Feagin, 1991; Feagin & Sikes, 1996; Ferguson, 2000; Wilson, 1987; Wingfield, 2007). Black women's experiences and communication within organizations that lead to a perception of their strength can be interrogated by using two critical frameworks: the Strong Black Woman Collective (SBWC) framework (Davis, 2015) and organizational emotion (Miller, Considine, Garner, 2007; Allen, 2011), as emotions are affected as Black women navigate oppressive structures. Analyzing Black

women's experiences through organizational emotion allows organizational scholars and practitioners to better understand Black women's communication patterns and experiences in the workplace. After exploring the role of emotion in organizational communication, scholars and practitioners are able to understand how Black women use the Strong Black Woman Collective and homeplace as spaces to cope with and resist oppression in the workplace. Where Black women in organizations find diversity, equity, and inclusion lacking or compromised within the workplace, they employ cultural strategies of resistance (hooks, 1990; Davis, 2019). In order to gain a better understanding of Black women's communication patterns, research should also explore resistance as another form of Black women's cultural history and norm.

Purpose

The purpose of this narrative thematic analysis is three-fold: (1) to investigate how the Strong Black Woman archetype manifests in the workplace, (2) to understand how Black women are affected by it through the lens of organizational emotionality, and (3) to interrogate how Black women use communication to resist oppression in the workplace.

In this thesis, I will first define the Strong Black Woman concept and its origin, and then explore its historical and contemporary effects. Second, through the context of *Champions Never Tell: Sisters Surviving Storms in the Workplace*, I will investigate how the Strong Black Woman archetype manifests in the workplace using organizational emotion (Miller et al., 2007; Allen, 2011). Third, I will analyze how Black women's experiences are affected by the Strong Black Woman archetype using the SBWC framework (Davis, 2015). Fourth, while acknowledging the value of Davis' framework, I will take exception to her theory by describing how Black women have resisted oppression in the workplace using homeplace (hooks, 1990), and analyze how this resistance is a symbol of strength in the context of *Champions Never Tell*. Lastly, I will explore

how this proposed study can be used to curate effective mechanisms that enact an organization's espoused values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Justification/ Rationale

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Historically, the labor force participation rate of Black women has been consistently higher than the rate for all women, with the exception of 1994. At its high point in 1999, the labor force participation rate of Black women was 63.5 percent, while the rate for all women was 60.0 percent" (2018). According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (2020), 74% of Black mothers were breadwinners for their families. Of these women, 69.9% were single mother breadwinners. In 2018, Black women made up 53% of the Black labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). As the number of families that rely on working Black women for economic stability increases, it is important to understand the experiences of this demographic within the workplace.

Complemented by grounded theory and a critical-interpretivist paradigm, this narrative thematic analysis is an opportunity to better understand Black women's experiences in reference to the Strong Black Woman archetype by combining a race-gender identity lens with organizational emotion theory. This study answers Davis' (2015) call for more communication research to "fully investigate the depth and richness of Black U.S. American women's communication". As the Strong Black Woman Collective is a developing standpoint theory framework, investigating the Strong Black Woman archetype is an avenue for understanding Black women's experiences and communication. By using the Strong Black Woman Collective framework, this scholarship aims to focus on Black women's experiences in the workplace. This scholarship aims to help organizations create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive cultures by

better understanding how Black women resist oppressive forces. Ultimately, this research will prescribe principles by which organizations can create equity and nondiscriminatory practices.

Literature Review

The experiences of Black women within organizations have been explored by scholars through various lenses including immigration (Madibbo, 2007), resistance (Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Davis, 2018), sexuality (Forbes, 2009; Collins, 2004), feminism (hooks, 1988), outsider within (Martin, 1994; Parker, 2001), and gender roles and labor (Brand, 1988; Wingfield, 2007; Jones, 2009; Wingfield, 2007; Dow, 2015; Dickens & Chavez, 2018). The Strong Black Woman archetype, specifically, has also been studied by scholars in various fields. Some of those fields include mental health (Donovan & West, 2015), counseling (Harrington, Crowther, & Shipherd, 2010), psychology (Nelson, Cardemil, & Adeoye, 2016), gerontology (Baker, Buchanan, Mingo, Roker, & Brown, 2015), education (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007; Corbin, Smith, & Garcia, 2018), communication (Bailey, 2018; Scott, 2013; Davis, 2015, 2016, 2018; Parks, 2013), media (Stanton, Jerald, Ward, & Avery, 2017; Parks, 2013), sociology (Beauboeuf- Lafontant, 2009), and feminism (Collins, 2000; Love, 2016).

There are also a number of theses and dissertations in other disciplines on the Strong Black Woman, such as: dealing with depression in Black women (Tillman- Meakins, 2017; Drakeford, 2017; Woods, 2013); sensemaking (Wallace, 2019); health (Johnson, 2008; Offutt, 2013; Harris, 2018); and assault (Gibson, 2018). In the communication discipline, there is still room for the Strong Black Woman to be further studied. In 2018, Verinique Bailey studied how Black women's notions of strength communicatively evolve or devolve with intersectional factors such as age. While Black women in organizations and the Strong Black Woman archetype have been explored separately, there is a need for the Strong Black Woman to be

explored through an organizational communication lens. In order to do so, it is important to first explore the historical and contemporary effects of this archetype.

Historical and Contemporary Effects

Strong Black Woman (SBW) archetype

According to Merriam- Webster (2020), an archetype is "the original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies". Communication scholars define archetypes as "discursive in that they are (re)produced within a system of regularities among concepts, objects, statements, and choices that is understood as real and accurate" (Foucault, 1972; Gill, 2013). To better understand the effects of the Strong Black Woman archetype, it is important to first, explore its origin. Hill-Collins (2000) asserts that the "dominant ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of several interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood, each reflecting the dominant group's interest in maintaining black women's subordination" (p. 72). These controlling images include Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, Matriarch, Superwoman, castrator, Welfare mother, Black bitch and overachieving Black ladies (Harris-Perry, 2011; Collins, 2004; Parker, 2001).

The origin of the Strong Black Woman archetype is a race-gender schema that can be traced to the Mammy archetype that emerged during slavery (Watson & Hunter, 2015; Collins, 1990; West, 2008; Carter & Rossi, 2019). In her fundamental study of the enslaved woman's experience on Southern plantations, Deborah Gray White (1985) describes Mammy as "a woman completely dedicated to the white family, especially to the children of that family. She was the house servant who was given complete charge of domestic management" (p. 49). The Mammy is characterized as a "self-sacrificing, mothering woman who happily cares for her slave owner and his family, her family, and community seemingly unaffected or without fatigue. The woman's

dark skin and broad shoulders signify her physical, psychological, and spiritual strength, fortitude, and ability to survive despite the challenges of life" (West, 2008). Mammy was such a prominent image during American slavery that the American Confederacy proposed a bronze monument be erected to pay tribute to her loyalty to the white family (Collins, 1990; Jewell, 1993; Sims-Wood, 1988; West, 1995).

The Mammy archetype can still be seen in mainstream images of Black women. For example, Aunt Jemima (Powell, 2010), Mammy from *Gone With the Wind* (Mitchell, 1936), and Aibileen Clark from *The Help* (Stokett, 2009) are three similar representations of the Mammy archetype in mainstream media. Aunt Jemima is a symbol of the mammy's role in the Old South; she is a household brand that reinforces her purpose—comfort and familiarity. Aunt Jemima is a symbol of trust—white families trusted their children and homes to mammies. Likewise, today, households trust Aunt Jemima, as a brand, to create a classic breakfast that is consistent and traditional—pancakes and syrup. The syrup is an ideal complement to the meal, similar to the way Mammies were a complement to the white family. *Gone With the Wind*'s Mammy was a nurturing, helping hand to the white family. She was painted as an asexual, submissive woman whose sole purpose was to serve those who enslaved her. Her purpose was to paint Black women as submissive martyrs, always giving to their superiors. Although *The Help*'s Aibileen Clark was not legally a slave, she still possessed the stereotypical Mammy qualities and occupational duties. Mae and Aibileen are portrayed to have a special bond as Aibileen cared for her more than her own mother did. Even when Aibileen is fired, she cried as she leaves the child that she raised. Aibileen is portrayed to love this child and view her as family, as enslaved mammies were also portrayed to feel.

As seen in the Mammy figure, scholars have described the Strong Black Woman as possessing unyielding strength, assuming multiple roles, caring for others, resilient, physically strong, resistant to vulnerability, motivated, breadwinners, anticipating the needs of others, possessing self/ethnic pride in spite of intersectional oppression, embracing being every woman, and anchored by religion/ spirituality (Beauboeuf- Lafontant, 2003, 2007; Settles, Pratt-Hyatt, & Buchanan, 2008; Harris-Perry, 2011; Liao, Wei, & Yin, 2020; Etowa et al., 2018; Abrams, Maxwell, Pope, and Belgrave, 2014; Jewell, 1993; West, 1995).

