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**INTERSECTIONAL LIVES, INTERSECTIONAL EXPERIENCES:
EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF STIGMA IN THE LIVES OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN WOMEN**

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

PSYCHOLOGY

By

Eve Lorane Brown

DECEMBER 2017

The Dissertation of Eve Lorane Brown is approved by:

Dr. Craig Haney, Chair

Dr. Carolyn Martin Shaw

Dr. Eileen Zurbriggen

Dr. Tyrus Miller, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Students

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Abstract

Intersectional Lives, Intersectional Experiences: Exploring the Impact of Stigma in the Lives of African American Women

Eve Lorane Brown

This intersectional, qualitative life history based narrative study explores the impact of stigma on the lives 10 African American women ages 21-55. All 10 women in the study also identify as transgender, transsexual, and transwomen. All of the women also primarily identified as women. Thus, one of the goals of this feminist investigation is to examine, position, and normalize these transwomen as women in contemporary research literature and in society in total. A culturally competent questionnaire was employed to guide the semi-structured, life-history based interviews. Theoretical frameworks of Intersectionality (Combahee River Collective, 1982; Crenshaw, 1993), Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 1991), Cross' model of Black racial identity (Cross, 1971/1991), and the Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954) were employed to gauge potential correlations between the impact of social stigma and feminist and female/woman group identities, African American race and racial group identities, and how the intersection of multiple oppressed identities interacts with their ability to obtain and sustain healthy, self-actualized, lives.

Participant responses were focused coded and grouped into 6 thematic categories (a) personal identity; (b) gender identity, transgender/transsexual or gender spectrum identity, female/woman identity, feminist understandings and/or identity, gender group connectedness; (c) racial group identity and Black community

connectedness; (d) identity disclosure, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community connectedness, and political associations; (e) self-esteem, self-actualization, and self-concept; (f) relationships and love; and (g) stigma, discrimination, racism, sex work violence, trauma, suicide ideation, and isolation. A content analysis (Fetterman, 1998) was utilized alongside theoretical examinations.

Findings include: (a) African American transwomen experience an inordinate amount of social stigma that negatively impacts their mental and physical health, limits their ability to access the hierarchy of needs, and impedes their ability to maintain healthy lives; (b) African American transwomen are often ostracized from African American communities and kinship networks; they experiences most acts of violence from other African Americans, yet Black racial identity gave 8 out of 10 of the women a sense of empowerment and esteem; however, the relationship between Black racial identity and self-actualization was still low; (c) African American transwomen overwhelmingly express a desire to be seen, respected as, and protected as, women.

Keywords: African American Women; African American Transgender Women; Stigma; Intersectionality; Black Feminist Theory; Black Racial Identity; Hierarchy of Needs; Social Discrimination; Gender Identity; Narrative; Embodied Narrative; Life History; Violence; Trauma; Social Psychology; African American Studies; Women's Studies; Gender Studies.

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“Just like moons and like suns, with the certainty of tides,
just like hopes springing high. Still, I rise!”—Maya Angelou (1978)

This dissertation (much like my doctoral studies) was completed in almost total isolation. It was 9 very difficult years of near solitary confinement that broke me into millions of pieces and crucified my spirit; however, like the Phoenix, I have risen from the ashes. And, it was entirely worth every ounce of blood, sweat, and tears! Let this dissertation and my imminent success be a testament to the strength and resiliency of Black womanhood, fortitude, and faith in a magnificent Christian God, who made all of the possible! And faith in my powerful African Goddesses: the opulent mother Goddess Yemojah, and the fierce warrior Goddess Oya! Modupe! I am eternally grateful to my kind, generous, and patient dissertation committee: Dr. Craig Haney, Dr. Carolyn Martin Shaw, and Dr. Eileen Zurbruggen. THANK YOU! Carolyn, you have saved me and helped me in many ways, and I am forever grateful! THANK YOU!

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, who made financial sacrifices to send me to Catholic school, so that I could get to “this place”, and whose passionate and undying love for each other inspires me still.

*This dissertation is also dedicated to
Terrilyn Fox, Krema Sherree, Tyra Allure,
Octavia St. Laurent, Tracy Africa & Tommie Ross, who all inspired me; &
Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera & Miss Majors; who inspired a movement; & also
to the women who participated in this study, and the multitude
of African American transwomen who dare to be their true selves daily and
unapologetically!*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.”

—Ida B. Wells-Barnett (Wells, 1892)

“Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being Black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century.”

—W. E. B. DuBois (DuBois, 1903)

"I defy any doctor in the world to prove that I am not a woman. I have lived, dressed, and acted just what I am—a woman."—Lucy Hicks Anderson (Ventura Star, 2015)

“I’m a person! A human being! I deserved rights too!” —Duana

Johnson (New York Times, 2008)

They live like prisoners locked inside a public solitary confinement. Policed daily by stigma, sexism, racism, and discrimination, they gallantly continue the struggle for survival. Often disallowed all humanity, they are both hunted and wanted like exotic sexual animals. However, their experiences of oppression and injustice are rarely ever explored and/or acknowledged. Treated like third- or fourth-class citizens, African American transgender women (transwomen) must navigate a constellation of oppressions in being both African American and transgender in a racist, sexist, homophobic, and transphobic society (Bith-Melander et al., 2010; Nemoto, Bodeker, & Iwamoto, 2011).

The social construction of their identities begins with their race: As African American, these women inherit a rich history of disenfranchisement. African Americans have experienced a long history of racism in America, and are still currently struggling for equality (Berlin, 2003; Du Bois, 1903; Franklin, 1947;

Hartman, 2007). As a result of their racial group oppression, their intergroup relations have suffered in a number of ways, but especially in terms of relations of gender and sexuality (Collins, 1991; hooks, 2002; Riggs, 1991; West, 1993; White, 2008).

African American lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are largely not accepted by the larger Black community (Smith, 1999). In addition, there is an increased level of rejection, discrimination, and stigma placed upon male-to-female transgender women. Much like racism, sexism is still prevalent in America, and women are still devalued despite the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the Women's Liberation/Feminist Movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2004). Though many transgender people (both female and male) identify as heterosexual, as a group, they are still categorized under the umbrella of gay or queer, thus, giving rise to the LGBT population (Vitulli, 2010). Though transgender women and drag queens were at the forefront of the Gay Rights Movement of the 1970s and 1980s, unfortunately, they are now relegated to being the silent "T" at the end of the LGB acronym. Transwomen are also marginalized within the LGB community (Bornstien, 1994; Vitulli, 2010).

The LGBT community has been described as racist and exclusionary toward African Americans. Likewise, the African American LGBT community has been described as transphobic and exclusionary toward transgender women (Boykin, 1996; Konsenko, 2011). African American transgender women are rejected from each group and community to which they are affiliated, leaving them doubly oppressed and

searching for not only social justice, but also a sense of acceptance, collective self-esteem, and the ability to self-actualize.

Social acceptance is important to personal and social identity development, positive self-esteem, and quality of life (Cross, 1971; DSMIV-TR, 2000; Maslow, 1954). Maslow suggested that self-esteem and self-actualization were essential to quality of life, and if self-esteem and self-actualization were unattainable, then traumas, depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems were inevitable. Bearing the burden of multiple stigmatized identities, African American transwomen's lives evidence Maslow's theorizing. Stigma, as Goffman's (1963) pioneering work on the subject suggested, is "the process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity", and those who were stigmatized were seen as not "quite human" (p. 4). In the case of African American transwomen, one must question whether there is a normal identity. Many African American transwomen would contend that they are rarely seen as human.

The binaries and polarities of gender almost always are attached to a sense of normalcy which, consequently, sets the stage for gender stigma and gender identity stigma (Bem, 1981). While stigma and transwomen have become recent topics of interest in the research literature, the reality is that African American transwomen are rarely examined in terms gender stigma. Gender identity stigma is still a growing field (Bockting, 2009). This qualitative, phenomenological research study is intended to contribute to that growing field by exploring the impact of stigma in the lives of African American transwomen.

Stigma as a phenomenon has typically been researched, discussed, and described as the negative reactions to members of aberrant or subordinate groups received when they stray from the rigid mores of dominant groups (Katz, 1981). In the discipline of psychology, stigma has also been reduced to mere intergroup conflict and threat (Stagnor & Crandall, 2001). Stagnor and Crandall undertook their study of stigma to explain its origin and development. Though their explanations of the causes of stigma are edifying, they do not consider its impact on the stigmatized. Unfortunately, the practice of legitimizing stigma—directly or indirectly—is a social problem that has been widespread in the discipline of social psychology.

Some groups feel the need to legitimize the often painful and unjust outcomes of stigma. Race—particular Blackness, and one’s proximity to blackness—has long been a source of stigma in the Americas and throughout the world; African Americans have endured centuries of suffering and injustice as a result (Blay, 2013; DuBois, 1903; Painter, 2006, 2010). Various examples of the traumatic stigmatization of blackness were explored in this study. However, it is advantageous to begin by remembering lynching.

Lynching was a deadly practice in America largely rooted in stigma. There are analogous connections to lynching and the current experiences of African Americans. The virulent nature of lynching, and social acceptability of this morbid practice can be compared to the various type of public and private lynching that contemporary African American transwomen endure. Social psychologists Green, Glasser, and Rich

(1998) did a study comparing gay bashing in the 1990s and the lynching from earlier decades to economic decline. Similarly, social psychologists Hovland and Sears (1940) explored the correlation between the lynching of African Americans in the South, the rising prices of cotton, and the threat to Whites as a result.

The social psychologists noted above barely acknowledged that African Americans—human beings—were being murdered. Instead, they appeared to see pernicious race-based stigma and the horror of lynching as little more than interrelated variables. Hovland and Sears is now considered a seminal study. When Hepworth and West (1988) later re-analyzed their work they, too, failed to consider the lynching African Americans as a genocidal practice. Stagnor and Crandall (2000) analyzed Hovland and Sears' work through the lens of intergroup conflict and the cocreation of stigma, similarly ignoring its human toll on an entire race of people. Thus, although these noted psychologists established a social-scientific relationship between stigma and lynching, they gave scant attention to the depth of the effect that trauma, injustice, and centuries of oppression and genocide had on African Americans who comprised the stigmatized group they studied.

The unwillingness by prominent social psychologists to fully address the human consequences of racial stigma and the horror of lynching, as well as legally sanctioned genocidal practices directed against African Americans, highlighted a void in the literature and discipline. The present study helped fill at least one part of this gap by bringing the voices of a particularly stigmatized group from the margins to the center of the discussion. Merging the social justice-oriented perspectives of African

American studies with critical, social justice-oriented social psychology created the possibility that the actual causes and deepest effects of stigma among African Americans might be better understood and more fully appreciated.

The psychologists mentioned above attempted to explain stigma and lynching from a dispassionate, abstract vantage point, but iconic Black feminist journalist and titan of African American studies, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, explored lynching from the perspective of an eyewitness. She dared to tell the world the inhumane nature of lynching, and how the stigma of blackness both wrongly identified African Americans as targets, and enabled the legal system to avoid bringing justice to the murders of African Americans (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Royster, 1996; Wells-Barnett, 1892).

Wells-Barnett not only documented the lynching and lack of remorse from White hate groups and mobs such as the Klu Klux Klan, but documented the violent actions taken to subdue innocent African Americans who were lynched. For example, she wrote how African American were often beaten and dismembered before being lynched. She described how their body parts were preserved in containers and celebrations of these killings were done in the homes of White Americans. Also, jovial White American cheered and posed with the bodies of African Americans and placed those photographs on Christmas cards and other religious items. Wells-Barnett also wrote how the surviving family members of murdered African Americans were forced to watch the torment of their loved ones—including those who were set on fire

and burned alive either before or after lynching (Wells-Barnett, 1892). She insisted that she was shining the light of truth on these wrongs in hopes of saving the lives of future generations of African Americans. Similar to Wells-Barnett's pre-eminent work, this study aimed to shine the light of truth on the traumatic stigmatization that prevented African American transwomen from living quality lives. I have analogized lynching to the violent crimes experienced by African American transwomen because of their torturous, deadly impact.

There is another gap in the literature that this study intended to help fill. Noted psychologist Gregory M. Herek has been rightly praised for his work on sexual identity stigma. He has published widely on the stigma faced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons. Herek has also addressed the violence caused by stigmatizing these three groups (Herek, 1990, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c; Herek & Berrill, 1990; Herek & Berrill, 1992; Herek & Sims, 2008; Franklin & Herek, 1999). Yet Herek and his colleagues neglected to consider both the importance of race and experiences of transgender persons in their analyses of sexual identity stigma. This study intended to address those serious oversights by merging two types of research and documentation: formal social scientific methods and journalistic accounts.

Journalistic Accounts of the Stigma and Violence Faced by African American Transwomen

In the tradition of Wells-Barnett, a number of eyewitness and journalistic accounts of the stigma and violence faced by African Americans exist, including violent assaults on and murders of African American transwomen. For example, in

2008, Duana Johnson became one of the first widely publicized and discussed examples of stigma and violence against African American transwomen (*New York Times*, 2008). Her story is not uncommon to many African American transwomen, past and present. Johnson was a sex worker who was also continually harassed by the police even when she was not engaging in sex work. She had been arrested several times during the day and night simply for walking down the street as a 6'5" darkskinned Black woman wearing high heeled-shoes that made her 3 inches taller, and tight-fitting clothes. Every news media outlet, including the *New York Times*, primarily described her appearance. This was done to likely sensationalize her story, and also covertly continue the stigma and shame associated with being a tall Black woman wearing certain articles of clothing.

Johnson's story became a national headline when two White male police officers arrested her on false charges. They misgendered her while she waited with her hands cuffed behind her back at the police station. She asked the first White male police officer to stop calling her by male pronouns. He became enraged by her belief that she deserved respect, and proceeded to pepper spray her in the face, glove his hand, wrap a set of handcuffs around his fist and beat her in the face. The second White male police officer held her down and laughed during the beating. The first officer had hit her so hard and frequently that he injured his hand and a nurse was called to tend to his wounds. Johnson was on the floor writhing in pain. A Black female nurse entered the room, laughed at Johnson, and stepped over her though she

was clearly in need of emergency care. She began to assist the police officer who wrongly attacked her.

The Black female nurse never treated Johnson. They released Johnson and, fortunately, she sought legal counsel and her attorneys were able to access video footage of the officers wrongfully assaulting her. They also established that she had been arrested on false charges. She won a settlement of \$1.3 million dollars, and both police officers were fired. Sadly, as she was trying to leave town, three unidentified men attacked her in her neighborhood. Johnson died from the attack, but the men who killed her were never caught. News media outlets speculated that her murder was arranged by the guilty police officers because the police took no serious steps to investigate her murder. Before her death, she offered the powerful quote, “I’m a person! A human being! I deserve rights too!” African American transwomen had been assaulted and murdered in this way for decades (Dinno, 2017), but Johnson’s case, as Wells-Barnett might suggest, shown a light on a problem that currently has risen to epidemic proportions. As Dinno, 2017 suggested, Black transwomen have consistently maintained the highest murder rates among transgender individuals.

Yaz'min Sanchez was a sex worker in Fort Meyers, Florida (Associated Press, 2014) who was raped, tied-up, and then burned alive. One of the residents of the neighborhood where she was burned indicated that the Sancez’s screams were so loud that they awakened her from a deep sleep at 2:00 am. The woman lived two blocks away from the scene of the crime. She also indicated that the smell of burning flesh and hair filled the air. Many in the area reported hearing the woman’s screams and

smelling the burning flesh, but no one saw anything. The Latino detective, Jay Rodriguez stated:

We have no indication at this time to say that this was specifically done because it was a male living as a female or anything like that. If you really think about it, a hate crime is killing someone for a specific reason like being black, Hispanic, gay. We're investigating this as we would any other homicide. (Associated Press, 2014).

Rodriguez's denial of the possibility of this case being hate crime is a typical occurrence for Black transwomen. As Wells-Barnett suggested, Black people are rarely, if ever, seen as victims deserving respect and protection (Wells-Barnett, 1892).

African Americans have tended to treat African American transwomen with little regard, even when victimized (Jackson, 2016). Islan Nettles was walking with her girlfriends on a summer's night in New York City's Harlem neighborhood on 135th street between Adam Clayton Powell Blvd. (7th Avenue) and Fredrick Douglas Blvd. (8th Avenue). She was approached by young man who did not know she was transgendered until someone else revealed she was. In a rage, he attacked her, beat her, and stomped her head into the ground until she died.

The Harlem 32nd Precinct Police Station was directly across the street from the attack. The members of the neighborhood who witnessed the crime were mostly African American and made a mockery of the attack. The investigating police officers were also African American, but treated the situation as if it was not important. They

disrespected her body that lay pummeled into the ground. Her transgender girlfriends were equally afraid for their lives (Associated Press, 2013).

Nettles had essentially been lynched as had been 14-year old Emmett Till, when he was accused of flirting with a White woman. After his death, his accuser admitted to lying (Till-Mobly & Benson, 2004). Till's cousin was forced to watch helplessly as young Emmett was ripped from their bed in the middle of the night by two White men who killed him. Likewise, Nettle's girlfriends were equally helpless in that moment. No one came to their defense. Nettles' mother initially misgendered and blamed her son for his death. It took two years before she publicly referred to her child as her daughter, and worked for bringing justice for Islan's death as a Black woman who had been violently killed. The way Nettles' mother treated her only child would have been foreign to Wells-Barnett, who consoled mothers who witnessed their children's murder. In contemporary times, stigma and shame help co-create internalized oppression in the families of African American transgender women, thus causing these situations in which even after the violent death of one's child, there is a need to try to reclaim respectability for oneself and denounce transsexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality (Jackson, 2016; Riggs, 1991).

In April 2016, Shante Thompson and her Black male friend were simply walking down the street in Houston as the couple happily engaged with each other, trying to ignore the group of Black men taunting them (Associated Press, 2016). The group of Black men became enraged that the couple was unmoved by their insults and they attacked them couple. Thompson had been on her cellular phone with her

mother when the group first began to taunt her and her date, and she told her mother she would call her back. Shortly after ending the call, the men began to ambush the couple by throwing objects: sticks, pipes, and a crowbar to the head that ultimately killed Thompson. Her friend, who was able to put up more of a fight, ultimately died from a gunshot wound to the head. After beating the couple, the group of Black men shot them both. When interviewed by the local news station, KTRK TV, Thompson's sister and mother both misgendered her, calling her 'he', 'my brother', and 'my son', and were both unmoved by Thompson's gruesome murder. The Black female interviewer displayed more empathy than they did, and constantly tried to correct their misgendering. In blaming Shante for her death, the Thompson women continued the cycle of oppression, and told the world that this type of lynching, even to their own family, was acceptable. African American transwomen are rarely protected, rarely seen as victims, and rarely seen as deserving a quality life (Mock, 2014). In a forgotten, but important case, African American transwoman, Lucy Hicks Anderson was accused of fraud for living as a woman (*Ventura County Star*, 2015). At 59 years old, Hicks Anderson, a successful businesswoman and philanthropist was convicted of fraud because she both lived as a woman, and because she was receiving her second husband's military benefits. Her first marriage was to an African American man, but ended in divorce. Her second husband, was White, and in the military. The two were caught because Lucy was running a brothel, which her second husband's military colleagues frequented. Due to their sexual encounters, many of the military men became infected with venereal diseases. Hicks Anderson's employees were

forced to be examined by a physician and the examining doctor also required Hicks Anderson to be seen. The doctor not only discovered that her genitalia differed from that of natal females (or cisgender females), he betrayed her confidence by sharing this information about her that came back to the police. At her conviction and sentencing, she declared that she was indeed a woman. However, the judge suggested that she not a woman, but instead she was a problem. Being identified as a problem was partially the stigma of her race, and partially the stigma of her gender. These journalistic accounts of violence and stigma are important because they document similar experiences of many African American transwomen.

What does it mean to be a problem?

Iconic African American studies scholar, father of Black sociology, and cofounder (with Ida B. Wells-Barnett) of the National Association of the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP), W. E. B. DuBois began his seminal work (1903) by exploring what it meant to be Black in America. DuBois' work explored identity development through stigma while attempting to answer the question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" (p. 1). DuBois suggested that Whites of his time continually looked down upon him with the burning gaze of this question in their heads. DuBois maintained that being a problem (i.e., being a Black American) meant that one was consigned to a life of strife. To cope with such a life, DuBois suggested that Black Americans be doubly conscious: constantly aware of the stigma and oppression that shaped their lives, and continually working to overcome the obstacles before them. While African American transwomen are brutally

conscious of the systemic injustices that constitute their oppression, many are unable to overcome the multitude of obstacles that lie before them. Their Blackness has given them the awareness to perceive injustice, as DuBois would suggest. However, their intersectional identity as Black and transfemale makes it unlikely for them to succeed. In many cases, it is unlikely they will survive to old age. Murder, suicide, abuse, violence, discrimination, racism, rape, mental health issues, and physical health issues (e.g., sexually transmitted diseases) pervade the life of strife that African American transwomen endure (Bith-Melander et al., 2010; Mock, 2014; Jackson, 2016). How does it feel to be a problem? The women of this study generously describe this.

Statement of the Problem

African American transwomen are being killed. African transwomen are dying. They are facing an inordinate amount of discrimination. African American transwomen are largely unable to self-actualize and reach their goals or participate in the 'American Dream'. African American transwomen are experiencing abuse and violence from other African Americans, and being exiled from the Black community. African American transwomen are being told that they are not women, and that they cannot use public facilities dedicated to women. They face racism within the larger transgender community, and rejection from the larger LGBT community. The contemporary existence of African American transwomen is in a humanitarian crisis (Clements-Noelle, 2006; Jackson, 2016; Nemoto et al., 2011; Singh & McKleroy).

A study conducted in San Francisco on transwomen by Clements-Noelle et al. (2001) found that of a sample of 392, 62% were depressed, 33% had attempted suicide, 20% had been hospitalized for mental health problems, and 35% were infected with HIV. Though African American transwomen were the smallest racial group in the study, their rates of these incidences across each category were the highest. As Singh and McKleroy (2011) noted, transgender people of color face numerous traumas and social issues. However, African American transwomen reported the highest incidences of traumas and social problems because of their multiple minority status. Jackson (2016) discussed the myriad of social and psychological problems faced by African American transwomen. Jackson expressed the challenges of being a Black transwoman within Black communal contexts, and the difficulties associated in trying to exist among her own racial group and cultural group. The participants of this study support Jackson's claims, as well as the problems stated above, in their life histories given in Chapter 4.

Purpose of the Study

The stigmas associated with African American transwomen's intersectional identities accumulate in ways that maintain their oppression that is not rooted simply in the systemic persecution of their race, nor in the patriarchal despotism over female gender identity. Instead, it is entrenched in a ghastly combination of the two and is often characterized by violence. Thus, one of the primary purposes of this study was to assist in eradicating the extreme violence that African American transwomen face from early childhood on. As already noted, African American transwomen are being

killed. African American transwomen constitute the most homicides among all transgender people (Associated Press, 2017). African Americans inflict inordinate amounts of violence of various kinds on African American transwomen (Jackson, 2016; Riggs, 1991). African American transwomen have been killed mainly by African American male acquaintances (Associated Press, 2017; Jackson 2016).

The Movement for Black Lives (Lebron, 2017), also known as Black Lives Matter (#BlackLivesMatter) Movement, was founded in the spirit of the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements. It began because of the many unjust killings of African Americans—usually males—by law enforcement and White Americans, without their families receiving any justice. The Black community has historically rallied around causes concerning African American heterosexual men (Collins, 2004), but have tended to ignore issues facing Black women and LGBT persons—especially African American transwomen—as this study suggested.

True to history, the focus of the contemporary Movement for Black Lives centers on the lives of identified heterosexual, cisgender, males. This same group commits the most violence against African American transgender women (Jackson, 2016; Mock, 2017). If African Americans are truly interested in liberation and garnering social equality, there is a need for them to address the gender and gender identity oppression that they impose, and/or are with which they are complicit. The purpose of this study was to challenge the transphobia in the Black community and usher in a safer existence for African American transwomen among their racial group.

The purpose of this study was also to forge new trajectories for how African American transwomen are being researched and discussed in the mainstream. This study boldly asserted that African American transwomen are indeed women, and thus should be examined from a Black feminist perspective as they personify the theory of intersectionality. African American transwomen often share more in common with their African American trans-sisters than they do with transgender of other races (Brooks, 2017). This sought to assist in the study and dialogue about those connections. This is a Black feminist, social justice, and social psychological exploration of women who are transgender.

Research Questions

The present study explored four general questions. They were also addressed through an intersectionality methodology that was discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

The questions are:

Q1: How does stigma impact the lives of African American transwomen?

Q2: How do African American transwomen conceptualize their racial identity, and how does their transgender identity intersect with the African American community?

Q3: Are African American transwomen more connected to their identity as Black women or to their identity as transgender? Does feminist identity impact their connection?

Q4: Are African American transwomen currently able to self-actualize, reach their goals, and live healthy lives?

These questions are also presented in Chapters 3 and 5. Chapter 5 discussed the findings surrounding these questions.

Definition of Terms and Language

Presented here are terms specific to this study and in particular to African American transwomen. The term *trans-ebonics* will be used to characterize the language of African American transwomen. Ebonics, a term coined by noted Black psychologist, Robert L. Williams (1973), was conceptualized as Black English to explain the patterns, devices, and meanings of the then largely private language of African Americans. Williams explained how African American used the verb 'to be', and various other words and word phrases specific to the communication styles of many African Americans. Trans-ebonics simply builds from Williams' work, and suggests that African American transwomen speak in ebonics, in addition to creating a vocabulary specific to their experience as Black transwomen. This research also aimed at presenting the participants in their own words and style of speaking. In Chapter 4, the women are very graphic, and often use very profane language. They also are quite descriptive of the traumas they have faced, and they say some very politically incorrect things. This sentence serves as a disclaimer for all trigger warnings because this study is about the lives and experience of stigma among African American transwomen.

Definitions of Terms

African American/Black: In this dissertation the two terms are used interchangeably. Of African Descent is also used interchangeably with these two terms.

African American/Black Psychology: Belgrave and Allison (2013) identified African American Psychology/Black Psychology/Afrocentric Psychology as the subdiscipline of psychology that focuses on experiences that shape the psyche of those individuals of African Descent throughout the African Diaspora, whether historical or contemporary. Founded in the late 1960s by the Association of Black Psychologists, it was considered a response to racism in the United States and within the discipline of psychology. Many notable scholars helped define Black psychology. Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark are perhaps the best known, historically significant Black psychologists, because of their notable studies that helped end segregation. Dr. Francis C. Sumner is honored as the father of Black psychology because he is the first African American to obtain a doctorate in Psychology; Dr. Joseph White is honored as the founder of the Association of Black Psychologist. Black psychology can be seen as the merger of African American studies and psychology. It can also be seen as social justice psychology.

Gender Queer: A contemporary term used to mean someone maintains ambiguous gender. This term is synonymous with gender non-conforming, and nonbinary.

Transwoman/Transwomen: In this study, transwoman is used interchangeably with the terms transgender woman, transsexual woman, and transfemale/transfeminine. Many women in the study identify as transsexual without having had vagioplasty because they feel they have medically transitioned to a level of having changed their sex.

Definition of Trans-Ebonics Terms

Bitch: A term that the women in this study use as both an endearment and an insult. This term appears frequently.

Fem Queen: Some use this term to mean transwomen; some transwomen find it politically incorrect, while others think it is acceptable.

Fierce: Used to describe something of great magnitude.

Fish: Used as both a term of endearment and an insult. This term is usually used to describe a cisgender or natal female.

FFS/Facial Feminization Surgery: Describes gender affirming plastic surgeries.

Girl: A term of endearment, and many of the women use this term frequently in their speech.

Gag/Gagging: A term to describe shock or surprise.

Hair Unit: This term is used to describe women's hair because the term wig is seen by some as offensive; so hair unit is used in its place. Hair unit is also synonymous with the term weave. Hair is an important topic among African American women.

Judy: A best friend or good friend.

Miss Thing: A “girlfriend” or “her/she”.

Mones/Hormones: Hormone replacement therapy.

N-Word: This a very controversial word that is inappropriate to use, and I do not endorse the use of this word in speech. However, it is presented as the women use the term. At times they said 'nigger', and at other points they said 'nigga'. Thus, I presented the inflection used at the moment.

Read: Used to mean insulting someone, or arguing with someone (i.e., 'reading' or read session').

Shade: Something bad or something done clandestinely: 'threw shade', 'she's shady', or 'it was so much shade how they did her'.

Stealth: Applies to a transwoman who keeps her transgender identity secret from everyone. Can also be used to describe a transwoman who practices the 'don't ask, don't tell rule', meaning she will share that information, but only selectively.

Tea: Means 'the truth', 'to talk', 'my secret', 'to sit and discuss or gossip'.

The Streets/The Track: Street work prostitution.

Trade: Describes male sex partners or clients in sex work. This term is often used the same way as a 'John' who can be paying or non-paying.

Tranny: Politically incorrect term used by some of the women to mean transwoman.

Ovah: This term is used to mean opulent or of highest praise. This term is in opposition to “over”.

Trans-ebonics is also partly inspired by the iconic African American studies and early Black feminist scholar/anthropologist/ folklorist Zora Neale Hurston's (1981) work on African Americans of the South and their narratives as the exenslaved. Hurston believed in displaying the local color of African Americans. She further believed that their colloquialism and elocution were symbols of their genius and creativity. The publishing of *The Sanctified Church* happened decades after it had been written, yet there were connections to the language patterns of African Americans speaking in the early 20th century and those who read it in 1981.

My exploration of trans-ebonics and the cultural language of Black transwomen was also inspired by noted Black psychologist Geneva Smitherman's (1977) work that expanded on Williams' work on Black language. Smitherman suggested that Black women are both creators and conservers of language, and evidence of this can be seen in Black transwomen. The language that Black transwomen were once afraid to use publicly is now very common in the media (Mock, 2017). *Paris is Burning* (Livingston, 1988) is a documentary that follows a group of mostly Black transgender women, drag queens, and effeminate gay men who first identified that Black feminine queer individuals spoke their own language.

To explore the impact of stigma on the lives of African American transwomen, the language of their identity and the language they use to articulate their life histories must also be considered. Black feminist scholar Melvina Young (1993) explored the Works Progress Administration's *Federal Writers Project Slave Narratives* in search of the true voice of ex-enslaved Africans. She discovered that

White interviewers were not only asking offensive questions, but were also coloring the responses of the ex-enslaved Africans to make them seem like those interviewed enjoyed slavery. Young suggested that when the real voices of the ex-enslaved Africans (African Americans) are heard, the truth of how they suffered could be fully recognized. This dissertation allowed its African American participants to tell their stigma-laden life histories in their own language, intimately and explicitly.

Chapter 2 presented the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks of this study. The methodology of the study was described in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, the participants' narratives were presented. In Chapter 5, the study's findings were discussed. Reflections and conclusions were given in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2 EXPLORING RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS AS CO-CREATORS OF STIGMA

“I wanted to tell the story of Blackness before it was seen as beautiful...”
—Toni Morrison (Morrison, 2009, p xi)

“It is hereby assumed that race consciousness and racial identification are indicative of particularized self consciousness.”—Kenneth & Mamie Clark (Clark & Clark, 1947, p. 594)

“I use the term ‘feminist’ here to capture the emancipatory vision and acts of resistance among a diverse group of African American women who attempt in their writings to articulate their understanding of the complex nature of black womanhood, the interlocking nature of the oppressions black women suffer, and the necessity of sustained struggle in their quest for self definition, the liberation of black people, and gender equality.”
—Beverly Guy-Sheftall (Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. xiv)

“They have no memory of days when black females could not rent rooms or flats here because white folks saw us all, no matter our class, as prostitutes—as bad news. Poverty in the white mind is always primarily black.”—bell hooks (hooks, 2000, p. 4)

“It is my purpose here to discuss how stigma affects present-day Americans and to feature those who are most frequently the targets of stigma. This book is dedicated to those most despised and driven to their deaths by stigma.”—Gerhard Falk (Falk, 2001, p. 9)

Race

To explore adequately the impact of stigma on the lives of African American transwomen, it is important to examine first their race, and the historical impact of racism on the lives of African Americans that serves as the impetus for contemporary stigmatization of African Americans of all genders (DeGruy, 2005; Quinn, 2006). This chapter investigated the nature of stigma as it is co-created by racism (race), sexism/transphobia (gender), and classism or class dominance (class). Literatures and theoretical frameworks pertinent to the present study were examined in this chapter. This social justice oriented, social psychological study evolved from a Black feminist perspective (Collins, 1991) and, as such, sought to eviscerate the current system of oppression that plagues the lives of African Americans—particularly, African American women. The violence that African American transwomen face is a result of their stigmatized intersectional identities (Jackson, 2016) and, in many ways, is a vestige of slavery and its brutal chattel system that has caused what Black psychologist Joy Degruy (2005) termed as *post-traumatic slave syndrome* in African Americans. African American transwomen in this study report receiving negative and violent treatment from other African Americans. The beatings, abuse, and assaults

they describe by both family members and community member are reminiscent of slave beatings that enslaved Africans described. In her eminent slave narrative text, *The Sanctified Church*, Hurston (1981), allowed ex-enslaved African to describe slave conditions, and the types of beatings they endured. In creating slavery, the United States government and Whites created an institution that still maintains its current stigma and social hierarchical dominance (LeBron, 2017; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Institutionalized racism in America is an institution that was created primarily by the enslavement of African Americans (Collins, 1991; DeGruy, 2005; West, 1993). The brutality of slavery and the subsequent disenfranchisement from Jim Crow segregation both substantiate the experiences of African Americans with stigma and oppression (Franklin, 1947; hooks, 2001; West, 1993). Eminent historian and iconic African American studies scholar, John Hope Franklin (1947), explored the origins of African Americans in Africa and in America. Franklin detailed the transAtlantic slave trade, and the growth of slavery within the United States. Franklin maintained that by 1790 there were already 700,000 enslaved Africans in the United States; by 1830, that number was more than two million.

The Southeastern states held the highest concentration of enslaved Africans. By the Civil War, enslaved Africans numbered almost four million. The treatment of enslaved Africans was utterly dehumanizing. Removing all humanity was both the foundation and the directive for the institution's success and later become the basis for almost another century of discrimination and stigma based on race. According to

Franklin (1947), a series of laws called *Black Codes* dictated the treatment of enslaved Africans. Franklin stated:

The point of view was that slaves were not persons but property; and laws should protect the ownership of such property, should protect the whites against any dangers there were likely to arise from the presence of large numbers of Negroes, and should maintain a position of due subordination on the part of the slaves in order that the optimum of discipline and work could be achieved (p.197). The ownership of property was generally forbidden, though some states permitted slaves to own certain types of personal property. A slave could not strike a white person, even in self-defense; but the killing of a slave however malicious, was rarely regarded as murder. The rape of a female slave was regarded as a crime only because it involved trespassing on and destroying the property of another White person (p. 188)

Similar to their enslaved ancestors, African American transwomen are frequently assaulted sexually, yet the sex crimes committed against them are seldom prosecuted, as the women of this study indicate. African American women in general rarely receive justice after experiencing sex crimes (Collins, 2004; Harris-Perry, 2012), and African Americans in general infrequently receive justice after experiencing multiple racist acts of violence (LeBron, 2017).

African Americans have consistently fought for their liberation. Similarly, the transgender community is currently in a state of fighting for its freedom, and African American transwomen are on the frontlines of the movement (Mock, 2014). During slavery, there were several slave revolts (Franklin, 1947; Hartman, 2007). With the beginning of each new slave insurrection (e.g., Denmark Vesey's revolt of 1822; Nat Turner's revolt of 1831) the *Black Codes* became more draconian (Franklin, 1947). There were four crimes that were considered capital offenses, and required the

extreme punishments, including the death penalty: conspiracy to lead a slave insurrection, arson, assaulting a white man, and raping a white woman (Franklin, 1947; White, 1999). The death penalty, however, was rarely enforced because the life of an enslaved African was very valuable—not because they were viewed as human, but because of the free labor they could produce only while living.

Following slavery, the enforcement of the death penalty changed dramatically. African Americans were not only systematically, routinely, and unfairly killed apart from the justice system, they were also more frequently sentenced to death within it (Brooten, 2010; Franklin, 1947; Haney, 2005). Social psychologist Craig Haney (2005) maintained that “throughout the history of American criminal justice, African Americans have received death sentences disproportionate to their numbers in the general population” (p. 193). African American transwomen, and African Americans in general, are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system (LeBron, 2017). Further, the *Black Codes* that Franklin described still inform the judicial punishments imposed on African Americans. Thus, this chapter revisited the historical experience of racism, stigma, and oppression to acknowledge that systemic change and equality are long overdue.

Plantation existence in America, like the institution of slavery itself, helped produce internalized racism and maladaptive patterns in African Americans that negatively impacted both their intragroup relations and collective psyche (Berlin, 2003; De Gruy, 2005; Franklin, 1947). De Gruy (2005) suggested that every social ill faced by contemporary African Americans can be linked to slavery. In her theorizing

about post-traumatic slave syndrome, she suggested that the violence and disenfranchisement that African Americans faced in slavery are recreated in the social dynamics seen today among African Americans, as well as among their relations with various other racial and ethnic groups who are often placed above them in various social hierarchies.

The value and preference of 'light skin' as opposed to dark skin, or colorism (Blay, 2013; Cross, 1971), began in slavery. Colorism is a dominant factor in stigma (Jones & Brown, 2016). As Jones and Brown suggested, colorism is what creates a caste system among racial and ethnic minority groups, as well as within African American communities. One's proximity to blackness (or darkness) seems to determine one's social position and treatment. Thus, to appear physically White, or to be assimilated to whiteness, distances one from various social oppressions (McIntosh, 1988). The African American transwomen in this study clearly articulate how their skin color or complexion also determines the amount of stigma they receive, and their social mobility.

Franklin (1947) detailed how enslaved Africans began to arrange themselves in a hierarchy based upon the situations of their enslavement and their skin color. Enslaved Africans who labored in the home of the master were seen as better than those who labored outdoors in the fields. Africans who had been products of interracial rape and breeding who possessed more European features were seen as better than those who possessed predominantly African features. This process of social categorization subsequently led to the enslaved Africans performing the

oppressions that were forced upon them. Again, this is what DeGruy (2005) identified as post-traumatic slave syndrome. In other words, the omnipresent trauma of slavery continually manifesting in the lives of Black Americans. The oppressions that contemporary African American transwomen in this study experience—from both ingroup and outgroup members—verify the historical connections that characterize contemporary stigma.

Social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) maintained that intergroup hierarchies are sustained as a result of hierarchy-enhancing ideologies (such as racism or sexism) in order to continue group-based inequality. Therefore, the hierarchies initially created by White racism in the institution of slavery have permeated the group relations of African Americans and therefore continue an ongoing cycle of stigma and oppression that manifests itself in multiple ways: sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, etc. Scholars and activists from various disciplines have observed this cycle of oppression that began as the offspring of White racism and chattel slavery (Collins, 1991; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Harris-Perry, 2012; hooks, 1981; Riggs, 1991; West, 1993).