Scholars have also found Black professional women often battle with the "modern Mammy" image in the workplace (Collins, 2004; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Wingfield, 2007). Black women professionals are seen as easily exploitable by virtue of their race and gender (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Wingfield, 2007). This is because they are seen as less threatening. Harris-Perry (2011), quoted here at length to provide context, argues that:

> The strong Black woman is the most pervasive and widely accepted of these self-constructions. By its idealized description, Black women are motivated, hardworking breadwinners who suppress their emotional needs while anticipating those of others... The strong Black woman serves as a constructive role model because Black women draw encouragement and self-assurance from an icon able to overcome great obstacles. She offers hope to people who often face difficult circumstances. Independence and self-reliance can be crucial to building and maintaining a positive image of blackness in a society that often seeks to negate and vilify it. African American women do not define themselves as Jezebels, Mammies, or Sapphires; instead, they call themselves strong and proudly drape the mantle of self-denying independence across their shoulders... But there are dangers to allowing this symbol to remain unchallenged at the center of African

> American understandings of womanhood. When Black women are expected to be super-strong, they cannot be simply human (p. 184).

Embracing this schema is a defense mechanism and response to other negative archetypes of Black women.

Harris (2001) asserts that "These suprahuman women have been denied the 'luxuries' of failure, nervous breakdowns, leisured existences, or anything else that would suggest that they are complex, multidimensional characters. They must swallow their pain, gird their loins against trouble…, and persist in spite of adversity" (p. 12). The denial of these privileges leads to having unmet needs, as the Strong Black Woman is to be "a caretaker who always puts others ahead of herself, [who] denies her own needs or weaknesses, [being] self-reliant and self-contained and has the role to nurture and preserve family" (Etowa et al., 2018, p. 2). By addressing how Black women cope with these unmet needs, this narrative thematic analysis will explore how the denial of these privileges manifests in Black women's communication in relation to their employers' organizational cultures.

Effects

Romero (2000) argues that "Strong Black Woman" is a "mantra for so much a part of U.S. culture that it is seldom realized how great a toll it has taken on the emotional well-being of the African American woman. As much as it may give her the illusion of control, ironically, it keeps her from identifying what she needs and reaching out for help" (p. 225). While the ideal Black woman is deemed strong, this supposed empowerment both physically and mentally harms Black women. According to Barnes (2017), "Black women are especially vulnerable to wrestling with their mental health, consistently reporting higher feelings of sadness, hopelessness, worthlessness and the sense that everything is an effort... [and] are frequently pillars of our

community, taking care of everyone's health but our own" (p. 8). Studies have found that the Strong Black Woman schema can cause depression and anxiety symptoms, and loneliness (Donovan & West, 2015; Liao et al., 2020); distress and fatigue (Abrams et al., 2014); and emotion dysregulation and obesity (Giscombé & Lobel, 2005; Harrington, Crowther, & Shipherd, 2010; Mitchell & Herring, 1998). Understanding the physical, mental, and emotional effects of the Strong Black Woman schema allows scholars to explore the need for the SBWC framework when analyzing Black women's communication pattern. This understanding also explains Black women's need of a place of solace and comfort, which is found in homeplace. Embodied in the Strong Black Woman Collective framework explained later in this exposition is an irony, or paradox, involved in the Strong Black Woman archetype. On one hand, there are vulnerabilities in having to uphold the Strong Black Woman image—vulnerabilities (such as those of anxiety, loneliness, distress, and fatigue). On the other hand, however, Black women in organizations strategically reappropriate the Strong Black Woman archetype to their advantage by bonding together to create support groups based on a common marginalized existence and identity wherein lies their strength of collective resistance to oppression.

Critically interrogating the Strong Black Woman archetype is a way of understanding Black women's communication and experiences in dominant organizational culture. Parker (2001) argues that communication research prioritizes white "masculine" and white "feminine" communication patterns when analyzing how managers and employees communicate. To accurately analyze the communication patterns of Black women in dominant culture organizations, it is important to understand their cultural histories and norms (Parker, 2001). While scholars (Parker, 2001; Wingfield, 2007; Collins, 2004; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998) have explored the experiences of Black women in organizations by referencing specific archetypes, it

is important for *communication* scholars to investigate how these archetypes manifest in the workplace, which can be done using organizational emotion (Miller et al., 2007; Allen, 2011). By investigating how the Strong Black Woman archetype specifically manifests through emotion in the workplace, organizations have the opportunity to change organizational policies and practices that negatively impact employees.

Theory

This thesis is situated using two complementary theories: organizational emotion and the Strong Black Woman Collective (SBWC) framework in which resistance is embedded. Both are reviewed below.

Organizational Emotion

Traditionally, organizational scholars and practitioners have studied the rational perspective of the workplace. Emotions were viewed as private, feminine, and irrational, which contradicted the traditional public, masculine, and rational perspective of work (Allen, 2011). However, organizational scholars have recently recognized how studying emotion provides a counterforce to rational views of the workplace (Miller et al., 2007). This change in perspective is salient as some researchers "have begun to investigate how employers monitor and try to control workers' expressions of emotions" (Meier, Mastracci, & Wilson, 2006; Allen, 2011). When analyzing how the Strong Black Woman archetype manifests in the workplace, it is important to use a communication lens of emotion as it allows scholars and practitioners a different perspective of how Black women experience oppression in the workplace. The three organizational emotions discussed in this scholarship include emotional labor, emotional work, and emotion with work (Miller et al., 2007).

Emotional Labor

According to Arlie Hochschild (2008), *emotional labor* is "the effort to seem and feel and to try to really feel the 'right' feeling for the job, and to try to induce the 'right' feeling in certain others". Hochschild (1983) argues that emotional labor refers to an emotional display exploited by the organization. This display of emotion is often perceived as inauthentic as employers are the curators of these emotional expressions, not the employees. When emotional labor is imposed, employees have two ways they can appropriately display emotion: deep acting and surface acting (Hochschild, 1983). Deep acting involves a worker changing their inner emotions to reflect the emotional expression rule set by the organization. Miller et al. (2007) gives the example of a flight attendant dealing with a difficult passenger. Instead of becoming frustrated, the flight attendant may imagine the passenger being difficult because of personal issues before boarding the plane. This imaginary scenario encourages the flight attendant to remain kind and empathetic toward the passenger. In contrast, surface acting refers to "putting on a mask" as a worker displays an emotion that they do not feel. In the case of Black women, Durr and Harvey Wingfield (2011) found that "Black women professionals find themselves doing both surface acting and emotional labor in order to successfully integrate their work spaces" (Hochschild, 1983).

Analyzing how emotional labor affects Black women is relevant as many scholars claim that emotional labor is gendered because of traditional gender expectations and stereotypes (Algoe, Buswell, & DeLamater, 2000; Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000). Men and women have different expectations in terms of display of emotion. Women are expected to be nicer and perform positive emotions. Allen (2011) gives the example of victims expecting female police officers to be more caring and empathetic than male officers. Similarly, female professors spend more time teaching, advising, and being involved in service activities compared to their male

counterparts. This expectation aligns with the gender role stereotype that women are nurturing, while men are objective and rational (Allen, 2011). This gendered expectation also aligns with the characteristics of the Strong Black Woman archetype: nurturing, self-sacrificing, and suppressing own emotions while anticipating the needs of others. This analysis will explore how emotional labor expectations manifest in the workplace, and how Black women are affected. Similar to emotional labor, emotional work stems from work itself and involves interaction with a client. The difference between emotional labor and emotional work is found in management control and degree of authenticity.

Emotional Work

In some jobs, emotional work is a central focus of the job. In contrast to emotional labor, emotional work includes emotion that is a *natural* outgrowth of job-related communication (Miller et al., 2007). Rather than performing emotional labor, emotional work is authentic and plays a central role in client relations (Miller et al., 2007). According to the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor (2017), women workers had the largest share in human service occupations such as preschool and kindergarten teachers (97.2%), secretaries and administrative assistants (94.1%), childcare workers (93.9%), dental assistants (92.4), medical assistants (91.3%). These occupations require both emotional labor and emotional work. According to Tuominen (2000), many human service professionals enter their careers because they want to care for others. When working in human service, relationships with clients require highly charged emotional interaction (Miller et al., 2007). A part of the job is listening to and empathizing with emotional stories of trauma, pain, and worry, which is a form of emotional work.

Those who chose to go into human service are expected—by themselves and others—to be empathetic toward clients, which can lead to both positive and negative effects. Similar to the effects of internalizing the Strong Black Woman archetype, emotional work can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Maslach, 1982; Miller, Birkholt, Scott, & Stage, 1995; Miller, Stiff, & Ellis, 1988; Omdahl & O'Donnell, 1999; Tracy & Bean, 1992). Analyzing Black women's experiences through the lens of emotional work will help scholars and practitioners understand how Black women internalize the Strong Black Woman archetype, and what their authentic emotional responses are to their experiences in the workplace.

Emotion with work

When analyzing Black women's communication and experiences in the workplace, it is important to analyze their relationships in the workplace—more specifically, interactions with supervisors and coworkers. This is accomplished by utilizing an emotion with work lens.

In their 2007 study, Miller et al. found that "emotion toward supervisors often involved the general notion of respect in the workplace" (p. 249). They found that if supervisors communicated respect to employees, then it was reciprocated and vice versa. However, when employees expressed negative emotion toward supervisors—or vice versa—disrespect was a common theme. This was communicated both verbally (i.e., yelling and judgment) and nonverbally (i.e., exploitation). When analyzing emotion with work in relationship with supervisor and subordinate, it is important to consider power and expectations. Allen (2011) argues that the primary medium for communicating power in an organization is language. Both Allen (2011) and Lammers and Garcia (2009) argue that how employees communicate professionalism is rooted in the ideology of rationality, or emotional neutrality. The ideology of rationality and emotional neutrality value "objective and 'cool-headed' behaviors" in the

workplace. Subordinates or organizational members of the nondominant group may feel pressured to conform to "professional" expectations to avoid being stigmatized as deviant or deficient because they do not comply with dominant norms (Allen, 2011). This expectation devalues emotionally expressive communication styles characteristic of some women and people of color (Buzzanell, 1999). This can affect Black women's emotion with work as they may not feel comfortable fully expressing their emotions in fear of how it will affect their relationships within the workplace—especially with dominant group members in power and coworkers. In *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*, Ginny expressed that she had a decent relationship with her supervisor as she "had always been friendly and supportive, giving Ginny a chance to teach when others said it was too soon" (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 148). However, she felt like she couldn't be Ginny; she had to be Jennifer. She was expected to work long hours and handle tough situations without support out of fear of being called lazy. This is an example of Black women's emotion with work in relation to their supervisors as they are expected to be "professional" to avoid conflict in their relationship with those in power.

It is also important to analyze emotion with work in relation to coworkers. Miller et al. (2007) found themes of fun and support in regards to positive emotion with work. These relationships often used a "family" metaphor. In contrast, negative emotion with work often involved "people who were seen as unethical, dishonest, or unable to pull their weight on the job" (Miller et al., 2007). These negative emotions are important to highlight as they are fears that Black women often work to avoid in the workplace (i.e., being labelled as lazy, deviant, dramatic).

Using an organizational emotion lens allows scholars and practitioners to understand how the Strong Black Woman archetype manifests in the workplace. This is accomplished by

exploring *why* and *how* Black women perform emotional labor, emotional work, and emotion with work—a form of oppression. To explore how Black women are affected by this manifestation, this narrative thematic analysis will use the Strong Black Woman Collective framework to understand how they use communal communication as a response to and resistance against workplace oppression. This perspective contributes to communal coping literature as it contextualizes how Black women's use of communal communication is a coping strategy against external hostilities (Lyons et al., 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Wlodarcyzk et al., 2016).

Strong Black Woman Collective (SBWC) Framework

According to Parks (2013), there is a balance of both positive and negative impact that the Strong Black Woman archetype has on Black culture. To explore this balance, I will utilize the Strong Black Woman Collective framework. The Strong Black Woman Collective (SBWC) is a developing feminist standpoint framework that "advances the idea that Black women construct strength through communal communication practices by imbuing their assembled voices with might and fortitude… the SBWC framework considers how Black women regulate strength in themselves and one another. Reappropriation of the strength image enables refuge from and collective resistance against larger oppressive forces" (Davis, 2015). By analyzing women's everyday lives, feminist standpoint theory provides an epistemology that focuses on constructing knowledge that criticizes dominant knowledge claims, and leads to liberation from oppressive social conditions (Allen, 1996, 2000; Harding, 1987, 1991; Parker, 2001; Collins, 1997). This narrative thematic analysis will use this developing feminist standpoint theory to investigate how the Strong Black Woman archetype affects Black women in the workplace by highlighting how Black women use communal communication as a response of resistance to oppression in the workplace.

Historically, women have been marginalized and relatively invisible as research has been androcentric, sexist, and racist (Kourany, 2009; Parker, 2001). Communication research has been androcentric, sexist, and racist in the sense that masculine and feminine communication models privilege white middle class communication patterns (Parker, 2001). When white, middle class cultural communication is deemed as the norm to which organizational members are expected to adapt, Black women's communication may be socially constructed as deviant, negative, and generally devalued (Parker, 2001; Lubiano, 1992; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996; Weitz & Gordon, 1993). To gain a better understanding of Black women's communication and how it manifests in the workplace, researchers benefit from using feminist standpoint theory.

The SBWC centers the "lived experiences of Black American women and the speech communities in which they participate. The intention is not to homogenize the communication experiences of Black American women but to illustrate that 'a Black women's collective standpoint does exist'" (Collins, 2000; Davis, 2015). To better understand Black women's experiences, the SBWC framework illuminates how Black women communicate strength as a form of resistance in the face of oppression.

This narrative thematic analysis will contextualize resistance in cultural studies. According to Merry (1995), there has been a "transition from understanding resistance as conscious collective actions such as peasant uprisings to more subtle, unrecognized practices such as foot-dragging, sabotage, subversive songs and challenges to the law's definition of personal problems". Black women's resistance can be traced back to African enslavement in America, according to Davis (2015). While resistance is often demonstrated nonverbally through defiant behavior, Black feminists believe that one can communicatively resist. bell hooks (1989) argues that "the best way to resist powerful oppressors is to break the silence with an audible

voice" as silence is a "sign of women's submission to patriarchal authority". To operationalize Black women's resistance in organizations, I will deploy Davis' (2015) analysis of communicative resistance in the workplace—Black women refusing to accommodate the dominant group and choosing to behave in ways that reflected their authentic personhood.

While scholarship has explored Black people's racial communication and women's gendered communication characteristics, less research explores the intersection of those identities—Black women's professional communication patterns. Scholars have explored Black women's unique discourse (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003; Popp, Donovan, Crawford, Marsh, & Peele, 2003) and linguistic practices (Houston, 2000; Hudson, 2001; Scott, 2002), but there is little research that "identifies strength as a defining aspect of Black women's speech practices and patterns; however, the connection is conceivable and worth investigating" (Davis, 2015). The SBWC framework "illuminates unnoticed patterns of strength permeating the existing research on Black women's communication. More specifically, the framework draws attention to the role of communication as an everyday practice constitutive of relationships and identities and as a primary vehicle for the construction of the strength ideal" (Davis, 2015). To better understand the prevalence of the Strong Black Woman archetype and how it manifests in organizational culture, communication research must investigate how this archetype affects Black women's communication as they resist oppression in the workplace.

Davis (2015) argues that

> (a) Black women communicate strength through the use of distinct communication practices (i.e., code switching, assertive and direct verbal messages, and culturally nuanced speech codes); (b) the assemblage of Black women communicating strength composes the SBWC; (c) members of the SBWC participate in the collective by

reinforcing one another's virtues of strength; and (d) communication patterns of strength enable the SBWC to confront and retreat from oppressive structures outside, but also impede vulnerability and emotionality within, the collective.

The SBWC illuminates Black women's communicative patterns of strength as an act of resistance (Davis, 2015). Exploring the effects of the Strong Black Woman archetype should also include understanding how it manifests in the workplace and how Black women's communication is impacted by this manifestation.

Homeplace

As I explore the standpoint of Black women workers, I will counter Davis' (2015) fourth proposition of the SBWC framework that the collective impedes vulnerability and emotionality within the collective by juxtaposing hooks' (1990) compelling idea of homeplace. Homeplace serves as a site that researchers can use to analyze how Black women communicate emotion in the context of organizations/the workplace. Homeplace is a safe space for Black women to commune with other Black women and learn about ways to manage daily oppressive stress through communicative support, making homeplace a site of resistance. While the SBWC suggests that communicating strength impedes vulnerability and emotionality within the collective, I will explore how Black women have used a collective homeplace to be vulnerable and fulfill emotional needs.

Homeplace is used to "reaffirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (hooks, 1990, p. 42). hooks (1990) described homeplace as a space where Black women have the opportunity to "grow and develop, to nurture our spirits. This task of making a homeplace a community of resistance has been shared by Black women in white supremacist societies" (p. 42). Davis (2018, 2019) and Goins (2011) found that one of the

key ways Black women confronted, or resisted, external hostilities was by retreating with other Black women to a safe space where they all debriefed, processed, supported, and confided in one another. While Davis (2015) argues that the SBWC offers a place of solace, communing, and a site for resistance for Black women that impedes vulnerability and emotion, hooks (1990) argues that homeplace is a similar space for solace, communing, and resistance that *encourages* vulnerability and emotion.

By analyzing how emotional labor, emotion with work, and emotional work manifest in Black women's communication, we have a new perspective of how Black women experience oppression in the workplace and how the SBW archetype is internalized. Utilizing the SBWC framework and homeplace allows scholars and practitioners to explore how Black women are affected by this manifestation and use communal communication as a reaction to oppression in the workplace. Given this literature, this project will be guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Black women internalize the SBW archetype in the workplace?

RQ2: How are Black women affected by internalizing the SBW archetype?

RQ3: How and why do Black women perform emotional labor, emotional work, and emotion with work to cope with the effects of the SBW archetype?

RQ4: How do Black women problematize the SBW archetype?