For example, West (1993) argued that Black sexuality was a main ingredient in White racism because sexuality is the part of African American life where both Black bodies and minds could be controlled. Therefore, if the oppression of White racism could train Blacks to hate every part of themselves, including their sexualities and differing gender and sexual identities, then slavery and other forms of systemic oppression would be successful long after equality laws were enacted. Blacks would

not only abhor themselves individually, but also maintain conflict and oppression among their own racial in-group (DeGruy, 2005; Harris-Perry, 2012). West (1993) and Harris-Perry (2012) argued that the myths of Black sexuality created by White racism (e.g., Jezebel (the seductive temptress), Sapphire (the evil, manipulative bitch), or Aunt Jemima (the sexless, long-suffering nurturer)) offered dehumanizing stereotypes which contemporary African Americans have consistently tried to escape. These caricature roles are also condemned and rejected when seen in members of their communities who in any way mimic such stereotypes of Blackness and Black sexuality. Schmader and Lickel (2006) studied emotional responses to stigma, and suggested that ingroup members become angry and ashamed of group members who confirm negative stereotypes.

The Black transwomen in this study suggested that these myths and personas also characterize their experience. For example, the persona and descriptor of the Jezebel is an identity concept often placed upon them. They suggested that they are consistently considered as sex objects. Some participants were disappointed by this idea, and others were pleased to be seen as sex objects because it translated into being desired. Riggs (1991) suggested that being seen as a sexual being was a reclaiming of power for gender and sexual minorities who were otherwise ostracized. There have been brief periods in history where African American individuality and sexuality were celebrated. The most well-known period for this was the Harlem Renaissance. As Cross (1971) and Belgrave and Allison (2013) posited, the Harlem Renaissance and its figures (Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, W.E.B. DuBois, Nella Larson,

to name a few), opened the door for contemporary exploration of blackness and Black identities.

The Harlem Renaissance began several decades after a brief period of equality known as Reconstruction (1865-1880). Reconstruction, like the Harlem Renaissance, was a time of reclaiming power for African Americans (Du Bois, 1935). However, by 1880 this time of equality was banished, segregation became law, and states began to move toward Jim Crow—which became the new *Black Codes* from roughly 1876-1965. In 1896, the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* reached the U. S. Supreme Court. Homer Plessy was a mixed race man who looked White, but was classified as Black because he had one Black great-grandmother. This qualified him for the “one drop of Black blood rule” (Blay, 2013, p. 3). The *Plessy* case was both orchestrated and layered. The levels of Plessy’s claims changed as the case move forward through appeals. On one level, Plessy had originally argued that, as an octoroon (a person who was 1/8th Black), his skin was White and he should have the rights of Whites. However, he and the non-light skin Blacks who helped orchestrate the case to obtain equal rights, realized that that argument would only bring equal treatment to those Blacks who appear White. When the case reached the Supreme Court, Plessy argued that segregation and unfair accommodations toward Blacks of all shades were unconstitutional and violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Plessy lost. Justice John Harlan’s wrote that as long as the law was symmetrical, and accommodations were equal, then being separated or segregated was legally acceptable (Blay, 2013; DuBois, 1935; DeGruy, 2007). This case is important not only because it illustrates a

cause of contemporary social problems, but because the ongoing roles of race, racial identity, and stigma are important to this study and connect to how contemporary African American transwomen conceive their identities. As Clark and Clark (1947) indicated, racial identity informs self-concept and self-consciousness.

According to Du Bois (1935), overturning Reconstruction was an effort to reduce Black labor and Black wages as much as possible in order to create unlimited exploitation by building a new system of capitalism in which African Americans were still subservient and dependent upon Whites. Jim Crow laws were not only aimed at creating the foundation for subservient capitalism for African Americans, but were also done to maintain the inhumanity and power structure created in slavery (Du Bois, 1935; Franklin 1947). As social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) showed, Jim Crow laws, by being racially discriminatory, used stigma and racism to maintain group-based and intergroup conflict.

The atrocities faced by African Americans during slavery and Jim Crow were matched by the genocide they experienced during the Eugenics Movement of the late 1800's and extending well into the Twentieth Century (Corltette, 2009; Guthrie, 1976; McWorter, 2010). The Eugenics Movement was aimed at 'race betterment' and the racial superiority of the white race through the eradication of the black race (Guthrie, 1976). Sir Francis Galton, regarded by some as the father of scientific psychology, coined the term eugenics in 1883. The movement was then led by noted psychologist G. Stanley Hall, who also served as the first president of the American Psychological Association (Guthrie, 1976). Hall, like other prominent proponents of

eugenics at the time (including Adolf Hitler, Theodore Roosevelt, and Andrew Carnegie), endorsed purification of the White race, and extermination of the Black race through a series of reproductive sterilization experiments (Corlette, 2009; Guthrie, 1976; McWorter, 2010).

Eugenics is important to mention in this history of systemic racial oppression because eugenics studies, practices, and experiments were often supported by the discipline of psychology. For example, in California, the Stanford-Binet intelligence test—created by psychologist Alfred Binet and modified by psychologist Lewis Terman of Stanford University—was primarily used by eugenics boards to determine whether or not an individual was mentally sound. This boards condoned more than 6,000 involuntary sterilizations of African Americans (Guthrie, 1976, McWorter, 2010). As noted Black psychologist Robert Guthrie (1976) indicated, the history of racism in psychology is long, and the effects of racist psychological practices are ever-present. Slavery, Jim Crow, and the Eugenics Movement all worked in concert to maintain socio-psychological oppressions and stigmas against African Americans.

In contrast to the long history of racist psychologists and racist psychological research, eminent psychologists Kenneth B. Clark and Mamie Phillips Clark's doll study (1939/1947) was very influential in the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), in which the U. S. Supreme Court found segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional. This decision helped launch the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Belgrave & Allison, 2013; Guthrie, 1976). The Clarks found that the racist stigma associated with blackness forced Black children to internalize

the hate and oppression of racism, and generally choose whiteness and white dolls over blackness and black dolls.

In the aftermath of *Brown*, however, the Civil Rights Movement faced many challenges. Some were internal. For example, because many leaders in Black churches spearheaded the movement, African American LGBT people were largely excluded from participation (Byrd, 2001). At the same time (i.e., the late 1960s), the Black Power Movement, and the Association for Black Psychologists were both founded in California (Belgrave & Allison, 2013). During this period, slogans for Black beauty, Black power, and Black racial acceptance became popular, and were also the theme of the Association of Black Psychologists (Belgrave & Allison, 2013; Cross, 1971). Distinguished Black psychologist William E. Cross began theorizing on Black racial identity with his nigrescence model (1971).

Cross's nigrescence model initially explored the experience of 'becoming Black' or discovering one's blackness. His 1991 version of the earlier model updated the language and some of his initial thoughts on the progress of becoming Black (Belgrave & Allison, 2013). Cross's work was the outgrowth of the Black is Beautiful and Black Power Movements, and his inquiry into his racial identity formation (Cross, 1971). Some of his initial theorizing romanticized certain ideals of blackness, and centralized blackness as a male experience.

Excluding Black women was common during this period of Black enlightenment, which is what inspired Nobel Laureate and African American studies

icon, Toni Morrison, to suggest there was a need to tell the real and often painful stories of blackness that transpired before blackness was seen as beautiful (Morrison, 2009). This dissertation explored both the positive and negative examples and experiences of blackness, because stigmatization grows from negative affiliations of one's identity and may be cured by combating negative stigmas with positive affirmation. Cross's model was important because it was one of the first models to explore Black racial identity. Cross's model was also studied because of its scientific rigor, which led to an attempt to validate and operationalize the model as a scale by Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, and Smith (2002). Various other contemporary psychologists employed and adapted variations of Cross's model (Jones & Brown, 2016; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1997; Settles & Cole, 2016). Future directions of this present research should explore race, gender, and feminism as part of the racial identity process in ways similar to Settles and Cole (2016), but include African American transwomen.

For the purpose of this study, Cross' model will be referred to as the Black racial identity model and not as nigrescence. Black racial identity model is here used because it is a more fitting title for this contemporary study. Cross' connection to "nigrescence" was also connected to term Negro, which is not used to describe Blacks or African Americans anymore. Cross's model is a guiding theoretical framework for this study. To evaluate the impact of stigma in the lives of African American transwomen, it is imperative to consider how they see their blackness, how they see their racial identity intersecting with their gender identity, and the stigmas associated

with both. Cross's model of Black racial identity is also employed in this study to explore the relationship of Black communal connection (or ingroup relationship), and the women's ability to combat stigma, as well as their ability to self-actualize (Maslow, 1954).

The Black racial identity model has five stages:

Stage 1: Pre-Encounter refers to a Black person being unaware of her Blackness, either consciously or subconsciously. A person can also inhabit this stage if they are aware of their blackness, but either try to avoid it because of the social stigmas associated with it. A person can likewise be ambivalent toward their Black racial identity if concealing their racial identity is possible. The pre-encounter stage also describes those who avoid their Blackness as a political choice (Cross, 1971/1991; Jones & Brown, 2016). Those African Americans who are at this stage are usually ambivalent toward racism and antiBlack discrimination, or deny that these exist. A few participants in the study expressed maintaining this stage as a coping mechanism to stigma.

Stage 2: Encounter/Dissonance refers to a person encountering their blackness or episodes of meeting their blackness in dramatic ways. The 1971 study used to term 'encounter' and the 1991 revision used both encounter and dissonance. This study used the term encounter because it more appropriately described the (re)discovery of one's blackness. The encounter stage for some African Americans is a stage that is returned to many times throughout their

lives because of new experience with racist episodes. Many of the women in this study indicated being reminded of their blackness—and thus their social position—during racist events in their lives.

Stage 3: Immersion/Emersion refers to a person who becomes immersed in their Black racial identity, and who simultaneously rejects multiculturalism, or rejects involvement in other cultures. The women of this study who occupy this stage were most aware of, and critical of, stigma, racism, discrimination, and other oppressions faced by African American transwomen.

Stage 4: Internalization refers to a person whose Black racial identity is fully incorporated into personal and social identities (Jones & Brown, 2017).

Stage 5: Internalization/Commitment refers to a person whose Black racial identity is full incorporated and, additionally, Cross suggested that they are also open to multiculturalism, and see it as a viable option for social harmony. This original study was not interested in multiculturalism, but by 1991, many Americans were trying to forget America's racist past, and encourage intergroup unity. The position of this research is that coexisting with other cultures is ideal (Belgrave & Allison). To diminish, limit, or assimilate one's blackness is not ideal because it encourages erasing blackness (Jones & Brown, 2016).

Jones and Brown (2016) explored expanding narratives on blackness among diverse Black (meaning those from across the African Diaspora) using Cross' model of Black racial identity. Overwhelmingly, they discovered that positive Black communal connections influenced positive Black racial identity perception, and the ability to positively cope with stigma and racism. In the present study, many of the participants maintained positive Black identity perception, while simultaneously facing ingroup bias and oppression, which does not reflect Jones' and Brown's experience. However, none of the participants in their study identified as transgender women, and it is important to acknowledge the gender identity of transfemale. Black transwomen are often exiled from their kin, as Riggs (1991) suggested, and must acquire and maintain positive Black racial identity without the benefit of communal support.

In order to study the impact of stigma in the lives of African American transwomen, it was important to consider the legacy and history of Black racial oppression, and how stigma interacts with and shapes one's personal and social identities (Jones & Brown, 2016). Moreover, scholars identified racial stigma and its impact on African Americans socially and psychologically. The next section evaluates the intersecting oppressions of their race and gender.

Gender

Gender refers broadly to Black transwomen's gender and sexual identity experience, and it also describes the multiple personal, social, and political identity relationships that work in constellation to shape their narratives, identities, and realities. Black feminist thought (Collins, 1991) serves as a guiding perspective for this phenomenological study, as does intersectionality (Combahee River Collective, 1982; Crenshaw, 1993). Both provide the conceptual framework used to explain the lives of Black transwomen. As a study of Black transwomen, however, it is important to also identify the limitations and exclusions of the transgender community as well as the current state of transgender studies as a discipline.

Distinguished sociologist and Black feminist scholar, Patricia Hill Collins, launched the study of Black feminist thought in her now seminal text (Collins, 1990). Although she coined the term, several early Black feminists paved the way for contemporary Black feminism. Some of those iconic Black feminists were Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Maria Stewart, Anna Julia Cooper, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Church-Terrell, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Fanny Lou Hamer, and Shirley Chisholm (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982). The identities and contributions of many of these pioneering Black feminists have been lost in the history of Black feminist thought. It is important to reclaim their contributions and cite them in ongoing Black feminist research.

Collins explained Black feminist thought as having four components. First, she maintained that Black feminist thought employed a “dialectical relationship” (p.

22) linking their oppression and activism. Collins used dialectical to mean a relationship between two things that are both opposed and opposite. This dialectical relationship is evident in Black women's continued dedication to activism and community. Many of the Black women who participated in this study show this dialectical relationship.

Collins further identified the link between experience and ideas as the second tenant of Black feminist thought: "On the one hand, all African American women face similar challenges the result from living in a society that historically and routinely derogates women of African descent" (p. 25). Her thought that all African American women face similar challenges is a bedrock of this research. African American transwomen's experiences are more closely related to cisgender Black women than to transwomen of other races. The women of this study express this finding as well. Collins realized that the idea (or theoretical framing) of feminism was incomplete without the lived experiences of oppression.

Her third tenant was the linkage to Black women's experiences as a heterogeneous collective. Although Black women have similar experiences, they are not homogenous and there is room for variation. African American transwomen fit into this collective, and expand its knowledge on diverse womanhood. Collins indicated that the fourth tenant was surrounding the necessary use of knowledge by Black women intellectuals. She suggested that in building from these four pillars, a critical social theory that is activist and social justice oriented would emerge to dismantle systemic oppression.

Thus, Black feminist thought is a call to action. It is a theoretical framing that seeks to liberate not only Black women, but all gender and sexual minorities of color whose proximity to blackness renders them oppressed. Collins' fourth tenant of the necessary use of work by Black women scholars in research was also reflected in this dissertation and truly cemented this social psychological study as a Black feminist study.

Some of Collins' contemporaries and colleagues are also trailblazing Black feminists who helped set the tone for the current successful state of Black feminist thought and activism. Some of those luminaries are Beverly Guy-Sheftall, bell hooks, Johnetta Cole, Bonnie Thornton Dill, Barbara Smith, Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, Stanlie James, Abena P. Busia, Elaine Brown, Michele Wallace, Alice Walker, Barbara Ransby, and Kimberle Williams Crenshaw. These Black women and Black feminist scholars have helped transform the Black psyche, and improve the trajectories of Black life. Black feminism is the vehicle for liberating the future (Collins, 1991; Collins, 2004; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; James & Busia, 1993).

When thinking of liberation for the future, I envision eradicating the system of oppression, which is constructed like a spider web that binds those who occupy multiple oppressed, interlocking identities while freeing those with dominant, privileged identities as Crenshaw would suggest (Crenshaw, 1993). Crenshaw saw this matrix of oppression for those who maintain multiple stigmatized and oppressed identities in society being in the legal system, the work force, and everywhere they turned. Her theorizing grew out of defending the need for affirmative action in

employment for Black women who were being excluded from opportunities because diversity inclusion, or affirmative action, was seen as hiring White women as the predominant gender minority and Black men as the Black racial minority. This was tantamount to saying being a woman meant only whiteness, or blackness meant only male (Hull, Scott & Smith, 1982). Companies asserted that it was unfair to give Black women special consideration for employment because (White) women and Blacks (men) were successfully fulfilling affirmative action; it would be unfair to try to level the playing field to give Black women the same opportunity. What those employers could not see were Black women's intersectional oppressions that prevented them from self-actualizing, and living lives comparable to women who were White, and alongside their Black male counterparts (Crenshaw, 1993; 2015). Crenshaw then illuminated all the ways that Black women in particular faced multiple oppressions in society, and what constituted those oppressed and stigmatized identities.

Although Crenshaw, used the term *intersectionality*, it was the Combahee River Collective (1982) who first theorized the intersections of multiple oppressed identities. The collective was a Black feminist lesbian organization of scholars and activists who boldly stated in their manifesto that, "We find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously" (p. 16). Their manifesto was in reaction to White feminists who were anti-male, faced fewer oppressions in society, and suggested that Combahees needed to focus on feminism, not racial causes. As the Combahees asserted, it was impossible for them to separate their identities. Though they were

lesbian, they were not anti-male in terms of working toward liberation. The Combahee River Collective was important to the theory of intersectionality not simply because they began the first thinking about it, but also because, as Black Lesbians, they exemplify diversity in Black womanhood and have paved the way for Black transwomen's inclusion as women into Black feminist studies (Brooks, 2017; Moore, 2012). The Black transwomen of this study personify intersectionality because they maintain multiple oppressed personal and social identities.

Intersectionality has become popular in the media and across various interdisciplinary literatures. In some cases, intersectionality is being used in ways that it was not intended (Crenshaw, 2015). For example, intersectionality is not a theoretical framework about the multiplicity of identities. Instead, it is a theoretical and applied perspective that is based on one's oppressed identities that are visible to, stigmatized by, and rejected by a White male-dominated, racist, patriarchal, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and heteronormative society (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Collins, 2015). The African American transwomen participants are not simply maintaining multiple identities (sister, student, activist, young), they are maintaining multiple oppressed and stigmatized identities (Black, transgender, female, poor, etc.).

Intersectionality has frequently been used across disciplines. Various contemporary Black feminist scholars are exploring Black women in diverse ways using intersectionality as a lens (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Baily, 2015; Brooks, 2017; Chatelain & Kaavya, 2015). Brooks (2017) explored the connections between Black lesbian and transwomen's identities and their desire to stay 'in the hood'. The women

interviewed for this study also demonstrated these identity connections, and this related to Cross' (1971/1991) immersion/emersion and internalization stages. Psychology has made advancements in employing intersectionality as an 'acceptable' theoretical framework (Cole, 2009). In her important article for the *American Psychologist*, Black feminist and social psychologist, Elizabeth Cole, explained the importance of intersectionality as a framework for examining systemic societal oppression and how psychologists could increase social equality by appropriately utilizing this framework. Various other feminist psychologists have also employed intersectionality as a framework (Hurtado, 1996; Hyde, 2014; Mama, 1995; Shields, 2008; White, 2008).

Black feminist social psychologist Aaronette White offered one of the first empirical studies on Black male feminists. One of the important aspects of her study is that she included a transgender male participant who articulated the oppressions that Black transgender men and women face. White's (2008) text is of particular interest because its use of intersectionality, critical psychology, and narrative methodology helped inspire this research. Unlike White's work, however, the present study includes extensive portions of the participants' responses in order to understand more fully their perspectives. Tragically, in 2012, as she was addressing the challenge of how to best give full voice and perspective to the participants in her research, she suddenly died. This acknowledgment of her passing in the text, and how she was ideologically connected to the work is what Collins (1991) would consider a necessary Black feminist act.

The women in this study were interviewed and presented in a life-history narrative perspective, which allowed them to express themselves fully. This allowed the reader to evaluate fully the impact of social stigmas on their race, gender, and class identities. Embodiment narrative (Searle-White & Crozier, 2011) seeks to express more deeply the narrative of the person studied, or the situation studied. The researchers specifically explored embodiment and narrative as a process of improving teaching, and suggested that students learn more when professors embody the narrative (i.e., teaching from personal, social, or political identity narratives) and/or allow students to embody their full narrative alongside the learning experience. There are fewer examples of embodiment narrative in social scientific empirical research literatures because of its generally lengthy format. However, this research posits that more of the participants' thoughts on oppression are beneficial to the overall study and eradication of oppression. Moreover, this is part of the social science rigor of an intersectionality and Black feminist study (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 2015).

Embodiment narrative can be seen in the important work of distinguished transgender advocate and intersectional feminist journalist Janet Mock (2014 & 2017). Mock's Black feminist-oriented memoirs have opened the possibility for many Black transwomen, such as those in the present study, and for multitudes more. I consider Mock's trailblazing work is in the vein of Sojourner Truth, Maya Angelou, and Audre Lord, who all gave important witness to the experiences of Black womanhood. Many of the women in this study speak of Mock as an inspiration. Similarly, model and entertainer Dominique Jackson's (2016) memoir offered

important knowledge on the Black transsexual experience. Jackson is also a Caribbean immigrant, so she has a different experience of and perspective on blackness (Jones & Brown, 2016). Both memoirs served as inspiration for this narrative study on African American transwomen.

Mock (2014; 2017) and Jackson (2016) maintained one of the important stances of this study: Black transwomen are indeed women. Black transwomen largely identify as women, and they feel an identity connection to other cisgender and transgender Black women. Jackson, who is married to a Black heterosexual man suggested that she lives her life similar to any other Black straight woman. She also suggested that while she loves the LGB community, she is not a gay male, nor does she have the privileges of transwomen from other races. Jackson, like Collins (1991), pointed to this shared experienced of Black womanhood. As hooks (2000) posited, Black womanhood is always characterized by being underprivileged, and working hard to obtain a self-actualized or equitable life.

Self-actualizing or obtaining equality and equal opportunities in society is a recurring theme of the Black female experience, despite constant obstacles. Distinguished anthropologist and Black feminist scholar Carolyn Martin Shaw (2017) explored the notion of *cruel optimism* alongside feminism. She explained that cruel optimism was the dark side of the fantasy of obtaining a 'good life' by suggesting that while searching for a better life that is self-actualized, equitable, and equal, Black women experience various tribulations, darkness, and adversity in the process. The women of this study express a level of cruel optimism because they remain hopeful

despite the odds against them. Thus, the participant narrative chapter of this dissertation (Chapter 4) was titled “Still They Rise” in order to convey that, despite every oppressive obstacle in their path, they still rose to the occasion of living and working for a brighter future. Chapter 4’s sections on the participants’ gender illustrates how they express female gender, how they identify with and as female gender, when they first knew themselves to be a female, how they identify sexually, and their thoughts on sexuality. It also explores gender group connectedness, their relationships to each other, and their relationships with cisgender women. Black feminist scholar Michele Wallace (1982) suggested that she was in search of sisterhood through feminism, and the women of this study share her search.

Exclusion and Selective Inclusion in Transgender Studies

Empirical studies of Black transwomen have come disproportionately from the discipline of public health (Bockting, 2009; Nemoto, Cruz, Iwamoto, & Sakata, 2015; Oden, 2015; Rowan, DeSousa, Randall, White, & Holley, 2014). Public health researchers have greatly expanded our knowledge of the health-related experiences of Black transwomen—especially the prevalence of sexually transmitted and other infectious diseases, rates of hormone and other drug use—as well as some research on mental health outcomes.

Yet, few, if any, of these studies explored the embodied and stigmatized experiences of Black transwomen. Further, participants in the Rowan et al. (2014) study posited that they were targeted by public health researchers because they were believed to have HIV and various other diseases, and not because the researchers

were truly interested in them as people. Many women in the present study indicated that they had participated in well-paying public health studies in which researchers were only interested in their sexual behaviors. Although it is understandable the public health researchers and practitioners would be primarily interested in healthrelated behaviors and outcomes, empirical research that fully explores the complex experiences of Black transwomen is both important and urgently needed. The focus of the present research, including the analysis of trans-ebonics and other dialectical relationships among transwomen of color is to help address this need, in part, by more fully understanding how their identities and psyches are constructed by and shaped around oppression. Public health researchers and scholars in other disciplines should also benefit from an in-depth exploration of Black transwomen that integrates historical, social psychological, feminist, and non-academic, contemporary perspectives.

A number of previous attempts to at least partially address these issues have yielded mixed results. For example, a study by Eyre, de Guzman, Donovan & Boissier (2004), attempted to portray the narratives of Black transwomen. Unfortunately, the authors' attempt to explain their participants' language seemed superficial and a parody of their lives. For example, they do not explain why the participants of their study speak in certain ways, which makes the presentation of their cultural languages and presentations dangle like punch-lines to a joke. For example, "hormones is not a magic wand" (p.1) is not explained, so it dangles simply as a grammatically incorrect sentence. The researchers may not have been connected

to the Black or Black transwomen's communities, which may explain their inability to understand how their participants' language was used to shape their self-concept. On a more positive note, however, the study did include long segments of their participants' narratives, thereby allowing the women who were interviewed to speak for themselves and readers to appreciate and glean from the meaning of their direct responses. This study follows that same useful example.

Graham, Crissman, Tocco, Hughes, Snow, and Padilla (2014) also conducted a narrative exploration of Black transwomen. Done in Detroit, a city known for its impoverished conditions among Black transwomen, this study let the participants to speak about their transitioning narratives. A major finding was that social and communal support networks were most influential in assisting the gender transitioning process. However, in contrast to the present study, Graham et al. (2014) reported overwhelmingly positive results with respect to their participants' transitioning experiences. However, they accurately presented examples of the frequent violence that African American transwomen face in navigating social institutions. While Graham and colleagues, and various other health-based scholars (Bith-Melander et al., 2010; Nemoto et al., 2015) are closer to presenting the realities of Black transwomen's lives, the discipline of transgender studies is largely far behind in this regard, and there appears to be much exclusion of Black transwomen and 'real' transgender, non-privileged, experiences in the discipline of transgender studies.

Collins (1991) correctly noted the erasure of Black women's scholarship from feminist studies. In a similar, but more extreme way, Black transwomen have been excluded and erased from the discipline of transgender studies. For example, a book that is regarded as the definitive text on the issue, the *Transgender Studies Reader* (Stryker & Whittle, 2006), is 700 pages of text from more than 50 contributors. Yet, there are no chapters discussing race, racism, or social justice issues. Nor is there a single African American (or person of color) included as an author. In addition, although it includes an entire section devoted to transgender masculinities, none is devoted to transgender femininities. Nonetheless, the book has been heralded as a text that describes the life experiences of an entire group.

Stryker's (2006) introduction to this anthology began with her description of an incident in which she was attending a gay/lesbian history conference, and all of the presentations on (trans) gender were misappropriated and lacked any trans scholars. Ironically, this same kind of criticism—the omission of an entire group of people—applies to Stryker's own oversight with respect to transgender scholars of color in the book she edited. However, Stryker maintained that:

Transgender studies, at its best is like other socially engaged interdisciplinary academic fields such as disability studies or critical race theory that investigates questions of embodied difference, and analyze how such differences are transformed into social hierarchies—without ever losing sight of the fact that “difference” and “hierarchy” are never mere abstractions; they are systems of power that operate on actual bodies, capable of producing pain and pleasure, health and sickness, punishment and reward, life and death. Transgender studies has a deep stake in showing how the seemingly, anomalous, minor, exotic, or strange qualities of transgender phenomena are in fact

effects of the relationship constructed between those phenomena and sets of norms that are themselves culturally produced and enforced. Transgender studies enables a critique of the conditions that cause transgender phenomena to stand out in the first place, and that allow gender normativity to disappear into the unanalyzed, ambient background. (p. 3)

Although Stryker is an historian, she consistently omitted race in her analysis of the transgender experience, as well as issues of oppression, injustice, violence, class, or other topics pertinent to the real, lived experiences of African American trans women and many trans people of color.

In contrast to Stryker, there are other notable White transgender scholars whose work appears in the *Transgender Studies Reader* that has advanced the discipline. They include Leslie Feinberg, Kate Bornstein, and Sandy Stone. Feinberg's (2006) influential work on transcending gender binaries helped to move those individuals who do not ascribe to neither male nor female gender expression, but instead locate themselves somewhere in between, to a place of respectability and acceptability and expanded the transgender umbrella. While this is important for the transgender community, Black transwomen enrolled in the present study indicated that they did not want to be grouped with gender queer individuals nor males, or part-time transwomen. This sentiment is echoed elsewhere (Jackson, 2016; Mock, 2017). This represents a divide in the transgender experience based on race and privilege. For example, the women in this study suggested that White transwomen who do not pass, and gender queer individuals do not have to work as hard as they do, and do not face the brutalities and stigmas of being a transfemale minority.

Unfortunately, Feinberg, like Bornstein (2006) both see passing as invisibility and hiding. However, neither acknowledge how whiteness usually supersedes a need to pass. Bornstein suggested that being neither male nor female has worked for her, so she chooses neither, and chooses not to hide. She created terms such as 'gender defender' and 'gender terrorist' to describe those who defend the gender binary. Her thought on these terms also included ostracizing those transgender people of all races who choose to pass. Due to their privilege, Feinberg and Bornstein—like other White transgender scholars—are unable to see the need for passing in many Black transwomen's lives. The Black transwomen in this study indicated being attacked daily when they do not pass as female. Passing is a safety issue, and as Maslow (1954) suggested, it reflects the basic need for survival. This study is important because it shows that “concealing stigma” (Quinn, 2006) through passing (Mock, 2017) is a needed function of life for Black transwomen.

Sandy Stone's *The Empire Strikes Back* (2006) is not only a seminal text for transgender studies, it situates itself safely between those trans individuals who, like Bornstein and Feinberg, think that passing is hiding, and those individuals who think that passing is an acceptable mode of living. What is important about Stone's work is that it is a direct rebuttal to anti-transsexual sentiments of second wave radical feminists such as seen in Janice Raymond's work (1978). Janice Raymond's vehemence toward transsexual and transgender women is not unique among many second and third wave feminists who define women as only those who were assigned female at

birth. Raymond and others like her are ironically tolerant and accepting to trans men, but not trans women. Do they not see their actions as sexist nor transphobic?

The practice of exiling transwomen from female identity is not simply relegated to White cisgender feminists. Black feminists are making positive strides toward accepting and fighting for the safety and inclusion of Black transwomen into the narrative of womanhood, but there were (or, perhaps, still are) dissenters who do not welcome Black transwomen into the fold of sisterhood as Wallace (1982) has suggested. Wallace herself is someone who was anti-transwoman until recently. This research has the potential to preserve the lives of future Black transgirls and transwomen. It also has the potential to firmly cement bonds of sisterhood for African American cisgender and transgender women.

In addition to recognizing the basic linkages and connections that Black cisgender and transgender women share, it is also important to acknowledge that regardless of what social class Black women belong to, their experiences with oppression are similar, and all are looked down upon in similar ways (Collins, 1991; Combahee River Collective, 1982; Crenshaw, 1993; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 2000).

Class

Social class was initially not a focus of this study. However, because of the way that class is connected to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, and the fact that participants frequently connected their ability to self-actualize and realize their goals to access what social class makes available, it became a central consideration. Social

class also emerged in this study as a method by which the participants stated that they established group-based social hierarchies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). For example, the participants discussed types of sex work as a class hierarchy and status. Thus, the subheading of class is used as an umbrella term that addresses the hierarchical levels of access in society that work against stigmatized identities (Black, transgender, woman), and also creates social class stigma.

hooks (2000) wrote that Black women have historically and contemporarily been stigmatized as both poor and prostitutes regardless of their social class or other demographics. African American transwomen effectively confirm this claim. The women of this study and many Black transwomen suggest that they are frequently seen as degenerate prostitutes regardless of their backgrounds (Konsenko, 2011). hooks also suggested that while Black women have engaged in various forms of sex work—consensual and forced—the stereotype exists and is maintained to keep Black women positioned as a lower class than White women. Collins (2000) explored the sexual politics of Black womanhood and how it is largely impacted by a long history of racism in America. Collins maintained that, "African American women inhabit a sex/gender hierarchy in which inequalities of race and social class have been sexualized. Privileged groups define their alleged sexual practices as the mythical norm and label sexual practices and groups who do diverge from this norm as deviant and threatening (p. 257).

African American transwomen evidence Collins's claim because they are routinely stigmatized as deviant and threatening. Many Black transwomen also

indicate that they experience harassment and false arrest by police simply because they are Black and transgender (Konsenko, 2011). There are stereotypes of transgender women being employed only in the sex trade industry, which reinforces the stigmatization of Black transwomen. However, and unfortunately, many Black transwomen are employed as sex workers at some level because they have extremely limited (if any) choices of other kinds of employment because they are Black transgender women. Although some use sex work as a means of survival, others use it as a viable employment option with which they are pleased (Jackson, 2016). Sex work is ubiquitous in the transgender community and hierarchies of sex work exist. 'Working the streets' is seen as the lowest form of sex work (Collins, 2004; Falk, 2001), or being of a lower class than someone who, for example, works in video pornography or exotic dancing.

The women who participated in the present study also said that beauty and one's ability to pass is equally a matter of hierarchy as employment. To be seen as beautiful and 'real' makes one a member of the upper echelon of the transgender community, as Mock (2014) suggested. Mock also spoke of 'pretty privilege', which is what she considers one's passport to access in life. To possess 'pretty' or 'beauty' is as important an asset as class for many women (both cis and transgender) because of a racist, androcentric, patriarchal society that promotes beauty for women as social capital (Collins, 2004; hooks, 2000).

However, being successful in the sex trade industry comes at a price. African American transwomen must attain very high levels of passing via the use of

expensive hormone therapies, plastic surgeries, and other gender affirming cosmetic enhancements. Many transgender women feel they must engage in sex-work to attain those luxuries, though such 'luxuries' may be regarded as meeting basic physiological and safety needs for African American transwomen. For example, Konsenko (2011) indicated that many women engage in sex work and in risky sexual behavior to attain hormones, silicone, and the like.

Konsenko also indicated that many women see social advantages in sex-work because it minimizes their risk of rejection. Upper echelons of sex work also offer some transwomen validation because they are being selected by their sex-work employers and are receiving approval and desire because of their beauty, gender, and gender identity. The notions of passing and beauty cannot be taken lightly for African American transwomen; not only are they working to pass as biological or cisgender females—which can be very difficult considering the existing socio-cognitive perceptions of gender—but are also working to attain standards of beauty that are most often Eurocentric (Bith-Melander et al., 2010; Brown, 2010). Therefore, African American transwomen are being exoticized and fetishized because of their race. However, this racism also dictates whether their achieved beauty will be seen as acceptable and, therefore, profitable.

Though there is evidence that transgender women experience multiple discriminations, especially in employment, heterosexual and homosexual Americans question why transgender women do not simply obtain legal employment. Gays and lesbians have obtained federal employment protection, which guarantees their legal

protection. However, transgender people are still working toward those rights in many states (Vitulli, 2010). Vitulli documented the struggle for transgender inclusion in the federal *Employment Non-Discrimination Act* (ENDA). The decision to remove gender identity protections in 2007, which left many transgender people without protection for legal employment, increased the likelihood that transgender people—particularly women—would engage in sex-work. Vitulli (2010) further explained that the motivation behind this decision actually originated from gays and lesbians. This gives credence to the reality of transgender exclusion even, within the LGBT community. Vitulli wrote:

The mainstream gay movement that emerged in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and consolidated into a professionalized politically reformist and assimilationist homonormative establishment in the 1990's has long sought to separate itself from transgender populations—along with other gender and sexual non-normative racialized, immigrant, and low income populations. (p. 156)

By denying transwomen employment rights, gays and lesbians further isolated an oppressed class. As a stigmatized class among transwomen, Black transwomen face intragroup bias from others within the LGBT community in the same ways that they experience bias, violence, and discrimination from various groups to which they belong (Vitulli, 2010).

The participants in the current study, like many Black women (Collins, 1991), spoke of education as a symbol of class and achievement. As Cole and Guy-Sheftall

(2003) suggested, education has always been regarded as a major achievement among African Americans because of the legacy of slavery and the way in which Blacks were legally denied literacy. Education is seen as knowledge and liberation. For Black women, education has been a panacea. However, the unfortunate truth is that while education has been an effective agent of upward mobility for many Black women, there are various systems still in place to maintain social dominance, which maintains the systemic oppression and glass ceilings for Black women in particular (Collins, 1991; hooks, 2000; Sidnais & Pratto, 1999).

This situation relates to the hierarchy of needs model, first proposed by distinguished psychologist, Abraham Maslow (1954). Maslow considered that humans moved through a series of motivations to attain physiological needs, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization. The stages are described below, along with some mention of whether (and how well) the transwomen participants in the study reported being able to meet them.

Maslow's first stage entailed fundamental physiological needs, which refer to basic survival needs such as air, food, water, shelter, and sleep. However, many Black transwomen have difficulty securing these foundational needs. They often lack housing, and are unable to provide food for themselves. Stage two in Maslow's hierarchy focused on one's 'safety needs', or the need to maintain physical safety (including not only freedom from attack, but also financial or employment security). Maslow suggested that the absence of physical safety could result in traumatic stress.

African American transwomen generally suffer from safety concerns and trauma (Bith-Melander et al., 2010), also evidencing this stage. The women of this study often articulated having persistent concerns for safety and being at this stage while yet attempting to reach other stages.

Stage three addressed a person's need for love and belonging, including the need to be accepted, to have group membership, social definition, and social belonging. Being stigmatized places one outside the possibility of having a true feeling of love and belonging. African American transwomen in the current study reported that obtaining and maintaining this stage are among their ultimate goals. According to Maslow, Stage four in the hierarchy focused on 'esteem', the need to feel respected, to feel good about oneself. Maslow's final stage in the hierarchy of needs pertains to what he called 'self-Actualization'—one's ability to attain life's full potential, to experience complete happiness and fulfillment. Self-actualization should also be seen as the ability to achieve one's civil rights.

The basic needs encompassed by the first three of these stages all relate in some sense to safety and the ability to ensure one's own well-being. For example, many African American transwomen in this study indicated that they felt unsafe, had lower self-esteem, felt unloved and stigmatized, and were unable to maintain some basic physiological needs. In some cases, participants used drugs to cope with feelings of isolation, stigma, low self-esteem, lack of love. Maintaining their selfmedicating drug use led to their inability to provide housing and food for themselves. Being on the streets magnified their vulnerability. Conversely, there were

women in this study who had experienced each stage positively, but still felt unable to self-actualize—or reach their full potential in life—because they were Black and transgender females. Maslow believed that if self-esteem and self-actualization were not attained (or unattainable), then depression, trauma, and inferiority complexes were inevitable. The women in the present study all expressed living with depression, and having various traumas, and inferiority complexes.

Depression, trauma, and inferiority complexes are the result of stigma, and characterize the lives of many African American transgender women. Though scholars have explored depression, trauma, and inferiority complexes with this population (Bith-Melander et al., 2011; Nemoto et al., Singh & McKelroy, 2011), few (if any) have explored stigma as a cause of these problems. If one begins to identify stigma as the social problem, then it is plausible to suggest that recommendations can be made to eradicate social stigmas for African American transwomen. This phenomenological qualitative study began a research inquiry into improving the quality of life and equality for African American transwomen.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs was used to demonstrate study participants' inability to meet the needs required at different stages that limits their ability to self-actualize. Maslow's hierarchy is not a typical stage model stating that movement from stage to stage must be linear. Instead, as the women in the present study described, several stages can be maintained at once, or higher stages can be achieved before lower ones. Social class significantly affected the ability of participants (and Black women in general) to move through Maslow's hierarchical stages.