Methodology

I conducted a narrative thematic analysis of *Champions Never Tell: Sisters Surviving Storms in the Workplace* (Greene & Rutherford, 2017) to explore how the Strong Black Woman archetype manifests in Black women's communication and the workplace. *Champions Never Tell* is a collection of essays written by Black women that experienced various forms of

oppression in the workplace. I chose this book because it is authentic, comprised of true narratives of Black women in the workplace. In explaining narrative research, Hones (1998, p. 226) writes that people understand their lives through stories and that these stories feature plots, characters, times, and places. And because narratives help people to understand their lives through stories, Chase (1995, p. 2) advises researchers to take narrative inquiry seriously. By analyzing Black women's communicative patterns within different workplace contexts, scholars and practitioners gain a more holistic understanding of how organizational emotionality affects Black women as they encounter the Strong Black Woman archetype. *Champions Never Tell* is an appropriate text as the writers describe how this oppression was communicated in the workplace, how the organization upheld problematic practices, and how they used communication (or lack thereof) in response to the toxic environment. It is also important to note that my positionality as a Black woman informs my critical-interpretivist approach to analyzing this text and the power structures in which the authors are positioned.

Champions Never Tell narrates the experiences of women taking control of their work and personal lives under oppressive circumstances. The authors detailed experiences with implicit and explicit racism, sexism, and harassment within their organizations. While they admitted to embodying the SBW archetype, they also resisted this image by using communal communication—writing this book. *Champions Never Tell* offers women insight on survival and self-care. It's not intended to discredit an organization, male bash, name call or portray women as victims. Seven incredible women bravely share their stories of being in hostile work environments to give clarity to the ambiguity that many women experience when trying to determine whether they're harassed. An Appendix in the book offers 31 insights,

recommendations, and action steps that women can take to assess where they are and take control of their health and work life.

Reissman (1993) contends that the narrative methodology "examines the informant's story and analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on and how it persuades a listener of authenticity," (p. 2). Analyzing this group of Black women's standpoints in *Champions Never Tell* can help further researchers' and professionals' understanding of Black women's professional experiences by directly exploring their standpoint rather than relying on the interpretation of dominant knowledge claims.

I analyzed a total of eight narratives, all of which were from African American women (one woman had two chapters). Their ages, location, and occupations varied. After reading their individual narratives, I was able to identify recurring themes between them. There was a high level of intertextuality between the narratives, which helped answer my research questions. Intertextuality analyzes how separate texts are related to and supported by one another (Cancalon & Spacagna, 1994, p. 2).

As I analyzed *Champions Never Tell*, I chose the iterative grounded approach. Grounded approaches (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992) are qualitative analyses generated in-process from the data, rather than being superimposed on the data (Pennington, 1999). I chose a grounded approach because it allows "emergent descriptive concepts to come from the data, illustrating the nuances and complexities involved," (Pennington, 1999). I take notice of Houston's (1992) advice to communication scholars doing research on nondominant women—scholars must place ethnic women's cultures at the center of the research, rather than centering whiteness and/or dominant group norms (Pennington, 1999).

For this analysis, I began with my four research questions. Next, I read through the narratives several times. My first read through served as an initial round of coding that helped me make sense of the narratives. I used an excel document to organize my thoughts as I coded. Sample codes included anxiety, depression, sickness, resistance, strength, hope, expectations. During the second round of coding, I began comparing and contrasting codes to find overlapping experiences, emotions, and ideas. I chose this format as the narratives were formatted in this order. Here, the coding became more sophisticated and resulted in codes like emotions (sadness, exhaustion, emotional pain, hope, relief), physical responses (sickness, anxiety, depression, vomiting, sweating, physical pain), and SBW/ strength (assimilation, hope for acceptance, overcompensation, sacrifice, lack of vulnerability, performance). I color coded the codes in my excel document, and then separated them into separate sheets according to code/ color. Within the separate sheets, I included quotes or summaries of stories that explicitly explained the phenomenon, and how that connected to traits of the SBW. The final round of coding consisted of organizing the codes into larger themes that encompass the meaning of the data: self-management, codified reaction, and collectivity. For example, I collapsed the recurring instances of the authors expressing their verbal and nonverbal responses to "storms in the workplace" into one theme, which I termed "codified reaction." In this case, these reactions emerged as (1) physical responses, as authors described instances of anxiety, depression, migraines, excessive sweating, and other physical manifestations of discomfort, and/or (2) resistance, as authors recounted instances of quitting or self-advocacy.

After grouping the data into themes, I analyzed how these themes connected to organizational emotionality. I accomplished this by analyzing how emotion was communicated and who it was communicated between within the organization. For example, emotion with work

converged with “codified reaction” as exhaustion, anxiety, reporting, resignation, etc. were results of communicating with other organizational members. Lastly, I prescribed how this insight could benefit organizations looking to improve organizational communication and culture.

Findings and Interpretations

The data (narrative texts) revealed that there was an expectation for Black women to embody the Strong Black Woman archetype in the workplace. The authors endorsed the idea of being the SBW by identifying ways they embodied it. However, they also reluctantly endorsed this internalized archetype as it limited authenticity for Black women and other negative consequences. The themes that emerged from the data are (1) self-management, (2) codified reaction, and (3) collectivity. Each of these themes correlated with an organizational emotion: emotional labor, emotion work, emotion with work.

Self-Management

Self-management was the most salient theme that emerged from the data. Initially, this theme was labelled as “strength**;**” however, I found that in each of the narratives, Black women used strength as a form of self-management. This theme answers research questions one and three as the authors explain how and why they internalized, or embodied, the expectation of Black women being strong as a form of emotional labor. This strength manifested in the form of self-management as the authors decided that in order to survive their toxic work environments, they had to manage their image by controlling their emotions and being conscious of their communication—a form of emotional labor. Impression management—how people want to be seen—is a form of emotional labor as Black women are encouraged to perform in an acceptable

manner determined by dominant group communicative norms (Goffman, 1959). According to Goffman (1959),

> persons are seen as actors playing parts, giving more or less convincing role performances, colluding with their fellow actors or acting on their own, using the available social scenery to their expressive advantage, presenting characters or social selves, and controlling their role performances in such a way that the image they want to project and to be known by is crystallized in the minds of those in their audience (Miller, 1984, p. 142).

The concept of impression management is to have the ability to mask one's true emotions and authentic behaviors, performing a role that dominant group members deem as appropriate and objectively right. This performance is an expectation of Black women as the SBW suppresses their emotional needs and responses to accommodate the needs and norms of others. Black women have to play the role of respectable, flexible, approachable, and nonthreatening to survive, and possibly thrive, in their workplace. They have to be cautious of avoiding controversy, being seen as aggressive, and deviant as they have to "cope with and resist the harsh reality that Black femininity is an unacceptable performance in professional environments" (Davis, 2018). In *Champions Never Tell,* Black women internalized the SBW archetype as a performance of emotional labor by using assimilation and sacrifice as ways to manage their image.

Assimilation as self-management

Throughout their narratives, the authors explained how they felt pressured to assimilate into their organizational cultures and white communication norms. Assimilation is when a nondominant group or culture comes to resemble a dominant group by adopting their values,

behaviors, and beliefs (Spielberger, 2004). Allen (2001) highlights that "within various settings, individuals tend to expect everyone to enact dominant norms and communication styles during everyday interactions. As a result, they may negatively judge persons who do not meet (or do not seem to meet) expectations related to white, middle-class values and attitudes" (p. 83). To avoid negative judgment, Black women throughout *Champions Never Tell* assimilate in various forms. In Rutherford's case, she "consciously and unconsciously downplayed my culture, femininity, and preferences in order to fit into the majority culture" (p. 2). This was a common expectation and behavior of the Black women in the text and Black women in the American workforce (Davis, 2018). Rutherford further explained that she felt like:

> It was a slow corrosion of my soul and self-image. Surrendering my preferences and values in order to fit into a box on a performance review. I continued to adjust and walk on eggshells for a period of time to suit the different personalities of the men I worked for... I assimilated into a white male dominated work environment, and gave up who I was to fit into an organization that wasn't designed for me to succeed in (p. 45).

Black women are expected to adjust their communication patterns to fit white, dominant group norms. These expectations require Black women to deny their authentic selves to be accepted in their organization's culture.

Assimilation also comes in the form of overcompensation in hopes for acceptance. Allen (2001) highlights that dominant group members "may respond to variations in verbal and nonverbal communication by equating them with speakers' levels of intelligence and personal characteristics" (p. 83). To combat or avoid the questioning of their intelligence, Black women may overcompensate in the workplace. In her narrative, Hagen argues that "women subconsciously put in more time at work. We do more than what's required because we don't

want our male counterparts to think we can't handle the job because we are women, wives, or mothers" (p. 52). Black women have to combat the fear of being labelled as incompetent from both a gender *and* racial standpoint as Black people are plagued with the stereotype of being unintelligent and lazy.

This racial and gender expectation disparity also makes an appearance when Russell's mother warned her "Just know that someone is going to remind you that you're Black, baby" (p. 56). However, Russell still overcompensated in hopes for acceptance and assimilating into her organization's culture. From the beginning of her tenure at a new law firm, coworkers communicated gender expectations:

> I learned a lot about work ethic from Jennifer, but it was on my very first day that she'd give me what I later learned was the advice that every woman joining the group received on their first day…"Don't have a kid until you make partner. You won't be able to raise them. If you aren't already married, wait. If you are married, there's a high likelihood that you'll be divorced by the time you make partner" (p. 56).

These clear expectations pressured Russell to overcompensate in her role. Russell, however, hoped to still be accepted so she "worked like crazy," and began to work all-nighters (p. 58). Russell did this in hopes of proving that she was good enough to be at this law firm and be promoted. She was even able to defy the odds and had a baby (p. 58). However, she was still seen as incompetent by her mentor. No matter how hard Black women work, they are still subject to being seen and treated as inferior by dominant group members. Rutherford explained that:

> I always thought if I continued to work just as hard and continue to exceed their expectations, that one day, I would be accepted in my organization. One day, they would

> see me as an equal. One day, I would get a high enough position and would no longer have to "prove" that I was worthy of respect. I would have earned it (p. 45).

However, none of the women in this text were able to “prove” their worth to their organization by assimilating. While assimilation has proven to help Black women manage hypervisibility (Dickens, Womack, & Dimes, 2019), this sacrifice of authenticity does not guarantee that dominant group members will see their worth and fair compensation. Assimilation for Black women is to sacrifice authenticity in hopes of being accepted and respected in the workplace.

Sacrifice as self-management

Black women are expected to sacrifice their authenticity as it allows dominant group members to be comfortable, increasing the likelihood of their success in the organization. Black women professionals may feel pressured to endure a toxic work environment to continue receiving benefits and to maintain a lifestyle that makes the toxicity seem worthwhile. Rutherford continued to explain that:

> some women hold on to toxic jobs to maintain a mortgage or an expensive car in effort to "show" how successful they are…Also keeping a job for the great medical benefits, when the job is creating the severe medical conditions that require treatment (p. 5).

Some Black women even hold on to jobs in hopes for better outcomes. Green mentioned that, “I think subconsciously, I was enduring this crazy ride because I really believed I would have a serious shot at this new role” (p. 15). This feeling is consistent with the literature that Black women are willing to sacrifice to better their situation, which would result in benefitting others (King & Ferguson, 2008). According to King and Ferguson (2008), “Well before mid-life**,** Black girls, demonstrating receptivity to Black women’s gender socialization, begin their induction to the role of self-sacrifice. At the societal level ascension to the role of self-sacrificer within the

family constellation as nurturer, caretaker, and self-sacrificer is a carryover derived from the historical epochs of slavery and reconstruction" (p. 112).

Black women's sacrifice is not always solely for their personal gain. Davis (2018) argues that "confronting oppressive forces might be difficult to employ in situations where women's lives and well-being are threatened by people such as supervisors and clients with greater organizational and social power…Black women's 'disruptive' behavior in the workplace can result in long-term financial and professional consequences." The authors gave a number of reasons why they gave in- to the pressure of sacrifice, going beyond personal gain.

Although she worked hard and was met with resistance from a supervisor, Nelson was mindful that she "didn't want to be the Angry Black Woman or the bitter and disgruntled employee," so she suffered through the maltreatment (p. 69). She sacrificed her feelings to avoid being labelled with another controlling image of Black women. On another hand, Rutherford suggested that she, along with other Black women, wore the superwoman cape rather than avoiding it. She began her narrative by explaining the pressure of sacrifice for the sake of others:

> We are superheroes to many. We represent women in our organization, women of similar ethnicity or women of color. We are heroes to our families, friends, associates, and colleagues in our respective industries. When people see us at or near the top, they see our cape. However, they don't see that the very cape that we use to save and inspire others has become wrapped around our necks, and choking us to death (p. 4).

Black women feel like their sacrifice is for the well-being of others, even when it causes them pain (Harris, 2001). Similarly, Nelson admitted that she had "always been the foundation for many of my family and friends. Yes, I was the Super Hero. Even with experiencing pain and despair at work, I put on my professional cape. Renee received some of the highest praises from

me, even as she continued to treat me poorly" (p. 69). Black women are taught from an early age that they are to be strong for the sake of others (King & Ferguson, 2008).

Black women's sacrifice is not only for familial benefit, it also extends to helping coworkers. Rutherford described how she shouldered the burden because "as a leader, I had to show up every day ready to serve" (p. 33). Even when others know that Black women are suffering, they expect them to continue sacrificing in hopes of a better outcome for everyone. This is seen when Rutherford expressed her desire to report a supervisor:

> I wanted someone in leadership to handle a toxic leader and not just expect for me to "use my legal rights as a Black woman" to file a complaint in a system that didn't work. Either way, my career was on the line. If I didn't do something, he was going to stop me from being promoted. If I did something, I ran the risk of being retaliated against and wouldn't be promoted. I figured if I was going to go down, I would go down fighting for myself and the people that I was responsible for leading.

King and Ferguson (2008) contextualize this dilemma by explaining that:

> persons of African descent are commonly socialized to an internal value system that emphasizes responsibility to and for individuals and collectives so that an overall care for communal and cultural life is central to personal identity (Hill Collins, 1991; Karenga, 1980; Nobles, 1976). Fulfilling these deeply held criteria of worth over determines dilemmas of self-sacrifice in Black women's experience. Wrestling with the dilemmas of self- sacrifice involves continued struggles with a continuum of anxiety, guilt, and the courage to act on one's beliefs about ethical responsibility at the communal level (p. 114).

Although Black women face discrimination within the workplace, there is an expectation, both internally and externally, that they will either assimilate into the toxic culture, suffer through the toxicity, or sacrifice themselves and/or their careers for the sake of others.

Emotional Labor as Self-Management

The pressure to assimilate in hopes for acceptance is an example of the kinds of circumstances that lead to Black women's emotional labor in the workplace. Black women are expected to display the "right" emotions for the job, making it inauthentic to their true feelings. They are expected to perform deep acting and surface acting to successfully assimilate (Hochschild, 1983). Deep acting can be seen when Black women feel pressured to feel grateful for their jobs even in the midst of a toxic work environment. For example, Greene repeatedly asked herself, "Did I really have anything to complain about? When I heard myself talk about this, it sounded like I was complaining" (p. 15). Instead of expressing her frustration, she reminded herself that she received great benefits from her job compared to others in worse situations. What could she have to complain about? Throughout *Champions Never Tell*, the authors tried to rationalize their toxic organizational culture and expectations.

Similarly, Black women also feel the need to perform surface acting, or wear a mask, as a means of sacrifice for the benefit of others. Although they may feel discriminated against, "we mask the pain with wine, paint a smile on our faces, and dress it all up with expensive clothing, but we suffer…silently…because no one REALLY wants to hear that their superhero is actually HUMAN" (p. 5). Black women are expected to be silent about their pain, but still sacrifice themselves to rescue others from the same pain.

According to Acker (1990) and Kanter (1977), men are the creators of organizational culture and authority that enforce "professionalism", "making decisions regarding acceptable

behavior, communication, skin color, style and dress, (e.g. dark suits, conservative dresses, white shirts, low heels, and no flashy jewelry, hair, or make-up)" (Durr & Wingfield, 2011). Durr and Wingfield (2011) argue that "This has had implications for women of all races who become employed within this new-found bureaucratic configuration of organizational norms, but has had particular consequences for women of color, who do not fit either the gendered or racialized norms of these environments" (p. 558). Emotional labor is often masked as "professionalism."

According to Lammers and Garcia (2009), professionalism is coded as unemotional, rational, and objective. Rather than reacting to difficult situations—such as discrimination—emotionally, Black women are expected to endure maltreatment because it is deemed as the "professional" way to verbally and nonverbally respond. For example, when explicitly told by a superior that he purposely mistreated her so that she would emotionally respond, Rutherford responded, "You will NEVER get a rise out of me or see me cry in front of you. It's unprofessional and uncalled for" (p. 41). Even when met with unprofessional behavior, Black women are still expected to respond professionally. Although assimilation and sacrifice are vital to Black women's survival in the workplace, both strategies "can signify that the perceived essence of Black womanhood is antithetical to 'professionalism'" (Davis, 2019). To meet the expectations of the dominant culture, or perform emotional labor, Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) found that:

> African American women change the way they think of things or expectations they have for themselves. Or they alter their outer appearance. They modify their speech. They shift in a direction at work each morning, then in another at home each night. They adjust the way they act in one context after another (p. 62).

In a qualitative study, Shorter-Gooden (2004) found that "sometimes women who role flexed were hypervigilant about their behavior, others' perceptions of their behavior, and their surrounding environments" (Davis, 2018). Self-management can benefit Black women by allowing "some women to avoid unfair judgment on non-normative, culturally specific demeanors. But it is also important to note that Black women's communicative adaptation strategies can be misread as enacting the 'good girl' performance (e.g., nice, respectful, and obedient), which risks being interpreted as passive acceptance of their domination" (Davis, 2018). Black women are expected to show strength by accepting that their authentic selves and emotion are unacceptable by dominant group communicative standards. Some Black women internalize and embody this expectation by remaining stoic, rational, and resilient in the workplace. Scholars, practitioners, and organizations should be weary of this expectation because it communicates to Black women that the essence of Black womanhood is antithetical to professionalism and organizational culture, and is not worthy of inclusion in the workplace.