It is important to note that few researchers use Maslow's hierarchy (Koznjac, 2017; Rassacova, 2016; Williams, 2017) to analyze oppression. Instead, the hierarchy is used primarily to explore human motivation. The realities of oppression, inequality, and the 'unequal playing field' are rarely addressed through Maslow's work. This is ironic because Maslow, as a Jew who lived during the Nazi era, likely knew that the playing field was not level, and that forms of systemic oppression (including genocide) were very real threats inimical to the human psyche and dangerous to humanity. A partial exception can be found in Lowry's (1973) work which, although it does not analyze oppression specifically, recognized the fact that, if life's playing fields were not leveled, and the ability to self-actualize was not available, there would be no reason to live. As Lowry (1973) wrote: "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man must be, he must be. This is the drive for living. This need we may call self-actualization. Without it, there is no life" (p. 162).

In much the same vein, I argued that what a Black transwoman must be, she must be. As I discuss in the next section, this required many layers of stigma to be dismantled, so that African American transwomen are allowed to self-actualize, and live normal, healthy lives in ways similar to their fellow Americans.

Stigma

Thus far, I have explored the multitude of racist, sexist, classist, and transphobic historical and contemporary experiences of African Americans—specifically, African American transwomen—in an attempt to set the stage for a

discussion of stigma as a social psychological phenomenon. As Falk (2001) suggested, stigma, though first formally studied as early as 1895 by sociologist Emile Durkheim, has existed since early civilizations and was likely born of the need to certify group identity and membership while clearly delineating those who were not group members. However, the formal study of stigma often diminished the experience of the stigmatized (Young, 1993). This review of stigma literature and theory therefore highlighted classic and contemporary work on stigma, while describing some of its failures—that is failures to offer intersectional analyses.

Much of the literature on stigma has been produced by White researchers, whose race makes them a member of the universally-sustained dominant group, and who conducted research on racial, gender, sexual identity minority groups, physically and mentally disabled groups, or other groups who were in some way socially oppressed (Hovland & Sears, 1940; Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl, & Hull, 2000; Katz, 1981). This fact highlights a power imbalance—whether intentional or not—in the research. For example, as previously mentioned, Hovland and Sears (1940) showed no sympathy for African Americans being lynched, but instead only considered lynching in relation to the economic costs of cotton in the South. This study filled this gap in the literature because it is important to educate citizens on severity of stigma. This study also boldly posited that the consequences of being stigmatized can be violent, mentally and emotional toxic, and a violation of Civil Rights. Crenshaw (1993) suggested that when individuals in a society challenge and eradicate discrimination, they challenge and continue the work to eliminate racism. Similarly, if

individuals in a society challenge and eradicate stigma, they begin to save lives, create equality, and continue the work of eradicating racism.

To be stigmatized is to have one's full humanity questioned, to have one's social identities devalued, and to be marginalized in society (Crocker & Quinn, 2000; Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998; Goffman, 1963; Katz, 1981). Stigma is at the root of African American transwomen's oppressions because their multiple interlocking intersectional identities all carry stigma. Stagnor and Crandall (2000) suggested that stigma is attached to threat, that is the perceived fear by the dominant group or groups of the subordinate groups. They offer a theory of the etiology of stigma that included the perception of threat, perception of group difference, and the consensual sharing of those perceptions of threats. African American transwomen as African Americans pose a perceived threat to the dominant group (White Americans) who have constructed a society based on their perceived fear of Blackness, which they consensually (and un-consensually share). Being female poses a threat to male dominance, and their gender identity as transgender/transsexual poses a threat to the dominant religious narratives in the United States and throughout the world.

While Stagnor and Crandall give a thorough theoretical framing of the origins of stigma, they fail to consider the lived experience of the stigmatized. Consequently, there is a need for social justice-oriented social psychological inquiry on stigma. Among the specialties of psychology, social psychology has paid the most attention to stigma by tracing its roots in racism, discrimination, prejudice, and stereotype (Crocker & Quinn, 2000). Noted Black psychologist James Jones (1997) primarily

explored prejudice and racism, but also investigated how both prejudice and stigma are the offspring of racism. Jones is one of the few psychologists to have considered the impact of racism on stigma, and the impact of stigma on African Americans. Jones also realized that the research on racism, prejudice, and stigma was conducted largely by those who were not stigmatized.

Jones (1997) pointed to a need for intersectional, social justice oriented studies such as the present study, because these types of studies conveyed how stigma truly feels and its effects. van Laar and Levin (2006) explored the experience of stigma, and suggested that its effects include generalized anxiety and cardiovascular issues. They also suggested that members of stigmatized groups are subject to both their personal experiences with stigma, and the experiences of stigma that their group member face. This claim can be evidenced by African American transwomen, as many spoke of their fear of being murdered or attacked because other Black transwomen are frequently attacked. The participants of this study also articulate this experience. The present study expanded the work of van Laar and Levin because it let the women fully articulate their experiences with stigma and its effects on their lives.

Similar to the investigation of van Laar and Levin, Shmader and Lickel (2006) also explored the effects of stigma. Shmader and Lickel concentrated on the emotional responses to stigma (shame) and proposed that members of stigmatized groups carry additional stigma when members of their racial group confirm negative stereotypes held by members of the dominant racial group. In their classic study of stereotype threat, Steele and Aronson (1995) indicated that stereotype threat means

that members of stigmatized or stereotyped groups fear performing or behaving in certain ways that would confirm negative stereotypes of their group. The African American transwomen of this study supported these claims of the emotional response of shame (e.g., fear of being stigmatized by being outed, fear of not passing as female physically and in performance).

Miller (2006) explored how the stigmatized coped with stigma. Miller suggested that stigmatized individuals draw from an internal resource to create optimism as a coping mechanism, as well as use group identification and social support as coping mechanisms. Miller also suggest that internal resources are easily depleted when individuals are heavily burdened with stigma, thus making survival difficult. As Maslow (1954) considered that attaining one's self-actualized goals would be difficult if a person was denied access to the basic needs in life, so Miller suggested that the emotional toll of being stigmatized can be too a costly, thus leaving the stigmatized individual in psychological debt. African American transwomen, particularly those enrolled in this study, spoke of being emotionally bankrupt and psychologically in debt as a result of stigma.

Crocker and Quinn (2000) explored the impact of social stigma on the self and self-esteem. One goal of the current study is to explore the role of self-esteem in selfactualization to combat stigma and oppression. Similarly, Crocker and Quinn investigated how the weight of stigma and oppression work in tandem to compromise and undermine the quality of living of the stigmatized. They wrote:

In part, interest in the effects of stigma on self-esteem is explained by the fact that the self and self-esteem have been of interest to social psychologists since the publication of William James' *Principles of Psychology* in 1890. Self-esteem is powerfully related to variables that influence the affective quality of one's daily experience, with individuals high in self-esteem reporting, for example, more positive affect (Pelham & Swann, 1989), more life satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Myers & Diener, 1995), less hopelessness (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994) and fewer depressive symptoms (e.g., Crandall, 1973) than individuals low in self-esteem. (p. 154)

Their thoughts concur with those of Maslow (1954), Miller (2006), and this research on African American transwomen. James' (1890) study, as mentioned by Crocker and Quinn, sought to use narrative inquiry as evidence of psychological phenomena. Likewise, this study used African American transwomen's narrative as evidence of their experience with various social issues and psychological phenomena. As Crocker and Quinn suggested about stigmatized self-esteem, this study also provided evidence that African American transwomen's lives are lacking positive self-esteem, quality of life, and life satisfaction. Crocker and Quinn also noted that the group to which a person belongs serves as the initial source of their self-esteem. Consequently, if their group is devalued, then feelings of worthlessness, depression, and internalized hatred are inevitable. This finding can also be seen in the lives of African American transwomen who are part of devalued groups.

Erickson (1956) claimed that "there is ample evidence of inferiority feelings and morbid self-hate in all minority groups" (p. 155). Erickson, Cross (1971), and Crocker and Quinn (2000) all speak of the self-hatred that results from stigma. However, this research challenged using the term self-hate and instead suggested replacing it with 'internalized oppression,' as it speaks more to the process of being

stigmatized and living with a stigmatized identity. Self-hate, on the other hand, reinforces historical victim blaming discourse (Hurtado, 1996).

Clark and Clark (1939) also acknowledged that the participants' devaluation of blackness was the result of stigma, racism, and oppression rather than a freely made, unencumbered choice. Similarly, in speaking about the internalization of oppression, Allport (1954) wrote, "what would happen to your personality if you heard it said over and over again that you are lazy and had inferior blood" (p. 42)? Likewise, DuBois (1903) said, "what must it feel like to be a problem" (p. 7)? These questions on stigma posed by these eminent theorists are evidenced daily in the lives of African American transwomen. Sociologists Mead (1934) and Cooley (1956) studied symbolic interaction and proposed that humans develop a sense of who and what they are from observations, interpretations, responses, and reactions they receive from others. Their theorizing is termed 'looking glass self' and further substantiated the claim that the messages people receive inform and shape who they are and how they feel about themselves. Consequently, African American transwomen are constantly looking through both internal and external glasses that create often unrealistic rubrics for their lives (Jackson, 2016). The multilayered rubrics of normalcy, beauty, and femininity reflect hate upon their inter-sectional identities.

Cioffi (2000) also explored the idea of the looking glass self and how it shapes one's behavior and perceptions. Cioffi explored the social traveler': a person who navigates public and private domains differently, performing the actions expected from those on the other side of the looking glass while maintain separate personal

views. The idea of the social traveler and the looking glass self collide in the act of passing and/or stealth for African American transwomen. To avoid the stigmas often associated with transgender identity, many African American transwomen feel the need to go to great lengths to conceal their stigmatized gender identity.

Quinn (2000) explored concealable versus conspicuous stigma. Concealable stigma is a stigmatized identity that is not immediately perceivable in social interactions, thus giving the individual a possible reprieve from public scorn. Conspicuous stigma is immediately noticed. Quinn compared stereotype research that examined gender as a conspicuous stigma with research on mental illness, and concealable stigma. Quinn's work, like much of the social psychological work on stigma, is a fine examination of theoretical thought on stigma. However, what is missing is the real-life experience of maintaining several conspicuous stigmas and trying to conceal them to live unencumbered lives in the ways that African American transgender women do.

As mentioned previously, noted psychologist Gregory Herek has contributed in very significant ways to the social psychological research literature on stigma among lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. However, his work has mostly excluded transgender people. His framing of the issues limits the social justice implications of his analysis, and does not fully integrate race and intersectional oppression. Herek's (1996) work focused on the concealment of stigmas—but only concealable stigmas. For example, masculine, White, gay men concealing stigma through appearance. Herek's work centered on the notion of disclosure, which is a prominent issue among

transwomen of all races. The challenge for African American transwomen is that their stigmatized identities are often non-concealable. Even when they have achieved every mark of feminine beauty, they are still outed, ostracized, and seen as less than human (Jackson, 2016; Mock, 2014, 2017).

Herek (2007) also suggested that sexual minorities (specifically lesbians, gays, and bisexuals) experience three levels of stigma: enacted stigma, felt stigma, and internalized stigma. Enacted stigma is the manifestation of violence on the stigmatized. Felt stigma is akin to code switching (Cross, 1971) and passing is done to avoid the consequences of enacted stigma through a system of behaviors. Internalized stigma speaks to the stigmatized person's personal acceptance of stigma as part of her own self-concept. Accepting stigma into one's own self-concept is linked to what Maslow (1954) considered to be an impedance of one's ability to selfactualize.

Goffman (1963) maintained that people experience psychological strain in the process of concealing their true identities. Goffman also addressed the phenomenon of passing and how those who possess stigmatized identities still try to pass as 'normal', but undergo isolation and extreme fear of being unmasked. Passing has long been a topic of interest among African Americans (Blay, 2013), but only in terms of racial passing for those African Americans whose skin was light enough to pass as White, and thereby reap the benefits that whiteness affords one in America—and throughout the world. However, little research has been conducted on African

American transwomen and passing. Passing is complicated because not only are the standards of beauty Eurocentric, the ability to pass may also be impacted by their skin color/complexion and class level. Passing may temporarily alleviate some stigmas and discrimination, but typically does not alleviate racism. As Goffman (1963) and Smart and Wegner (2000) noted, concealing a stigma leads to inner turmoil, obsessive thinking, and other pathologies that absorb one's mental state and potentially causes psychological and physiological damage. African American transwomen also evidence this assertion.

Singh and McKelroy (2011) studied trauma, but found that the stigma that transwomen of color face causes exogenous depression, frequent suicide ideation, agoraphobia, substance abuse, eating disorders, and more. One of the findings of this research is that stigma and trauma are synonymous for African American transwomen: Their experiences with stigma consistently lead to trauma. When their transgender identity that was concealed was discovered, African American transwomen tend to face brutal violence and/or death, which is the polar opposite of White transwomen (Boylan, 2015). White transwoman scholar Jennifer Boylan noted the privileges that White transwomen possess, as opposed to Black transwomen and other transwomen of color. In her essay, she said that while she lived her life without threat, Black transwomen were being killed on the streets in the same city while she had brunch with other White transwomen colleagues.

Miller and Major (2000) acknowledged that stigma produced stress in a number of ways and found that "discrimination against stigmatized persons, for

example, limits their access to resources such as healthcare, housing, education, and employment” (p. 244). African American transwomen’s lives and experiences reflect this quote. Miller’s and Major’s attention to discrimination and threat to the stigmatized offers validation to stigmatized victims’ experiences. While the team began to address social justice concerns, their work reverted back to a social cognitive, theoretical understanding of coping with stigma. For example, they introduced the idea of cognitive appraisals of situations and events, and pointed out that not all victims of stigma suffer reduced well-being because they are able to appraise each situation differently. Ideally, this is true, and there are women in this study who attempted to appraise situations differently by creating false realities or narratives, and creating false perceptions to cope. Nonetheless, in the final analysis, the weight of being both Black and transfemale is often suffocating beyond resuscitation.

Although the claim about the efficacy of cognitive re-appraisals of stigmatizing experiences has been supported in the literature (e.g., Bandura, 1977; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), there are limits to how easily or effectively it can be employed in real-life settings. In fact, the experiences of African Americans—particularly African American transwomen—demonstrated that even with the ability to appraise various situations, the outside world is still unyielding in various other ways. As Herek (2007) suggested, felt stigma is layered, and even those with concealed stigma are affected in intense ways. Bandura (1982) considered the idea of ‘self-efficacy’ and ‘human agency’ which translated into an individual’s self-concept

of power and ability to control a situation, and how individuals respond to, perform in, and cope with stressful encounters. African American transwomen are resilient, though they may possess low self-efficacy, and comparatively low human agency because of social class or other demographic factors.

Konsenko (2011) allowed readers to hear participants speak in their own voice about their stigmatized identities, coping with stigma, and their resiliency. For example, Serena, a self-identified full time, post-transition transsexual woman said:

Ostracism is a key component of being transgender. That's what this society does to us...I always tell people, and I think its true, "I have social AIDS". Its just like being HIV positive. To be transgender is to have social AIDS in many respects because people put you outside. Whatever fence you can name, I can name how people put me on the outside. If I'm in gay company, I'm a straight person. if I'm with lesbians, I'm a man. If I'm with men, I'm a fag. It just goes round in little circles. It's a form of ostracism. I mean I probably get flak from people for saying this, but I think being transgender can be a kind of social AIDS, and it affects every area of your life from employment to health care to sex. (p. 268)

Serena's sad comparison of her daily life to dying from a disease is unfortunately echoed by many transgender women. Stigma leads to potentially life-threatening behaviors for these women because of the constant rejection and dehumanization that they face. Rejection by various communities, and shame inflicted by familial connections and other intimate partners, drives many of these women to self-harm as either a coping mechanism and/or maintain abusive relationships or situations to cope.

African American transwomen should not have to employ such means of coping simply to survive. A meaningful, social justice-oriented, social psychological

intersectional exploration of stigma needs to explicitly address the significance of race, gender, class, and histories of systemic oppression. This Black feminist, social justice-oriented study places Black transwomen at the center of the discussion. It is thus situated outside the categories and premises of queer theory and the traditional framework of transgender studies (Styker & Whittle, 2006) that have mostly ignored African American transwomen.

Race, gender, and class work in unison to create and maintain social stigma against African American transwomen. African American full-time transwomen are not socially treated like Black men, and are not socially treated like White transgender women and men, nor transgender people of other races. African American transwomen share similar stigmatized identities to African American cisgender women, and thus are socially treated like Black women. Most socialize themselves as, and primarily identify themselves, as Black women. This study made that point. Positioning African American transwomen as female and/or women who deserve to be respected, protected, and accepted in society is revolutionary. The present study has attempted to go beyond merely identifying the impacts of stigma on the lives of the African American transwomen who participated in the study, but also to acknowledge, legitimize, and honor their stories.

To further analyze and advance this narrative exploration, Chapter 3 details the intersectionality methodology that the study employed. Chapter 4 further explores the varying levels of stigma and their impact on the lives of African American transwomen.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

“One of the goals of this research is to demonstrate how narrative methods and personality theories can be combined with sociological and feminist perspectives in ways that increase our understanding of processes of personal and social transformation.—Aaronette M. White (2008, p. 202)

In accordance with White’s (2008) Black feminist, social psychological research, the present study seeks to traverse uncharted territory in the discipline of psychology and forge a new path of exploratory, qualitative, social justice-oriented research. To do so, I employ what can be termed “intersectionality methodology.” As discussed in Chapter 2, intersectionality is a feminist theoretical framework that identifies and investigates matrices of oppression, oppressed interlocking identities, and social domination. The concept of intersectionality can and should be used to guide social psychological research, as a methodology that attempts not only to continue to identify and investigate constellations of oppression, but as a research tool that assists in the eradication of systemic social problems.

“Methodology” generally describes a combination of methods, procedures, and techniques used to examine social and scientific concepts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The intersectionality methodology I employ is a form of what social scientists have called “multi-methods,” but one geared more to specifically identifying and employing those research methods that explicitly seek to more deeply elucidate the varying manifestations and layers of inequality in society. For example, this study

utilized culturally competent, semi-structured questionnaires to guide the qualitative interviews that are also set in a life history- based, narrative format to allow participants to deeply reflect on all their experiences that may be linked to their multiple stigmatized, intersectional identities. Simultaneously, it allowed the collection of rich data to provide strong evidence that addressed the grounded hypotheses of the study, answering the study's research questions in nuanced ways.

Research Questions

Q1: How does stigma impact the lives of African American transwomen? Q2: How do African American transwomen conceptualize their racial identity, and how does their transgender identity intersect with the African American community?

Q3: Are African American transwomen more connected to their identity as Black women or to their identity as transgender, and does feminist identity impact their connection?

Q4: Are African American transwomen currently able to self-actualize, reach their goals, and live healthy lives?

Participants

Ten African American transwomen over the age of 21 were recruited via community and snowball sampling in Northern California during the fall of 2015. Each participant was pre-screened to ensure they met the study's criteria and given an informed consent to complete before beginning the interview. The pre-screening criteria included being age 21 or over, identifying as African American/Black (or of

African Descent), identifying as a transgender woman, transsexual woman, transwoman, or all of the above. Participants were also required to be living as fulltime women, and made medical and/or legal changes. Medical changes, for example, may include undergoing hormone replacement therapy and/or having gender affirming surgeries. Legal changes include changing one's birth name on governmentissued documents and/or changing the gender marker on one's government-issued documents. Each woman was also given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. The choice of pseudonym was important because as a Black feminist and social psychological researcher, I desired to maintain positive social cognitive perceptions of each woman in order to reduce levels of initial stigma from readers when they were introduced to each woman (Khatib, 1995).

The participants were identified as:

1. Rose (the Grand Diva)
2. Lily (the Actress)
3. Camellia (the Activist)
4. Ivy (the Queen B.)
5. Magnolia (the Boss)
6. Violet (the aspiring Housewife)
7. Lotus (the Artist...of quadruple threats)
8. Willow (the Makeup Guru)
9. Daisy (the Recording Artist)
10. Jasmine (the Princess Warrior)

11. Azalea (removed from the study)

Eleven names are listed here because one participant, Azalea, was removed from the study. After her interview, she disqualified herself by confessing that she was not of African descent. She had previously stated she was biracial (of mixed African American and Asian descent), but she was only of Asian descent. She also indicated that she claimed blackness publicly “because being a ghetto mixed-BlackAsian chick is hot! That really works for me, you know, cuz’ I’m trying to start my music career.” After removing her from the study, I recruited and interviewed Willow.

While all the women identified as of African Descent, there was variation in how each woman personally constructed and lived out Black racial identity contexts. Five identified as African American or Black, four identified as Black-biracial or mixed race (two identified as Black and Native American; one as Black and Asian; one as Black and Latina), and one as other. She indicated that both her parents are Black and she is not biologically mixed, but prefers to not identify as Black, and that she usually identifies as White, Brazilian, Dominican, East Indian, and sometimes as a mix of all. Further description of their racial identity was explored in Chapter 4. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 55, with the median age being 35 ($M = 35.2$). In terms of sexuality, all identified as heterosexual. However, five indicated that they engaged in bisexual sex on occasion, particularly if being paid to do so.

The women’s socio-economic class levels varied greatly. Seven indicated that they were living below the poverty line and/or had experienced poverty as a result of

being both Black and transfemale. Six said they had been raised in middle and uppermiddle class families. One reported being from the upper-class with a very wealthy family who indicated to her that she would be financially disowned once she graduated from college because of her gender transition. Another reported being from the upper-middle class. Though her current income level was below the poverty line, she still identified as upper-class: “I might not have a lot now, but I’m still a little rich, White girl. In my head, I’ll always be White and beautiful.”

Their education levels varied as well: all participants completed high school. Four earning a GED (General Education Development, or Diploma); four reported completing some college with three still enrolled in college/university programs; three earned bachelor’s degrees; and three have graduate degrees. Many of the women indicated that they have maintained multiple professions simultaneously. This was explored in Chapter 4. Eight indicated they either had been (or are still currently) engaged in various forms of sex work.

Procedures

As indicated above, snowball and community sampling methods (Neuman, 1996) were used to recruit the participants. Community sampling in this case involved my contacting transgender community-based organizations that offer special programming for African American transwomen, creating and disseminating marketing materials approved by the Institution Review Board, and actively recruiting and retaining each participant through a series of conversations to ensure participation and appearing for the interview.

Community sampling evolved into snowball sampling. Snowball sampling can be defined as collecting respondents along the way, similar to the way snowballs acquire more snow as they roll (Neuman, 1996; White, 2008). In this case, the snowball came from the women's social networks. For example, Rose recommended Lily and Camellia, Violet recruited Ivy and Magnolia, Daisy volunteered Azalea (who was disqualified) and Jasmine. Lotus and Willow were recruited independently from the same community center.

Each participant was compensated for her time with \$25.00 in cash and a meal that I provided. The participants also had the option to choose their interview site: four chose their residence, three chose my location, two chose community spaces. The length of the interviews varied between two and six hours. Only one interview was two hours long, and it was notably shorter because the participant, Ivy, was very adversarial toward me. The longest two interviews were notably longer because the participants, Lotus and Jasmine, needed to reflect on, and process their responses, and engage themes more deeply. Lotus indicated, "I feel like I got so much from this interview. It was so what I needed." In fact, seven of the participants suggested that they felt that this life history-based interview was therapeutic for them, and one of the first times that someone actually wanted to hear about or know about them.

Participants completed the demographic part of the interview first. These questions asked about their racial identity, gender and sexual identity, educational background, income level, and other socio-economic factors. Some of their responses to those questions were presented in narrative format in the Participant Narratives of

Chapter 4. The questions are provided in Appendix A. Once demographics were established, and a comfortable tone was set, participants were guided through the questionnaire (see Appendix A.) in the tone of a conversational life history-based interview. Eight respondents had very emotional interviews. Each participant was given a list of free counseling and health services at the start of the interview, along with their compensation, and each was given a check-in phone call within 48 hours of the interview to ensure that they were doing well after sharing such emotional, and often traumatic, information. One interview, Ivy, ended icily, but I maintained professionalism. The IRB required that all interviews be transcribed by me within 72 hours, and all recordings and contact information be destroyed within 72 hours because of the sensitive and incriminating nature of the interview. Likewise, because of the sensitivity of the information, I was not allowed to have research assistants handling data, nor was I required to have inter-rater reliability of the data transcripts performed. These two mandates lengthened the process of research study, but helped maintain the integrity of this feminist, intersectionality methodological study.

Instrument, Measures, and Analyses

Information for the interview questionnaire was generated from a number of facilitated support groups conducted with African American transwomen. It reflected a combination of Black feminist, socio-psychological theoretical frameworks, as well as integrating social psychological research literature on stigma, and additional interdisciplinary literature on African Americans and African American transgender

women. An initial list of questions was grouped into sections addressing distinct sets of issues and concerns. These were:

- (a) Personal identity;
- (b) Gender/transsexual or gender spectrum identity/female identity/feminist understandings and/or identity, gender group connectedness;
- (c) Racial group identity and community connectedness;
- (d) Identity disclosure, LGBT community connectedness, and political associations;
- (e) Self-esteem, self-actualization, and self-concept;
- (f) Relationships and love;
- (g) Stigma, discrimination, racism, sex work violence, trauma, suicidal ideation, and isolation.

These sections were designed to elicit responses that connect to the research questions of this study and the research literature. For example, section (g) is connected to the broader literature on the impact of stigma, and are geared toward answering the first research question. Section (a) connects to sections (b) and (c) and is directed toward answering research questions two and three. Section (a) also allowed these women to take ownership of their personal identities and demonstrate how intersectionality is present in their lives. Section (d) also connected to research question two, while section (e) specifically points to Maslow's theories, conclusions, and implications. Section (f) looks toward future research directions. The instrument was designed to be both open- and closed-ended in order to be flexible, provide some

direction to participants, and yield the most information possible. For example, participants were asked a question such as:

*“Did you experience any abuse or violence during your childhood?
Yes or No...
If yes, was it related to (or do you feel it was related to) your being feminine,
transgender, or non-conforming to assigned male gender? Please explain.”*

It is important to note that the interviewer did not simply read each question, but communicated it in a culturally appropriate and atmosphere appropriate tones. As anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston would have suggested, I spoke to them in their language and their local color (Hurston, 1981). All of the women spoke in what I am suggesting is “trans-ebonics.” This research coined the term “trans-ebonics” to suggest that there is a particular language or way of communicating that many Black transwomen and transwomen of color understand and use as a sign of kinship. Some terms were presented in the Definition of Terms section of Chapter 1, and other terms will be defined as they appear in Chapters 4. While trans-ebonics was available for use, it is important to state that all the women practiced code-switching (Cross, 1991), which is typically characterized as an attempt to be well spoken when not communicating with members of one’s communities.

Measures and Analysis

The yes or no (a/b) function allowed for gathering responses, and gave the interviews and their analyses some structure. Because of the narrative format in Chapter 4, each participant’s data was coded independently to construct a cogent narrative. For example, participants tended to connect earlier points to later questions,

which meant that longer responses were created by the merging of single responses. I conducted content analysis to interpret themes, subthemes, and some responses. For example, a participant may not use feminist terminology, but how she sees and responds to oppression could be feminist, and content analysis allows for that interpretation (Fetterman, 1998). Moreover, all questions are connected to previously mentioned theories: intersexuality (Combahee River Collective, 1982; Crenshaw, 1993), Black feminist thought (Collins, 1991), Black racial identity [nigrescence] (Cross, 1971/1991), and self-actualization/hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954).

For example, a question such as, “*How connected are you to a/the Black community? Why or why not?*” is clearly connected to Cross’ Black racial identity development theorizing. A question such as: “*What does it mean to be feminist to you?*” is connected to Collins’ Black feminist theorizing. “*Do you feel that there is more stigma associated with being an African American transwoman than being a trans woman of another race?*” is most connected to the theorizing on intersectionality, whereas “*Do you have any goals for yourself? Do you feel that you can achieve these goals?*” are most tied to Maslow’s work on self-actualization.

Adapting the stage models of Cross (1971/1991) and Maslow (1954) was done to demonstrate connections to the social, developmental, and personality literatures within psychology. Cross’ Black racial identity model [nigrescence] explores how one becomes Black or discovers their blackness, lives out a Black context, and exists in the Black community. Black racial identity and/or blackness is an important theme to this study because racial identity and/or being perceived as

Black (African American or of African Descent) is what these women gave as their initial oppressed identity. Black feminist theoretical frameworks also identify this as the initial or first oppression of women of color who are perceived as Black, or those women of color who have a close proximity to blackness (Collins, 2004; MillerYoung, 2014).

The preceding paragraph demonstrates the connections between Black racial identity and Black feminist identity in this study. Further, Cross' Black racial identity model takes place across five stages that do not necessarily happen in a specific order nor in an exact sequence. In some cases, they may overlap or repeat based on the individual (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, and Fhagen-Smith, 2002). As noted in Chapter 2, this study uses Cross' model because it is germane to the study; therefore, the term "Encounter Stage" is used as opposed to the 1991 addition of "Dissonance". Likewise, Cross' original term "nigrescence" is not frequently used in this study because the Black racial identity model is more fitting. To better explain what I am calling "intersectionality methodology", and to better demonstrate how the method, theories, and analyses work together in this dissertation, below are examples with participant data that in psychology would typically be housed in the "results" or "findings" sections; however, the departure from this norm was done to better accommodate the directions of the study, and to assist the reader in better understanding the coming chapters.

Stage 1. While Cross made substantial revisions to the nigrescence model between 1971 and 1991, as discussed in Chapter 2, it is adapted as follows: in the

PreEncounter Stage (stage 1), one is not aware of her blackness, their racial identity, or the socio-political oppressions and implications that accompany blackness. It is not a salient identity category for them. In the 1971 context, and in some African American's experiences during the Pre-Encounter stage, they are opposed to blackness and favor whiteness and/or the privileges that accompany whiteness.

Willow, for example, exemplifies the pre-encounter stage from all perspectives. She consciously avoids her Blackness, prefers Whiteness, and suggest that her racial identity is not a salient identity category for her. Willow's Black racial identity rejections demonstrated low self-acceptance, and though her preferred nonBlack identity renders higher self-worth and higher self-actualization on personal or pretend levels, she admits that she is often not socialized as non-Black, and her social mobility is still somewhat limited. In one response, Willow said: "Sometimes people treat me like I'm Black, or you know, they try to be disrespectful, but I just ignore it. I don't really go to certain places because I know it will be shade." Her self-worth and actualization are both high because, personally, she sees herself as White, and part of the dominant class. However, her limited social mobility also includes her profession and socio-economic status. She remembered:

I don't pull the race card, but I have been passed over twice for promotions on my job; both times they hired ole dirty skinny, blonde White fish over me. And I trained both of those bitches. But its ok though; because when I lose this weight, trust me, they will gag, because nothing will be able to hold me back at that point. They won't even see that I'm a little more tanned than those bitches because I will be giving them so much pretty Barbie doll fish. Pink lipstick and blush; blue eyes and all this long blonde hair.

Maintaining pre-encounter stage provides a safe, if delusional space, and allows Willow to cope with her inability to achieve the full hierarchy of her needs. The stigma of blackness, combined with the dual oppressions of Black womanhood, continually keep her locked in the matrix of oppression. Though Willow professes whiteness and non-blackness, she is fully aware of the value placed upon whiteness, White womanhood, and White or Eurocentric standards of beauty. Further analysis of Willow, and explorations of the pre-encounter, stage are presented in Chapter 5.

Stage 2. Encounter maintains that the person is introduced to blackness, a Black racial identity, and/or is in the early stage of Black racial functioning. Cross suggested that a specific life event causes the encounter. For example, Rose suggested that she had not thought of herself as “really” Black until she “got old”. She continued, “when I was younger I didn’t have to think about being Black because I was beautiful and I looked more exotic then. Once I hit about 40 and life became harder, that’s when I began to feel Black again.” Here again, the centrality of Black racial identity to the experiences of the women of this study is paramount, and thus, demonstrated the relevance of the adapted nigrescence model to this study. For Rose, (and most of the women), negative or stigmatized attributes of her identity are grouped with blackness. Rose suggested that getting old made her realize her blackness. In contemporary U. S. culture, to be old or to age is seen as, and stigmatized, as bad. Aging is grouped with disability and both are negatively stigmatized. To be Black and old is again a double handicap, as Katz (1991) suggest.

Stage 3. Immersion-emersion maintains that the person becomes immersed in their Black identity and begins to live out a prideful Black context. For example, Lotus occupies stages three and five. She indicated that her strong Black identity came from the Black Power Movement, and that strong Black women who were Black Panthers, such as Elaine Brown, Angela Davis, Erica Huggins, and Kathleen Cleaver (to name a few), empowered her. Lotus offered:

My Mom was a Panther, and she raised me to be fearless and not give a shit about what people think of me. If it wasn't for her, for them, showing me how to make it, girl, I wouldn't be here today. Every time I was kicked down, I was able to get back up, and keep fighting. Girl, we are some warriors! Warrior Queens! Queens of this got-damn jungle! Fuck the lion, he aint shit; it's the lioness who rules!

Though she has a high self-regard predicated on the strength of her Black racial identity, she admitted that her inherited Black women's resiliency is a survival mechanism that is required to live, and that her multiple oppressed identities impeded her progress along her hierarchy of needs:

I love being a Black woman, but it aint no walk in the park. Especially being a Black transsexual woman! Girl, being a Black tranatee means you 100 times more likely not to succeed. Girl, everything and everybody just be against you for no reason. They keep us on the margins of society; the same White men who won't give the girls a job on Monday, will pay them \$500 to be treated like a slave and get fucked in their hairy ass on the Friday. So it keeps the system going. So they can go have their perfect White life with some White bitch in the suburbs, but still have they lil Negro sex mistress in the hood. Then, while they Thomas Jeffersoning our asses, they can keep sitting they ass in some form of government or law enforcement saying we don't want to work, we don't look the part, we just want to be sluts and whores and prostitutes, our ID's don't match...and xyz, and then, take away social services on top of it! So they keep fucking us, keep knocking us down, but we gon keep gettin back up! And the fact that we keep getting back up is what makes them even mo mad!

Further analysis of immersion-emersion appears in Chapter 5. Heather's sociopolitical and socio-historical awareness provided understanding of her high Immersion-Emersion into Black racial identity and culture, and likewise demonstrated her ability to acknowledge the obstacles she faced in pursuit of obtaining a self-actualized (i.e., quality) life because of her inter-sectional identities as a Black transwoman.

Stage 4. Internalization refers to a person's maintenance and comfort with Black identity and can also refer to a person's extreme blackness, or Black codes. Both Lotus and Camellia offer great examples of how Cross' model appropriately compliments this exploration of Black transwomen's experiences with stigma and how it shapes their intersectional identities. However, an example from Camellia's life story adequately shows internalization:

I just never did trust White people? My family is from the South and they always instilled in us to not get too comfortable with White people because they always gon show they color. I never really trusted other minorities either? I don't have a problem with them, like I speak to them, and show respect, but I just prefer my own people. Black people is real ignorant and nasty and hateful and evil sometimes, but our shit just easier to deal with than some coward ass White Police Officer handcuffing you, beating you, raping you in the back of the Police car, then taking your money, then taking you to jail. And when you complain about his crooked White Cop ass, nobody believes you! And girl you know that this motherfucka had the never to speak to me when he saw me again? Blew a kiss at me and everything like we was friends? Like I agreed to have sex with him? He couldn't even handcuff me in front so I could be comfortable while he stuck his lil bity pencil dick in me, and then he wanna speak to me? Or try this one: some old Asian bitch professor misgendering me every day in class trying to humiliate me and call me a man. Oh but when you try to report her ass, the White bitch Chair of the Department, gon say oh she just old and it's a language barrier, she don't understand? Oh but I

thought we was ‘women of color’ together? Meanwhile, I’m standing there with Double E titties, and they telling me that she can’t understand that I’m a woman? And I’m like wait, this ole dried up Asian cunt is flat chested, and she looking at my big ass titties saying I’m not a woman? You think some lily White bitch from the Valley getting pushed into a Cop car at 2 am and getting raped on the side of the street where anybody can see, and when you try to complain the Head Cops, they take his side, and don’t believe you? You think a White tranny getting disrespected in class? A flat chested, manlooking bitch with a beard? This Asian bitch smiling in my face knowing she embarrassing me, and I’m supposed to trust her as a ‘woman of color’? And when you crazy and traumatized and depressed and can’t get out the bed to work to pay yo damn rent, then, you back in the damn trap. While all they asses getting ahead? Motherfuckin illegal Mexicans owning houses and getting degrees from the top Universities in the area, and I can’t even get in, and I’m supposed to just be happy about that? See that’s why I sticks to my own people, because at least we all held back because we Black.

As is evident, Camellia has a deeply internalized sense of blackness and Black racial group loyalty, despite injustices imposed by her Black racial group and community members. As she gives examples of painful and traumatic experiences administered by Whites and an Asian in positions of power over her, she reduces the negative experiences with African Americans because they are often not in positions of power over her and, as a result, those negative experiences with Blacks can be more easily dismissed, reduced, or defeated. Camellia’s and Lotus’ mention of societal hierarchies and racist positions of power relate to Maslow’s (1954) contention that if society prevented individuals from living self-actualized lives, that person’s mental health would suffer and they would begin to form inferiority complexes and self-hatred.

Stage 5. The final stage of Cross’ model is internalization-commitment, which is when a person not only maintains a committed strong Black racial identity, but also

is now able to resolve past encounters and conflicts and may accept the possibility of building ties with other cultural groups. Lily's life story best evidences internalization-commitment:

I know I'm Black. I'm proud to be Black. I'm dark skinned, and guess what, White men love me, and I've had a few White men. I have White friends, I have Asian friends, I have Latino friends, I have all kinds of friends. I want to be loved, so I love. I accept all. I prefer my own people and I'm closer to my own people, but I love everybody. Of course, I experience racism, but I don't let it dictate my life no matter how much it gets in the way. And it gets in the way in my relationships with White men. Girl, I done had plenty White men, but you know when mad day come, they seem to always forget my name and call me a "nigga bitch". And I just go upside they head, leave them, and find me another man. Black men are harder to keep. White men real easy to get and keep.

Lily's strong sense of her blackness, while maintaining her multi-racial relationships, demonstrates internalization-commitment. However, for various reasons, not all the women reached this stage. Some engaged in multi-racial relationships and multicultural activities, but did not have fully internalized Black racial identities. Others had fully internalized Black racial identities, but did not desire a racially inclusive life. In Chapter 2, there was a critique of this particular stage. There will be an additional critique of this stage in Chapter 5 because I attempted to expand the narrative of Cross' internalization-commitment.

Internalization-Commitment in the women's lives does not neatly align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Black feminist thought (Collins, 1991) would suggest that there is not a need for Black women to seek multi-racial and/or multi-cultural (i.e., racial assimilation) to live healthy lives. However, being required to do so further continues racist cycles of oppression. A Black feminist perspective would also

contend that Black women should have the choice of Black relationships, and a choice of living-out Black contexts as sources of their external validation, romantic relationships, and social support (Collins, 2004; Collins, 2010; Cooper, 2015; GuySheftall, 1995).

The ability to live-out their blackness and femaleness in these contexts would enable Black transwomen to complete Maslow's (1954) third (love/belonging), fourth (esteem), and fifth (self-actualization) stages. Cross' internalization-commitment stage is in line with the often unrealistic American Dream, and the historically problematic concept of the 'melting pot' culture. This was appropriate for the time when Cross was writing. However, an intersectionality methodological study must challenge seminal social psychological theoretical frameworks to move beyond whiteness and White approval. Moreover, an intersectionality methodological study such as this challenges White (domination) endorsement to evolve into racial equity. Racial equity would thereby empower African Americans (and other people of color) to freely live quality lives.

People have a need to reach these five stages described by Maslow at varying times in their lives. Sometimes, these needs (stages) overlap. A number of women experienced higher stages were being maintained, while lower ones were not yet reached. Their stigmatized identities were largely the cause. For example, Ivy projected high self-esteem (Stage 4), but was often concerned about meeting her physiological survival needs (Stage 1), her safety needs (Stage 2), and her need for love/acceptance (Stage 3):

I'm beautiful, I'm pretty, I'm real, I'm tiny, I'm petite, I'm light skinned, I have my own long hair. I still wear weaves sometimes, but my hair is long and pretty. You not really pretty (said to me). People just think you pretty, but you just ok. Violet said you were really pretty, and I laughed. You too big, yo skin is bad, you weave is nice, but it's nappy, you need to get yo hair fixed. See I can tell you think you too cute to escort, and that's why yo ass is broke, looking basic. See I keeps me a man and a client. They go hand and hand: dates and clients is my bill money, and guys I just fuck with is my extra money. I get my lovin and my dick and my money all in one. Yea, I'm a hoe that falls in love with clients. I don't know what I would do without either one. My dicks and my money is my life. Bitches like you might look down on girls like me because I sell my ass, but my ass is expensive bitch, way more expensive than you. You could never make the money I make bitch. The only thing you have on me is that you know when yo checks comin, and how much they gon be. But that don't mean shit bitch because I'm still the badest bitch.

Ivy was not provoked in any way to lambast me. Throughout the interview, she would insult me with a smile or laugh, as if we were sharing jokes. I had only seen Ivy twice before the interview: once during recruitment, and once randomly in the community. Though we did not know each other, Ivy assumed that I was her adversary. Ivy also reported low connection to gender group communities, and low feminist identity connection. As seen above, she demonstrates having reached Maslow's stage 4, but stages 1-3 elude her consistency because of the social oppressions that intermittently impeded her access to them. For example, her success at sex work and her ability to provide for herself depended on the men's desire and availability: her ability to maintain their desired standards of beauty, her ability to sexually perform at a high level, and, additionally, the pay inequity that results because of her race. She and other participants noted that transwomen of color get paid less in sex work than White women (Collins, 2004; Miller-Young, 2014; Mock,

2014). Her ability to be loved (Stage 3) also depends on the potential levels of shame that the men may or may not possess in being involved with and seen publicly with a transgender/transsexual/trans woman. Analysis of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and its connections to Black racial identity development, Black feminist thought, intersectionality, and to this social psychological study of the stigma in the lives of African American transgender women are in Chapter 5. However, the preceding presentation of the adapted measures and content analyses, alongside the theoretical frameworks, was done to explain the methodology of the study.

To ensure that the items of the interview questionnaire were culturally appropriate, basic pilot testing was done with two African American transwomen (who were not included in the final study) and four research colleagues. After piloted and defended as a rigorous dissertation proposal, the study was validated and approved by the dissertation research committee and the IRB (IRB #HS2447/FWA00002797/ IRB00000266).

Limitations

This study offered several important findings to the research literature. Yet there are limitations to the study. One limitation was self-reporting of race and gender to be included in the study. As can be seen, one participant gave an erroneous report of her race, and disqualified herself post-interview. Without having external source corroboration of the women's narratives, I could only base the results on the women's sole testimony. The low financial incentive was a limitation, but most of the women participated in the study because they believed in the project, and because they had

been encouraged by their friends. Censoring was a limitation: some of the women felt they had to ‘act sophisticated’ for me. At times, they were initially guarded with the information they shared. As they felt accepted by me, they revealed very intimate details about their life. For example, when they spoke of their involvement in sex work, they felt more comfortable discussing it after I assured them that I held no stigmas against that profession—whether done by choice or for survival. The sample size is a limitation because it may be not representative of the larger or general population. However, the wealth of information garnered is important, and may reflect a large percentage of African American transwomen. There is a limitation of sampling bias because the snowball sampling allowed for the women to select and recruit their friends. The friendship network is an important feminist aspect, but in terms of sampling, there was the possibility of overly saturated populations and/or positions. I acknowledge my own positionality as a Black feminist, genderconforming, somewhat “stealth” transwoman: my positionality may have influenced the results because my position and identities often made the women feel more comfortable and willing to share their full narratives. There is also a limitation to the method: while it allowed for the women to give their embodied narrative, it was much more difficult to quantify and analyze.

Chapter 4 gives further information on the women and speaks to their selfidentity narratives and the ways in which they connect to the study, to each other, and, overall, how they connect to Black feminist notions of womanhood. The women

also share various oppressions and traumas they have faced, and the consequences of social stigma.

CHAPTER 4

STILL THEY RISE: PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

You may shoot me with your words, You may cut me with your eyes, You may kill me with your hatefulness, But still, like air, I'll rise.—Maya Angelou (Angelou, 1978)

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?
Look at me!—Sojourner Truth (Guy-Sheftall, 1995)

Nineteenth century abolitionist and early women's rights activist, Sojourner Truth's pioneering work is a guiding light for this phenomenological exploratory treatise of African American trans women and stigma. Once Truth escaped slavery, she dedicated her life to speaking against the ills of racism and sexism. Long before intersectionality became known as a theoretical framework, Truth was arguing against the oppression and erasure of Black women and Black womanhood. Similarly to Truth's exclaiming that Black women deserved the same rights as White women and White and Black men, this feminist research is proclaiming that Black trans women are indeed women and deserving of the same rights and protections as both cisgender women and men. Contemporary feminist and queer theorist alike are currently debating what constitutes being a woman and/or female/womanhood (Brooks, 2017; Mock, 2014; Moore, 2012; Jackson, 2016). While the thesis of this research builds from a social-personality psychological stance based on one's personal gender identity (Hyde, 2014) and a Black feminist stance of ones lived

experience and social definition/delineation as a Black woman (Collins, 1991), the reality of the social cognitive perceptions of others in society is ever-present (Quinn, 2006). The social cognitive perceptions of others—particular from those in dominant groups and positions of power—is what causes stigma (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Like many of the women of this study, Truth nobly stood 6 feet tall and she possessed a thunderous bassy-alto voice that roused the debaucherous imaginations of her detractors. Her now eminent “Aint I Woman” speech, was actually in response to the constant jeering she received during her public speeches that insisted that she had to be a man. Truth’s historic declaration and rejection of White racist stigmatization of her race and gender offers a contemporary bridge to understanding the complex experiences of living-out Black womanhood among the African American trans women in this study.

Chapter 4 offers the women’s narrative with brief interjections regarding theory or analysis. Analysis of the study’s findings follows in Chapter 5. Each woman is introduced by her pseudonym, followed by my brief description of each woman, then, each woman’s description of herself. For each woman, the narratives are presented in four semi-structured sections: Race; Gender; Class; and Stigma. The subsection of Stigma addresses the impact of stigma on their lives and their abilities/inabilities to self-actualize and/or reach their hierarchy of needs.

Rose (The Grand Diva)

Rose identifies as over 50. She insisted upon not sharing her exact age. She is very grand and sophisticated in her gestures and speech with some code switching between

trans-ebonics, and cool pose of the 1970's. All of the research participants were offered a meal of their choice, and most chose inexpensive options, however, Rose chose an expensive option because as she put it, "she deserved a nice lunch". She was 30 minutes late for the interview, yet gracious. Most people would describe her as attractive and cisgender because there are no visible signs that she is transgender. Her ability to pass so well affords her the option to conceal the stigma of being transgender (Mock, 2017). Likewise, she appears racially ambiguous to many people, which also allows her to conceal the stigma of Blackness.

Rose described herself as: *old, petite, broke, crazy, talented but gives-up easily, always running from something, always hiding. I'm still very stealthy at times...well most times. I'm more out now than I've ever been. You know, I transitioned long before you were even born! I transitioned in the early 1960's when I was 16, and I've been stealth most of that time... I'm a loner. I'm very social, but reclusive. I used to be a star! Girl, and back then, it was all about being mysterious. Especially for transsexuals. You never wanted anybody to know too much. That's why this interview is good for me. I want to write a book about my life, but I've never really talked about my life. I'm secretive. I'm insecure, though you'd never know it.*

Did I say I was crazy? Girl, it seems the older I get, the crazier I get. It's like menopause with no meno...just pause. Girl, I had a crying spell this morning. Just woke-up feeling bad. I'm old and I'm sharing my apartment with 2 strangers, I just never thought I'd be this age with basically nothing. Chere (French for Dear, a term of endearment that she called me throughout the interview), I want to go back to

school. I want to finish my degree and then become a social worker. I want to work with families of transgender youth. Chere. You know, especially Black families.

Chere, girl, Blacks can be just so damn ignorant! Girl, our people just be so damn ignorant and hateful. Girl, my family was so horrible to me. They are a little bit better now, but my sister can be a real evil bitch. My mother was actually the worst until she died, then my sister took over. Calls me by my old name, calls me he, just low down. And I want to work with Black families before these girls are on the streets like I was.

Race. *Rose describes her race as Black, African American, Native American, Creole. In terms of her racial identity development, she occupies both Stage 2: Encounter, and Stage 5: Internalization and Commitment. Rose occupies both stages because she still has moments/episodes where she encounters her Blackness, while simultaneously having previously internalized and committed to her Blackness. Rose continued: I come from light skin saddy, uppity, Negroes. Creoles! You know what I mean Chere, You Creole! You know Jack and Jill's kinda people. I was born in an exclusive neighborhood in Southern California. But being high-class didn't stop my family nor our community from being low-class in their ignorance. They made me not like Black people for a long time. Black people made me not like Black people for a long time! It wasn't until I was modeling in Paris that I found myself liking being Black and liking Black people. It was the 1970's! It was cool to be Black. Girl, I was a showroom girl for several top designers. They thought I was so exotic with this red hair and these green eyes, girl, I was the shit! And you know, then I was meeting other Blacks like me and Black artists and Black celebrities, and nobody knew I was a*

transsexual, so I was just cool, ya know. Just cool mama. Just cool (She sang the last just cool and motioned her hands). Then in the 80's, as worked slowed, and I was hookin and strippin and trying to go to college, that's when I realized I was Black again, but in a different way? I don't know? I can't quite explain it, but something was different. In Paris, I was special, In the US, I didn't feel special anymore. The older I got I began to see, notice different things. Also, I was in relationships mostly with White men; often abusive relationships. But my best relationship was with a Black man. Ooh Chere, I loved that man! He made me feel like a woman more than any other man. And he was really pro-Black, so he made me pay closer attention to society. But he couldn't quite handle my past, ya know. He just could not bear the thought of someone knowing that I was not born female. He asked me to marry him, and girl, I said yes, and the next day I told him my T (truth). Girl he roughed me up, had rough sex with me, roughed me up some more, then screwed me harder, then we cried, and the next day he was gone. Three years gone in one day. After that is really when I felt like a quote-unquote "Black woman" (she made air quotes and changed her voice). I felt like I had been loved as a Black woman and I felt like I had been left like a Black woman. Then when I started doing community work, I started noticing how different people got treated, and it was like HELLOOOO, YOU'RE BLACK! (she yelled). It was such a rude awakening! They were asking me to clean toilets while my White co-workers, who are the same level as me, were going for coffee runs? I thought to myself, I was once the mistress of a prominent man who donated millions to this same organization, but to

them, I'm just a dumb, under-educated, Black tranny who should be happy to be getting a legal check.

I know I'm Black, and I'm proud of it, but I don't think about it every day. I honestly try to feel as White woman as I can! (She laughed) You know, very commanding. Very entitled. Very Elizabeth Taylor. But every now and then, there comes a situation in which I'm reminded that I am an old black bitch! (She laughed) As Rose mentioned, she continues to have moments of encountering her Blackness, and in an intersectional way, her Blackness encounters are inextricably linked to her gender identity.

Gender. Rose describes herself as a Heterosexual female, woman, post-op transsexual. *I've known I was a woman since I was about 6. I just always felt like a girl. And Chere, you know the more they tried to beat it out me, the more my pussy just came purring out! (She laughed) My family was real terrible to me. Real terrible. My father was the physical abuse and my mother was mental abuse, when I was younger. My father was also abusive to my mother. That's something I rarely tell. As terribly as they treated me, I don't like people knowing all of my family T. You know, I don't want anyone saying I became a transsexual because my father was absent or anything like that. My father moved out when I was 12, and my mother took it out on me, so she became both the mental and physical abuse. She believed he left only because of me. Yes, I was abused because I was a lil trans girl, and I was not loved because I was a lil trans girl. My father beat me unconscious when I was 11. I can't even remember why? I just remember him jumping on me and then it was the next day. I had urinated on myself either during the beating or while I was unconscious. I woke up on the floor and*

I'm assuming they all just walked over me or around me and the piss? I finally grew tired and decided to run away, but my father literally beat me to it: I came home from school one day and I thought the house had been broken into. He had taken things for his new house, which also pissed my mother off. She attacked me as soon as she got home from work. It was of course all my fault. I endured her abuse for another 2 years. Her and High School were both too much, so one day during one of her fits, she threw a glass that narrowly escaped my face and head and shattered on the wall. I was shoeless. I said nothing. I simply turned and headed for the door. She followed after me, and once outside, she began to swing on me. But this time it wasn't a mother beating her child, she was literally swinging like we were two gutter women in a Barroom fight. My only goal was to escape, but I had to fight her off me (Rose began to cry). She had me on the hood of the car in the drive way just beating the hell out of me, and girl, I got her one good time in the face then began to windmill swing like I had seen the girls at school do. My first time fighting someone back and it was my mother (she began to cry harder, which caused a break in the interview). It seemed my mother was enjoying the fight? "You think you a woman, bitch, its only one woman, and 2 bitches in this house!" She was referring to my sister as the other bitch in the house. As I'm walking away from her, my male neighbor "Mr. L" decided it was his turn, so he ran over and started attacking me. My mother cheered it on. His wife screamed for him to stop. He did not. "Mrs. L" and their oldest son "R." who was a year younger than me, but much bigger and taller than me, came over to pull him off of me. Girl, I was bloody, hurt badly, barely conscious, clothes ripped, practically

naked and laying in the middle of the street. R. held his father back, Mrs L. prevented my mother from jumping on me again, and I just remember Mrs. L. yelling in disgust, “girl, that’s your child!” and telling their youngest son “D.” to “help her up”. Mrs. L. had called me a her and insisted that a boy help me up. As much pain as I was in, that was so comforting. Mrs. L. told me years later that she always saw the girl in me, so it was no shock at all that I became a transsexual. She was the 1 adult in the neighborhood who was always nice to me and she never allowed her sons to mistreat me. They never did actually: all 3 of her boys were always nice to me. I had a big crush on the oldest boy R. Girl, he was fine! Grew-up to be even more fine! He knew I had a crush on him too, (She laughed), he was unbothered by it! They were such good boys! But after D. helped me up, I almost fell again, and he put my arm around his shoulder and his arm around my waist and steadied me toward the house, but I stopped him. I couldn’t really talk, but he understood that I was saying I wasn’t going back in there. He walked a few more steps with me to the corner and then I limped the rest of the way on my own. I’m sure I had cracked ribs and probably a lot of other cracked things that healed on their own. I was taken in by some of the girls who would become my trans family. But 2 months later the police brought me home after catching me in the park during school hours. My father had moved back in while I was gone. Apparently, they were happier without me—as my sister informed me. They had filed no missing persons. They did not look at all concerned and in fact, my father told the police they could take me back wherever they had found me. That I was a “no good faggot”. The Policemen—both White men—ignored my father as if he had said nothing. He felt really small, and

of course, as soon as they were out the door he became Cassius Clay! I started screaming for help. The Policemen returned, entered without knocking, and pulled him off of me; he told them again that I was a faggot, and they said “we understand, but he’s had enough. Let him rest tonight.” So he did. They left for work in the morning, and I limped out of there with everything valuable that I could carry including cash! That was my set-up money. This time I was smart! I lived comfortably for a while tricking and sittin on my lil stash. Then I had to start buying hormones, and that’s when my money started getting low, so I had to trick harder to make more money. I couldn’t work. And when it was good, sex work was good. When it was bad, it was horrible. When you are desperate, doing anything with anybody...it’s horrible. When you’re not desperate, and can choose your clients, it’s not so bad. Some of my better boyfriends have been clients, and some were my worst nightmares! Being a pre-op transsexual had its challenges, and I like many of the things that being a sex change has allowed me to do, but if I could do it all over again, I’m not sure I would have the sex change? I don’t regret it, but what I went through to get this pussy, and to take care of this pussy, and it’s not even a new age pussy, I just have hole, I’m not sure it was really needed? I’m not sure it was worth it?

When asked the question: “Did you have any role models growing-up? If so who were they?” Rose responded: *Eartha Kitt! Honey, she played Cat Woman and I wanted to be her! And she was so sexy and seductive! I loved that! I’ve modeled my fishiness after a few women and she was definitely one of the main women. My “trans mother” was definitely a role model and friend and mother (meaning the transgender woman who*

helped me to become trans). I'll refer to her as the Duchess Cambridge...she'd love that!. I really wish you could interview her too! She would love it! Elizabeth Taylor was definitely a role model! Audrey Hepburn. Diahann Carroll. All the grand Dames! And Verushka, Twiggy, and Donyel Luna all made me want to be a model! Honey, Donyel...ooh I loved that girl! You're probably too young to know Donyel, Twiggy, and Verushka, but they were HIGH fashion. I'm very high fashion you know? Don't let this old drab outfit fool you! Honey, I can give you Dynasty. I've always tried to be very classy. Because class gets respect! Passing was extremely important to me when I was younger because passing meant living. Passing meant being happy. And now it's important to me because I'm still mostly stealth. Stealth is not just passing, stealth is when your past is top secret. Girls today get it all wrong. They think that one is stealth if one simply passes. I heard someone say Caitlyn Jenner was stealth and I laughed. I thought, wait, she barely passes even with all that surgery, and everyone knows that she was Bruce! There is absolutely no stealth in that! But her class can buy anything—even the unearned label of stealth! Passing and stealth are part of being high class in my opinion. Certainly, a transsexual can be low-classed and still be stealth or passing, but being low-classed takes far less work. It takes a certain type of woman to pass and be respected—especially if she's Black. You can be ghetto and pass of course, but the ghetto hoodrat is not given the same respect as an upscale Black transsexual. Passing means possibility and options. It means not being stuck on the street corner.

I was never really a whore, but I had to be a whore. I was on the street at 15,

16. Six-fucking-teen. Six-fucking-teen turning tricks. Girl, it still rocks me to my core that I was six-fucking-teen prostituting. I went from Cotillions to sucking dicks in backalleys. It still hurts. I dreamed of getting married and having a perfect life, but instead,

I've been the mistress and the Hoe of men with perfect lives! Mostly for White men. Back in the day, having a White man was a status symbol, and it also meant comfort. I've never been with a White man who wasn't rich! And back then, Black men were a no-no for dating until I met X.(the man she mentions previous). Now, White men are easy to come by and Black men are scarce for relationships. It's funny to think that back then, I had so many Black men wanting to be with me, and I was not at all interested because it seemed impossible. I don't know why? I also can't be with the typical Black man and that's probably why it seemed impossible, because they all seemed so typical. And I guess by typical I mean still niggerish ya know? I need the Ivy League educated kind of Black man. I need me a Barack Obama. Some say I'm a bitch, and I can be, but I've had to be a bitch (she laughed).

I don't know why, but when you asked that question about "Do you see yourself as feminist? What does that mean to you? And all I thought was bitchie? (She laughed) Well, I think that I would say that I am somewhat feminist? I would say I'm about a good 6 (out of 10)? But maybe a 9 (out of 10) on the bitchie scale (she laughed)? I'm not burning my bra, but I'm also not some dumb backwoods church lady who thinks

Jesus is a man so men are better. My mother actually may have said that a time or two? I guess feminist means to me that I stand-up for myself and I stand-up for what's right, but I'm not extroverted or very intellectual about it. Like I know Gloria Steinem, Alice Walker, and those girls, but I'm not deep into it. Like I said, I want to go back to school and get more into that, and take those kinds of classes. Women's Studies? I always thought that was so fish to be in a Women's Studies college course. And you know, maybe have discussions with other women on that kind of stuff. I've never really been myself with my real fish (cisgender women) friends because they don't know my T. (truth), and my trans girlfriends aren't usually sitting around talking about feminism and how they were feminist because they chose sex work. (She laughed) Ya know, I've heard the girls say that? Which I think is crazy. Who wanna choose to sell they ass? Who wouldn't rather have a job? White trans women always talking about crazy shit like that.

I know Janet Mock talks about that kind of stuff too, but she's real about being Black too. I don't know any transsexuals personally that talk about being feminist and selling ass as a feminist move. Maybe Camellia? You're interviewing her right? Well she is real into trans activism, but she's not very refined...(She paused with nervous laughter) and I don't mean that in a bad way, and I'm not trying to be shady, but I guess I mean she wouldn't be discussing these topics in the way someone like Janet Mock would, and I guess that's what I'm hoping to get in a classroom setting. I would love to meet Janet Mock and more girls like her. But see that's my point: Janet is refined and classy so she's gotten things and gone places; Camellia is smart, but, she just don't have that

umph, that classiness ya know? I wish I could have stayed in college, girl. I wish I could have gone all the way like you, but girl, I was just always too afraid of being spooked or someone spilling my T. Girl, back in the day we couldn't get all out paperwork and ID's changed as easily as the girls can now. And girl, one time, my last time, I was enrolled in college, I went to this class feeling all good about myself, and the Professor called the roll, got to my name and said in front the class, oh the Registrar must have made a mistake, they have you listed as male, just go to let them know after class. GIRL, I ALMOST DIED RIGHT THERE (She screamed!). Even remembering it, makes me feel sick and like I want to jump out of this window. I never went back. I just could not bear the pain of someone finding out. Can you imagine? I was a model in Paris! Paris! I wear a size 8 women's shoe! I have a prehistoric pussy! Male? I curse the thought! But to answer your other question, I think that I am moderately close to my gender group; I may be a tad bit closer to real fish because I have more real fish friends, and I might be deeper in my woman identity than my trans identity. I'd say a 10 (out of 10) in woman identity and 6 (out of 10) in trans identity. And I think I'm equally as standoffish with both groups.

Class. Rose pointed out that she speaks about class as being a part of every piece of life because class controls everything. *When I was a model in Europe, I really became aware of class a bit more than race. Because my profession as a model was considered high class, and I could be seen as biracial or White, I was usually treated as high class. I pretended to be White often in Europe. Not in Paris, and places where being Black or mixed was en vogue, but other places in Europe like*

Germany, definitely. I believed that if I could forget my Blackness like I forgot my past, then I could be happier, and in those places, I was. Being lower-classed is always grouped with being Black, so I guess I was trying to forget both? Maybe I picked-up forgetting my Blackness from my parents who always tried to forget that they were Black? They were both 2nd generation college educated and we lived in a good area, and they were part of that generation who thought we could erase Blackness. Both were light-skinned, but still had Black features. My features are less predominantly Black, which my sister still envies. Well, I did have a nose job, but that's strictly between us (she laughed). My sister got all the Black genes, which she is still mad about. Her skin is more caramel, her eyes are dark brown, her hair a brown thick and nappy mess that was permanently damaged by perms, and all her features broad. Not to mention she's been over weight her entire life, so you know she hated me (she laughed). Can you imagine being real fish and your older brother is a beautiful, tall, thin female model in Paris? People would tell her she looked like the boy! (she laughed) See that's why so many real fish hate transsexuals! That's why I don't get too close them because it's always some tea with them being mad because we a lot of times look better! That's why my sister misgenders me in public because she gets jealous of how I look...STILL! My baby brother looks kind of Mexican or Latino, which didn't help him in Southern California much, but does help in other parts of the country because you know most places Latinos get treated better than Blacks. In Southern California, they're not treated much better because they are a big part of the crime down there. But my brother has wavy brown hair, cat eyes like our

father, and mixed features. Most Blacks can tell he's Black, but people of other races not so much.

Race and class are connected because if you can appear let's say Latino like my brother and you're in the right place, you can get over. My brother moved to a place where he is seen as White or Latino or both, and he doesn't have to deal with the issues of class and race because he is pretty well-off. Class is simply part of everything. High class is what helps you achieve things in life. Being a poor Black, ghetto, street walking transsexual gets you absolutely no where in life! NO WHERE (she screamed in rage).

Rose's last statements on class relate to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954), as it suggests that because of African American trans women's unique intersectional identities and intersectional oppressions, that they are unable to obtain their highest goals, and therefore, unable to self-actualize as Maslow would maintain. Additionally, because of her concentration on class throughout her life, it is plausible to suggest that class has been the object that keeps her at a moderate level across all categories (e.g. Blackness, feminist identity, goal achievement, etc...) Having some level of privilege associated with her identities allows Rose to in some ways coast through society. Because she was born into an upper-middle-class family, she does not have a feeling of fighting for or working to overcome poverty like many of the other trans women in this study who were born into lower-classed families. Rose acknowledged feeling poor because she is not rich, yet because she has been able to live somewhat comfortably. She also acknowledges that that comfort along with the need to remain stealth has taken away from her will to achieve her higher educational and professional goals. This

highlights two important points that are germane to this study: First, that although being born upper class in the United States can entitle one to a level of comfort, many African Americans are not born into upper class families. Seven out of the ten women in this study were not born into upper class families. Second, the more one can conceal the stigma of being transgender through stealth, the more comfortable one can live. However, stealth can also work to limit one's goal achievement through fear of being discovered as transsexual. This can be seen in Rose's college experience. These two facts are what constitutes Rose's moderate or neutral score (so to speak) on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954): she neither feels like she cannot achieve the hierarchy of her needs, nor does she feel like she completely can achieve them.

Stigma. All of the participants came into the interview very clear about the idea of stigma and felt that transgender/transsexual stigma and the stigma of Blackness were the reasons for their oppressions, however, they all described stigma and experiences with stigma differently. Rose offered: *Stigma. I have spent my entire life running from stigma. All these questions could have been one question. Girl, you must have planned on interviewing young girls with no real life experience to ask all these questions about experiencing stigma or feeling stigmatized?* (She laughed) *It is nearly impossible for a Black transsexual to answer any of these questions with a NO? Girl the place in between my fingers hurt. That's hard life has been because of stigma. Stealth was supposed to be the shelter from stigma—it was in some ways, but you cannot hide from your mind and the thoughts and fears that produces because of stigma. Black transsexuals can never escape stigma. White transsexuals can because they are White.*

When they are not seen as White women, they are still WHITE MEN! Nobody fucks with White men. Hell, nobody fucks with White women and gets away with it. Stigma is that feeling of constant anxiety. I'm old and pass without question, but there are still those feelings and memories of being discovered as trans. Fears of being incarcerated in a men's prison because male is still on my birth certificate. (Rose paused for a long period and while staring out of the window she began to cry) Stigma makes you not leave the house. Stigma makes you not get out of bed. Stigma keeps you from living. Stigma is a slow, painful death.

Lily (The Actress)

Lily is 52, but publicly identifies as 47. She identifies as a “classically trained stage actress”, and during our time together she performed and displayed a full range of emotions. Her speech depended on the character, mood, or attitude she was trying to convey at each moment. She used trans ebonics often, she burst out into song as if she were in musical theater often, and at other times she was quite melancholy. She arrived 10 minutes early for the interview, and she acknowledged feeling honored to also be taken to lunch. Like Rose, she too passes very well and would be described by most as cisgender. She and Rose are old friends as she put it, but very different in most ways. Lily is very dark-skinned and has not felt beautiful most of her life. Her background is working-middle-class, and she is very humble. While she passes very well she does not see herself as stealth.

Lily described herself as: *old, Black, dark, poor, transsexual, a classically trained stage actress, occasional pornographic actress, sex worker, street walker, a*

sex change, clocky, recovering drug addict who occasionally still parties; I'm an attorney who was disbarred because I was caught prostituting. I don't know? This is hard. Like...I don't have many good things to say about myself, and that makes me feel like I'm being really honest with you, which is something I'm not very good at, and I know this means I don't have a very high opinion of myself and that bothers me. Honestly, I only feel good when I'm at my lil parties, when I'm with my best friend "L", and when I'm on stage. (She began to cry)

Race. Lily identifies as Black, African American, and of African Descent. She also indicated that she feels a connection toward Bahamians, Haitians, and the Congolese, but she has not yet done her ancestry DNA test. In terms of her Black racial identity development, she maintains stages 4 and 5 (Internalization, Internalization and Commitment). Lily began responding to the questions about race with a laugh and song about being Black. Lily offered: *If ya Black get back! Get on back to the end of the line! Negros, Darkies, Niggas, Nigga bitches, Spooks, Blacks, get yo ass on back to the end of the line! Stand on da back of the bus! Lift that bail, tote that hay, say Mistah Whiteman, hey Miss Lady White Mistress, I's a Black Nigga* (She laughed). *Girl, I caint be nothin but Black. Look at me! Girl, if I close my eyes in a dark room you'd walk right past me!* (She laughed) *Being dark-skinned, I never really had a choice to see anything but Black. As a child my family gave me the first harsh reminders that I was Black—and therefore, nothing. Worthless. Ugly. Unwanted by society, undesired even by a family of midnight-dark Negros themselves. We all are mostly dark: the select few family members that reached*

mocha brown, were the favored. The generations after me intermarried a lot, so I have some great and grand nieces, nephews, and cousins who are as light as you, maybe a lil lighter? I have one great niece who may be a lil lighter than you, but that's it. Though my family is very color struck (a colloquial term used in the African American community to mean that someone prefers lighter skin and/or Whiteness over Blackness) and we used to say very mean things to each other, our darkness made us stick together in some ways, and make us work harder in others. My family was nasty to me during my youth because of my young transness, or because they saw me as a nasty sinful faggot, but now, they are respectful if not accepting. My male cousins my age and older were terrible to me! Girl, just down right terrible! Girl, the family would allow them to all beat me up in hopes of making me a man. It, of course, did not work, but it did make me stronger! And LORD, was it needed! (She screamed) Girl, I remember it like it was yesterday! I'm originally from Southern California, but both my parents are from the South. My mother's family is from the South, and I would go there during the summers, and that's where I also went to college. It was the 4th of July and also my favorite cousin's "E"'s birthday. She's like my sister really. We don't talk that often anymore, but back then, and up till she got married we were inseparable! Her husband is not my biggest fan and convinced her that I was a negative influence on her and their sons. I wish she had had daughters! Maybe then he would have let us stay together. He don't know what he took from me in taking that girl away from me. Lord, that was my sister! She was the only one who really understood me. (Lily began to cry) He's a Deacon in the Church hoping to one day

be Pastor. She's still running the Choir. Ooh that girl can sing! But girl, so it was her 15th birthday, and we having a good time just playing and being free, and girl, "Don't Leave Me This Way" by Thelma Houston came on and she and I started performing it like too grown women, and girl, before I knew it they had surrounded us, and I don't even remember what was said, I just remember being knocked to ground and all of them basically trying to kill me! E, was swinging trying to stop them, My Aunt "V", E's mama, ran over to try to save me too, but my uncles held her and E, then, stopped it momentarily. My uncle "P", was always the worst to me, and he decided to basically make it a fight club. He made me try to fight all 9 of my male cousins. Girl, I was a big girl for my age, but girl, 9? 9 big niggas? Girl, I got through about 3 before I was completely bloody and on the ground and couldn't move and my Aunt V was screaming at the top of her lungs for help. Girl, it was like some slavery shit! One of the neighbors called the Police because they thought someone was attacking my Aunt. When the Police got there, ALL the other adults including my Grand Parents tried to make it seem like a children's spat that got out of hand. They hid me, my Aunt V and E in the house, and it was like no big deal. Auntie V and E held me, they called me girl, they cleaned me up, they loved me. (She began to cry)

Girl, that was a painful thing. So my first ideas about being Black was being hated. But Auntie V literally made me look in the mirror every day and tell me I love myself, and tell me I was smart, and special, and talented. She made both E and I do it. So both of us knew we were dark, Black, big, tall, and that many people were against us,

but we knew we were strong and special. My mother who is Auntie V's older sister was not so optimistic. She knew I was smart, and that was my saving grace for her, but she felt ashamed of me and burdened by me. Her insults were always preceded by Black, dark, big nigger. So if she was mad at me, I was never just a jennywoman (old black slang for gay) I was a big Black nigger jennywoman. I guess you would say she was abusive, but back then, everyone else was worse, so she didn't bother me all that much. She was actually more absent than anything. She was a nurse, and she really loved her career more than anything. She worked as much as possible. My father was in the Military, so he wasn't around much. When he was around, he was completely embarrassed! Ohmygod, he was so ashamed! Girl, it used to hurt me to my heart the way he used to look at me and scream at me. He would make me exercise until I passed out. I was not an athletic child, so when he was gone, I would get a bit heavy, but when he came home, girl, it was like being anorexic and bulimic without any doing of my own. I couldn't eat. Just water and the occasional piece of fruit or vegetable. I'd lose massive amounts of weight. He told me he hated me several times. That he wish I'd never been born. That he wish my mother had another miscarriage. That I was his punishment for cheating on my mother. Girl, he didn't have to beat me physically—though he did several times— because, just the way he'd talk to me was enough to make me cry. But he did teach me how fight! He trained me like a military special agent. I've rarely lost a fight because of him.

He didn't come to any of my graduations, none of my plays or anything at school. He was just too ashamed! When I turned 18, he was done. I turned 18 before I

graduated high school, and on my 18th birthday, he gave me an envelope with \$1000 in it and said he was done with me. I was dead to him and good luck. I turned 18 on a Friday and he was gone by Saturday. My mother cried when she came home to the note he left. Then, after a few hours, she looked at me and said, "And you like men on purpose? On purpose? Aint nobody gon love you! You a big Black nigga, and aint no notha nigga gon love you! I'm a bitch and I caint get one to love me, so what makes you think one gon love you? You see this, (she held up my Dad's letter) niggas don't love nobody but themselves, and you want to waste your life being a faggot so you can suck they dicks and take they dicks up yo asshole? I barely wanted ya Daddy no good Black nigga dick up in me, and you voluntarily wants that?" And she burst out into laughter. Every single message I got growing up was that I was Black and worthless! But Auntie V made me believe that I could be Black and beautiful and anything else I wanted to be. So I did believe it. So even now, even when I feel my worst, I know that I'm Black and strong, and I'm gon make it!

When asked the question: Did you have role models growing up? And if so, who were they? *Girl, yes! What Black transsexual doesn't? My Auntie V definitely was a role model for me. She was tall, dark, thin, pretty, nice, sweet, funny, just an all around joy! She had my Uncle "L", they had E, they were just happy. Uncle L is Haitian, and he said that I was born with a girl spirit, that I wasn't macici (Haitian derogatory slang for gay) but the others can't understand that because they are not Haitian. Loved Uncle L too. Esther Rolle: LOVED her (She screamed). She was a classically trained Actreez! Millie Jackson! Nell Carter! Della Reese. Cicely Tyson.*

Diahann Carroll. Sylvester. Girl, I loved me some Sylvester! And girl, my idol of idols, Patti LaBelle! Oooh girl, I love me some Patricia Holt LaBelle! Girl, Patti is what kept me going. Patti made me feel loved! Girl, I put on "You are my friend" and I just know she got me. I got my courage from her. When people used to treat me bad in the streets girl, sometimes I would just start singing a Patti LaBelle song at the top of my lungs and just walk away! (She sprang into song. She sang and performed a few songs before she returned to the interview.)