Lastly, it is also important to note the repeated mantra and title of **CHAMPIONS NEVER TELL** is rhetorically significant to mention because the word "champion(s)" signifies someone who has arrived at a high status; and yet, the irony is that these women have to suppress their emotions because they have learned that, even as champions, it is unsafe for Black women to "tell," because they strategically need to portray an image as strong black women for their own employment survival and security of others. Each author admitted that they did not immediately react or talk to others about their workplace storms because **CHAMPIONS NEVER TELL.** This mantra is an example of the emotional labor that the SBW endures as she is expected to carry the burden alone. Greene explains, "You can't see it, but you can feel it, and you definitely know it's there. But guess what? **CHAMPIONS NEVER TELL** and to a lot of

people, I was a champion. But in truth, I actually felt like a chump" (p. 15). Even when Black women are hurting, they feel the pressure to be everyone else's superwoman or champion. *But who is her champion?* Rutherford has a similar experience as she expressed the pressure to mask her pain, "I was harshly criticized and ridiculed by the people who were close to me, but they didn't know the extent of my suffering…they didn't know I had been harassed for most of my career. They never knew because **CHAMPIONS NEVER TELL**" (p. 43).

To combat the racist and sexist ideal that Black womanhood is antithetical to professionalism and organizational culture, organizations have the opportunity to analyze how their formal and informal policies and practices uphold systemic oppression. This can be accomplished by asking the purpose of current formal and informal policies and practices. This analysis should include diverse identities. For example, when analyzing the intent and affect of the organization dress code, Black women should also be included in the discussion to address how the dress code may reinforce racist, sexist, and other exclusionary expectations, or beauty standards. Black women are disproportionately affected by organizational dress codes as American beauty and professional standards are Eurocentric, which is antithetical to Black womanhood (i.e., straight hair v. natural hair, how curves should or should not be displayed, amount and style of makeup, etc.). These expectations are examples of bias in the workplace.

Codified Reaction

The authors of *Champions Never Tell* had various reactions to the discrimination they experienced in their respective workplaces. As they explained the storms they faced in the workplace, the authors detailed their verbal and nonverbal reactions to these situations. The two common reactions were physical responses and resistance. These reactions were a result of

interaction, or communication, with other stakeholders within the organization-- emotion with work. This theme answers research questions two, three, and four.

Physical response

It is common for our bodies to physically respond to stress (Casell, 2017). Throughout their narratives, the Black women of *Champions Never Tell* discussed a variety of physical reactions they suffered in response to discrimination in the workplace. Greene explained that she experienced excessive sweating, vomiting, migraines, stuttering, and a racing heart as a result of a hostile work environment created by her boss (p. 15-17). She further expressed that she "had transformed from a strong, ambitious and confident rising young professional, to a very insecure person" (p. 18). Greene felt intimidated by her boss, which caused negative physical reactions. Rutherford had a similar, but worse, reaction to a toxic work environment:

> [A]rthritis that was in remission for 12 years came back. From all the stress, my immune system was shot and I went to the ER several times a month with flu-like symptoms. I woke up and went to bed with blinding headaches that lasted all day. I had chronic back pain, and gumball sized knots in my shoulders, neck, and back. My ears started ringing, and I had secret panic attacks at my desk (p. 42).

Rutherford was later "diagnosed with PTSD and had over 15 medical conditions" (p. 43). Although she was able to receive health benefits after leaving this environment, Rutherford "didn't want to accept the (medical compensation) money, because if I accepted the money, that means that I believed what they said about me was true and that was a lie" (p. 43). Before writing her narrative, she only told two people. Even when experiencing health issues, Black women may still feel the need to be strong for themselves and others. This strength sometimes means shouldering the burden of health issues alone.

Nelson also described feelings of anxiety, exhaustion, crying, "thyroid flare-ups, tachycardia, migraines, hair loss, and mood swings…I was diagnosed with clinical depression and had to start taking several different medications a day" (p. 74). It's important to highlight the physical reactions that the authors experienced in their toxic work environments as research has found that Black women who internalize the SBW archetype suffer negative health consequences (Barnes, 2017; Donovan & West, 2015; Liao et al., 2020; Abrams et al., 2014; (Giscombé & Lobel, 2005; Harrington, Crowther, & Shipherd, 2010; Mitchell & Herring, 1998). If organizations want to enact their espoused values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, they must consider how their discrimination manifests and affects organizational members. This understanding of physical responses can explain why Black women may need access to health care benefits, paid time off, and overall support for physical well-being as toxic work environments take a toll on their physical and mental health.

Resistance

Black women's resistance against discrimination and oppression can be traced back to colonial slavery. Black women slaves would use "strategies of resistance, such as infanticide, to alleviate the burden of slavery from their children, as well as covert acts of defiance, such as teaching the Bible at home to instill hope in children" (Davis, 2018; Jacobs, 2009; Lyerly, 1996). bell hooks (1989) contends that the best way to resist oppression is to break the silence with an audible voice, which is the purpose of *Champions Never Tell*. According to hooks (1989), Black women can speak out and against oppression by directly communicating "to those who have power to oppress and dominate." hooks (1989) argues that silence is a "sign of women's submission to patriarchal authority;" thus, using an audible voice allows Black women to help end oppression. The women of *Champions Never Tell* used their voices to call out discrimination

and toxic organizational culture in effort to encourage other Black women that are facing similar circumstances to also resist.

Rather than keeping their stories and storms to themselves, the authors chose to juxtapose the title of their book, *Champions Never Tell*-- a mantra of the Strong Black Woman. While each author repeated "**CHAMPIONS NEVER TELL**," they decided to break that cycle of suffering in silence and told the world their storm and how they were able to break free. Instead of allowing organizational members (supervisors, coworkers, and subordinates) to win by remaining silent, these Black women followed the tradition of Black women using communicative resistance as a response to oppression-- "talking back" (Davis, 2018). The perfect exemplar of liberation through communication is when Russell resisted the status quo, "It's true that many times, **CHAMPIONS NEVER TELL**, but today, I choose to speak about my experience because there is power in the tongue" (p. 63). By writing their truths, the Black women authors were talking back.

Two common forms of resistance for the authors within their organizations were working through adversity and quitting. Russell explained that although times can get hard, "The best way is always through" (p. 63). Nelson had a similar experience when she decided to take matters into her own hands instead of allowing her supervisor to dictate her fate within the organization. Nelson decided to start "inviting senior leaders within the company to coffee meetings, lunch meetings, or office meetings. The response was overwhelmingly positive," (p. 70). This was a form of resistance in response to being sabotaged by her supervisor. Rutherford had a similar response to adversity, "It became my mission to prove them wrong. I committed to being better, to work harder, and to shine brighter" (p. 38). Rather than shrinking themselves or allowing

discrimination to win, Black women often times resist adversity by rising above and using their voice to advocate for themselves-- talking back.

Instead of letting her job treat her as an affirmative action fulfillment, Hagen decided "not to fight anymore or play their game and walked away. I knew my value and that I was worthy of a job because of the skill sets I had developed throughout my career. I was very experienced and held management positions because of my talent, not because of the color of my skin" (p. 50). Rather than letting their jobs disrespect them, all of the authors recognized their worth and left. Russell quickly decided that the best decision for her was to leave the organization two weeks after being microaggressed by her law firm mentor (p. 62). Similarly, although she had 3.5 years left until retirement, Rutherford resigned. She was already suffering major health effects like post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), so she decided that the best way to protect herself was to resist continuous disrespect and turmoil by quitting. Francis had a similar revelation. After vowing to not work for any law firm again, Francis quit her job and took it upon herself to teach other women how to protect themselves-- a form of resistance (p. 86). Each of her strategic solutions for women going through similar storms in the workplace was centered around protecting oneself-- a form of resistance. Francis suggested that women communicatively resist oppressive organizational culture by reporting discriminatory behavior (p. 88). This follows hooks' (1989) call for women to use their audible voice to resist rather than remaining silent. Reporting oppressive organizational practices is a way of verbally expressing dissent and resisting the pressure to submit to external hostilities. Whether it is working harder, finding their own way, reporting, or resigning, Black women may use verbal and nonverbal strategies to resist discriminatory organizational practices.

Emotion with work

Physical reactions and resistance are consequences of emotion with work. Exhaustion, anxiety, depression, illness, reporting, resignation, etc., are results of communication with other organizational members. It is important for scholars and practitioners to evaluate how organizational member communication causes various codified reactions within the workplace. It is not enough to only look at policies and practices that are enacted within an organization. Scholars and practitioners should also analyze *who* is enacting these oppressive policies and practices within the workplace. This analysis can be conducted by looking at interactions between organizational members.

Black women are expected to manage their interactions within the workplace through white middle-class communicative norms. They are expected to communicate in a professional manner, which, again, is defined by white middle-class communicative norms. For example, Black women are expected to be submissive to their supervisors and adhere to their communicative expectations. Nelson was expected to go through her supervisor, Renee, to connect with executives of her organization. However, Renee intentionally sabotaged and blew off Nelson's career development. Nelson and Renee's relationship caused anxiety, sadness, and exhaustion within Nelson. This resulted in Nelson overthinking and making mistakes in her work. By analyzing emotion with work in this situation, scholars and practitioners would be able to identify that their relationship was the catalyst of Nelson's demise within the organization. Although she was in a constant state of distress because of Renee's unrealistic expectations and undermining, Nelson was still expected to present herself in a "professional" manner-- not expressing emotion or disapproval for Renee's negative behavior. Buzzanell (1999) contends that this expectation devalues emotionally expressive communication styles characteristic of some women and people of color.