Gender. Lily, identifies as a transsexual, transgender, trans, woman, postoperative transsexual. She indicated that she is mostly heterosexual, but somewhat fluid depending on the situation. She maintained: *Um, well, if I'm high and I'm at one of my "lil parties" and one of the girls wants to do a lil bulldaggin (slang for lesbian sex) or a scene calls for it, or somebody is paying, then, yes, I'm going to be fluid. (she laughed). My best girl friend "L", who is really like my sister, we bulldagg sometimes. It's great. She is a co-star at my lil parties. I know you wondering what that means, but girl, I'm the leading actress in a weekly sex party. And L is my main co-star. Sometimes we might have another girl, our good friend "M" or this other girl "R" is friends with "J". The parties started as me trying to find a way not to kill myself. Girl, I had just had my sex change at 45. Girl 45...yes, forty-motherfuckingfive. Girl, what the fuck was I thinking? Girl, for 5 years I thought it was the worst decision I had ever made. Girl, pussy did not work! Girl the maintenance! Girl, I just don't even know where to begin? Girl, I just don't know what to say. Having a sex change first of all changed absolutely nothing! Girl, I was*

still seen the exact same way, and it was just so painful and so worthless. They are so lying when they say they can make a pussy like natural! Girl, so I went through it for about 4 years. Got physically ok, then started coming back together. Girl, so I started going to straight bars more because I felt more comfortable ya know? I mean even though I knew I was still clocky, I felt security in having a pussy. So in that regard it helps. Girl, I had also started smoking weed again. I had been on hard drugs for 10 years, sober 5 years until the sex change, then needed weed again. So one Friday night before turning 50 I stopped in at this mostly Black older crowd Bar, and it was great! Girl, I had such a good time! So I started going pretty regularly. Went for my 50th birthday and had a blast! Girl, so I finally met a guy there. I thought he was going to be just a one time thing because I blew him in the alley and made out with him. So girl he actually called me the next day and we went out. We had sex that night and it was an overall really good time. So girl, the next week I go back to the Bar he met me there, and about an hour later his friends come, and girl, they clocked my tea. I don't know if fish told them I was a tranny or one of the guys figured it out, because it happened so fast: he came back from the bathroom and asked me was I a man, and I said no, but my voice began to shake cuz I was scared, and girl he punched me in the face and knocked me on the bar, and girl, like instinct I grabbed the glass and threw it in his face and the drink blinded him and glass broke, so he was stunned, and I ran! Girl, people was throwing their drinks on me as I tried to run away, trying to trip me, trying to grab me, I had to tussle with this guy outside to get a way. And what I couldn't understand was he had fucked me in my pussy, how could

ask me if I was a man? So girl, that night weed wasn't good enough, and I called this dealer that I knew who knew I was trans, and I told him I'll do anything you want if you hook me up with some blow. He told me come over. He told me he also directs porn and he could host sex parties if I wanted him to pimp me out. He told me that he'd take less money in exchange for drugs, so instead of a typical 20-30% pimp fee he'd take only 15%, supply what drugs I needed only for the weekend because he wanted to see me stay pretty clean and on my feet, and this could be extra money, and a way to avoid going back to the streets. Girl, I cried. He saw how much pain I was in, and he cared for me. Even though we have sex sometimes he calls me his lil sis. R introduced me to my best friend L. She is cisgender, but also a woman like me: a Black woman who got lotta education, had a successful career, and lost it all to drugs, prostitution, and everything else. R met L in rehab. The three of us and M are like a family. A weird family, but a family. All of us have sex occasionally. R basically pimps us all out. But we spend every holiday together and really love each other. M is also cisgender female. My lil parties as I call them is basically my way of living out my dreams: sometimes I do burlesque performances and then sex party, and sometimes just sex party. The sex parties really helped my self-esteem, my sense of belonging, and it helped me physically. It helped my self-esteem because for the first time in my life I was wanted by all these men of color! Black men, Latin men, Asian men, you name it! They don't know I'm transsexual, they just think I'm an "ugly" woman? An ugly fat woman with big saggy tits, a big fat ass, and a few holes that she is willing and hoping to fill. Girl, my pussy was almost completely closed again even

with diolation! And that first night, R got me high and fucked me with his big ole Bahamian Black man dick to get me ready, and it was so painful! Thank God I was high! I got higher, then, it was lights camera action, and girl, that first weekend it was three other guys. Girl, three big ole Black men. Girl, I went from a sex change pussy that was barely open, to having two big blacks dick in me at the same fucking time! Girl, I could not walk on Monday. R took care of me; he sat me in a ice tub and everything. And ever since, I've been doing my lil parties and making my pornos. Girl, I'm 52 years old, I'm a fat Black ugly bitch, but I'm a fucking sex symbol. Bitch, I'm Millie Jackson, I'm Vanessa Del Rio! For the first time in almost 15 years I have "extra" money in my pocket. I'm still poor, but I aint po! My bills paid, I got a nice living situation with L. I'm working as a part time as a paralegal...mostly under the table, but still, I'm using my law degree and I am making it, and I am happy. Would I be happier if I could have just bypassed street hooking and being disbarred, and everything else that came along with being Black and transgender, Um HELL YES! Would I love to be performing in off Broadway shows and revivals instead of doing sex-show-karaokestrip tease shows in my big brother's house, HELL YES! (she exclaimed) But this is life as a Black transsexual, an old Black transsexual. I had two family members who loved me even through my transition, but who finally felt ashamed of me for being a two bit crack hoe prostitute losing her law license because she trying to make money to buy drugs to help her sex work, so she can buy hormones to help her look more like a woman so she can pass and finally be accepted, and my job as a lawyer is only paying my mortgage and my car note because I'm living

above my means trying to feel good about myself. So I lost everything. That's being a Black transsexual woman. You lose everything. Everything. My White girl friend that I went to law school with, who first introduced me to hormones, oh honey, she transitioned easily, and she found her swarthy Greek rich man, and got married and lived happily ever...dick and balls and all. No sex change. She worked the streets too honey. She was ole high paid tranny fish honey. But somehow, if a group of us were about to get arrested, somehow she was always let go? Somehow even though she was arrested, it never ended up in her record? She stopped talking to me when I started hitting rock bottom. She said I was too bad for her image. In terms of gender group connectedness, I would say I'm about a 8 (out of 10). I feel very close to my two or three cis women, and I'm not as close with many transwomen, but to the ones that I know, I am close to. You're interviewing Rose and Camellia right? They would be really good for this study, and I'm sure they will enjoy this as much as I am. Rose is hilarious! Miss Diva! Girl, she don't bother me. She thinks she so much...Miss High and Mighty. She only mess with me because I'm a lawyer. You know she don't really use the Black girls...well the dark girls. Well, I guess she do, but ya know she real, high society, I'm light skin, I look White, I was a model in Paris...girl, go somewhere and set yo old ass down.

Girl, Camellia just idolized her, and she looks so far down her nose at Camellia. Camellia don't seem to mind either. It's Camellia thinks its cute or funny when Rose says something insulting to her. She thinks its just keke sister shade, and I think to myself, no bitch, she really thinks you're a hot ghetto mess! But the three of us are

like sisters (She laughed). We've all been through it. No matter how fancy or high society, we've all been through it. We've all been on the streets. We've all been beaten like dogs. We've all been raped. My Uncle P started having sex with me when I was 10 years old. My cousins started having sex with me around 7? The same cousins and uncle who were out there fighting me, are the same men who stuck their dicks in every hole in my body. My Uncle P was mad at me because I wouldn't allow him to have sex with me anymore in private while bashing me in public. I told him I'd fight him if he touched me again. That was a month before the party. He couldn't beat me by himself, so he had all them jump me. It was fine though...I bet you I fought three of them straight up like a real motherfuckin woman! And they never touched me again. Years later I got my Uncle P back: I paid four crack heads to beat him up, rob him, and stick a bottle or stick up his asshole. They chose an industrial broom stick. That motherfucker was in the hospital crying, saying "Why would they do this to me? Why would anybody do this to me?" (she laughed continuously for several minutes!)

When asked about her connections to feminism, Lily responded: *Yes, I feel very feminist. I'd say a 9 (out of 10). I mean how can you be a Black transsexual and not be? Especially these days when we are so close to getting equal rights! This is why I went to law school. I wanted to be an actress, a Broadway actress initially, so I studied theater and music and political science in college. I knew I could debate. I knew I had a great voice. I knew I could act, but I wasn't born in the right body, and I wasn't pretty enough to be an actress...then. In college, I went to a Historically Black*

College (HBCU) in Florida. I was in the band, in the choir, honey, I was that faggot who was unbothered. Honey, I would fight the boys and everything. And my sistercousin E was there with me, so honey nothing mattered. Then our senior year she got with her now husband "D". who went to the HBCU that we played for Homecoming where they met. He and I were cool up till they got married, then he started trippin. Then I started transitioning, then, he really started trippin, then she had their sons, and then he started threatening to leave her and take the boys if she didn't stop associating with me. He told her we could have holidays only and I couldn't be around the boys at all. She is very feminist too, but I think she's a bit more womanist? Like ya know, she puts him first, and she looks down on the sex work thing, and that's very church woman womanist to me. Like I feel like she and a lot of Black women just don't want to be oppressed by nobody else but Black men. Like I think she like being oppressed by him. Like, she is so strong and so successful in her own right, and he so small compared to her literally in height, and figuratively in status, but she submits to him so completely and it kills me. I could never do that. That's why I probably haven't had a successful relationship? I like to do my own thing. And I feel like that's feminist. Like, if I get a man right now, he has to accept that I am a classically trained stage actress and I am pursuing my dreams as an actress, and I am doing my shows. And I kind of like having sex with multiple men Friday-Sunday. I like my big brother R having sex with me whenever he wants to. I don't know why but that makes me feel special to him? Like, I just feel that he loves me. And I feel like our relationship is feminist. I can exactly explain quite how, but

something about is liberal and expansive and allows me to be completely myself, completely me. I think that's Black feminism, but I can't quite explain it ya know? I'm just myself now, and I'm just doing me. Things could be better, but I'm a woman now, I'm living my dreams...well kind of my dreams. I'm looking on the bright side! (she laughed) But feminism kind of opened the door to what we, the transsexual girls are now seeing in the way of rights. The gay men's movement, and sometimes lesbian, never bisexual movement was not feeling us honey. They were not trying to give us our rights, and it's the women's movement that has made space for us. I don't feel LGB no way. I'd rather be in the women's movement. Black transsexuals still got it bad you know. And its so bad for us we need to be with the Black Lives Matter movement. We need to be Black Power! Because let me tell you something honey, these White trannies and transmen, they don't care about us! I've had my own White trans friends show they ass on me. I've had White boyfriends show they ass on me. Don't nothing feel worse than to have a White man who done came up inside of you, turn around and call you an nigger. I've had Johns want to call me nigger while fucking me. That was \$500\$1000 right there. If you want to fuck me and call me nigger, then motherfucker you gon pay a hefty price for it! I think that somewhere some there is someone out there going through these same things, and I think she is a Black woman too. Real Black fish and trannies go through a lot of the same things! Look at my best sister L! Me and girl got mirroring lives. She don't have kids, never been married, difficult childhood, everything in common. She gets the Black woman treatment, and when I'm lucky so do I! She is gracious enough not steal my show and

to be my side kick because the boys really do love her. She is light skin and prettier than me. But she can't take dick like me nor dance like me. She can sing, but she can't perform and shake down the house. And she's nasty but she's more quiet nasty. Like she's like a kitten, and I'm like a big ole mountain lion just popping up in your backyard....well in my backyard! (she laughed).

Lily indicates that she has a high gender group connection and also that she is high in feminist identity. An intersectional content analysis would suggest that because Lily does have high gender group connectedness that that communal connection positively affects her outlook on life and through her many adversities. For example, she recalls being rejected by her mother, father, and most of her family, but she states that her Aunt, her cousin, and her Black female role models are what kept her going and “gave her courage.” As we turn toward Lily’s attitudes and responses on class, a cross analysis with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and Black feminist theory in Lily’s life quality can be expected.

Class. Lily stated that she was trained as an attorney, and that she is also an actress. She maintains that she lives below the poverty line and that most of her income is paid in cash and undocumented. Lily also indicated that she was raised middle class by a mother who was a nurse and a father who served in the military. She grew-up in a nice area in Southern California, with no siblings and having gone to predominantly White, affluent public high achievement schools excepting her undergraduate education which was at an HBCU. Lily continued: *I went to the same HBCU that my mom and Auntie V went to. All 7 of my grandmother’s kids went to*

HBCU's: 6 finished, the 1 who didn't was of course the family fuck up, Uncle P, and my mother's other 4 brothers went to the same HBCU where they all played sports, and all joined the same fraternity. All the classic Black bourgeoisie things to do. My Auntie V pledged a sorority as well. My mother was a book worm. Always to herself. I think my mother only married my father so that she could escape my Grandparents very strict religious household. My mother was a 30 year old virgin still living at home with her parents before she met my dad. My Grandparents' rule was that their daughters has to be married before they move out of the house. My father was in the Military and moved to town, went to Church, met my mom, and a month later she was married...and free to go. I came five years later after a few miscarriages. My mother and Aunt V are ten years apart but both only had 1 child a few months apart. Aunt V was happily married and in love with my Uncle, the Bahamian Cassanova who rocked her world. Honey, I would stay with them in the Summers, and girl Auntie V would be in there moaning! She would tell E and I to always get a man with money and who can love you right. If he aint got no education, and cant take care of you then he aint for you! Period. End of discussion. Don't worry about looks. Looks are a bonus. You need a good man who take care of you. And when yall having sex it cannot just be about him. E would be embarrassed, but I would love it! Auntie V isn't super crazy about E's husband because she makes more money than him, but otherwise, she approves because he works hard. I feel like I have both white and blue collar mentalities? I think my family did too. I think we work like blue collar steel mill, sharecropping Negroes, but try to be white collar. I think we too dark to be

white collar. Like I guess you can be dark-skinned and white collar, but usually they just look stupid. Like Clarence Thomas...its like nigga, you look stupid trying to pretend you're white. And I know that light skin doesn't mean white collar...necessarily...but you know, if you're dark, you kind of have to be a lil ghetto. It's kind of like your badge of honor; like people know "that bitch can fight" because I'm a big Black woman. As an actress my skin color in a liability because I cant get certain roles. In porn, I'm always the nasty filthy whore cougar slut. I'm never the nice little dainty girl being ravaged. Even between me and L, she was born with a pussy, yet, I have to take it deeper and longer and harder than her in my man made barely functioning pussy. I take it anally all the time too. She only takes it anal sometimes. She's light skin though. And she gets the sweet innocent house wife roles. She also gets more 1-on-1 roles. I get paid more for gangbangs, but people aren't as excited in seeing me 1-on-1 because I'm not considered pretty. Pretty and light skin equals high class, white collar. I feel like I'm really loving my life right now, but before my acting career took off, I was miserable, I was suicidal! Ooh Lord I was so close so many times to just ending it! (She began to cry and scream but insisted on not stopping the interview tape. She wailed and she moaned, and she meandered between monologues from plays and then she'd come back into her story;) Girl, I know I talk about my acting career like I'm Halle Berry and I just won an Oscar, but I have to. I have to see it as this big great accomplishment because if I don't then that means I really don't have anything else. My new successful career and my part time career as an attorney...ehem...paralegal...and my family consisting of my brother and two

sisters and our family business is high class. We are in real life a pair of misfits with rough Black, traumatic past lives that we are all trying to escape and live freely, but in my pretend world that keeps me going, we are perfect.

Lily's explanation of class, much like her other experiences demonstrate the linkages between race, skin color, class, gender, and how they are intersectional. Lily's class analysis also highlighting various of layers of classism in the African American community that further alters and shapes the experience of being Black in America. The idea of "not being allowed" to do certain things just because you are Black and middle class like not being allowed to move out of your parent's home until you were a married woman. Lily has internalized and committed to the depth of rich layers of the Black experience and has chosen to use her Blackness as her resiliency. Likewise, she relies on her strength as a Black feminist woman as her resiliency; but sadly, she admits that she is able to keep her positive outlook, and thus, her ability to obtain the hierarchy of her needs by pretending that her life situations that are shaped by oppression, are actually positive circumstances that are allowing her to survive. While her Black racial identity and Feminist identities are high, and though she is technically achieving as high as Stage 5: Self Actualization on Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs she admits that working in sex work and having the challenges that she has had because she is a Black transsexual woman is not her actualized self; it is not her true goal; and that obtaining her true goals would have required some part of her identity to be more consistent with Whiteness.

Stigma. *Do I think I have faced stigma because I am Black transsexual? Hell Yes! I can't tell you one thing about myself that is not stigmatized and that is not related to me being Black or being me trans or me being a woman. My whole entire life my entire existence has been marked by stigma. I was never even really loved as a baby. My mother told me she wanted a light baby. My Grandparents were mean to me because I was feminine. I'll be honest with you, I think they knew my Uncle P was having sex with me. I mean that first time he put his whole big dick in me, I swear I screamed loud enough for the whole state of Florida to hear, but nobody heard anything? And if I had said something the shame would have been on me. Even in law school, I came in with a 4.0 GPA yet my talents were down played and I was dismissed as the affirmative action admittance. Even when I am giving my best performance taking two dicks with a third in my mouth, the other guys are cheering me on saying things like "you a know a fat black bitch a do anything" ...even when I'm doing my absolute best at something my race, gender, or class are always present and stigmatizing. My mother tried to forget her dark-Black-femaleness with work. She was a great nurse: at the Hospital she could be everything she dreamed of...until they reminded her that she was still a Black nigga bitch. Some White patients even called her that to her face. I called her Mama, but she loved the ones who called her out her name more. I loved her, but I wasn't good enough. Cleaning sick people's nasty shitty asses brought her more joy than I ever could. She never loved me. I was too dark, too faggoty, too womanish. When I called her to tell her that I was going to be a woman, a transsexual, when I came home for Christmas, she simply hung up the phone and*

never answered again. Auntie V told me she died basically from working herself to death. She literally dropped dead at work. I hope I am lucky enough to either die peacefully in my sleep, or joyfully on stage delivering the best performance of my life! (Lily began to sing “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” as if she were Patti LaBelle; she played the background music on her cell phone and literally gave a finale performance to the interview.)

Camellia (The Activist)

Camellia is 45 years old. However, she appears to be much older. She appears labored most times, worn out, defeated; but in short bursts of remembering her true self, she is full of energy. When she is protesting before an audience, she is fiery!—or as she put it, “*when I’m in front the crowd, when I’m fighting for our rights or when I’m Femceeing, it’s like I don’t feel it anymore...I don’t feel that tired weight up on me...but most times, I just feel so tired. So overwhelmed.*”. She arrived to the interview out of breath because she said she had run from the train station in an attempt to not be late. While I calmed her fears of there being a problem because of her one minute tardiness, she still reacted as if the interview was of utmost importance, and something she did not want to lose. Once she calmed down, she asked if she could get comfortable? Once encouraged to be her authentic self, she removed her shoes, then her hair: she entered wearing what she described as a “*synthetic lil piece nothin wig*”. It was honey-blonde with darker roots cut into a bob. She offered, *Yea Rose told me that I pass more wearing a wig and that this honeyblonde color would be best because it would make me look more mixed or*

white-ish, and that would make people leave me alone. She was right. I don't pass wearing my own hair for some reason? And this wig right here (She had another hair piece in her purse) is really my favorite, but Rose said this braided wig make me look like a tranny. She was right. I get clocked down in this braided wig, so I wear this at night if I'm trying to catch me a lil something or make me a few dollars. But braids is me! I feel like myself with these long braids and some big earrings and some dark lipstick! That's me! She modeled the braids for a few moments, then returned to her natural hair. She removed her brassier and shapewear as well and changed into a West African kente-cloth printed caftan.

Her language and speech were as varied as her moods and mannerisms. Typically speaking in trans-ebonics, she at times tried to project grandeur and sophistication, noting, “*see I can give you White girl teas too!*”. At other times, her speech was incomprehensible? There were moments when she would become excited, angry, or upset and speak her own language. There were moments when she sat gazing out of the window and somewhat talking to herself. She said that she has been clinically diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (as well as additional disorders), and some of her behaviors or a result of PTSD. She also shared that being in solitary confinement while in prison made her talk to herself out loud without realizing it. In terms of her Black racial identity, she occupies both Stages 3 (Immersion-Emersion) and Stage 5 (Internalization-Commitment). She acknowledged that she is “*Black before anything else*”. Camellia described herself as: fat, Black, light skin, nice, sweet, a soldier, transgender, woman, graduate student working on

my second masters! Kind of disabled, a sex change. Lonely, tired, disgusted, a fighter, a singer, Rapper, Activist.

Race. Camellia began: *Ooh yea girl, I can already see Imma like this interview cuz girl you speakin my language. These is my kinda questions girl! Girl I get so tired of being asked about HIV and sex work by these damn researchers. Girl they got 1 group, a buncha Asians, working for the CDC or 1 of them big organizations that do research on us seems like every month...every month they offering us money to talk about how many dicks we done sucked, how many raw dicks we done had...you know got White bitches interviewing us asking, (she changed her voice) "um so how many unprotected anal sexy partners have you had in the past 6 months?"...see I can give you White girls teas too! (She laughed) And I'm like bitch first of all, I gots a pussy too, and second of all, what hoe you know go around counting how many raw dicks she done had exactly. (She laughed) But yea, so I identify as Black, African American, of African Descent. I say that woman of color bullshit too, you know when I'm around them, but girl, aint no sucha fuckin thing as a women of color. It's Black women...maybe Brown Latinas depending on which day you catch them hoes, cuz you know them hoes can be racist against Black folks too...then its all them other basically White hoes with tans that wanna go around claiming women of color status when that this helps them get ahead. Them bitches only be looking out for they own kind. But you know I play the game, and I gives it right back to them hoes. I don't have a problem with minorities, ya know, but I don't trust them hoes. Being from California, well, being Black from Southern California, I*

grew-up seeing them hoes get over and get better treatment. Even though back then, in the 70's and early 80's we were a lil bit mo connected. We were a lot better to each other. But somebody told them Asians they was White and they pinned the Blacks and Latinos against each other, then they start bringin East Indians and all them, then they started treating all of them better, even though it's Blacks who did all the work! I mean all the work! Slavery, civil rights, you name it, we did it, but we still on the bottom, still getting killed, still in jail, still getting beat, raped, all kinda shit, meanwhile they asses is livin a fucking life Riley! And then, wanna be mad at us for being mad. Girl, even when I was in prison, it was like that. Very segregated! And of course, the Whites were treated way better. Caint even be equal in prison? I'm light skin, and I guess it has helped me in some ways that don't really matter, but I'm still Black and get treated like all other Black women. My granny used to say I was lucky to be so light, and I couldn't see what she meant when I was younger. But now I can. Even though I get treated like shit because I'm trans, I still notice a bit of a difference. You know like when I wear my blonde wig, I can feel the difference. Like it's sad that that lil synthetic piece of nothing \$40 wig gets me treated better because it make me look more White at first glance. You know Lily, Lily is dark and I see how people treat her versus me, or how well people treat Rose versus me or Lily. Sometimes I wish I was darker because I feel like I act dark; Like, I know it's wrong to say this, but I'm ghetto, Imma hard, project type chick, and if I were dark I feel like it would be easier to be me? I feel like because I'm so light people expect me to be better, proper, prettier, ya know? Like I feel like I'm more scrutinized because I'm

light. Like people tell me oh you could be so pretty if you just tried. And I'm like I'm doing the fucking best I can! I don't know how to put on makeup! I don't know how to do my hair all fancy. My feet big, so I can't wear lil cute fishy shoes, I can't walk in heels! Like my feet not that big, I only wear an 11 in women's but they man-shaped, so they real wide. I'm not very tall, but I have broad shoulders and big tits, so I'm like Humpty Dumpty, if I wear heels, I'll fall down! (She laughed) But people expect me to be this pretty glamour girl just because I'm light with light eyes and straight/curly hair. My hair is short and kinda thinning, but I like it. I wish I could wear it and pass. It's too weak to get real braids, so that's why I like my braided wig. Girl, I paid \$800 for that wig: it's a full lace human hair with the weave added, so if I ever wanted to undo the braids, bitch, I got a whole notha wig! HA! Bitch hi-you doin'? (She Snapped her fingers, rolled her eyes, and swung her head in excitement) Ooh I love that wig! It look so natural, but it makes my face look harder? I guess cuz its so dark? Aint that funny how a piece of hair can make you look more feminine or female or down right manly? Aint that shade? That's why so many Black women wear fake hair. Because if we don't then everybody say how ugly and hard we are. Rose is fucking beautiful, but she still wear a lil clip in or some kinda extra hair to make herself look super fishy. Lily always got some ole piece a hair on her head! That bitch really think she Patti LaBelle, and just like Patti gots a new attitude, Lily ass gets a new attitude. My grandmother had her two wigs: one for Church on Sunday, and 1 for every day. She used to say, "as long as they make wigs, aint no need to be lookin bald-head and ragety". What's fucked up is that we all believe we

look bald-headed and ragety without long European looking hair, or long hair period. Not just cuz the White man say it, but because everybody say it. Everybody really think Black women are ugly unless we look White. I feel like my grandmother loved me mostly because I was so light. It's like the gay thing or trans thing didn't bother her because she saw me as her pretty almost white baby. She loved the lil White children, she raised about three generations of them. Didn't love them when they got grown tho because they was still lil ole nasty pecka woods. Ole White Honky bitches! My biological father was half White. His mama was raped by a White man, so there came the White. Daddy was pretty! My grandmother even said, if nothing else, my daddy was pretty. She didn't blame my mama for loving him, but she did blame my mama for having three babies for him. She offered my mama abortion money for all three of us...my granny told me to my face that she offered my mama abortion money and that she was dumb for not taking it. She said she wanted to save my mama from the same burden she had...raising children by herself. My mama didn't raise us by herself: her and my daddy were happy and high together until they both dropped dead. Both had OD'd few times, both had diseases, we not sure what exactly killed either one. My mama was the singer in my Dad's band; he got my mama on drugs, heroine to be exact, and both of the them was dead by 35. My daddy at 34. My mama the year later at 35. My grandmother raised me from almost 8 until she died when I was 16. Been on my own since then. Dropped out of school, started selling drugs, and did good for about 10 years. My uncle got me into selling drugs. I dropped out of school cuz I was

tired being bullied. I also wasn't doing good in school. It's like I went from smart to dumb over night. It's like as soon as I realized I was gay...or trans...back then I didn't know trans was a thing, I just thought I was a gay who wanted to be a woman. And being gay or trans where I'm from was a NO-NO! NO MAM! Girl, as soon as I hit about 12, it was fights every day! My grandmother had my uncle come teach me how to fight. My uncle saw my being a punk as a good thing because he said police wouldn't fuck with me. He was right. I didn't get caught until I tried some crazy shit!
(She laughed)

My granny was from the South...came to California searchin for better, ya know. Like they all did. But instead of better, she only got as far as another White woman's kitchen. She was Domestic. She could do anything! Anything she saw once she could remember and do! Ooh I loved that woman! Her love was so unconditional...for me that is. My mother, my mother's sister and brother, and my mother's other two kids, not so much. I tell you my skin color saved me with her. When my mama was found face down in the gutter one Sunday morning, the first time she OD'd, and child welfare needed to place me and my sister and my brother, my grandmother decided she would take me, and my aunt who was 26 at that time, and raising a dead woman's five kids had to take my brother and sister too. My mother, brother, sister, aunt, and uncle are all darker. My sister and brother kinda brown, but to her, that was still dark, and not good. She did not like Black people...well... dark Black people. But she loved light skin Blacks!

I think for a hot minute I didn't like Black people either? Well maybe for a few hot minutes? Had nothing to do with skin color...well sometimes it did because darkskin Black do be mo ignorant! Black people be so fuckin ignorant! Well...niggas...niggas were always more hateful toward me for being gay or transgender, or different. But Black people sometimes been my safe space too? Same with Black women...some done did some hateful shit to me, but for the most part, it's Black women that had my back. Matter of fact, it's usually always been Black women who have my back. Black women that make me love our people so much. Don't get me wrong, I love me some Black menseses, ooh I love me some Black men, I love me some Black dick! But them niggas be evil! I'm telling you, that's who fuck our shit up. It's always a man of any species. Bitches, we be chillin, but niggas always gotta fuck some shit up ya know?

I don't really mind White people, my housemate is one of my bestest friends and she's White. But she real though. She said transitioning made her realize how fucked up things were, and how fucked up and racist she was when she was a White man. She can see now how easy everything is for her, so she really helps me out, ya know. She let me live with her for free, and she even buys groceries most times. Lily and Rose say I'm her "house girl" meaning kinda her slave because I'm not really living there for free, I do keep the house, and do all the chores. And sometimes if I have a date or a client who wants a threesome she joins in. They say she still ole massa, but I don't mind. I guess its some Domestic shit I got from my granny? (She laughed).

She's really into trans activism too, so we have that in common, and she aint like most White trannies, she stand's up for Black trannies. She always stands up for me! Like even at the like the Grocery Store or something, people will be trying me, or trying to make fun of me, and honey, she will turn it the fuck out! She will carry on so bad that we get shit free! Bitch will sue in a minute too! And you know people fear her because she still kinda has that rich White man look...(She laughed) and I don't mean that as shade. She knows what she gives and she's ok with it. We both have had surgeries to look more female, and I think we do, but unfortunately, people still really clock us. I hate it! I hate being clocked! The only difference is, when they clock me it's fierce drama. But when they clock her, they still call her Mam and give her respect! She don't really have to pass. No shade! She can do the bare motherfuckin minimum and people will live for her. This bitch used to look like a straight-up man in a dress with a beard and no tits, and people would be like "oh you look beautiful! I'm so proud of you!" and I would be next to her with big silicone titties looking good, and people would be calling me a ugly man! It's so much easier being White! Sometimes I do wish I was White or at least as grand and mixed looking as Rose. I'm light, but because I'm naturally hood people can still tell I'm Black and my features are Black and more hard. Rose...that bitch look like a fucking mixed movie star. When she gets all done up, that bitch looks amazing, and she got that White woman attitude down! I just love watching her! I kinda idolize her. But I don't want to be White. I like being Black. I love our culture and our history! I love us!

When asked the question: Did you have any role models growing up? If so, who were they, Camellia responded: *Girl yes, of course! Who doesn't? My grandmother was my first role model. She's where I got my work ethic! And "R" my housemate can tell you that I keep an excellent house! My grandmother wasn't very flashy or diva. She was kinda plain Jane, and I guess that's where I get it from? Like I'm not very feminine and dainty. Growing-up, I LOVED Chaka Khan! Ohmygod, I loved her. Still do! When I'm feeling my prettiest and my sexiest, like when I'm in a nice dress and cute pair of shoes, I feel like Chaka! I loved Phyllis Hyman! Girl, you probably don't even know Phyllis? I was very depressed, still am, so I understood Phyl. I was really into Hip-Hop too, and I think I kinda became more of B-girl style type chick than like a glamour girl? Like, I don't feel masculine at all, but other trans women always say I'm kinda butch. Them hoers be thinkin Imma dyke. I mean I'll dyke-a-like a lil bit, but I aint no serious bulldagger. I think I'm like the female Rappers from back in the day. Ya know, we was hard, and we don't mind fighting, and we do shit niggas do...and we might eat a lil pussy and bulldagg every now and then, but we still straight up women. I loved Roxane Shante, Sequence...Angie Stone...McLyte, Ohmygod, Salt-N-Pepa was my motherfuckin bitches! I LOVE Queen Latifah too. I wanted to be like her or like a female Chuck D. When I'm rappin or doing my Activist work I kinda pattern myself after them two. I kinda have crush on both of them two? Like we would be a cute 3-way relationship. Hip-hop sisterwives!* (She laughed) *Rose is kinda like a role model. I'm trying to be more fish like her. Lily is a role model too. She's so smart! But CRAZY (She screamed)! That girl know*

she is crazy! That bitch will start singin and dancin in the middle of the street! But she so fuckin real! She like a fuckin hyena or something: I minute she singin at you, then the next minute she attackin! She the only transwoman who done had my back in a fight with the trade! I was downtown minding my business and this group a men starting messing with me, and we went to fightin. Girl, it started off as like three of them and then the crowd just got bigger and bigger! Girl, I was hanging for a minute, but then they was whippin my ass! Had me on the ground feeling like I was bout to die! I screamed help me Lord, and girl, and just when I didn't have no mo left in me, who come running down the street singing Patti LaBelle and pitching bottles...Lily! Girl, she got them niggas good! She was like a fuckin military man throwin grenades! Girl, She hit people who was just standing there watching, she hit the niggas who was beating me, she just kept pitching bottle from the trash can until it was empty! This one nigga who had kick me all in my head was trying to run away, and girl, Lily threw a 40 ounce brown bottle at the back of his head like a football! Girl, that nigga hit the ground so hard its like his brains was all over the side walk! And when the trash can was empty, she pulled this metal rod out the can and went to swinging it like sword! Girl, the same people who came to cheer on my death were runnin for they motherfuckin lives! Girl, they was scared out they fuckin mind! I mean it was site. That girl is a motherfuckin assassin! She pulled me up of that ground, and said now walk like aint nothin happen. And we walked about block, the bus was coming, and we got on the bus for a few blocks, and we got off and went into a parking garage. She said we cant get caught by the cops because if you get caught its gon be

violation to your parole, and they gon send you back to the clink. Mind you, I just got my ass kicked, I'm barely functioning, don't know nothin, just in shock, and walking with her. We get in the garage, she tells the trade that she done ate up on (had sex with) before what happened and that needed to call her brother. We hid in the fuckin stair well, until he got there in a mini-van, and girl, we got down in the mini-van until we got out the city like we had done something wrong and need to flee. Girl, that's being a Black transsexual! We fightin for our life, but gotta be scared to go to jail for self defense. I mean sho, she pretty much chopped off some innocent heads, but it was self defense (she laughed) Me and my sista was fightin! First time somebody ever had my back like that against a group people! She didn't just break it up, she got in it and didn't care who head she bust open! She did that for me! She protected me! She saved me! She made sure I didn't go back to jail! She took care me! Hallelujah!

Adebodashandebelo-Esa-Ye-oooyelO-comose-atOlo! (She began to speak in her own language; her language sounded similar to what Black Christians call talking in tongues, but it was more of her own language)

Gender. Camellia, identifies as a transwoman, transgender, transsexual, sex change, woman, heterosexual, and heterofluid. In terms of gender group connectedness, she indicated that she is very close to her gender group and she also suggested that she is highly feminist oriented. Camellia, offered: *I've always been close to women. Ciswomen, transwomen, lesbians, whatever... I've always enjoyed women. I do like being around gay men because they live for me...ya know they think I'm special. I also don't have to try around them. Around women, I have to try to be*

more feminine, and around transwomen especially. Transwomen be more judgemental of how fish you are. Well punks do too...yea punks can be really mean...but the punks or gay men I know really live for me. Transwomen like Rose who are super fish look down at me because I'm kinda hard. I feel insecure around real pretty transwomen. Pretty cisgender women don't phase me as much because they was born fulla estrogen ya know? (She laughed) It hurts my feeling a lil that Rose look down on me, but I just keep trying. Ya know, like how I sit. I'm a big girl, so I can't sit with my legs crossed, like sometimes, its more comfortable to sit like this with my legs a lil open. Like I feel really comfortable around you. You didn't even flinch when I took my wig or my bra off. (She laughed). Like its something about you that made me feel intimidated when I first met you, but then you made me feel good about myself. Like really pretty girls make other people feel good, women who try to be pretty make other people feel bad. That's what my granny used to say. Ciswomen being trying it though. They always be telling people I'm trans too. I don't like that shit. Me and one ignorant, stupid, ghetto bitch fought till times got better 1 day at school because I'm standing there havin a conversation with this man, nice fine older man, and we bout to exchange numbers, and this bitch walks up and says, "you know that's a man right?", the man mighta or might not have clocked me, but he was so embarrassed he just walked off. Girl, when I tell you I beat the entire hell out that bitch! And she was ole ghetto project fish like me, so you know that bitch could fight, which made it even better, because it was two big ghetto bitches fighting. Nobody could say oh I was a man beating her ass...even though I had my pussy by

then...nobody could say it was an unfair fight, ya know. I beat that hoe ass in the ground you hear me. I made sho to say, "no bitch, I'm a motherfuckin woman" before I decked that bitch in her eye! Ooh girl, that was one of the best fights I ever had! Girl, it took 6 security guards to finally break us up. First 2 guards came, then 2 mo, the 2 mo. We just keppa getting at each other. I pulled ever piece of braid out that hoe head! I beat that hoe head in the ground. And she keppa comin back! Even when she couldn't do nothing but grab my hair or my shirt, that bitch wouldn't give up. And I loved it! Aint nothin like stompin a bitch that can fight! Girl, then bout 2 weeks later I saw that hoe again. Face all bandaged, up, I guess I broke her nose or something? I'm thinking she know I done whipped that ass, so she gon leave me alone. Girl, why this hoe pulla knife on me? Girl, good thing the real Police was down the street because that hoe was gon stab me in the heart! (She laughed) She was scared so that's why she just didn't come right out and stab me. You can always tell when a bitch scared. I took my jacket off and was swinging it so she couldn't aim ya know. All the while I'm thinking to myself, "either she gon kill me, or Imma have to take this knife and stab this bitch and go back to prison. Lucky for me, PoPo came and arrested that bitch. And girl, they actually were on my side and treated me like a woman.

I've had plenty of those situations. I even got jumped by a group of Black people during the Gay Pride Parade. All because fish was trying me. Girl, straight Black people always go down to the Parade to pick fights with the Black trannies.

Never trannyies of other races. ALWAYS the Black girls. And it's usually girls like me. Well back then I was even less passable. I had to fight her, 2 chicks and 3 niggas. Me against 6 people. I was lucky that was before I had my sex change, so I still had a lot of strength to beat all they asses. Girl, I picked the smallest fish up and used that hoe as my shield! They was fucking that hoe up! Girl, hormones make you weaker, but a sex change...girl...if 6 people jumped me right now, I'd just be dead. I wouldn't be able to pick her up and swing her around to protect myself. I wouldn't be able to punch a nigga lights out. Fighting a man now is just so damn hard! When youre a transsexual on hormones or if you have a sex change, you really are a woman. You might be a lil stronger than real fish, but you really on they level once you start monin' or if you get castrated or have the full chop.

Havin the sex change was pointless. I kinda regret it, but kinda don't. Like I like being able to say, I had a sex change, I have pussy. But girl, it didn't make I single bit a difference. Not one! I thought it was going to make me look more female or be accepted more...neither one happened. I got jumped on the train on my way to school by 2 lil young niggas right after I had the sex change. Girl, they straight beat my ass. Girl, if I got 1 punch in, I'd be surprised? Girl, for the first time in my life I begged somebody to please leave me alone. Nobody helped me or stopped it. People just recorded it and cheered them on. Lucky they weren't no real hard fightin trades. They beat me up, but it wasn't as bad as it coulda been. I just went on to school all beat up. Sat in class weave all pulled out, clothes ripped, face all beat up. Nobody asked if I was ok or nothing. It was a exam review day, so I didn't want to miss class.

I called Lily after class, and she took a cab over and came with her weapons. Bitch had mace foggers that could take down grizzly bears or a crowd, brass knuckles, all kinda shit. This crazy bitch wanted to go look for the boys. That's my girl! I don't know what I think about my gender now? I just feel trapped. I've put all kinda silicone in my body to try to pass more. The sil in my face dissolved. My tits big as fuck and heavy. My ass dissolved. My hips dissolved. Got a nose job, and didn't make much difference. Did hormones till I was literally blue in the face. Got a pussy to try to be more female. Being Black and transgender feels just like solitary confinement felt in prison. I thought the pussy would free me, but it's a damn prison too. It don't work. Lucy, if I do in sex work I'm mostly a Dominatrix and get paid for BDSM because if I needed this pussy to make money, I'd be fucked! Good thing I love it up the ass though. I didn't love it up the ass at first, which is why I sold drugs. Selling drugs was easier and more profit. My uncle told me straight up, "don't be no hoe. That shit aint gon get you nowhere. You gotta be the pimp or the madame or sell drugs". He took me downtown to see some working girls, and of course, I loved them! I wanted to be like them. Then I saw one girl get slapped around by her pimp and he took her money. Then, my uncle said, "ya see that shit" ...then, he went over to one beautiful girl, she was so beautiful that I didn't even know she was trans! And he said, "say boo, this my lil nephew, he wanna be like one of yall, give him a lil tour" and girl, I was so excited! She gave me a black spandex tank dress to put on, some too small jelly sandals, and a shake and go wig, and some lipstick, and girl, I felt too cute! Girl, maybe 30 minutes later, I had my first John. It was her pimp. Girl,

he was fine! Looked like Big Daddy Kane! Ohmygod, I was so in love at first sight! He was really nice at first, then he told me, "ok, now its time for business. I'm bout to be a lil rough with you cuz you got to learn the streets. This aint love, I'm not your boyfriend. I'm paying to fuck you. You bout to suck my dick, and I'm bout to fuck you, it's gon hurt, and you gotta try to take it, cuz you gotta make this money. Keep some Vaseline or jelly in ya purse cuz you gon need it. Imma teach you as I fuck you. Just say yes daddy." Girl, he was saying stuff that made absolutely no sense to me like "start off in doggy". I was just lost and in love because this was my first guy, ya know. Girl, he said "Imma kiss you because it's your first time, but don't kiss your customers! Its business. If they want to kiss, that's \$10 extra...ok!" Girl, and he started tonguin me. My first kiss. He was gentle at first, then he fucked the complete hell out of me. Girl, I gagged so hard. I screamed and he slapped the side of my face and told me to "shut up and take this dick if I wanted this money". Girl, I shitted and bled all on his dick. He didn't care either, matter fact he was turned on by it. I was a virgin. It hurt. I wanted him to be my boyfriend. I wanted him to hold me. He pulled out nuttid in my face. He beat my face with his shitty, bloody, cummy dick and tried to stick it in my mouth. I just laid there froze with my asshole burning. (She began to speak her own language again) Anshe-IEy-Yee-jo-man-yo! Hallelujah! Jem-say-yin-DOE-manyi-lecum! Hallelujah!

Then when I got older I started enjoying anal, but when I went to prison is when I really started enjoying it. Them niggas in jail know how to fuck! Ooh girl, I had some of my best sex in jail. Prison culture is good for some transsexuals. We run

it and we get treated really good...sometimes...but you have to be the right transsexual. I got over because I was light with curly hair and big tits. You don't need tits, but you need either tits are ass and I don't have much of an ass. I was like Queen Latifah in prison but more fem. She was in that movie Chicago as the Madame in prison, and girl, that was me. I ran my girls and I ran them niggas. It felt like what High school should have been like. I was 27, but it felt like for the first time, I was normal. Like men...big Black sexy men...liked me, and I had my girls...I finished my GED, I got my BA...it just really felt normal. I had been on the streets and selling drugs and all kinda shit for like 10 years by that point, so it was like I was living Thug Life. I was living Thug life way before Tupac made that shit popular! My uncle bless his soul really taught me how to survive. He was a OG Thug! That nigga was fresh! My granny thought he was lazy, but far from it. He just didn't know what to do after high school. If she gave him a chance he coulda done better. He coulda helped me do better. But she did him what the world taught her to do to Black people: give him little, expect a lot, kick him out with nothing, then he gotta hustle to survive. He never looked down on me or treated me bad. He loved me.

After my first time with the pimp, my uncle hugged me, and just said, "some things you gotta learn the hard way...don't never forget how this night felt cuz that's what's gon keep you on yo grind! If you gon be a bitch, you gotta be a bad bitch!" That kinda was my first feminist lesson...well I guess hood feminist (She laughed).

I feel really feminist, like 9 (out of 10), but I'm not all White bitch with it. I'm straight Thug Life with my feminism too. Like I feel like Angela Davis or Nikki

Giovanni...you know I identify with Black power dykes. They be straight thug life too! Like Sister Souljah! I don't think she a dyke, but you know what I mean? Like I'm bout freein Black people and bout Black trans rights and Black women rights. Like I don't care if lil White trans children mad because they can't use the girls or boys bathroom at school. Like seriously I don't care. Because I'm like bitch we out here getting killed, and yall fucking toddlers worried bout which bathroom yall use. We caint even go to school half the time, and yall seriously worried bout 8 year olds in the bathroom? Fuckin White people! Always got time to worry about foolishness. Saving the whales and shit, meanwhile niggas is dying. I'm not with that shit. In public I go along with that shit because I'm a trans activist, but really, I be thinkin bitch please! The revolution will not be televised! Fight the Power! (She continued saying various slogans and free-style rapping for a few moments.) **Class.** Though Camellia maintains high positive Black racial identity development, high feminist identity awareness, and high gender group connectedness, she feels that she cannot reach the hierarchy of her needs, and she attributes the hindrance to systems of inequality created by class. She became very sad and distant when talking about class, reaching her goals, and self-actualization. Camellia stated: *I hate class. It's like a glass fucking ceiling. White feminist always talkin bout glass ceilings but don't never want to talk about how just because they White they already won the game...they at the top near ceiling and meanwhile bitches like me on the ground several stories down. I come from Slaves, Domestic, Share-Croppers, junkies, addicts, hustlers, street people...how was I ever supposed to get a head? I have a Master's Degree and*

working on a second and can't get a good job. I work a bullshit job that I have to wear a blond wig to? I been to prison. I'm a fucking felon. I'm Black, I'm a transsexual. You know how long it's been since I've had my own apartment? Almost 20 years! I'm crazy as fuck because I'm a fuckin poor transsexual and gotta deal with all this fuckin social pressure and stress. A bitch like Rose don't have 1 degree and she can get way further than me because she come from high class light skin people. Look at Lily, she got a fuckin law degree, but lost her license trickin to buy hormones! That's some Black transsexual shit right there. So now she gotta do legal work part time, off the books to make a lil change, but she make most of her money in sex work, and she in her 50's. We go fuckin degrees and she basically a porn star, and ole White men pay me to shove dildos up their ass, pee in their mouth, and whip them, or I might make a lil change doing some other sex act. What kinda life is that? And White feminist—including my housemate—want to talk about Glass ceilings? I'm like bitch you got everything as a White man and transitioned in yo motherfuckin 50's and you still get treated like a fuckin White man! Lily come from educated people! 2nd generation college educated, but she Black and dark and tall and big, so she way at the bottom...and my housemate always talking bout her and Lily in the same boat, and I'm like bitch you still got your license! You still got everything! You aint never walked no streets! You aint never been raped by the damn Police! You didn't lose your virginity to a pimp! Bitch you lost your virginity to the fuckin the prom queen in the back of your fucking convertible mustang! And she one of the good White people, can you imagine how the bad ones think? You know they be like "oh slavery was so

terrible, I'm so glad that now we have unemployment payments and welfare for you all".

I just feel like I never had a chance. Aint nobody in my family make it big...everybody low class working regular jobs. Like we still slaves. Me and my uncle the only ones that made a lil piece of money, and we both lost that. Then my other people some ignorant ass broke niggas. They don't like me being trans, and I told my sister, bitch you act like yall really matter to anything. When I was doing good selling drugs, and yall needed, I took care of yall, and yall wanna tell me in my grown motherfuckin face that yall gots a problem with me because I'm living my truth! MY TRUTH! (She screamed repeatedly as she began to cry) Niggas everywhere wanna have a problem with me and aint got pot nor window? Class got people like Regan and the Bushes in office. Ole dumb ass motherfuckers. Regan was up there talkin bout welfare queens, and I'm like bitch its mo White hoes on welfare, but because they asses is White, yall still make they asses high class. Even in sex work them hoes get treated like high class. The White girls I know in sex work get paid more than me, and I know I'm way better than them. I knew since I was 7 I was a girl, and around that same time I realized how all the Black girls worked the hardest and got shitted on the most. When I told my grandmother that I wanted to be a girl, she said, "well, at least I know you gon work hard, but be prepared for the world to hate you". Well she was right. Everything I've ever done in life has gotten me nowhere. Except in prison...there I was a fuckin pimpstress...but shit, that was still nowhere too! I'm a activist, and I guess I've done a lot to help move trans rights ahead, but just like Marsha P. Johnson

and Sylvia Rivera and Miss Major and all the legendary trans activist I'm broke with nothing to show for it. Bitches like Caitlyn Jenner getting credit for shit that me and other poor Black trans women been done did or said! Ole dumb ass White cracker honky hard lookin man bitch! A fuckin republican. Ole stupid pussy eatin piece a trash bitch! Fucking strongest man in the world Olympian with three ex-wives, and six kids, and they wanna crown this bitch Miss-Afuckinmerica. That's fucking class. I been a woman more than half my life, hormones, surgeries, silicone-pumpin-parties, you name it, and this bitch on the fucking cover of a magazine like a damn pin-up girrl. My housemate up there idolizing this bitch like its 1989 and she Madonna. Caint stand that shit. We do all the work, all the goddamn motherfuckin work, and don't get shit. That's class in America. If you White you got it and free pass to life. If you Black get back...if you a Black tranny good fuckin luck...have nice slow death and a well attended funeral cuz life sho aint gon be much.

Stigma. Camellia's responses to questions on stigma and obtaining the hierarchy of her needs were equally as sullen. For a moment, she did what people in the African American Church call "*shouting*" (Hurstons, 1981). This moment was different from her earlier private language moments or from Lily's monologue because she was completely operating from her subconscious. Her eyes were either closed or rolled backwards, her hands were stretched outward, she cried uncontrollably, she screamed, she prayed, she attempted to release the burdens that had yoked her. During her *shouting* she said things like, "*why Lord?*", "*help me*

Lord”, “I can’t do it no mo Lord”. After a long period of her shouting she regained composure, and began to sing the reframe of Phyllis Hyman’s “Living All Alone”. She offered: *I can’t stand this living all alone. Stigma is being a Black transsexual. Stigma basically means leprosy...to have some disease that marks you...to be cursed, to be on the outside. That’s being a Black tranny. A transwoman. Being Black...not really Black transmen, they live fine lives most times, but Black transwomen, we get it every day. From the minute you step out yo house to the minute you get back in it, you getting it...you geettin you ass whipped and reminded how you aint worth shit! I can’t walk through Walmart without a fight...that’s stigma. I caint go to the doctor’s office without drama...that’s stigma. I caint go to school without drama...that’s stigma. I caint get my own apartment...that’s stigma. I caint have nothing...I gotta be somebody’s fucking house girl, just to have a fuckin roof over my head...that’s motherfuckin stigma. Everything I do in life is judged negatively...that’s stigma. Oh Oh Oh...I can’t stand this living all alone...Oh I can’t stand this living all alone!* (She repeated the reframe 7 more times before singing her version of the full song. After her singing, she asked if she could eat again before going, recollected herself, changed into her braided hair, and stood-up straight with a smile on her face; she appeared to be less burdened.)

Camellia occupies stage 1 (Physiological) of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1954).

Though she has the basics to survive, she does not feel as if she can readily, easily, or legally provide those things for herself. In many cases, when someone has high Black racial identity or positive regard, high feminist identity, and gender group

connectedness, they tend to obtain more of the hierarchy of their needs, however, Camellia's life demonstrates that the impact of social stigma of race, gender, gender identity, and class can still supersede one's ability to use other resiliency mechanism to achieve one needs or goals and/or live a quality life. The first three respondents, Rose, Lily, and Camellia, all shared community and friendship or sisterhood. Rose was the informant that assisted in the snowball recruitment of Lily and Camellia. Similarly, the next three respondents all know each other: Violet was the informant that led to the snowball recruitment of Ivy and Magnolia, however, they might describe themselves more as "friend-enemies or frienemies" as Ivy suggested. They have had difficult relationships with each other, and as a result, their communal connection is markedly different from the previous trio, which added an additional layer to one of the study's variables: gender group connectedness and how it affects one's ability to attain one's needs or goals. What these women will help to illuminate is how stigma also erodes African American transwomen's abilities friendships and often impedes on their ability to work together. Black feminist ideology may be the bridge that helps connects these potential divides, and therefore, increase the quality of living for African American transwomen.

Ivy (the Queen B.)

Ivy was the most difficult interview of all the women and she was the shortest interview, lasting around 2 hours. She was very adversarial and insulting toward me for absolutely no reason. I maintained professional research psychologist composure and continued to conduct the interview. Ivy is 40 years old, from the Northern

California area, and identifies herself as the “Queen Bitch of the City” (She used the name of the actual city). Most people assume that she is cisgender, and she indicated that she lives as “*Stealth transsexual*”. When asked to describe herself, she stated:

I’m petite, I’m pretty...way prettier than you, I’m a hella bad bitch, I’m a super bad bitch! I’m that bitch! I’m Miss Bitch to you. I’m sexy, I’m feminine. I’m a tranny, but I’m all woman, trust! Might have dick, but I’m all woman. Nobody can fuck with me! I’m the best. I’m that girl you love to hate. I’m the Queen Bitch of the City! Every fierce bitch has come through me. You see a fierce transsexual and she from this area, she came through me. Believe that honey. I sells pussy, hormones, I’m the work lady, I’m the hot lady, I’m the booster, I pulls stunts, I do shows, I that bitch! And you tired ass, dried up pussy, no dick getting bitches, caint take me. Bitch, I know you mad, you look hard, and I’m soft, and I’m pretty, and I’m lighter, and my weave is better, and I know my natural hair is better than yours too. You look a mess. (She laughed) Next question...?

Race. Ivy identifies as publicly as Biracial, stating that she changes what she is mixed with depending on the situation, but she mostly identifies as half White and Black. However, she acknowledged during the interview that both her parents, and her mother’s family are Black. In terms of her Black racial identity development, she occupies Stage 1 (Pre-Encounter). While she is aware that is she is Black and most often identified as Black, she prefers to ignore that she is Black. She also stated that she does not like Black people. Ivy offered: *Um so yea, what kinda crazy questions are these? Why does it matter how I identify racially? Bitch, what are you the Black*

police? You don't even look that Black so why do you care about Black shit? Its bitches like you that kill me. Bitch you almost as light as me, but wanna talk about Black Power. Bitch you don't know shit about being Black. (She laughed) But yea, I guess you can say I'm Black. I mean I look mixed, so I say I'm mixed. But my mama is Black and so is my sperm donor. My mama ole ignorant nigger as family is Black. So yea, I guess that makes me Black. But I'm a White woman. So I say I'm half White. Sometimes I say I'm Latino or whatever people guess; it just depends on how I'm feeling and what I can get away with. Shit, I'd say I was all White if I could get away with it! My mama ole ignorant ass nigger family is a buncha black niggers...ooh they some dark black bitches and niggas. Don't look like nothin. I was lucky: my mama came out a brown, pecan color, and my sperm donor was high yella, almost White, so that's why I have this nice color. This nice hair...well, I have a lil weave up in here right now, but its still nice...wayyy better than yo hair I bet. Yo weave look a mess. Its time for a redo bitch. But I bet yo ass broke. (She laughed)

My mama had me when she was 16. She got pregnant by one of the Deacons at their Church. He was bout 40 with children her age, but you know they made it all her fault. I'm telling you Black people be so fuckin stupid! How a 16 year old girl gon take advantage of a grown ass man? So they sent her out here to live with my great aunt. My great aunt was a bulldagger. You a bulldagger? Oh you seem like one of them educated pussy eaters. Yall hoes can't get no man, so yall go to bulldaggin. That's how my aunt was. She was real educated, doing real good for herself, but she was a ole dyke-like. Ooh she was strict too. She basically raised me and my mama till

I was 9. Then she died. My mama was so brokeup. She acted like that was her real mama. I mean she carried on! All at the funeral callin out “mama don’t leave me, ooh Lord take me instead.” I mean she carried on! She musta begged the Lord to take her for a good month before she finally realized that her dying instead wasn’t gon work. Mama was weak. Auntie D. was her strength. Auntie D. had this big beautiful apartment in the City by the water. She was real fancy—Black fancy...she wasn’t White woman at all. She loved niggers and she tried to make me love yall po nigger asses too. But I just knew from a child, that yall black niggers was no good. Mama loved any and everybody. I think she was special...ya know? Kinda retarded. Always happy, always singin to herself. She called all Black people “mam” and “sir”. She used to always say how one day Black people was gon be back on top. Her and Auntie D used to say how niggers—well they said Black—used to be Kings and Queens and we was gon get back there, we was gon beat the White man, you know all that shit. I just never really liked niggers. I mean I like some. I love me some big black dick! Oh yes, I love me some Black men! But even they get on my last fuckin nerves. Always expecting free pussy. No nigga, this pussy aint free. I bet you fucks niggas for free? You’s a dumb bitch. See Black hoes be dumb. Yall always think some nigga gon love yall. Niggas don’t love yall...niggas love theyselves and White bitches, and bitches like me who make them pay. See yall go around doing shit for free, and they pay me. I gots me about 5 Black husbands right now, and I love fucking all of them! Make all of them think I’m in love, and like they special, while I’m

steadily taking they money. My dicks and my money, I don't need nothing else. I mean I gots

White husbands too. Ooh now see, I love my White husbands! They tricks off proper! Niggers pay basic bills, but White boys pay big bills. I don dick whipped and pussy whipped so many of these White motherfuckers it's a shame. I got White regulars that I been fucking for 20 years...trickin off \$1000s...hello? Thank you! Been like that since I was a lil girl. Lil White boys would be my boyfriend, invite me over for play dates, give me treats, they parents was nice...all that good shit! But niggers, them the ones always fighting me, trying to rape me and make me suck they dicks in the bathroom, always being ignorant and shit. I hated nigger teachers too. I just have always hated yall black niggers. Me and Auntie D. fell out when I was like 7 and I told her I didn't like Black people and I didn't like Martin Luther King. Bitch, she almost fainted. Her old ass cried like I said something really hurtful. (She laughed) I mean I coulda told her how her ass looked like a man, but I didn't. Bitch she looked like Sylvester or skinny Luther Vandross (She laughed). She got on my nerves! This bitch would make me read Black history books and shit. I was like 8 studying for 3 hours a day, and had to read on Saturdays too. Had to clean up like a damn slave. Ooh that shit worked my nerves. She didn't like my lil White friends either. She would try to find lil Black kids for me to play with. But I would be mean to them on purpose just to spite her. She didn't mind me being a sissy—matter of fact, she kinda encouraged it—but she said I could only be a sissy at home. She said it wasn't safe for a lil Black boy to be a girl in the streets. So you know I had to fag out at school

and stuff even harder. She didn't care though. She would just say "well, when they beat yo ass in the street, I just hope you can make it home. You need to wait till you old enough to defend yourself but you don't wanna listen, so go head and get yo ass beat." Mama wouldn't say anything. She didn't know what to do most of the times. She was a grown woman in her 20's still playin dress-up with Auntie D. Auntie D. was a ole man lookin dyke, but she was still kinda fishy. She liked being a mama to us. Mama said I was evil and lowdown like my granddaddy and his friends...she meant the men at the Church, the Deacons. They didn't like Auntie D. either. Sometimes, I wish I wasn't so evil to Auntie D. and mama. (Here was one of the few moments that Ivy paused and genuflected) Sometimes I feel like I killed both of them. Auntie D. just didn't wake-up the next morning after one of my tantrums. And Mama tried to work 3 jobs to keep us in Auntie D.'s house, livin Auntie D's life, and one night she was coming home early from her 3rd job, and a drunk driver ran her over. I was 14. I was up in the house having a threesome with B and BR. Our Italian neighbor who was 19 and his friend from college who was bout 20? Yes, I was a bad bitch even then! Bitch I was 14 gettin mine! Bitch when you was 14 you probably was face down in a book or a plate of food, and I was face down on some dick, making my money. Bitch he took me shoppin and for pizza earlier that night, and then he told me it was his friend birthday and I had to show him a good time too. Bitch all I said was I saw these other shoes I want! We can go get them tomorrow. (She laughed) Bitch I'll never forget. Bitch I was eatin up on them dicks learned, and bitch the phone rang off the hook and I didn't answer it until we was through. And just when I was feeling

like the last piece of White fish, some real White fish on the phone telling me my mama was dead as door knob.

My mama's family was so horrible to me. I hated them at first sight. My mama's funeral was the first time I saw my sperm donor. So light he could pass for White easily. All sly and nasty. Lookin like an ole raper man. My grandfather was as evil and mean as my Mama said. My grandmother ole man lookin ass was evil too. They all was some black ugly niggers. Ole burnt pieces of shit! They thought I was gon stay in Arkansas with them...bull shit! My boyfriend B. had a bus ticket waiting for me when I called, and I ran away maybe 3 days after the funeral. I came back here. Auntie D.'s bulldagger friend was getting all the affairs and house together, so she let me stay at the house till the end of the month, and then she said I had 3 choices: come to live with her, go to foster care, or runaway and live on the streets. She said, "I know youre a trouble-making brat, and I don't want you to live with me, just like I know you don't want to live with me, but I owe it to your Aunt. She was a great woman! She helped a lot of people! Your mother was also a great woman. She'd give you the shirt off her back. I don't know where they got you from? But if you want to stay with me, you're welcome. If you choose one of the other two, that's fine too, and if either one don't work out, you can always come live with me." I chose the streets. I needed my independence. I felt I could finally be the beautiful White woman of my dreams! (She sang). Ok bitch nexttttt...Next question.

When asked the question, "Did you have any role models growing up? If so, who were they?" Ivy responded: *Bitch what kinda crazy questions is this? I mean I*

guess? Madonna. Alexis Carrington Colby from Dynasty...um what's that bitch real name? Um, Joan Collins! Ohmygod, yes! Alexis was my bitch! That's who I wanted to be like! I guess I kinda am like her. Madonna was more the look, the music, the vibe. I wanted to look like her or Farrah Fawcett but with red hair. This lil White bitch "A." I went to school with, her mom looked like Farrah Fawcett, and everybody loved that bitch? She was some kinda local celebrity. Some kinda actress or some shit? I think they was Jewish too, but not serious Jews, you know, just rich, but not religious. A. was a complete bitch. I mean a total fucking bitch...and I loved her! I kinda modeled my fishiness after her. I kinda studied her. They had help around the house, they had drivers, they had it all! Her mom used to tell her other rich White bitch friends I was her Black friend...ooh I hated that shit! Introducing me as the Black friend? What kinda shit is that? I time I said back, "no, I'm White too!", and her and her friend laughed. And A. said no silly, you're not White, you're Black. And since then, I make sure to tell people I'm not Black from the jump! I be like, my White mother was raped by a Black man, that's why I look like this, and they start feeling all sorry for me and shit. I love it. They be like stinkin nigger! I hope they strung his ass up and cut his balls off and stuffed it down his throat! And I be like, they never caught that stinkin nigger...(She laughed uncontrollably for a few moments.)

Ivy suggested that she was a 0 (out of 10) in terms of racial group connectedness. Ivy occupies the Pre-Encounter Stage because she has a need to avoid her Blackness because of the negative associations and stigmas that accompany Black racial identity. As she responded to the questions about gender, gender group

connectedness, sexuality, and class, she further indicates reasons why she wants to avoid Black racial identity stigma.

Ivy identifies as a transsexual, trans, woman, and heterosexual. She stated that she is heteroflexible for the right price. Ivy maintained: *Bitch for the right price I'd fuck you. I don't care who it is for the right price...man, woman, transsexual, old, fat, whatever. I used to be totally straight, but then White couples started paying hefty prices for some tranny dick or tranny asshole, so you know I made that money bitch! Shhhh! Bitch what? I will eat a bitch's pussy down for the right price. It's all about money honey...what can you do for me? What have you done for me lately? Hello? I'm a straight White woman, but I gets dirty like the lowest bitch. Hello? I didn't use to use my dick either. No mam! Bitch, I used to think that was so nasty and manish! Then I turned about 21 and realized I could make more money if I fucked too. I wanted to get a sex change, but then found out all that shit sex changes go through, and I realized my money would be affected, because sex changes make less money than regular trannies, so I got over it. I don't really personally see myself as having a dick, I see myself as having a nice long, thick clitoris, but for the right price, bitch I have a 9 inch cock! And it's no shade No shade, bitch!* (She clapped her hands together repeatedly saying "it's no shade") *It's all about the money bitch! I guess I always felt like a girl...or maybe not like a boy? I don't know? As I get older...bitch I still look younger and better than you! Bitch you look tired and old. Bags all under yo eyes, bitch you aint sleepin? You look tired as fuck. And I look fresh and young. Bitch I got fucked all last night and right before you came, and you see how good I look?*

(She laughed) *But as I get older, I wonder about how I feel as a woman. Like, I don't really feel like fish. No shade. I feel like a transsexual. I feel like a chick with a dick. Chicks with dicks act differently than fish or trannies who wanna be real fish. Fish be all emotional and shit. Fish be worried bout the wrong shit. I'm like a straight-up dude bout shit. I like to look pretty, and I like being cunty and fishy and real, ya know, I got all lil work done to look extra cunt...just lil bitch, just a lil. You need to get some work fa realz. If you ever want any basic work, you know silicone shots and things like that, come to the doll. Hello! Ive pumped all the girls! I'm the doctor bitch. You aint no body. (She laughed)... But I don't feel like a woman like that. See like Violet.*

That bitch is crazy...Yea, you better thank her, because she the only reason I'm doing this bullshit ass penny paying interview. Because I owe her. But see Violet, that bitch got some dude in her too, but she really feels like a woman. Her manish ways come from being on the streets tho, but she really feels like a woman. We be talking bout shit sometimes, and this bitch be crying and shit, I be like bitch really? (She laughed) And the bitch dumb and messy just like fish.

Gender. When asked questions on gender group connectedness and feminist identity, Ivy indicated that she was not close to her gender group nor was she feminist oriented. Ivy offered: *I don't really like bitches. I mean, I'm the Queen Bitch of the City, so every bad bitch has come through me! It's only I bad bitch that didn't come through me and that's Magnolia. Violet and all other fierce bitches came through me. Violet was my daughter. We cool now. But we fell out a few times. When I first met*

her, she was a boy...up in drags playing tranny...but I could see that Violet could really run the streets. I seen her fuck this date in the alley one time, and I was like ok, bitch can fuck. She bout her money! And bitch can fight! She one of them TV show kinda fighters that you just be talking to one minute, then the next she beating yo ass. That's why I wanted her to be my daughter. I don't really like dark girls, but I knew she had potential. So I took her under my wing. Then kicked her out the nest before she was ready like I do with all of them unless they making me lots of money are benefitting me. See a Madame don't take as much as pimps because we understand the game. But some girls have made me a lot of money. Violet could take 3-4 dicks...ooh she a bad bitch. She was a threat to my business tho because she too emotional. I falls in lust with my clients, but this bitch really falls in love with clients. She just like dumb fish: she really be believing them and giving up free pussy. I'm like bitch really? And even White men? I'm like bitch I'm White and I don't even fuck White men for free! If anything you make them pay more. They got money! Fuck that! This bitch fought me in the street over a fucking date. A black nigger piece a trade. Trade told her he wanted to marry her. So you know me being the evil whore that I am, I went and fucked him, and told her that he was my husband. Bitch...this hoe went straight crazy. I'm not no fighting bitch. I pay people to do my fighting. And I didn't expect her to buck like that. This bitch went clean the fuck off. Ohmygod. This bitch went hella hard on me. This bitch dragged me up and down the street. This bitch beat me till she got tired and then chased me down and beat me some more. This bitch beat me unconscious. Well you know I had to get her back! So I got her

lights cut off on Christmas Eve! Bitch was in the dark and cold till bout 5 days after Christmas. She knew it was me who did it, and soon as she caught me, she beat me up again. This bitch dragged me out a date's car. I'm getting fucked down in the back seat, my face pressed up against the window, and bitch my eyes was closed, and all I felt was the door open and somebody draggin me out by my hair. This bitch was fucking me up! And lucky the date was ole ghetto nigger trade because he was trying to stop her from fighting me so he could finish getting his money worth. Bitch you know a White man would drove off right? So soon as she stopped hitting me, I got up and I pepper sprayed her ass and kicked her in her dick, and told the date lets go, and we found another spot and I gave him some extras for helping me. So the next morning, I coming out of my house, and bitch who jumped out the bushes? Violet ass beat my head all in the ground. Bitch I had to go to the hospital...I had a concussion. See she a ole ghetto nigger. But I got her ass like the rich White bitch that I am, and I set her up to get arrested. (She laughed) And she enjoyed a nice 6 month vacation in a men's facility. (She laughed) Yea, we done been through it, but she always come back and want to try again. She really see us as family. Aint that fucked up? I treat her like shit, still her man, get her put in jail, and this bitch still say she love me. Bitch, that's that Black fish shit. Yall black bitches be so stupid and loyal. I don't fuck with nobody like that. Bitch its me, my paper, my dicks, that's it. Fuck a sister, daughter, mama, cousin, auntie...fuck all that. I don't know if I feel anything for anybody? But I could definitely give two motherfucks bout bitches. Fuck bitches, fuck feminist, fuck all that dumb shit! It's bout getting paid only!

She told me you interviewing Magnolia too? Bitch that hoe is crazy. I met her through her uncle "D.". Her uncle a big timer! Ooh that motherfucker cold. You know I likes me a nice light skin or light brown nigger. Big ole dick, and got game on lock. He only fuck with top shelf bitches. His main bitch is always super bad! He was fucking with this bitch "V.", me and that hoe was tight. She had game on lock. She was light skin Black fish, but she ran shit like White fish. She didn't work the streets, she was straight high class. One night he was riding round, he saw me, and bitch, I made my move: I let him fuck me for free bitch so you know he must be something special. I was trying to get in on the business. I didn't want to be one of his hoes, I either wanted to be the main hoe or one of the business bitches. But he wasn't letting me in, so you know me being the evil bitch that I am, I tried to set him up to go down.

I was like ok you fucking nigger, you trying to play a bad ass White bitch like me? You're trying to say I'm not good enough? Ok, Imma set you ass up with the Law! Hello! Bitch, what I did that for? Bitch! What I did that for? Bitch, this no good nigger had me kidnapped and took to some warehouse, and bitch, them motherfuckers tortured me for almost 3 weeks. It was pure hell. I was chained. I was beat. I was hosed. I was gangbanged. I was fucked repeatedly. I mean it was pure torture. (She welled up with tears, and became silent for several minutes, but did not cry) But I deserved it. I tried to fuck him over with the Law, and the got fucked. I tried to be like 1 of them White bitches on TV and bitch go TV'd.

They covered my head and tied me up and dropped me off on the street. Bitch, I was damn near naked, beat, and head covered on the street. Somebody untied me. I

had to walk home barefoot in a just a t-shirt, got home, and bitch, almost everything in the house was gone. Bitch, I never fucked with him or Magnolia ever again. Most of the other girls I've raised or pimped out I don't really fuck with anymore. I mean I talk to them, but right now, I'm just really bout making my money. I guess I'm like a 2 (out of 10) in being close to my gender group. I fuck with some trannies and fish sometimes, but I don't really like them hoes. I don't really like faggots either, but I always keeps a few around because they come in handy. I don't like faggots and bulldaggers really. I mean that whole LGBT shit don't mean shit to me.

A., from my childhood, was really the only real girlfriend I think I ever had? She was the only one that I didn't set out to sock it to. I loved her. I wanted to be her. I wanted to live with her family. She is my favorite memory from my childhood. Auntie D. had a nice apartment but it was a slave shack compared to A.'s family house, and they didn't live far from us. Walking distance. Auntie D. hated her family. Said they was some racist honkies and all that ole shit. Mama worked for them off and on. I guess that's why I went over there so much. I was so embarrassed. My mama was one of the help at their big parties and things. My mama was doing all they dirty work. Black women always strugglin, always doing somebody else dirty work. A. tried to make me her fucking maid too when we got older. I cursed her ass out from here to Arizona! She called me a "fucking two bit nigger whore" and hung up the phone. We never spoke again. I've never really had a real girlfriend sense then. The girls I raised and pimped out weren't really girlfriends...they was more like the help. I guess I did to

them what A. tried to do to me? (She laughed) I guess I treat people like how I felt A. and her family treated us?

Feminist? Now, do that mean I get to charge extra on blow jobs or something? Hell no bitch, I aint no damn feminist. That sounds like some ole bulldagger shit, or some ole shit ugly hoes like you do because yall caint get a man. (She laughed) Well you aint that ugly: you light, so that saves you a lil bit. I mean you don't look that bad, you just not as pretty as people think you are. So I could see why you would want to be with them bulldaggers. Because that's the only way a hoe like you can matter. You caint get a man, so if you aint a wife, you don't matter; you caint sell you ass because you lame and I can tell yo pussy as dry, so you don't matter; so you have to be a smart bulldagger kinda cunt. Just like Oprah kinda bulldgagery, that's what you like. She aint cute and you aint either! I'm 0 (out of 10). I'm not feminist, don't care about no other bitches, and I'm only trying to continue to be a rich White bitch. Period. Thank you. Nexxttt! Next question.

Ivy ranks herself as low in gender group connectedness, feminist identity, and Black racial identity. Her thoughts on class are brief, but offer more insights into why she is disconnected from the aforementioned groups.

Class. *What really is class? I mean I know I'm high class, but I really dont know what class means when people say it. I mean, ok, yea, I dropped out of high school, but I don't want you to think I'm dumb! You fat ugly bitch, I know you trying to look down at me, but I just don't know what that means. (I explained Class to her) Oh ok. Yea, well I guess my Auntie D. was middle class. She went to college and stuff,*

she had a good job, but I don't know exactly what she did? Her and mama always seemed like they was strugglin. They had that po ass backwoods southern nigger mentality. I hated it. All Auntie D. did was talk about the White man and lifting Black people up. And talk about how we had to work 10 times harder blah blah. I hated her because all my lil White friends got to just play and be a kid and I had to work, and I had to study, and I couldn't go play. My allowance was fifty cents and theirs was five dollars. Ooh I hated it. We lived in a very nice part of town, but Auntie D. used to make me go with her to do community service in the rough neighborhoods and tell me shit like "this our people, if it wasn't for opportunity, we'd be living here too..." I still remember that shit. It's like I would look in the mirror and see a pretty White girl, and I would look at them and see strugglin ole Black women. They would always be complaining about how bad things were, then go to laughin and talkin and cookin like everything was ok. I never understood those too? They seemed so miserable and burdened, but so happy. Just like niggers. My Auntie D. didn't have no steady woman, but she always had a buncha Black bulldaggers around; she had a gay friend too and I think they bulldogged too? Aint that nasty? A bulldagger and a faggot fuckin each other. (She laughed) Mama didn't have nobody, hell, she was damn near a virgin! But they was always happy? Reading books and doing puzzles and other ole lame shit. I knew I wanted the life on TV. I knew I wanted to be Alexis Carrington Colby. Mama wanted to be Dominique Devereaux (played by Diahann Carroll), but I didn't even want to be her because even she was strugglin to be in the show. Even she was an ole irrelevant bitch. I wanted to be the main bitch. I wanted to be the star. The

star is always the White girl. Just like A. was always the star, and her mama was always the star, I wanted to be the star. I didn't want to be no Claire Huxtable either because she was dark, she worked too hard, she had too many kids, and Cliff was not cute. I wanted to be the rich lily White bitch! Black women don't never get nothin. Look at Michelle Obama, you know she the one that's running everything, but the only way she got in the White House is because she married to Barack. Barack say he Black to get votes and shit, but clearly, he White. That Black thing work for him because people tired of old White men like the Bush family. But I love they kind because they make the best clients. See, you get you a Bush Jr., and bitch you set for life. You know he gotta a small dick and cum fast, so bitch you just made you a cute coin for almost no work. Bitch you know they love them some trannies. Look at who they married too...ole dried up hard lookin ass White bitches. But see they want Barack cuz he White enough but say he Black, so they trying to make yall niggers feel good. They like we kept yall down, so we'll give yall one lil break. But it aint gon last. I'm surprised they didn't kill his ass. But they probably scared of Michelle ole big Black ass! (She laughed) Yea, I guess you kinda like her too? Ok maybe you do have a chance because if her ole big Black horse lookin ass can get a man, I guess you can too? Both of yall ole irrelevant big dyke lookin bitches. Bitch you are nonmotherfuckin factor ok. (She laughed uncontrollably for a few moments) I'm a high class, high-price hoe! Yea, technically, I'm still po, cuz technically I don't have no for sure income, but as long as they got men with hard dicks, I will have money. I

will be that bitch. The Queen Bitch of the city, and you will be a non-motherfuckin factor bitch. Hello? Good night.

Because Ivy's earliest impressions of Black racial identity and Black womanhood were negative, that she developed negative concepts on these groups, thus, negatively impacting her identity and relations with these groups. Ivy suggest that she is rich, but also states that her income heavily depends on the availability of sex work. She is acknowledging having reached the hierarchy of her needs, however, she does not maintain any of the stages of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs because every stage that she occupies is temporary based on the availability of her sex work. As she approaches middle age, when sex work slows, it is plausible to suggest that her ideas about her high class standing will change, and she may have her first encounter with her Blackness, thus, moving to the Encounter Stage of her Black racial identity. Her ideas on stigma are very brief, but consistent with her earlier stances.

Stigma. *Stigma, what is that? Is that some kinda STD? (She laughed) Bitch I don't have no thoughts on that shit. No I don't experience no damn stigma because I'm beautiful, I'm pretty, I'm sexy, I'm the baddest bitch OK? Pretty women don't get stigma. Ugly hoes like you get stigma. White women don't get stigma bitch. Look at Kim Kardashian. Hello. Bitch, I'm like Kim K. Except I wouldn't marry no dumb nigger. All transsexuals do get stigma'd...only clocky trannies do, ugly trannies. If nobody can tell youre a tranny then you don't get stigma'd. I been passable since 14*

bitch. I don't get no damn stigma. People can't really tell I'm Black, I be like I'm French Canadian... (She laughed) People only get stigma'd when you can tell they ass is something bad. Me I'm a perfect little White girl with long fiery red hair and green eyes... I can be blonde tomorrow with blue eyes if I want to, and guess what bitch, I'm still going to be White and you're not!. And you caint take me bitch! Ok, is that the last question? Good, now get yo ass out my house bitch. Thankssss!

Ivy's narrative demonstrates a need for and value of an intersectional methodology because, though her responses to the questionnaire driven interview were mostly brief and curt, it was the life history information that she shared, often long after certain questions were asked that allowed for a more in-depth view of her experiences as a [Black] transwoman that in many ways prove or corroborate the thesis and hypotheses of this phenomenological study. Her occupancy of PreEncounter Stage of Black racial identity is reminiscent of the Clark & Clark (1939/1947) doll studies as mentioned in Chapter 2 that suggest that because Black children were primed at an early age to abhor Blackness, they consistently chose Whiteness as being better. Ivy pretends that she is White, and maintains anti-Black racist ideologies and practices in an attempt to gain White privilege, to thereby escape the stigmas of being Black, and also being a Black transwoman. She also believes that claiming a White female identity will assist her in obtaining the hierarchy of her needs. Though Ivy pretends that she is White, she noted that her race is always questioned. Rose, who is lighter complexioned than Ivy, who passed for White in parts of Europe, also noted the pain and difficulty of the experience of being Black, a

Black woman, and a Black transwoman in America. Ivy is joined in Pre-Encounter Stage by Acacia: while their experiences differ vastly, their connections to antiBlackness are similar. In polar opposite to Ivy and Acacia is Magnolia who acknowledges being a “proud, strong Black woman”. While Magnolia acknowledges being a proud, strong Black woman, she too also holds many ill feelings toward “the Black community” because she explains how Black Americans treats Black transwomen worse than other races.

Magnolia (the Boss)

Magnolia is 39 years old with a larger-than-life personality. She is very comedic and brutally honest. She refers to her home as “the Estate”, and it is opulently decorated with things she refers to as “fancy White people shit”. She would not give the interviewer her home address, but instead, she guided me to her home via cell phone for “safety purposes”. She was very affectionate toward me and referred to me as “sister/sistah” and “Oprah.” I had to strongly encourage her to take compensation for the interview, and after much pleading, she took the payment stating, “Sistah, I have way more money than you, I don’t feel comfortable taking yo lil money”. Magnolia would not allow me to provide lunch, instead, she had her uncle “D.” prepare grilled steak dinners, stating, “Oprah’s here baby, we gotta have the good shit!”. Magnolia’s home was reminiscent of 1980s television shows such as “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous” and “Dynasty” to which she credited her decoration style. She pointed out her collection of crystal, stating, “See this some Crystal Carrington shit” (one of the lead female characters in the show Dynasty). Her

living room was decorated with mostly white furniture, and Magnolia informed me that because she was wearing black pants that they could not conduct the interview in the living room because “white aint strong enough to have no black sit on it.” Both Magnolia and her uncle greeted me with a hug: her uncle D. actually patted me down, and searched me to make sure that I did not have any weapons, nor police wire-tapes. D. also inspected my tape recorder, laptop, purse, and briefcase. Magnolia is engaged in many business ventures, thus, she refers to herself as the Boss.