Scholars and practitioners should also analyze coworker relationships as they also influence emotion with work. For example, Russell pulled all-nighters to prove that she could be a valuable team player. This expectation was communicated on her first day on the job by Jennifer (p. 56). Russell adhered to this informal practice so that she could fit into the organizational culture and meet expectations set by her coworker. She wanted to avoid being labelled as lazy or deviant because she did not put in the unexpected, expected extra work. Unfortunately, however, regardless of her extra hours, Russell was reminded that her labor still was not valued.

Identifying how resistance is a reaction to problematic relationships between organizational members gives insight into how Black women problematize the SBW. Each of the Black women authors were expected to endure poor treatment and unrealistic expectations during their tenure. They were expected to be strong by weathering the storm and remaining professional regardless of the unprofessionalism they were presented with. The Black women problematized this expectation by questioning why they were expected to endure this toxicity and realizing their worth. This process of questioning and realization is an act of problematizing the SBW. Questioning the status quo and actively working against it is a form of resistance. Why was there an expectation to adhere to racist and sexist verbal and nonverbal communication simply because of their race and gender? Rather than internalizing this oppressive expectation communicated in their organizational relationships, the Black women decided to defy the "professional" norm and demand better for themselves-- and others. This demand was in the form of leaving these toxic work environments and sharing their stories.

By employing emotion with work as a lens to analyze Black women's experiences in the workplace, scholars and practitioners are able to identify how internalizing the SBW archetype

affects Black women, how and why Black women perform emotion with work, and how Black women problematize the SBW archetype. Looking at workplace relationships can reveal where organizational communication fails Black women and justifies their reactions to certain experiences. This analysis has the potential to help organizations create policies and procedures that set clear expectations about organizational member communication and relationships.

Collectivity

The final theme found in *Champions Never Tell* was collectivity as it relates to the SBW archetype. Although all of the authors did not mention leaning on a group of Black women, there was still a sense of collectivity in each narrative. This collectivity is a form of emotional work as these women had an authentic response to discrimination-- wanting better for others. Collectivity manifested in two forms: the Strong Black Woman Collective (SBWC) and homeplace.

Strong Black Woman Collective

While exploring Black women's experiences, it is important to also consider how collectivity impacts their communication and perspectives. By utilizing Davis' (2019) SBWC framework and hooks' (1989) homeplace, scholars and practitioners can begin to understand how the Strong Black Woman archetype affects Black women in the workplace by highlighting how Black women use communal communication to embody strength and as an act of resistance to oppression in the workplace.

The SBWC framework has four propositions; the Black women authors of *Champions Never Tell* embody the second, third, and fourth propositions in their narratives. The second proposition-- "the assemblage of Black women communicating strength composes the SBWC"-- gives insight into how Black women internalize the SBW archetype through communal communication (Davis, 2015). Russell's conversation with her mother about her new position is

an example of communal communication between Black women that communicates the expectation of strength:

> My mama, on the other hand, had a little bit of a different approach to life. So, when I shared my offer letter with her, she said something to me that has stayed with me since and always will. She has always been an honest mother-- even when it hurts. "Just know that someone is going to remind you that you're Black, baby." And they did. And it hurt like hell. But, it was necessary (p. 56).

Although her mother did not explicitly say that she had to be strong, it is inferred that because Russell is Black, she has to be prepared to face obstacles because of her race. This preparation takes strength as racial discrimination takes a toll on one's mental and physical health. Nelson gave a similar example when she shared her experience of reaching out to other Black women:

> I reached out to several African American women about my anxiety due to workplace stress, and shared the embarrassing story about my 25-pound weight gain since joining the firm. All of their responses were the same "RUN!" (p. 68).

It takes strength to leave a toxic work environment; however, hearing the same message from a collective reinforced this ideology of strength-- in which she obliged.

Champions Never Tell can be considered an assemblage of Black women communicating strength as each Black woman author gave a list of advice that encouraged readers to be strong in the midst of storms in the workplace. For example, Greene advised readers to "use your voice" (p. 30). It takes strength to advocate for yourself as self-advocacy can run the risk of retaliation from perpetrators of oppression in organizations. Francis also advised readers to "stop it! Report it!" (p. 88). Speaking out against discrimination in the workplace can be difficult as Black women can face a series of consequences: more microaggression, being fired, being blamed for

disruption, being labeled as a trouble maker, being excluded, etc. It takes courage and strength to take that chance. By reading a collective of Black women advising the same thing, readers may be more inclined to embody this strength through their communication.

Greene also advocated for communal communication as she suggested that readers get a mentor (p. 30). Mentorship can foster open communication that allows mentors to give advice on how to embody strength in the midst of concerns and challenges. She also added that mentors can give advice on how to advocate for yourself (p. 30). Similarly, Hagen advised readers to "own your space and take ownership of who you are and what you do" (p.53). It takes strength to take up space when those spaces are male dominated with expectations that are antithetical to the essence of Black womanhood. It takes strength to intentionally deviate from organizational culture and present oneself authentically. Russell explained that this strength that Black women internalize can be nurtured by a collective:

> Squad Up…The stresses of work, motherhood, and marriage, you can survive it-- you just can't do it alone. The truth is, you have to surround yourself with a strong squad who will help keep you afloat…Get yourself a squad, because only a strong squad understands that sinking is not an option (p. 66).

Another common piece of advice between narratives was spirituality, which is an attribute of the SBW-- being anchored in religion, or spirituality. Some of the Black women authors advised that the readers tap into a spiritual source for reflexivity and strength. For example, Hagen contended that "iron can only sharpen iron if you are connected to a power source greater than your own. Always remember to keep God first in your life" (p. 53). Similarly, Russell suggests that "God plays chess, not checkers...God assures us that every step counts" (p. 65). Rutherford even quotes Buddha, "Holding on to anger is like drinking poison

and expecting the other person to die" (p. 47). Russell advised readers to "think back and remind yourself how much crap God carried you through. However, even more, I hope to give you hope that whatever you're going through now might hurt like a whole new hell-- but it's necessary" (p. 56). Although different spiritual philosophies, the message is the same: through spirituality, Black women can reflect on their experiences and find meaning in the pain. This takes strength as it requires Black women to relive and make sense of their experiences (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). This can lead to emotional discomfort, but can benefit Black women in the long run. Other examples of advocating for collectivity in their advice sections are "squad up" (i.e. diversity of thought through connecting with other Black women that may have similar or different walks of life, having five champions), hosting women empowerment seminars (p. 76), taking care of their mental health (i.e. professional counseling, reading, meditation, self-reflexivity, releasing negativity, taking a break), taking care of their physical health (going on walks, exercising, talking with a healthcare professional, massages), and being prepared (knowing organizational policies and procedures, having a career plan, assessing difficult situations).

Each Black woman's list of advice had at least one component of using collectivity to encourage strength through communication. By sharing their individual stories and how they survived their storms, the Black women authors of *Champions Never Tell* are communicating that through strength, readers can also survive. This supports the third proposition of the SBWC framework-- "members of the SBWC participate in the collective by reinforcing one another's virtues of strength" (Davis, 2015). While they had various examples and different ways to show strength-- both verbally and nonverbally-- there was congruency in that regardless of the avenue readers take, each method of survival takes strength. Resistance takes strength.

Homeplace

The fourth proposition of the SBWC framework argues that "communication patterns of strength enable the SBWC to confront and retreat from oppressive structures outside, but also impede vulnerability and emotionality within, the collective"; however, I problematize this proposition by employing hooks' (1989) homeplace. Homeplace is a site of resistance as Black women resist external hostilities. These external hostilities can take on the form of projecting controlling images-- like the SBW-- on Black women in the workplace. When she finally decided to leave her toxic work environment, Rutherford was "harshly criticised and ridiculed by the people who were close to me, but they didn't know the extent of my suffering" (p. 43). While some Black women can feel ashamed or harshly criticized for showing emotion, it is also important to recognize that not all Black women collectives impede vulnerability and emotionality as a means of embodying strength. hooks (1989) argued that Black women use homeplace to commune with other Black women and learn about ways to manage daily oppressive stress through communicative support.

Homeplace gives space for emotionality as dealing with discrimination and oppression takes a toll on Black women's mental and physical health. It is harmful-- and unrealistic-- to expect Black women to abstain from showing emotion when communicating about hurtful experiences that may have caused emotional distress. Scholars and practitioners must recognize that Black women have valid emotions and that they need the space to work through and express those emotions; homeplace is that space. Homeplace encourages emotionality and vulnerability within Black women collectives as it is a part of the process of using homeplace as a sight for resistance. In order to resist external hostilities, Black women must first confront how they are affected so that they can then communicate the best ways to resist. *Champions Never Tell* can be

considered a homeplace as the Black women authors use this space to vulnerably communicate their emotions and negative experiences within their organizations. This expression of emotionality resists the SBW archetype as one of her attributes is resisting vulnerability. By sharing their narratives, the authors are also communicating how to use other mechanisms to resist oppressive organizational culture and the expectation of the SBW.