When asked to describe herself, Magnolia offered: *Well sistah you know I'm the Boss. Violet didn't tell you I run everything? Like Diana Ross, I'm the motherfuckin Boss! I'm that bitch, the baddest bitch, caint none of these hoes fuck with me. I'm bout my business first and foremost. Um, I'm funny, I'm a keke down! I'm real. I'm not shady or bitchie, but I can be. I can be a bit ruthless. I'm a big bitch...ooh girl, I need to lose some weight! But see boys like fat and silicone, so I aint too worried. I'm rich. I'm living most of my dreams, but sistah, I gotta be honest with ya, I do wish I woulda got rich differently. See, I wanted to do this interview because I want to write about my life, and see, Violet told me how you asking all these deep ass questions, so I figured this will help me get started. I don't really think about myself that much. I think about making money. I guess I don't really think good things about myself, so that's why I think about business and making money. Ooh see Oprah, you already got me to thinking. Sistah, I don't want to say the things I really think about myself. Well...at least not yet. (She laughed) Ooh sistah you got me feeling real comfortable already. When yall go to psychiatry school do yall just learn*

how to put people in a trance or something? I don't know? I knew college wasn't for me or getting all those fancy degrees, but I wanted to be somebody...ya know famous. Yea, I'm famous in the City and Town, and probably famous all over the country with transsexuals and hustling and shit, but you know, I wanted to be like a famous singer or rapper or actress or all three. I'm turning 40 soon, and I'm set financially, but I just wish I coulda did something better than hoein and pushin drugs and all other ole kinda shit.

Sista, I was in the bank making a six figure deposit, and girl, why the ole hatin ass Black cheesy crusty bitch teller gon ask me what I do for money? Not what's my profession or career, what I do for money? Sistah, I looked at the hoe like bitch what? And this bitch gon tell me, "cuz I know yall mostly be prostitutes, but aint no hooker making this kinda money", and sistah she laughed like that shit was funny. Sistah this bitch thought that was ok. And yea, I rung fish up, and told the manager and shit, but sistah it hurted me to my motherfuckin heart that I got mo money than this bitch can ever imagine having, and this bitch think she better than me cuz she make \$12 per hour...counting my damn money! And when I was carryin on saying she assuming shit, girl, why this bitch gon say "well I knew you was tranny because your account and your ID got a man's name on it, so I didn't have to assume, it says you a man, so I was being nice". Sistah, I felt so humiliated! I just sat in my car and cried. Aint no bitch ever make me cry bout no dumb shit! And I felt like this black bitch went out of her way to shame me in front all these damn White people. And it just hurt so much more that it was my own people and all the damn White people

snickerin and whisperin. It just felt horrible girl. The next day D. took me back down there and we both withdrew ALL of our money! Sistah? Did they gag? The look on they faces was so worth it! And sistah you know I went down there dressed in my funeral black dress and just covered in diamond and pearls with my big ole white church lady hat! And you know D. so light skin he can pass, so you know they was givin him the apologies and "yes sir" White man treatment. The same motherfuckers that treated my Black transsexual ass like shit the day before, treated him like he was some kinda president or some shit. Just fucking terrible.

Race. Magnolia identifies as Black, African American, of African Descent.

In terms of her Black racial identity development, Magnolia occupies Stage 5:

Internalization-Commitment. She acknowledged that her Blackness had always been part of her identity and that she's Black before everything else. Magnolia offered:

Sistah, do you have to ask, I'm Black girl! I'm straight up ole Black, Negro, niggra, colored back of the bus fish, ole dirty Mahogany fish! (She began to sing the theme song from the 1970's movie Mahogany) Sistah see I was born and raised down south till I was 10 years old, and I'm ole toasted pecan mahogany tree brown, so I never questioned being Black. My whole family Dark. My mama and them always talked about being Black too. Always. Always talked about skin color. Always talked about hatin the White man and how evil White people are. Always talked about how other minorities was out to get us. Sistah, my granddaddy hated hisself some White men and didn't trust White women, Asians, Hispanics, none of em. Granddaddy was pretty much my daddy till we moved out here. Then "B." my mama's late husband became

my daddy. The year I turned 17, everything changed: B. got killed that January, granddaddy died that April, and I turned 17 later that year. B and granddaddy both didn't like White people and both was pro-Black! B. was a Black Panther! He got killed by the police. B. and uncle D. had different daddies though. That's why D. so light. D. daddy was Cuban or Columbian or both, and well connected if you know what I mean? B. and D. mama, I call her granny "L". Granny L. wasn't married to D's. daddy, she was his side chick.

Granny L. people from the same town as my people, and that's how my mama met B. B. moved us out here so we could have better life. He was such a good man. He didn't even care that I was gay—you know I was just a big ole sissy then; sistah, girl, I was such a big ole sissy! I didn't come out as trans until I was 18. But him and his whole family always accepted me. My whole family always accepted me. Through everything. Niggas is crazy and evil to the girls, but my family has always been good to me and all the girls. None of my cousins, nobody never was beating the girls and that ole foolishness ya know. My family is hood, but I grew-up pretty sheltered from homophobia stuff. I grew-up pretty loved. Very loved.

We didn't say transgender then, we said sissy, queen, tranny, or transsexual. My uncle D. was very supportive. He was always very open-minded about stuff. He was in community college at the time, but he was still in these streets, so he knew transsexual prostitutes and stuff. He told me to finish my education or get a cosmetology license or something under my belt before I fully transitioned because work and stuff was gon be harder after I transitioned. Girl, of course he was right,

but of course I didn't want to wait. Girl, I finished high school, and started hormones...and girl, it was down-hill from there. I didn't want to be no hairdresser, and community college wasn't for me either. I wanted money! I wanted to be like the badass bitches that he knew, so of course you know ya sistah had to get up in these streets. Sistah, I was so sheltered, I didn't think about how hard the streets were, I just saw badass transsexuals looking like they was having a good time, and I wanted to fuck. I wanted to fuck hot boys. I wanted to be a sexy lil slut. The girls I was friends with in High School was sluts! They became strippers and escorts and shit too, and they was fuckin all the hot boys, and that's who I wanted to be like. So D. broke down game for me, and told me what I was gon have to do, and I was down. He kept trying to discourage me, but I wouldn't listen, and then he said "well, Imma train you like a pimp train his hoes" ...and he said he was gon fuck me real hard, then I was gon have to make some money fuckin. Sistah, that night was beginners luck. Sistah, first, D. fucked me so hard and so deep, girl, I didn't think I was gon be able walk! Then, he told me I needed to be ready in 30 minutes...ohmygod, sistah, that night I must had like 8 dicks. Girl, I felt like every piece of slut I had been dreaming of and I had me bout \$500! Shit, girl I was hooked! Sistah, I thought I had hit the jackpot! D. wasn't too happy, he was hoping that I was going to be turned off, but he saw my mind was made up and he saw my potential to be a gangsta, so he took me under his wing. We've had relations off and on, but, he still sees me as his niece even though we have no blood relation, so he be trying to keep it family, but I've had a crush on him since I first laid eyes on him, so I don't really care bout family ties. But I think he really not

that attracted to me? I'm short and dark and his main girl is always some kinda exotic light skin thing and he prefers taller girls. His girlfriend "V." was his ideal, and she is who I most wanted to be like. She was tall and light skin of course.

When asked the question, "Did you have role models growing-up? If so, who were they?" Magnolia shared: Girl yes! My mama and my grandmothers and my aunts all influenced me. That's who I'm probably most like? Bout it ass hood women from that Bottom or the Northside! That's my ole neighborhoods down south. Granny L. a lil bit more proper because she grew-up out here, so I get a lil of bourginess from her. But V., D's ex-girlfriend...ohmygod I wanted to be like her! She was badass fish! She was a real dancer, but she became a stripper, then she became a high class escort, and bitch had her own agency back in the day! Girl, she was bad! She looked like Vanity or one of them 80's girls. Vanessa Williams, Jayne Kennedy, Jasmine Guy...she gave you very that! She was tall, big tits, big ass, and small waist. She was sweet too. I liked Janet Jackson a lot. I loved Oaktown 3-5-7. Lil Kim! I like hoes. I like pretty hoes who was sluts. I loved Blanche Devereaux on the Golden Girls! I guess I'm kinda a exhibitionist too! I love being the center of attention! And I just really love fucking. My mama and the women from down south was never really the center of attention. They was like regular dark skin Black women ya know? Dark skin women don't really get to be sexy and the center of attention. Granny L. is light and she was hot lil number! She got that Diana Ross kinda style...you know real grand and like I'm too cute... Dark skin women caint really get away with that Diana attitude. People look at us like we crazy! (She laughed)

I don't know, I guess I always knew I was gon be a transsexual, and I guess I always knew that this was the only way possible for me to be rich. I admire you Oprah girl, because just like the real Oprah, you knew that you could do more, and you was willing to work for it and fight for it, and you give professional fish...see sistah, that's not me. Like I don't know if its because I'm dark or what, but I just never thought I could really do more? It hurts to say I never thought more was possible for me.

Gender. Magnolia identifies as a transsexual, transwoman, trans, woman, and heterosexual. She acknowledged that she is very connected to her gender group with high feminist orientation. Magnolia stated: *Sistah, I always just identified as a transsexual. Now they have all these new terms and shit that don't make no sense. Bitches saying they gender queer and gender non-conforming, I'm like bitch what? Who transitions to say they aint a woman? Who gets titties and all this damn silicone to say they aint a woman? Bitch I don't want to be no damn man or genderless! Them bitches aint real transsexuals! Them bitches is boys just playing around in women's clothes. Now, I don't feel like real fish...ya know, I don't feel all emotional and like I want kids, and other shit you hear real fish talking about. Like, don't get me wrong, I love real fish, but girl, they just be dumb sometimes. Trannies be dumb too, but real fish just be letting people...especially men just run all over them. That's why I'm like a 10 (out of 10) on that feminist shit. Aint no nigga, no hoe, no bitch, no motherfucker running all over me! I'm bout my business and that's what feminist means to me. My granny L. used to always talk about Black women being strong and running shit, so*

that's where I get my feminism from. But granny L. kinda uppidy, and she don't mess with a lotta women. She have like I good friend and her sister Auntie D. She don't trust a lotta women. No Mam! Now Mama, she don't meet strangers. Every woman she meet seem to be her friend. So that gender group connection you talkin bout, I definitely get from her. I say I'm a 9 (out of 10) (in gender group connection). I like other women, but I also keep a nice lil distance from most hoes. Like I'm a good Madame. Every girl that has every worked for me, know I have they best interests at heart. Every girl that I've been friends with know Imma real bitch, I keeps it 100 all the time. It's never any tea, never any shade. Now, I cuts hoes off real quick, don't get it twisted, but I give hoes a chance. I'm just a real ass boss bitch. And to be a real boss bitch, you gotta fuck with some bitches.

Now, it's no shade, it's really not, and she probably gon gag that I said this, but Violet, I don't really consider that bitch no friend...it's no shade! I'm not saying anything to you that I wouldn't say to her face. Violet for me is more of an associate who used to work for me. Violet is fucking crazy. And she not bout her business. And I can't stand a bitch that ain't bout her business! Violet could be a real boss bitch, but she too caught up on trying to regular fish...housewife, baby mama fish. This bitch be taking care a niggas and shit. Bitch even be fucking for free? Who do that? Ok, so I have a few businesses with the girls: I have girls on the streets, I have girls who a lil more high class, I have girls in porn, and I have some girls who run stuff or sell stuff. I call them my Avon girls. (She laughed) Violet was one of my first girls on the streets once I made it to the big time and started pimpin hoes. Violet ass would be giving

White men freebies? I'm like bitch what? Bitch who? Bitch it aint no fucking love when it comes to clients...especially not no motherfuckin White men! This fuckin dumb bitch saw "Pretty Woman" and think she fucking Julia Roberts...and I'm like bitch hello? It's a movie! But girl, I don't really fuck w/her because this bitch fucked with my money, and this bitch talk too much and stay in mess. Be careful with her girl. She is crazy. That bitch like one of them hoes on TV, she just flip out and start fighting a bitch. But the reason I keeps that hoe around is because she the fucking news. Bitch know everything going on in the street, and she don't never mind fighting! Bitch, that hoe is straight up Mohammad Ali! I aint never seen no tranny fight like her! And that hoe crazy, but she's loyal. She don't care if she have a falling out with ya, this bitch gon come back. She told me you interviewing Ivy too. Now that bitch crazy. She really think she's White. That bitch aint even that light! But both them hoes is not hoes I really fucks with, but, in my line of work, I have to keep my enemies and my frenemies close...get what I'm saying sis? Keep yo enemies and yo frenemies close! I love my sistahs, I really do, but they just don't get real life sometimes. It's like we spend so much time trying to survive these streets, trying to make money, trying to be loved, trying not to kill ourselves, trying to have all these damn surgeries, that we can't really think about real life. How to live and shit. Like its really sad sistah. Like we as Black transsexuals just don't really be having a chance to make it! It's just so hard being a Black tranny girl. White trannies, Asians trannies, even Latin trannies, have it so much easier.

Even my real fish Black girlfriends have a better chance of making it than we do. Don't get me wrong, Black transsexuals and Black fish be having some of the same struggles, but real fish at least born with a pussy, and that comes with some benefits. It's no shade, I have a big ole dick, and I thought about chopping it off to get a pussy, but sex change pussies don't really work, they aint good for nothin, and sex change pussy don't have benefits or power to it. Girl, I'm straight, and cunt-pussy down, but bitch, I will fuck a man in his asshole faster than you can ask me this next question! Sistah that's how I started making real money. White men have paid me \$1000 for 1 hour fucking them in their asshole. Girl, I done made men shit all over they self the next day I done fucked them so hard with my dick and dildo at the same time sometimes. (She laughed). Bitch White men is some nasty fucks! And Violet dumb ass still fucking for free and saving up for a sex change because she think that's gon solve her problems.

Ivy...chile...Ivy...sistah, if it's one bitch I caint stand it's Ivy. But that bitch well connected to the streets in the City. She done fucked every White man possible. But I aint mad at her because she bout her paper too, but she still small time. She so busy trying to be White, that that shit done held her back. It's no way in the world that a bitch that look as good and been working the streets for 25 years, should still be on the streets, still not owning shit, still just barely making it. We have some history that I wont go into, but I will say, she knows not to fuck with me! She just plain ole evil. Sistah she done got the girls arrested, she done got the girls beat up, she done spread rumors that girls had diseases, I mean she is almost worse than the

White transsexuals. I'm cordial with White and other transsexuals, but I don't fucks with them on that level. I don't employ none, I don't help none, I don't befriend none. If I need help from a White person, it's gon be a client I can blackmail if need be, or a crocket ass cop that can do shit for me. White transsexuals be like evil ass White men in dresses. See that Caitlyn Jenner, bitch, I don't trust that hoe at all. Mark my words, she gon be bad for transsexuals! But she a fucking big ole rich White man, so they gon let her do whatever she wants to do, and fuckin Black transsexuals and other colored transsexuals gon be the ones to pay for the shit she fuck up. Some of new girls talk about how people be clocking them because of Bruce Jenner and shit. Miss Caitlyn might think she doing us a favor, but she getting us clocked more and putting our fucking lives in danger. She riding around in a motorcade like the fuckin Pope, and regular ole everyday transsexuals, girls that been living as women for 100s of years, is the ones paying the price. I been going to that same damn bank for years, and sistah aint nobody ever said nothing about me being a transsexual until now. Now everybody just think they know everything about transsexuals now. That's why I love that you writin a book on us, because people don't know all the shit we go through.

Class. Magnolia's views on class were layered: when discussing questions on class and obtaining the hierarchy of her needs, she acknowledged the irony being financially rich, but still feeling "held back", and while she was mostly upbeat and jovial during the interview, answering these sets of questions is when she became emotional. Magnolia shared: *Ooh sistah, now wait, see, now you comin with the good*

shit. See, ok. Wait girl, I got to get comfortable. You mind if I smoke? Ok, see class is that thing we can't see...class is that imaginary line that White people...George Washington, Abraham Lincoln all them motherfuckers, created to make sure that they stay rich with all the power and we stay poor. Class is power too. Like it's so many things. Sistah, I got to use you as an example, and you know I love ya, but I gots to use you. See how you Oprah, like you just walk in a room and people can tell you got class and power. And sistah its no shade, and I'm not reading you, but you know I train girls, so I pay attention to things like your hair could use a touch up, your nails aint done, see stuff like that, makes a regular bitch look bad, but you just look like tired, hardworking fish. And something about you says you have money, and sistah it's no shade, but when you opened your lil tired wallet to pay me, I looked in, and you only got a few credit cards and bout \$30 in cash, and you trying to pay me \$25. And see I can tell you strugglin because I can tell this yo last money sistah. But to the average eye, you just working professional fish. Im sho a lotta people think you rich and see that's class and power. You see how Uncle D. treating you? Bitch, he is in love with you...know why, because of class. D. only act like this with women he respect...and see how you aint payin him no mind and its driving him crazy! See that's class! High class fish aint never worried bout no man. See a regular bitch or tranny woulda cut the interview by now, and would be in the backroom somewhere fucking him or sucking his dick. You look him in the eye...that's class and power. See I respect you because you on some boss shit. Sis, Imma be real with you, I've never met a Black transsexual who was young and pretty that wasn't no hoe. I don't even know how that's possible.

D. asked me if you was a dyke! You don't seem like one, but see we only used to only seein dykes be so unbothered by him. See and that's how we can tell you aint no street girl because you don't even know who we are! Girl you like fuckin Oprah. You kinda remind me of granny L. too! See that's class. Granny L. was ole secretary fish downtown, but people always thought she one of the executives or something. Granny L. was the first in her family to graduate high school and get her I guess you call it technical degree, vocation, you know...she didn't go to college, college, she went to one of them business schools. Education always equal class. You can be the dumbest motherfucker on the planet, but if you got some schoolin, that's your ticket. D. got his associates, and see on top of him being so light skin, that's his ticket. Granny L. was against him selling drugs and stuff, but he showed her he could find ways to be mostly legal, and high class, and when he put a million dollars in her hand, she nicely closed her mouth. And when she reopened her mouth, all she said was, "I knew yo ass was gon be just like ya Paw", and she screamed, and shouted like she was in Church. Daddy B. went to Community College too. Ooh he was a good man. My mama was a old kitchen beautician without a license and aint have nothin. My grandparents was basically taking care of us, and Daddy B. just took us in. Daddy B. was into fighting for Black rights he wasn't concerned about money. He got into some kinda altercation with the police when he was young and they stomped his testicles, so he couldn't have children. Ooh he was such a good man. He never hurt nobody and they killed my daddy. (She began to sob) He aint never hurt nobody. And he loved me. My own real daddy ran off, his people called me a faggot, but My daddy B. and his people loved me. See

that's class. These is classy people. Niggers is ignorant, but some Black people have class. My granddaddy "J." and grandmama "V.", my mama parents they was low class Black in terms of money and education and all that, but they was high class in terms of how they treated people. They worked for White people, and got treated like shit, so they refused to treat other Black people like shit. Even when they church members would try to shame them cuza me, they would standup. See classy people standup and say that's not right, don't make fun of the gays...or the trannies. Even if a Black person is poor, if they standup for a tranny, you know they got some kinda class and manners and some kinda training. And yea, high class people fucks with us too, but they don't be trying to kill us in the streets. It's always niggers that's killing us in the streets. Niggers that done fucked us, sucked our dicks, or we done fucked them in their assholes. Sistah, I'm so sick and tires of niggas terrorizing the girls. When I was on the streets, girl, I used to be scared to date Black clients. It's no shade sistah, it's really not, but niggas, always the low class niggers just be out to get us on the streets girl. And it's no shade sister, but once I became a Madame, I started lookin for niggas after they terrorized my girls...well I didn't, but I done had my detectives find niggas, and sistah, when we catch them niggas we tries to skin them motherfuckers alive! Sistah, I wish we could catch all of em, and just fuck them niggas up!

Girl I love D. with all my heart, but sometimes I could kill that nigga for making me work them damn streets first! Ooh that nigga know he coulda let me start out high. Girl, see most girls have to work they way up. The streets is for everybody,

especially beginners. It's like class levels too. Girls that's on the streets is usually lower class. Once you make it to the top, you usually doing more top shelf things. No shade. It used to be where girls would run ads, have a hotline, shit like that...then, once you done got worked over, you know, face work, body, tittys, all that, then you might be able to do high-end escorting with an agency or madame. Then there's porn. Porn became really big for the girls about 10-15 years ago. If you a girl that can get into porn, and get your own promotions and stuff, that's how you make it big. Bitch I'm the director and producer now, I'm not actin no mo, and that's when you a boss bitch!

But you still aint on top at that point. See once you've done all that you might still be middle class...no shade! You might be upper middle class. You aint upper upper class until you consistently brining in and keeping six figures bitch...how bout that? Bitch I hits these hoes with seven figures! But then it's still layers because you can be upper upper class like me, but still not seen as upper class unless you like V...V. hit the millions, but she was also light skin and educated so that meant she could be seen as upper class by the regular society not just the hood people. And see transsexuals, we only get that high or that accepted when we've done all that, climbed our way up from the gutter, get all these damn surgeries, do all this damn work, look like a fucking million dollars every single motherfuckin day, because a badass Black transsexual bitch always gotta be done on these hoes to be taken seriously or to damn survive the streets...then we gotta be super real, super passable too on top of all that, to get to upper class. And it's nearly impossible! Yea, a few

girls have done it, but you know how few it is...how few Black it is. Yea, we got Janet Mock, but bitch what that mean, it's only 1 of us that could get in? Don't get me wrong, I love Laverne Cox, but she aint really in. No shade, she the token...she the Black tranny that don't really pass, that act White, and no shade, she can't really act, but they have her out front as the token...she just the token. Janet is really accepted. And I just feel like class is what made me always think I couldn't go further... well that's race-class. Shit I guess gender too. It's like growing up, I'm thinking I'm Black, I'm dark skin, I'm not cute, I'm po, and I'm a faggot...then I'm a tranny...so it's like shit, what I was gon do? Girl, if I wasn't a hustler, my mama, my grandma, they wouldnt have nothing. Mama caint even work no mo, standing all them years doing hair with no pension, nothing; shit you know my grandma caint work. She in her 90s. Asians get given all kinds a shit: loans with no interest, tax breaks, all kinds a shit to help them do well, then all they kids go to college and become doctors and lawyers, and they can own stores and be rich and take care of they old folks. Girl, can you imagine if I was just a damn hairdresser? Bitch that barely pay for hormones...how would I pay for everything else and then take care of my mama and some of my family too? So I got all this stress up on me being a Black transsexual, then I gosta take care of my people. It's like a fucking system setup to keep us down...even though I got money, girl, I just feel trapped. If I want to venture out into another profession, bitch what Imma say, I was a hoe and a Madame and small business owner for 20 years?

So yea, I laugh and joke a lot, but girl this shit hurts. That's what people don't get. This bitch Caitlyn Jenner got people thinking you can just be a microwave transsexual...do everything in three minutes like popping popcorn, and it's so much fun and so glamorous. And don't get me wrong, there are fun times, there are glamorous times, but bitch it's some hard, painful times, fulla shit that you caint get over, caint forget, caint get past, caint get through, all because you's a Black transsexual. And I'm lucky! Sistah praise the Lord, I am lucky! I'm blessed! I got all the surgeries that I wanted, still getting surgeries because it's addictive...or I should say, when you're a transsexual you stay paranoid about your looks, so you keep getting work done! My family accepts and love me, I got so much, but I still feel scared, I still feel empty, I still feel like I'm missing something. And that whole bank situation is what made me feel it more. Bitch, I'm depositing all this damn money, and this black crusty, thoty bitch treated me like I wasn't shit. Sistah they laughed at me (She cried). They laughed at me. And I needed my White looking, tall, deep voice uncle to go in there and get respect. Sistah they didn't even treat him like he was Black. I hate it!

Stigma. Magnolia ranked herself high in her Black racial identity development, high in her gender group connectedness and feminist orientation, and though she has maintained up to Stage 4: Esteem, in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954), she still indicates that she is unable to reach Stage 5: Actualization, and thus, the full hierarchy of her needs. Her thoughts on stigma are brief, but as poignant as her overall narrative. Magnolia maintained: *Stigma is why Black people ["can't"] caint*

get nowhere, and why transsexuals caint get nowhere. Stigma is dying a slow death or like being in jail ya whole life. Like being in solitary confinement. Yes, I have experienced stigma because I am Black, because I am transsexual, because I am a sex worker and sex boss, because I only have a high school diploma, because I'm dark. Everything about me has been stigma. I changed what I could to be more accepted, but my skin and how I was born I can't change. Nobody can change history. Not a sex change doctor, not nobody. The only thing we can do is work and fight to change the future. My daddy B. said all we can do is work and fight to change the future.

Violet (the aspiring Housewife)

Violet is 40 years old and somewhat unpredictable in her interactions with me. Upon first meeting her, she was very quiet and somewhat contemptuous; in the next meeting, she was outgoing and jovial; in the third meeting, she was somewhat flirtatious and asked me if I was a lesbian; in the next meeting she was completely insulting toward me, thus, giving me the impression that she would not be a viable candidate for the research study. However, during the recruiting process when I saw her at a Community Center, she was very warm toward me and acted as if we had been friends for years. Violet also volunteered to help recruit for the study: she garnered the support of several Black transwomen, but because of scheduling and compensation, only two (Ivy and Magnolia) participated in the study. Though Violet had been enthusiastic about participating in the study, she postponed the interview twice, and on the day of her scheduled interview, she called me an hour before the appointed time, stating a need for a location change. Violet invited me to her home. It

was a very rainy day, thus, making it appear dark outside during the daytime. Violet's home is located in a high crime area. I remained my care for several minutes because she was unsure if the sounds she was hearing were gun shots or thunder. It was in fact gun shots.

Violet answered the door visibly upset and in tears. She immediately hugged me and held on while crying on my shoulder. I consoled her as she explained that her boyfriend had abandoned her again. Through her tears she exclaimed, "*He told me I'm not real enough; not passable enough; too tall; my body is too hard!*" She was wearing a long kimono style robe: she removed the robe to display her almost nude body and continued: "*You see these fuckin titties, this shit is too big for my body! I look like I got fucking soft balls on my chest and I got this for him! You see all this fuckin bad ass silicone (pointing to her legs and buttocks) I got this shit for him! I risked my life getting all this shit to make him happy! I made more money with smaller tits! Yea, I wanted a more shapely body, so I wanted the silicone in my legs and ass, but this shit don't even look good! I'm just so fucking tired of changing! I done had so much work done and now I'm just fuckin tired!*" Violet sobbed uncontrollably for several minutes. Though I barely knew her, and had never been to her home, she began nursing Violet. The nursing is what allowed the interview to take place. Violet was a mix of childlike, adolescent, and adult during the interview. She—like Magnolia—did not want to take compensation for the interview stating: "*Girl, I should be paying you! I needed this so much!*" Her home was immaculate, and as she cataloged its effects, she reminisced on each man that purchased each

item. She stated, *“All I’ve ever wanted to be was a Housewife and a mom, like on TV. I thought doing all this was going to make me the woman that I always wanted to be...”*

When asked to describe herself, Violet offered: I don’t know? I’m Black, kinda dark, kinda pretty...I don’t know? I don’t really like to describe myself. Because all I think about is the bad stuff, and I don’t want you to think I have low self-esteem or something. Can we come back to this question?

When asked the question, “Did you have any role models growing-up? If so, who were they?” She responded: *Girl yes, definitely! I wanted to look like Janet Jackson or Robin Givens! I kinda wanted to be like Claire Huxtable (Phylicia Rashad), but not really because I didn’t want to be a lawyer or nothing like that, but she was beautiful and grand! I kinda felt like Mary J. Blige...still do really. I’m probably most like her. Been on drugs, all my relationships been bad. I’m singin “No More Drama” every fuckin day! Don’t laugh, but I kinda wanted to be like Carol Brady or June Cleaver. I loved the Brady Bunch so much! Carol was the shit! I didn’t really like Leave it to Beaver, but I loved the way June looked in her pearls and heels. My mom worked a lot when I was growing-up so I had to cook, clean the house, and take care of my younger siblings. One of my siblings has special needs, so that was a lot of work, but I didn’t mind. I felt like the mom. Girl, I would put on my mom’s shoes and jewelry and clean the house just like June. My dad came home early from work one day and caught me, girl, I even had on full makeup with a towel on my head and a dress! Girl he beat the shit outta me! Then that’s when everything went*

downhill. Girl, there was this movie the Burning Bed...with my bitch Farah Fawcett...ooh...girl, I love that movie. And she was a abused Housewife. Girl, I felt like her. I would come home from school, take care of the kids and house, and if my dad got home first, then girl, it would start. If I walked the wrong way, or if I did anything feminine, girl, he would just jump on me. He beat me every day without fail. Then, when I was about 14 turning 15, girl, I started fighting back! He jumped on me while I was washing dishes one time, and girl, I tried to kill him! Girl, it was a mess! I stabbed his ass a good 3-4 times! After that, they put me out. I had to go live with my "Aunt J"., but then she got married, and her husband didn't like me, so girl, I just kinda moved around from family member to family member for bout a year. Then, I met some friends at the Gay Bar. Well we was too young to get in, so we'd be in the parking lot. Then girl, I met Miss "M"! She was a old Drag Queen, and she was a assistant manager at a fast food restaurant. She would give the girls jobs, teach them how to do drag, give us a place to lay our head if we needed...she was like a real mother. She didn't want the girls to be hookin and doin drugs, but girl you know it wasn't long before I was hookin and doing drugs, so she stopped helping me...then girl, I met Ivy.

I thought Ivy was a real woman girl. I was like fuck, I don't just want to be a Drag Queen, I want to be a woman like that. So Ivy started helping me transition, and she started pimping me out. I wanted to be like Ivy. Ivy was definitely a role model. She had it all! She had a nice place, everybody knew her. She was like a celebrity!

Then, I became her competition, so she started being shady. Then she fucked my man. Girl, I beat Ivy ass till I couldn't beat it no mo. Every time I saw her ass I whipped it. Then she got me arrested. Then I went to jail. The first time. Girl jail was hard! But in there I met my sista "Miss T." Miss T. was a role model too. Girl she turned her life around after she got outta jail. She got a husband and helped him raised his kids. Girl, that was my dream! She stopped being friends with me because I was still with that street life, but I didn't have no other choice. (She began to cry). Girls like T. and Ivy don't understand that they biracial, so it's easier for them. Ivy don't really look White, but she look White enough, and T. does look kinda White or Puerto Rican or something? They have chances and opportunities that girls like me don't.

Race. Violet identifies as Black, African American, of African Descent, and she added "woman of color". She maintained: *I don't know? I like the way woman of color sounds. Its sounds better than Black. It sounds cuter. Like it sounds exotic. Like you're exotic to me...you don't look all Black, so you should say you're a woman of color. Remember that time at the Center when somebody called you a woman of color, and you were like, "I'm Black, you can say I'm Black."? See that woulda made me feel better. Like, I don't mind being Black, but I just feel like when people think you're something else or mixed they think you're better. Like I wish I looked like you girl. People never think I'm mixed. Like guys think I look good for a dark girl, but I always feel like they want somebody else. They want me because I'm a good fuck or I take care of them or something like that. I never felt like nobody wanted me. My mom and dad told me they didn't want me. Well, I guess my Aunt J. wanted me. She like*

me. She loved me. But as soon as she got married she had to make a choice, and guess who didn't win. I'm not mad at her because I probably would have chose my man too, but I wish I coulda stayed with her. I wish I coulda been her child. My grandmother was real color struck. Even though most of my family dark. But you know a few are a lil bit lighter. Like my cousin "S.", she like Meagan Good color, kinda look like her too...her and her mama about that shade of brown, and my grandmother used to love them! Even after her mama and my uncle got divorced, my grandmother still acted like his ex-wife was her daughter. My mom used to say that my grandmother wasn't a good mother, so she didn't know how to be a good mother. She said my grandmother treated them like slaves because she from down south. My dad dark too. Real dark. You turn the light out and that nigga disappear if he close his eyes. Me and my siblings was all lucky because we all came out my mom's color brown. Well, my youngest brother is a lil bit darker, but he aint as dark as my dad.

It seem like darker people more ignorant too? Like every time somebody Black doing something to the girls, it's usually a ole ignorant dark blue purple black ass nigga. Every time I had problems with clients, it was a ole dark blue purple black ass nigga. I'm not racist against my people. I don't hate my people, but you know that shit be working on my nerves! I mean White people more evil in other ways, but if you notice, they don't really be having problems with the gays and the girls. Or if they do, they don't be coming up to you on the street or trying to fight you and shit, ya know? I don't know why Black people so evil to the girls? It's like even if they cool with the gays, they still be hatin the transsexuals. Especially if we don't pass! Ohmygod!

When I didn't pass, girl, I used to have to fight almost every day! Girl, niggas used to jump me and shit and nobody would say or do nothing! Nothing girl. Sometimes, they would be cheering them on! This one time, two niggas beat the piss outta me girl, and then they stumped me out, and left me for dead. Girl, a ole White lady called the Police, and when the Police got there, one was a ole black nigga, and girl, he was making fun of me. I didn't even know it was happening because I was unconscious, but ole White fish was not having it! Girl, she filed a complaint and everything! She almost got his ass fired! She would not give up. She came to see me in the hospital and everything. Her grandson was gay, so she was not having it. Her dead husband was somebody important, girl, so she was not playing! You know it's always that one good White person. It might be ninety-nine that don't like Black people, but there is always that one. That's why I don't hate all of them. I actually like White men because they treat us better than Black men. I would prefer to have a Black husband...obviously, as you can see...but girl, I done had me some good White men. Well, they weren't really my man, they was just regulars...you know, regular clients. I guess I have been in relationships with Black men more? My ex is Black, but he light skin. He really the first man that ever loved me. I don't know why he treat me so bad sometimes? I do everything he ask. I'm a good wife. I think he just break-up with me so he don't have to take me out or do real couple, husband and wife stuff. See that's the thing: Black men be to scared to go out and stuff. White men don't care! White men be like, I dare a motherfucker to fuck with us! Girl, I hate it: I've done all this work to be passable, but Black men still be finding excuses. But what's so funny to me is that they'll

take a Asian bitch or a Mexican bitch out, and them hoes be clocky, but nobody bothers them. Especially not Asian bitches! Shit they can look like boys in dresses...fuckin ladyboys...and people still think they cute. White hoes be looking like straight-up brick walls, but nobody dare mess with them either. Mexicans...or Latinas, depending on where they live, they might get through too. Like in the hood, around here, yea, they gon get made fun of, but not beat-up. Black girls could look like fucking Beyonce, and still get the shit beat out them. Like, race is not a super big deal to me, but being a dark girl, it's not something I can forget about.

Gender. Violet identified as a Woman, Transwoman, Transgender, Transsexual, and Heterosexual. She stated that she does not identify as bisexual, but she does occasionally have bisexual sex. She excitedly began: *Ooh yes girl, I like these kinda questions. I'm straight, but I got a lil lesbian in me. I don't mind bulldaggin here and there, just not full time. I've dated transmen before, which no shade is still kinda like bulldaggin...no shade...I'm sorry, but if a transman asks me to fuck him in both his holes and eat his pussy, it's still bulldaggin. Now, if he don't want to be fucked, and don't want me to eat his pussy, I see it more as straight sex. Same with men who like me to fuck them in they ass, that's gay to me. I don't have a problem with either one, I just call it like it is, and I know that's not somebody I can marry because they don't want me as just a straight woman. I've even been with lesbians before. Girl, we would go shopping and then come home and bulldagg. It was kinda fun. It was like having a girlfriend and kinky sex. I thought you was a dyke: you not masculine or hard or nothing like that, but you have that power dyke lipstick*

lesbian thing kinda going on...kinda like Michelle Obama? She gives me very lipstick power dyke too! You don't think? I guess that's why I wasn't that into Claire Huxtable? I just like to be a traditional woman. You know, I like to be in a woman's place, and I like a hard, take charge kinda man. I would definitely fuck with Barack, but he couldn't be my husband because he too soft. I need a man like Jay-Z or Dr. Dre. My man kinda look like Dr. Dre., just maybe a lil lighter? He kinda act like him too! He don't play! I love it! If I get outta line, trust me, he puts me right back in my place. I cancelled the interview last time because we got into a fight, and he gave me a black eye, and I didn't want you to see me like that. I hate fighting with him, but when he actin crazy, I gotta act crazy back. But I just be wantin a lil static...I don't be wanting to seriously fight! That nigga be straight fighting me like a nigga sometimes. I be like fuck nigga, I'm still a woman! One time, he was punching me in my stomach and ribs, and I was like, "I'm pregnant!" ...and you know that nigga said he was gon make me have a abortion and kept me hitting me! Girl, no shade, that made me feel cunt! Girl, I felt like real fuckin fish! Girl, that's why I be like I'm not just a tranny, I'm a woman! I live my life everyday like any other natural born woman of America! Ooh girl, I'm getting horny just thinking about it. Girl, he fucks me so good after he beat me, and he buys me things, and he treats me nice again. I love him so much. He the best thing that ever happened to me! I never thought a man as light and fine as him would want me...as a girlfriend or a wife, ya know. He got everything I want and need. He the man I been dreaming about since I was lil girl.

I always knew I was a girl. I never felt like a boy. Transitioning has been the hardest thing ever, but I wouldn't go back for nothing. I hate being a tranny, but I hated being a boy even more. I wish I was just a natural born girl. I don't really want a sex change, but I don't know, I want to feel like a real woman. I know it's not gon really make me a real woman, and I know it's not gon change anything really, but I just need something to make my life better. My man keep throwing his baby mama's in my face, saying he needs to spend time with them, and sometimes he want some pussy, so that's what be making me want to get it. He done had four more kids since we been together, and I just wish I could keep him. (She began to cry and scream "I hate it" and "I hate this shit" for several minutes) I just wish somebody wanted me as myself. I just wish somebody loved me just like I am. (She removed her hair unit, robe, and underwear, then stood looking in a wall mirror screaming, "I hate you" for a several minutes. Then she stormed out of the room. Violet returned, re-dressed in a different robe and hair unit, and she returned to interview as if nothing had happened)

When asked about feminist identity development Violet quickly and adamantly responded: *Hell no! I aint no damn feminist! I mean, I want fair treatment in society, like I want to vote and stuff, but hell no, I aint no damn feminist. That shit is a total turn off to men. My man would leave me fa show if I came home and told him I was a feminist and I was burning my bra or some dumb shit. That's some White hoe or some bulldagger shit. See, that's why I thought you was a bulldagger. You caint have no man and be a damn feminist. Fuck that! It's hard enough trying to keep a man as a transsexual, I don't need nothing else blocking me. So, I'm like a 2 (out of*

10) on that feminist shit! And the 2 is only for rights and stuff in the world. But in my house, a woman's place is in the kitchen, and on her back, or on her knees pleasing her man.