The SBWC framework and homeplace illuminate how Black women communicate strength as an act of resistance in the face of oppression. The Black women authors used their narratives as a way of communicating strength and resisting oppression in the workplace by "talking back," or sharing their experience and advice to an audience. *Champions Never Tell* is a site of resistance as the Black women authors resisted the mantra "**CHAMPIONS NEVER TELL,"** and vulnerably exposed their storms. The authors openly told readers that "if you want to win, stand on my shoulders. Let's get out of the crab barrel and win together" (p. 75). Rather than allowing workplace storms to consume them, the Black women authors challenged readers to lean into a collective and resist the status quo. By leaning into the "if one of us shines, we all shine" collective mentality, Black women can use their collective strength to dismantle oppressive power structures not only within their organizations, but also within society (p. 69).

Emotional Work

The SBWC and homeplace are examples of the emotional work of Black women as wanting to put others in a better position is an authentic response to experiencing oppression in the workplace. A part of the SBW archetype is caring for others, being resilient, motivated, and anticipating the needs of others. By writing about their storms and survival mechanisms, the authors were anticipating that other women were experiencing similar situations, and showed that they authentically cared for those women by taking the time to write about their experiences.

They were authentically motivated to write their narratives as this work was voluntary and likely caused them to relive difficult experiences. Rather than sulking or treating their negative experiences with oppressive organizational culture as a rite of passage, or the norm, the authors took the time to help out other women that are struggling. As Rutherford reflected on her experiences, she detailed that "taking absolute responsibility for the undesired results and changing to correct and/or mitigate the results has been excruciating. Excruciating, but LIBERATING" (p. 46). Although she had to go through the excruciating process of reflexivity and healing, by writing her narrative, Rutherford could be saving readers from also experiencing the dilemma of choosing between using communication (verbal and nonverbal) to navigate oppressive organizational culture and recognizing the signs that it is time to depart the organization. *Champions Never Tell* is an authentic response to not wanting other women to experience the excruciating pain of oppression and healing. Instead, readers are able to also bask in the liberation that the authors discovered.

A significant example of how and why Black women perform emotional work is Greene's experience being a mentor to a young Black woman professional within her organization. Greene detailed how she went out of her way to help her mentee through multiple obstacles throughout her tenure within the organization-- upgrading her appearance after request, budgeting, and preparing for a promotion interview. However, the relationship changed after a conversation about appropriate language in the office and a review of her 360 survey results. Greene was not obligated to buy her mentee makeup, help her acquire donated gift cards for food or prepare for a promotion interview. Greene did this because she "felt inclined to make myself available as a resource because she was a woman and a woman who was African-American like me" (p. 27). Her authentic response to another Black woman professional asking for guidance

was to help. Although she was not met with the same courtesy and sisterhood, that did not stop Greene from continuing sharing her insight in how to navigate organizational culture as a Black woman. She still decided to share this experience with readers as they could also benefit from this knowledge and perspective.

Being vulnerable about their emotions and negative experiences is an example of how the Black women authors used *Champions Never Tell* as a site for the SBWC and homeplace. This is representative of how many Black women use communal communication to both internalize and also resist the SBW archetype. By recognizing the utility and power of collectivity as a form of emotional work, this analysis provides scholars and practitioners an understanding of how organizations can better support Black women performing emotional work as both a cultural survival mechanism (wanting other Black women to survive and thrive within the workplace) and manifestation of the SBW.

Discussion

The purpose of this narrative thematic analysis is three-fold: (1) to investigate how the Strong Black Woman archetype manifests in the workplace, (2) to understand how Black women are affected by it through the lens of organizational emotionality, and (3) to interrogate how Black women use communication to resist oppression in the workplace. The data (narrative texts) revealed that there were both internal and external expectation for Black women to embody the Strong Black Woman archetype in the workplace. The themes that emerged from the data are (1) self-management as emotional labor, (2) codified reaction as emotion with work, and (3) collectivity as emotional work.

The data suggests that Black women often internalize and embody the implicit and explicit expectations of the SBW in the workplace. This embodiment manifests in the form of

self-management and emotional labor. Self-management is consistent with Black feminist literature as Black women were expected to be strong and outwardly deny their needs for the benefit of others (Collins, 2004; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Wingfield, 2007; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2003, 2007; Settles, Pratt-Hyatt, & Buchanan, 2008; Harris-Perry, 2011; Liao, Wei, & Yin, 2020; Etowa et al., 2018; Abrams, Maxwell, Pope, and Belgrave, 2014; Jewell, 1993; West, 1995). This finding is also consistent with organizational emotionality literature as emotional labor is often gendered because women are expected to embody more "feminine," or caring communicative norms (Allen, 2011; Algoe, Buswell, & DeLamater, 2000; Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000). This study converges Black feminist and organizational emotionality literature by contextualizing how Black women specifically use emotional labor as a form of self-management, and how this expectation affects them in the workplace. Scholars and practitioners can use this convergence in literature to analyze how organizational formal and informal policies and practices uphold system oppression from an intersectional perspective. This can be accomplished by questioning the intent and effect of current formal and informal policies and practices. To gain an intersectional perspective, this analysis should include diverse interlocking identities. For example, when analyzing the intent and effect of the organization dress code, Black women should also be included in the discussion to address how the dress code may reinforce racist, sexist, and other exclusionary expectations, or beauty standards. Black women are disproportionately affected by organizational dress codes as American beauty and professional standards are Eurocentric (Powell, 2018; Morrison, 2006). If organizations want to create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizational culture, reflexivity is salient.

This thematic narrative analysis supports existing literature on the negative physical, mental, and emotional effects of the internalization and embodiment of the SBW. Black women

consistently report higher feelings of depression, anxiety, hopelessness, loneliness, distress, and fatigue due to the SBW schema (Donovan & West, 2015; Liao et al., 2020; Abrams et al., 2014). This study contributes to existing physical, mental, and emotional health and business literature on physical manifestations of stress in the workplace by contextualizing the effects on Black women. This analysis also contributes to organizational emotionality and intercultural communication literature as it demonstrates how communication between organizational members can have a material effect—especially in terms of racist, sexist, and other oppressive forms of communication. Through an emotion with work lens, scholars and practitioners can potentially help organizations create policies and procedures that set clear expectations about organizational member communication and relationships, which can prevent the negative effects of emotion with work. For example, practitioners can recommend ways to change formal policy language that prohibits and protects employees from intimidation from supervisors. This can potentially empower employees to report instances of discrimination. If organizations have espoused diversity, equity, and inclusion values, it is important to assess and address how organizational members' communication upholds oppressive institutions of power and privilege. This can be accomplished by establishing an anonymous reporting mechanism that allows organizational members to report any instances of discrimination that they have either experienced or witnessed within the workplace. Anonymous reporting data has the potential to explain certain relationship dynamics and reactions of Black women. Although anonymous, organizational leadership will be able to identify patterns of reporting, which can help inform their future decisions on how to restructure organizational culture to value diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Lastly, this analysis explicates the utility of collectivity amongst Black women as a tool of survival and resistance (Parks, 2013; Davis, 2015; Collins, 2000; Merry, 1995; hooks, 1989, 1990). This study contributes to organizational, feminist, communal, resistance, and emotionality communication bodies of literature as it contextualizes how Black women utilize communal communication as a tool to survive the workplace and resist external hostilities. Scholars and practitioners' understanding of Black women's use of collectivity as forms of emotional work can assist organizations in creating and providing resources (policies and practices) that make their organizations truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive. For example, organizations can employ affinity groups that allow Black women to use full voice about their experiences within the organization and how that relates to larger oppressive structures outside the organization. Rather than assuming what Black women want and need to be changed within an organization to make it truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive, scholars and practitioners can give Black women the chance to explicitly communicate how organizational verbal and nonverbal communication and culture affect their experiences, and how to formally accommodate and uplift marginalized identities through policies and procedures.

Limitations

This narrative thematic analysis is limited to the Black woman demographic and does not purport to generalize to other ethnic or gender demographics. The experiences of the women in *Champions Never Tell* may not be categorically generalizable to all Black women, but this analysis reflects what is found in much of the literature of Black working women, especially professional women. Lastly, this study does not assess how other marginalized identities (i.e. sexuality, ability, age) of Black women affected their experiences. It is important for scholars and practitioners to remember that different intersecting identities of Black women affect their

communication and experiences. I encourage future research to explore different Black women archetypes, and different intersecting identities of Black women (i.e., sexuality, ability, age, socioeconomic status, education, etc.).

Conclusion

By combining a race-gender identity lens with organizational emotion theory, this analysis provides more insight into Black women's standpoint, communication patterns, and how they resist oppressive forces in the workplace. By using the text *Champions Never Tell*, researchers and practitioners are able to gain a more holistic understanding of the overall organizational emotion, resistance and display of strength in which Black women professionals engage. This narrative thematic analysis provides organizations with information that will allow them to curate effective mechanisms to cultivate a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizational culture. It is important to shed light on how Black women survive in the workplace as a way to better understand their communication patterns and experiences. This analysis contributes to existing research and supports the idea that Black women show strength in the face of adversity in the workplace, thus exploiting the Strong Black Woman archetype. This analysis also contributes to existing research by advocating for the validity of emotionality and Black feminism in organizational communication research. Rather than encouraging Black women to continue internalizing the SBW archetype to their detriment, scholars and practitioners are able to recognize the destructiveness of this expectation and internalization, and begin to fix organizational culture so that Black women are no longer pressured to internalize and embody this controlling image.

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