When asked about gender group connectedness, Violet offered: *I feel very close to my gender group. I like being around other women, both cis and transwomen. I have a lotta girlfriends. I would say I'm a 10 (out of 10) in that. Even though me and Ivy have our issues, that's my sister and I love her. Me and that girl used to be inseparable! I was her best girl. Her top daughter. She don't even like dark girls, but she liked me. I felt so special. I was like her assistant. She made me felt so important. It was like that movie the Devil Wears Prada. She taught me so much. That's why when she fucked my man, I forgave her. Yea, I beat her ass going and coming, but I love her. Magnolia is like my sister too. I worked for her too, but not the same way I worked for Ivy. I didn't clean Magnolia house and stuff like that, or take care of her the way I took care Ivy. Magnolia was more like a business woman. She gave you a job to do, you did it, and that was that. In the beginning, we used to keke and hang, but then she just started treating it like a business. Well, I had messed up some stuff, and she told me that we needed to keep it all business because if I messed up again, it would come to blows, and it wouldn't be nice. We almost fought too, but I got in her face, and this bitch pulled a lil gun out her bra, and cocked it, and was like bitch, "I'll kill you right here and not think two shits about it". That was the first time in my life that I was actually scared...because I knew she would do it. Magnolia is one bitch that nobody in they right mind fucks with. I knew I could beat*

her ass, but when that bitch came out her fuckin tits with a gun, I was too through. Ivy tried fucking with her and her uncle, and that bitch paid for it seriously! But if I ever need a loan or anything like that, Magnolia is always willing to help. We aint good good judies like I wish we were, but we do judy. Most of my other best judies are real fish though? I don't know why, but I tend to get along better with them. Trannies keep me up in mess. I'm getting to old to be fighting and all that. Plus other trannies get me clocked and I hate it.

I hate being clocked. I fuckin hate it. I feel like they sayin I look hard or like a man. I didn't do all this work to have somebody tell me I look like a man! But having real fish friends has it's benefits and it's setbacks. The benefit is looking more real in public and learning real woman stuff. The setback is fish be jealous and haters. It's always a competition with them hoes! Always! Girl one of my real fish friends fucked my man. You know I beat that ass. And you know he watched and laughed at her ass. I always like having a bisexual girlfriend too because my man like to have threesomes sometimes. I don't really like doing it with girls I don't know, but sometimes we do. Girl for him, I might even do some sister-wife shit? Especially if fish pretty and got pretty kids, or could have some for us. I just want to be housewife and a mom! Is that too much to ask? I just want to be taken care of, so I don't have to worry about work or hookin or nothin. I just want my man to bring home the bacon so I can cook it up, then sit on my fat silicone ass, and watch TV, and eat bonbons, or vacuum in my pearls and stilettos. Being a woman to me means having a man to take care of you and raising some kids. I just want to be that. I just want to be a woman and be happy.

Class. Violet's mood changed throughout the interview; while answering the questions on class she became taken with a memory of the 1970's TV show "Good Times" and she began to recall and act out several scenes. One of her idols, Janet Jackson, starred in that show, and played an abused child. Violet shared: *Girl, I grewup kinda middle class I guess you could say? We wasn't Good Times poor, and we definitely weren't Cosby Show rich. We had a nice three bedroom house that my parents really couldn't afford. My mom worked two-three jobs to my dad's one job. My mom was kinda like Florida Evans (played by Esther Rolle) and my dad was a lot like James (played by John Amos). A lot... a complete asshole. Dumb stupid lazy ass nigger. My mom made sure all the bills were paid and food was on the table, and he made sure to eat most of the food, and made sure that we always had a nice TV and two cars. He always had a nice car and my mom always a hoopty. My Aunt J. was like Walona (played by J'anel DuBois). Aunt J. was fancy. She was high class to me. She lived in the nice part of town, she had a nice job, nice car, nice clothes, perfume...she was always done. The rest of the family was kinda poor or I guess working poor, not poor poor, but just a step away from it. Aunt J. went to college and was always there for the family if anybody needed anything. Her and mom were close like Florida and Walona, and my dad couldn't stand Aunt J. and she couldn't stand him either! She would cuss him out coming and going...call him all kinda lazy no good niggas. That's kinda how my whole family was: all the women worked super hard and all the men was lazy no good niggas. Aunt J. married a good man though. He can't stand me. Aunt J. said it's not the gay or the trans thing, he just don't like*

me. He speaks to me and stuff if I'm around, but he don't like me in they house for too long. I don't know why?

He come from real high-class people. He kinda soft. Most high-class men be soft. I don't like that shit. Aunt J. kinda changes when she around him. She be all dainty and giggly; he think he funny, but he really corny. And she just be lovin it. He real kissy huggy too. He aint never yelled at her or cussed her out or beat her or nothin. When Aunt J. around the family she stay cussin folk out and regulatin ya know. She like the boss of the family, but when she with him, she totally different. I think that's most high-class Black people though? They be pretending they aint ghetto. I don't feel I'm really ghetto, but I know I'm a lil ghetto. My man wouldn't want me if I wasn't a lil ghetto. He a street dude and he need a street chick. One of his baby mama's is a high yella, high-class bitch, and that bitch don't even let him see his son. That bitch told him, she was young and dumb when she was fucking him, and she just wanted to fuck with a thug for the experience, and she didn't think she was gon get pregnant because she was on birth control. Can you believe that? Then this bitch had nerve to get him arrested, and get a restraining order again him after he slapped her ass. Just a lip slap and this bitch trippin! That bitch don't know what she gave up!

I'm classy, but I'm not high-class. I'm like Mary J. Blige ya know...I'm a lil hood but I'm classy. I would love to be rich like Mary J.! But I don't care how much money I got, as long as I have him. I feel kinda rich with him actually. Since we been together I aint had to hustle as much. Like, I aint really been escortin in a while.

Every time we breakup, if it's more than like 2 weeks, I might work a lil because it be feeling good to feel wanted ya know? I don't like escortin, but I do like feelin wanted and needed. When you escortin, it's not just about the money...sometimes it's good company, sometimes it's community. Like when I was workin the streets, we would be out there laughin and talkin and havin fun and stuff. Now, if he aint around, I just be by myself. I feel like people be avoiding me. He the only one that love me. I just want us to go out more, and take trips and stuff like a normal married couple. He do it with them bitches, so why can't he do it with me? He took one of his baby mamas on a trip last month for her birthday. I feel like she the main bitch sometimes. I hate that bitch. I been trying to find that bitch so I can beat her ass or start some trouble. I called one of his baby mamas and told her I was a transsexual so she would leave him alone. You know that bitch didn't. I be wanting to fight all them bitches. Them bitches just want his money. They can have other men, so they should let me have him. I need him. (She began to cry; while crying she called him three times, and left three different voice messages: in the last message, she begged him to come back. She also sent him text messages, but did not disclose what she texted to him. Once she ended her calls and texts she did not immediately return to the interview, instead, she put on music by Beyonce, and she began to perform. Once she ended her performance, she returned to the interview.)

I don't really care what class I am, as long as I got him, and we comfortable I'm good. I don't want to be poor and strugglin. I'll take middle class because I guess that's what we kinda are. I don't know if I want to be upper-class though? I just don't

think that's realistic? Like even though we got money, probably more money than most people, we still not upper-class. Like I don't want to be some fake ass bitch trying to keep up with White people because we never gon be White. No matter how much we as Black people do, we never gon be White. Look at Barack and Michelle, people still treat them like niggas. She got all kinda degrees, she smart, she pretty, she as bad as bad bitch can be, and White people still hate her. Barack half White, look White, and they still hate him. I read somewhere that right before he was a Senator they was broke. They was fuckin lawyers from Harvard, and broke as fuck? What kinda sense that make? I want to be like you and Michelle in some ways, but yall do all this work and still don't have that much to show for it. I mean yea, Michelle first lady, but what the fuck that mean? She aint no queen or nothin. A po white trailer trash bitch would come along and still be treated better than both of yall. Don't get me wrong, I admire yall, but I feel like yall do all this work, and people still treat yall like shit. She got a pussy ass nigga, and you don't seem like you got no nigga, so what good is it? Just like Aunt J., she got a ole pussy ass nigga, done worked hard all her life, and she still regular. And she dark, so she really aint shit in the world. My granny used to say we still just one foot outta slavery. I feel like yall makin a big difference in the world, and Aunt J. definitely took care of the family, but in the end, yall all still just glorified maids takin care of people. At least I know my place is in the kitchen and takin care of kids, and being on my back, and my knees.. I just want him to buy me a nice like three-four bedroom, two-three bath house, with a nice lil yard, maybe a white picket fence, and two cars in the garage. And I just want

to take trips to like Vegas or Mexico or maybe even Miami. Ohmygod, I've always wanted to go to Miami or New York. I've had enough disappointment in my life, enough heartache, enough people telling me no I can't do something because I'm dark, because I'm Black, because I'm a transsexual, I just don't want to even get my hopes up and have expectations anymore. Yea, I want you to help me get into college and stuff, but I just want a degree. I don't know why, but I just want a piece of paper that says I'm special and I did something. I want my kids to feel like I did something. I barely finished high school. I really was just passed my senior year because I barely went to school. I was working late nights, I barely had a place to stay; I wanted to be really good in school, but I just never had a chance. My daddy used to beat me so bad, I couldn't concentrate when I was younger. Then when I got older, I could barely go to school. I always wanted somebody to say I was smart and special. That's all I want from college. That's all I want outta life.

Stigma. Violet became excited toward the end of the interview because her significant other responded to her text message. She tried to stay focused, but could not. She stated: *Girl, we gotta wrap this up...how much longer we got cuz he say he horny again and he miss me, so he gon come over. Girl, I'm so happy! Girl, I was thinking about killing myself again, but my man coming to save me! YES! My man is coming to save me. See how much he love me! Girl, I be so depressed without him. He all I got. I can't wait till we get married. I'm glad you asked that question about marriage. I've never been in one of these studies where they asked us about marriage and relationships. You ask real woman questions. I really like that.*

I don't really understand these questions about stigma and reaching my goals and stuff. My only goal in life is to be loved and to be a wife. Once I have that, I'm good. I don't really care bout no stigma and all that. I want our lives to be better and stuff, but we Black transsexuals, so girl, how much better can life get? Most of us just lucky we aint been killed yet or committed suicide, or died of AIDS or something. Yea, my life has been horrible, like I said earlier when you asked them question about what I been through, but what Black transsexual life aint been horrible? Even Janet Mock...even she was escortin and got a beat-up and shit. Her life was better than most Black transsexuals, and she on top now, but it was hard for her too. You see how perfect she is, and it's hard for her too. Some Black transsexual do make it ya know...if they short and completely real and passable, they can make it, but they still be crazy too. Shit, it hurt being a Black transsexual. Everywhere you go, everywhere you turn it's somebody that hate you, somebody calling you a man and making you feel ugly. And even if you the realest bitch ever, you still Black! If people can tell you got even a lil Black in you, they still gon make life harder for you. I don't care what nobody else say, everybody else got it way easier than us. Black straight people, Black gays and lesbians, even Black transmen. They can live normal lives, and achieve all they goals. But it's always somebody that hate us, standin in our way, jealous of us, scared of us...it's something they gon find to not like us and keep us down. It aint no escaping it. What we got in common with Black biological women is that it's always somebody trying to keep us down and tell us we aint good enough. Other transsexuals, especially White ones still can get ahead, still can be loved and

shit. I know girls like you and Janet gon help make it better for us in the long run, but bitch I'm 40...in transsexual years, bitch, that's 65. I'll be dead before Black trannies getting treated like normal people. Shit I'll be dead before Black women period gettin treated good. Stigma, racism, discrimination all this shit you askin about is basically being Black. I can't change that I'm Black, I can't change that I was born with a dick, I can't make my voice higher, I can't change my shoulders, I can't change none of the things that get me stigma'd.

Violet's significant other entered her home with his key. He stared at me, and spoke in a flirtation manner. Violet immediately embraced and kissed him. He fondled her as if I was not present. Though there were a few questions left to the questionnaire, I became uncomfortable, began to collect her research materials, then stood to exit. The couple moved to the sofa and began engaging in sexual activity as if I were not present. On the way out, I thanked Violet and said to her, "you are smart and special, don't forget that." Busily engaged with her partner, Violet did not acknowledge me then, however, when I placed the requisite follow-up call to ensure Violet's safety post-interview, Violet thanked me and told me that she "would try to do better from now on" because she knew I believed in her.

While Violet occupies the lower stages of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, with her ultimate goal being to achieve Stage 3: Love and Belonging, she appears to be ambivalent about reaching the highest stage of Self Actualization. Because love, acceptance, and belonging have been absent from her life, she believes it is the highest goal that a woman can only attain through being a housewife. Her

perception of a housewife is a woman has obtained all 5 Stages of the hierarchy of needs. Violet's perception was buttressed by the popular images of housewives that were projected in the popular TV shows she watched while growing-up. These shows mostly starred White actresses playing characters with "perfect lives". She clearly states that the stigma of Blackness is what prohibits Black women from moving forward in society or being treated well in society. Violet maintains Cross' Internalization Stage as she is clear that her race and skin color supersede any of her other intersectional identities. Violet ranked herself low in feminist identity because she sees it as antithetical to her dream of being a pampered, docile housewife—and in many ways it is. However, she had consistently been a working woman, and that it is Black feminism that has enabled her to analyze centuries of systemic injustice against Black women. While Violet's narrative demonstrates many themes of the overall study, one important theme that Violet personifies is her connection to Black womanhood, and how she sees Black transgender and cisgender women as inextricably connected.

Lotus (The Artist...of quadruple threats)

Lotus is 42 years old, and unlike the preceding 6 participants, she was not connected to anyone enrolled in the study. Lotus was recruited somewhat randomly by me: I was attempting to recruit participants at a Community Center where there is a low population of African Americans. In fact, many African American LGBT people have indicated feeling unwelcomed in that particular Community Center; however, there are a small few African American transwomen who do frequent this

particular Center, which is why I attempted recruiting there. I was curious to see if potential recruits from this Center would offer a diversity of opinions and experiences. Both participants recruited from this center (Lotus and Willow), did offer diversity of experiences, but in many ways, they were similar to the other 8 participants. This unique connection of all 10 participants evidences some of my hypotheses for this study.

Lotus was entering the Center as I was preparing to leave. I was speaking to a White staff person at the time, but acknowledged Lotus with a wave and smile. Lotus ignored me, however, I was determined to meet and recruit Lotus for the study. I approached Lotus in a very warm manner, and initially, Lotus was uneasy, but once I continued my recruitment speech, Lotus became quite talkative. After several minutes of talking, Lotus stated: *Ohmygod girl, I would have never guessed you were this cool! Ohmigod, I just want to give you a hug! Thank you so much girl! I so needed this light and love and positivity today—especially from a sistah! Girl, I was feeling so down today. It's no shade girl. Ohmigod girl, you just don't even know.*

Lotus was 20 minutes early for her interview. When given all the options for the interview location and lunch, Lotus chose to be interviewed at my home, and to have a home-cooked Soul Food meal. Lotus touts her personal style as being enigmatic, eccentric, punk, and avant garde. She arrived wearing a platinum blonde, bob-cut hair unit to accentuate her deep ebony complexion, and her ensemble was an amalgamation of how she described herself. Lotus received a great deal attention because of her artistic presentation, and she maintained: *Im a fucking star! People*

should stare. I'm fucking royalty! All hail the Queen! I'm fucking moving, breathing art! I am art! I am an artist. I am a classically trained fucking artist! I am an artist of the highest degree: I am an artist of quadruple threats! Yes bitch, get into it! I paint, I write, I sing, I dance! Miss Thing, I've been a model and muse to some top artists and designers. These fucking country-bumpkin ass people out here can't even understand the greatness that they have before them! Miss Thing, girl...bitch...when I tell you that that walk from the train station was so fierce! Girl, I love coming to this part of town because I get so inspired. You know I live in fucking whiteville in the City, and I'm so not inspired! Then I come to this area, and I see all of this beautiful diversity...but you know yo people always gotta try it. Fucking dumb ass niggas always gotta fuck shit up! I'm minding my business leaving the train station and this motherfucker gon yell out, "that's a nigga", and of course everyone started staring and snickering. Girl, I felt bad at first, but then I just paid it nootch, and strutted harder. You know ignorant ass niggas cannot stand it when the girls are unbothered honey!

Girl, of course it hurts, but I refuse to let them see that hurt girl. Girl, they used to have me so fucking broken. Ohmigod, girl...wait we aint even really start yet! Girl, you see, I'm just ready to talk girl! (she was encouraged to continue) Girl, I'm sorry. This shit got me riled up girl. It's like I was feeling so good coming to see you, and this one ignorant ass nigger then just fucked my whole mood up! Girl, you're a psychologist, so I'm just gon let all my shit hang all the way out today. OK! Girl, you've been warned. So girl, I'm crazy as fucking shit. I'm fucking PTSD, I have

fucking anxiety. I'm fucking anxious as fuck right now. I'm trying to fucking calm down. Girl, this is really how I ended-up on drugs real heavy. I've always smoked weed, still do, and you know I used to party here and there...you know, a lil coke, a lil X, a lil shroom, you know designer fucking artists-model shit, but girl, then I went full time and started my transition...GIRL! Everything hit me like a ton of fucking bricks! Girl, I used to have to be sky-high just to leave the house. I mean, I still do smoke a lot, but girl, I used to be one of those bitches bumping coke in a public bathroom. And Miss Thing, this walk over here has taken me back to that place! Bitch if I had coke in my purse right now, I'd bump! Because I'd need something to make me feel invincible again...ya know? It always hurts. Sometimes less than others, but it always hurts. I love myself as a transwoman, but I hate to be called a man! I absolutely hate it! Ohmigod, girl, how do you do it? How do you deal with these niggas trying it? Well you're real, so I guess you don't have to deal with it, but bitch you a mothafuckin gangsta for being able to live over here! Bitch you must be a good fighter cuz you don't even seem scared! And you are such an amazing cook bitch! Work! You mind if I have more?

When asked to describe herself, Lotus stated: *I'm tall, thin...kinda slim thick now. I have a booty now, so I totally don't know how to act! Ohmigod girl, hormones got my body so together. Now my face...girl...it took so long for my face to soften from androg to womanly. I still look kinda hard some might say, but I see it as editorial, high fashion, couture! I'm like bitch, I got paid thousands for these hard, African features!* (she began to strike high fashion model poses) *Girl, I had so much*

success as a gender-bender androgynous model, but absolutely no success as a female model. I was one of the first big androg Black models! But trying to work the women's board up against some of the biggest 90's models...girl, it did not work! That was a very hard pill to swallow. It's like they were saying yea, you're hot, striking, freaky, and fetishy as this kind of alt-fashion-African-looking-ladyboy, but as a girl, oh um, not so much. That like really fucked with my self-esteem, and once again, drugs came to the rescue. Girl, I keep talking about drugs because I'm trying to fucking stay sober. I'm just feeling so much fucking stress right now. And I just really need to fucking process this, so forgive me, but bitch, you're fucking beautiful! Ohmygod bitch. I'm looking at you in this light and I want to draw you. You're so fucking beautiful and so fishy and so confident, I mean, you're just fucking sickening, and I'm needing to process this because I'm feeling intimidated and maybe a little envious. Like, you're so fucking cool and sweet and sisterly, and I'm feeling bad for feeling jealous, and I'm feeling like amazed or aspirational, and I'm feeling like ohmygod I knew this beautiful creature in another life, and it just fucking sucks because mentally, I'm wanting to default project my envy and insecurities on to you because that would make me feel better. For example, I just got clocked right, then I come to your beautiful home by the way...very Black woman academic...books every fucking where! Bitch a stack of five books is not supposed to be the base of a flower arrangement...I'm just saying! See like that: that's a compliment, but the envy monster is still like bitch you can do better. Or like you look fucking amazing, but I've been dying to tell you that you wear too much makeup. I literally just want to rip you

to shreds and put you down to make myself feel better, and it feels horrible. And I hate this feeling. (She began to shake and cry)

This feeling almost made me not talk to you when we first met at the Center. Bitch you were so done! Bitch you had on heels, cute outfit, face, hair, I mean everything was so together. You had like 3 bags...and there I was looking like I had fallen out of 90's Punk video. And when you spoke to me, I felt so ashamed. And you know the Center is already a super White space, so there's that feeling, then the other Black girls who are usually there are either bitches or hoes or both, multiplied by being mean and shady, divided by dealing with these same fucking issues of oppression-forced jealousy, equaling us just being horrible to each other! So, it's just not easy to meet other Black girls. Plus, I also wasn't sure if you identified as Black because you have this really unigue...exotic look. Then you came up to me and talked to me as if you were really interested in knowing me, and I was like what the fuck just happened?

And another something you don't know is that another shady as black bitch hated on you to other girls at the Center, and took down your flyer and told girls you were a bitch. And I thought to myself, I wonder how many people throw shade at you just because they're jealous or insecure or intimidated? I'm rarely ever jealous, and it's because I usually feel like I'm better than everyone else, but every now and then, there comes a bitch like you to reignite all of my insecurities! (She laughed) And now you're literally asking me to describe myself, and all I see are insecurities, problems, issues, cracks in the very fiber of who I pretend to be, who I aim to be. I'm so fucking

tired girl. So fucking tired of hurting and trying to mask it. (She began to sob) I'm fucking crazy. I'm fucking crazy because I was pretty much born intersex, I had tits as boy with an androgynous body, so I've spent my life trying to perform in ways to be accepted and loved. I'm a fucking Artist! I'm a classically trained fucking Artist who has been acting and performing and creating my whole fucking life. I'm lonely as fuck. I'm surprised I'm fucking alive at 40 something, I'm a recovery fucking designer-drug junkie. And I desperately want to be married. And right now, I need to fucking smoke! (She took a smoke break)

When asked the question, “Did you have any role models growing-up? And if so, who were they?” Lotus responded: *Ok girl, yes...come through with these great questions! I was just talking about this! Nobody ever seems to think about this idea of Black transwomen and girls needing or having role models! Positive role models that is...most of our inner-community role models are not positive. Sure, we have girls like Janet Mock or Laverne Cox in the media now, they are great examples and role models, but we need more positive examples. For me, almost all of my examples were cisgender Black women. And that's a great thing, but I think it does help tremendously when you can see a girl that's JUST LIKE YOU make it. I can't say that enough. For most of us, there was not a road map; there was no north star...life was only about escaping the male life that you had, then surviving as female...there was never an idea that we could actually be normal...whatever that means...but be just regular women. I transitioned because I just wanted to be a regular woman...well, a not so regular...a phenomenal Black woman, but you know what I mean. Girl that*

being said...girl, you gon have to keep me on target with these questions. I know I'm just rambling and getting my life, but please feel free to interrupt and remind me to answer the damn question! (She laughed; then, I encouraged her to continue to speak freely.)

Girl, well you already know Grace Jones was one of my earliest inspirations. I've pretty much patterned my aesthetic after her. The hair changes, the clothes change, but Grace is always with me. Ohmygod, she is so fierce! Sylvester actually was a big influence on me. You know Sylvester was kind of trans in the beginning. Then she butched up because being gay was easier to sell. And how well I know about that! I don't know...there are so many! Natalie Cole, Chaka Khan, Patti LaBelle, Janet Jackson, Whitney Houston...I loved singers, I loved music, I loved to dance. Naomi Campbell, Iman...I loved fashion, I loved models, I loved art. Judith Jamison!...Alvin Ailey too, and the whole Company, but in Judith I saw myself! I've always loved the whole strong Black woman manifesto...My mom...Ohmygod yes, My mom! My mom was definitely a role model. She is where I got all of my strong Black woman love, and when I can find it, my inner self love. She really loved and accepted me. She was an artist and an activist, and she fully embraced me. Ohmygod, I miss her so fucking much! She had a massive stroke. She died in her sleep. She laid dead in her bed for 3 days before we knew. Damn, I miss her! My "Aunt J." was definitely an inspiration too. She is my mom's younger sister and polar opposite! My mom was all righteous Black Panther, power to the people, starving Artist, and Aunt J. is very bourgeoisie, prim and proper, upper-class, southern-belle, Black woman with the

rich husband, and she's very involved in her Church...you know big hat wearing hallelujer type! They have different dads (She laughed)! Several other women too: Maya Angelou, June Jordan, Sonya Sanchez, Alice Walker, Lorraine Hansberry, most of the Black Panther women...Elaine Brown, Assada, Angela Davis, Kathleen Cleaver, Erica Huggins...like it's so many Black women that inspired me as a Black woman. As much as so many Black people have thought I was a fucking oreo, I'm like super fucking Black. Being Black is the core of who I fucking am! Yea, I may speak more properly, but shit I use slang and ebonics too. And I used the Fem-QueensEnglish...heller! I might prefer champagne, but shit, I drink red kool aid too! And by the way girl, this iced tea is so fucking good! Bitch your beautiful, you cook, and you make fucking sweet tea from scratch...ohmygod, I need you to teach me how to cook and shit girl, cuz I needs to get my manzes back...heller! (She laughed)

Race. Lotus ranked high in her Black identity development: at Stage 5, Internalization and Commitment, she acknowledged that her Blackness is at the core of her identity and fully who she is. Lotus continued: *Yea you know girl, as much as I would love reject the notion that you don't need to know how to cook to get a husband, girl, I think that shit is so true! Especially if you're a Black transwoman and you want a Black man! Girl, they might marry straight fish who can't cook—especially if said fish is not Black—but they aint marrying no Black tranatee...oh sorry girl, tranatee is my play on tranny and manatee...there is a lot of symbolism in that that I've done in various pieces of my art that I may go into later, but girl, I'm on track so I'll come back to that...but they're not coming for a transwoman who can't*

do almost every fucking thing under the sun. Like seriously, no lie, if you're a Black transwoman and you want a man...a Black man...and you want a normal life...like real fish...meaning going to work and doing normal fish things...then you got to be fucking perfect. I realize that now, and I feel like I'm too fucking old to learn all these new tricks...girl, some old bitches can't learn new tricks! And it's kinda fucking impossible. It's almost fucking impossible to be a Black transwoman going through all of the shit we go through, and then still be able to do everything real fish do.

And I don't want to die alone, and basically broke like my mom. I'm so much like my mom it's scary. And she was lonely toward the end. She said the kind of men she liked, didn't like her, and the ones that did like her, were either no good or worthless. Do you know how I feel that exact same way? Girl, it's like it's so hard to have Black on Black love. And girl, move out the way, because I'm about to open my brain and let my inner slave come shufflin out...girl, I really only like light skin and biracial Black men. Isn't that terrible? Girl, I hate admitting it! I've dated all kinds of men, but, my deepest attraction, and who I've found to be most attracted to me is the really light brothas. Girl, I'm still in love with one that I've had an off-again-wefucked-again relationship with for over 20 years now. He's my second love, but my greatest love. Ever.

So, I mentioned how my Aunt J. is all southern church lady and shit, well, she is how I met my "second husband B." Ok, so my mom is originally from the South. My mom's mother had her at like 15, then almost ten years later she married a "well to do" man with a Church family from a town not too far away; and basically, he and

my grandmother would have been looked down upon if they had taken my mom with them, so my grandmother left my mom with her family. At 18, my mom moved out here not knowing anybody! She got a job, met my dad within days of being out here, got married at 19, and had me at 20. My dad was killed by the Police when I was 2, she raised me mostly by herself, and she died at 51. I've lived much more than she did, but I still feel like her story is mine, and it scares me. I just wish B. would leave his wife and be with me. (She paused for a few minutes with watery eyes, but she did not cry)

*So B., is not related to me, but he kind of is. Girl, so B.'s uncle, is my aunt's husband, so technically we're cousins by law in some kind of way. So girl, the first time I went down to visit for the summer, he came over to keep me company, and it was love at first sight. I was 17, and my aunt and uncle had just purchased this big ole plantation-like colonial home...girl, that shit was like *Gone With the Wind*! And my auntie definitely thought she was *Scarlette O'Hara*. She was 27, married to basically one of the royals of their community, she had been to college, I mean she was living the dream! Especially considering my grandmother came from illiterate share croppers! She married into a family of old black money folks, the kind who be like "we owned slaves". Auntie is light enough to be in their family; you know she had to take the paper bag test! She wanted to show off to my mom, so she paid for us to travel down by train. Me and mama had so much fun! That was like our first vacation! It took like 2 days, but every single minute, going and coming back were just amazing!*

So B. is a musician and singer, and that's how we first connected. It was magical. He is like butter pecan ice cream light, with dark waffle cone colored hair, and the most beautiful hazel green eyes. He was always taller than me too, which was rare for me living out here cuz most people from out here are short! He wasn't like other Black boys: he wasn't super masculine, yet he wasn't noticeably feminine. He was soft, but not feminine. He knew how to appear butch, but honey, once we were alone, all that sugar would come oozing right on out. Girl, don't let a Whitney Houston song be on...girl, he would hit notes higher than me! He had had sex with girls, but not girls like me. He had not really experimented with girls like me, but he was eager to be intimate, and wasted no time expressing it. The first time we were alone he kissed me, and he groped me, and he led me to the bed, and he got on top of me, and he humped me as if we were having sex. We did not stop until we heard "Uncle K." yell dinner was ready. As we collected ourselves, I was nervous and scared of what might happen next, but he was laughing, and I said, what's funny?— and he said, "I didn't even ask you to be my girlfriend first. I'm sorry. Will you be my girlfriend?" I laughed and said yes. He said, I don't want to call you that name (my given name), can I call you something else in private, and of course, I already had a secret girl name, so that's what he's called me ever since...even though I've changed that name. It's like his special name for me. I kind of love it. Well we had sex that night. I had lost my virginity two years earlier to my Art teacher who was 23 at the time. I consider my Art teacher J. to be my first husband. He really helped out a lot. He was biracial and looked almost White. He and B. kind of did it for me on the

whole light skin thing. They both really loved me and took care of me, so no matter how terrible Black men can sometimes be, I know that there is hope because I've had two good Black men that loved me deeply. Sure, they both married cisgender women and left me in the cold, but they never stopped loving me. My Art teacher J. moved away at the end of my junior year to get married to a rich white bitch who basically takes care of him. Or as he likes to say, "she supports his art". He really nurtured my talents, and he really helped me. Being a 15-year-old dark skin Black boy with tits and a girl voice, and girly look, at a predominantly White school, with no real friends, and a mother who worked day jobs and night jobs in between doing her art, was not easy. I love my mom, don't get me wrong, but she would literally leave me alone for long periods. If she took a job working at a bar over Super Bowl weekend, she'd leave Friday night, and come home Monday morning. Her return was always grand with gifts! She'd proclaim, "mama made some good money this weekend!" And when you're 11 or 12, you don't really know what to do with that. J. was like boyfriend, teacher, and big brother. My mom said she never suspected that we were sexually involved. And she said she never suspected it because men like him don't typically like lil Black girls like me, so she didn't think she had anything to worry about. I still don't know how to feel about that? Was there no value placed on my little girl Blackness—my onyx darkness—or was my mom just trying not to see that I had his picture in a heart on my wall? She knew I was gay...well you know trans...before I told her at 14. Yes girl, I came out to my mom at 14 in 1985 after we saw The Color Purple! Girl, I was like mama, I think I'm like Shug Avery...and she

said, "How you mean?" I said, I like boys. And she said, "I know baby, but how you think you like Shug Avery?" Girl, that was it. She didn't make no big deal about it. She didn't see trans as different from gay because it was the 80's. So though she didn't get to see me as a full time, transitioned woman, she got to see me over the years at some of my highest highs living as an androg almost woman. The kids nowadays would still consider how I was living transness, but no girl, you know I'm from the old school on that. Aint no everybody a transwoman! This shit takes blood, sweat, and tears! If a girl is only part time, if she aint paying her dues full time, then she don't need to be considered a woman! Everything I've lost in life because I am a transwoman, I've paid the cost to be considered a woman! I've lost so much! And it's so much harder being Black and transfemale. Girl, as much as I'm Miss Black Power, and love my people, girl, truth be told, I have like five Black friends...girl, two of them live on the East Coast! Girl, most my friend out here are fucking White and various other races and mixes, but girl, they all get grouped with Whites because they all have mostly White-washed experiences. And girl, they are so blind to their privilege, and so blind to how hard it is being Black, and all these other very intersectional identities that I have all at once. I'm not just Black, I'm dark, and I'm trans, and to some I don't pass enough, and my look is avante garde, so I always stick out in ways they don't. And I've been rich at points in my life, but right now I'm functioning poor! Some of them are functioning poor too, but they are poor by choice. Or living poor by choice. I come from generations of poverty. It's like it's just layers upon layers of things that they just don't get, and then, my White trans friends have

the nerve to still walk around as men sometimes because it's easier, then, they want to be and have the same rights as me? NO! No, no, no, no! I'm sorry sir, you don't get to wear a beard and men's clothes into the ladies restroom just because you don't feel like trying to pass today! You want the luxury and comfort of being in women's spaces but don't want to work!. No, no, no, no! I'm like super pro-radical, pro-future, and all that; I'm post modern, I'm into affirming people's gender identity and performances, but no, I'm not into the manly White, male-presenting, sometimes gay, might be married to a woman, masculine men in the City who want to experience transness like it's some kind of Disney Ride. Bitch, take yo ass to a Drag Show at a Gay Bar and feel the fantasy there. There, you can use the ladies room, and no one will care! But don't get me thrown out the bathroom just because you want to get your life for the day! Sorry girl, I'm not being PC, I know, but I'm so fucking tired of people conflating our identities, and/or making a mockery of us, but somehow White trans people still come out on top.

Gender. Lotus ranked herself very high in feminist identity and she rated herself 10 (out of ten) in gender group connectedness. Lotus maintained: *Yes, girl, I'm super feminist, and I feel intimately close to my woman identity. I always have. I think I tried to be gay when there were no other available labels; and I think I "tried" to be radically trans when I was late androg, early transitioning phase. I officially began my transition about 30. I was a late bloomer. Before then, I was like totally fucking living it up as a fem-punk-high fashion kind of diva gay male. Girl, as soon as I moved to the Big City on the East Coast at 19, everything just became fucking*

amazing. Ok wait, so let me back track again to tell you how I go to the Big City. So, Mama and I stayed down south for like 3 weeks that first time, and me and B. were inseperable! I was fem and androg then, but my family kind of shielded me from the brunt of the vile homophobia that beset that southern town. As religious as Uncle K. 's and B's family was, that whole time we were there, Mama and I never went to church, but Uncle K., Aunt J., and B., were at that church like 3-4 times a week. B. had a car...girl, a red mustang! Girl, it was so hot! He would come over right after his work was done at the church. He was in the choir and played several instruments. Now he's the Minister of Music. Girl, the church is huge now, and he makes an insane amount of money. Insane! Girl, we would go for drives in secluded areas, but never to any place in town. I didn't realize the differences until the next visit when he flat out told me that Uncle K., told him that he could not be seen with me. And if he was caught with me, it would not be pretty. Uncle K. always kinda knew the tea... Well, B.

being the good boy that he is, he listened, and our relationship only took place in private. The conditioning of shame, and the acceptance of stigma was born in me in the moment. Before then, I had not known the fear of being "caught". It hurt! I felt terrible. I cried to my mother about it when I returned home. She said, "baby, unfortunately, this is the life for somebody like you; it's gon be hard, but you gotta be harder! When life hands you lemons, you gon have to make lemonade!" So, I just accepted it.

So, it came time to apply for colleges. Well P. was expected to go to one of the HBCU's his family had attended, but he got out of it by getting accepted to an elite arts school in the Big City. I had no idea where I was going, I didn't really know how to apply for colleges and stuff, and then Aunt J. had this bright idea that I should go to her and Uncle K.'s HBCU alma mater, and she could get me scholarships, and she'd help out financially...girl, she made it seem so amazing, I was in! I was like ohmygod, I'm bout to be on A Different World! And I'm thinking it's perfect, I'll only be like 4 hours away from B., and he was excited too. Girl, I got there, and it truly was different world. Girl, I did not know Black people until then. Girl, it was every different kind of Black you could imagine! I was so excited, then, dorm room time came. Girl, me and my mom was all excited in my dorm room, and in came my roommate and his ole ignorant fat ass family. Girl, it was dead silence! My mom felt the tension and introduced us, girl, they did not speak. The father said, yea, this aint gon work, and they all exited the room. Girl, so they made a huge scene downstairs and called me all kinds of "Aids infected homos", it was really terrible. My mom was afraid to leave me there. I had never been in a fight. I didn't even know how to defend myself. I was terrified. So Aunt J. got on the phone and raised holy hell and said I wasn't going anywhere! So girl, their fat miserable asses forfeited his deposit, and he never move into the dorm just to avoid being my roommate. That was the first time I was in a completely Black space, and so aware of my gender, so aware of my sexuality, so aware of my difference. It was like the best and worst culture shock all at once. It was this love of Black people but also this extreme dislike of their ways.

The boys in the dorm were a mix: some were mean, some were neutral, some wanted secret-sex, but nobody was my friend. The girls on campus were the same kinds of mix, just omit wanting sex, and insert wanting a makeover. Miss thing, the girls would assume that I was every piece of fairy godmother that they had dreamed of. At the time, I loved it. Now, I'm like that's so tired! The classes and professors were good, but I just really felt alienated and isolated. There were gays on campus, but none seemed to like me? That was the first time I was depressed. So B. paid for me to come visit him in the Big City to cheer me up, and girl, I didn't want to leave! Girl, that first time we walked through the famous gay neighborhood holding hands, I just didn't want it to end. We didn't hold hands uptown, but we were also not afraid to be seen together. He was not afraid to introduce me to his school friends. It was heaven. Girl, I had to finish out the year at the HBCU with good grades to transfer, and girl, I got my first ever 4.0 that semester. I had had A averages before, but never all A's. I was so excited! Aunt J. paid for my bus ticket and move to the Big City, and gave me some money, and I was up out!

Girl, B. and I were at different schools, but we got an apartment together in a mostly gay friendly area. It wasn't exactly the famous gay area that was too expensive to live in, but it was like a trashy knock-off a few blocks away. Drag Queens, gays, lesbians, you name it, everybody was there! And I had my man, girl, it was so perfect! Until his parents came to visit. Girl, every time they came to visit I had to crash with friends! I time they came, they didn't call him until they were on their way from a nearby city, so girl, I had to sleep at the bus station until I could get

in touch with one of our friends. It's like I didn't exist. We were happy for almost 2 glorious years, then, his father, the preacher, stated becoming extra curious about his life and his plans. They knew of me, but had never met me. They now insisted on meeting me. They met me, and the tension was so thick. They didn't come out and say anything, but you could just feel the disdain. Then they insisted on meeting his other friends. Then, at the end of the Spring semester, they made him move back to the south to attend an HBCU in the area, and they made him change his major to business and minor in music because it sounded better.

They pretty much made him marry her! It was so fucking heartbreaking! For a while we maintain our secret long-distance love, but we got caught. We had taped ourselves fucking once...girl, no shade, we had a friend tape it so it was really good VHS porn quality fucking. Girl, he was cumming all in me and saying I was the only woman he loved, and he wanted me to have his baby...girl, you know his wife found the fucking tape while she was 9 months pregnant! Wait girl, she didn't just act a fool, this bitch showed his parents! Girl, this crazy bitch basically blackmailed them! She said she was never getting a divorce, and if he tried to leave, she'd tell everybody, so they needed to pray homosexuality off of him. So that ended us for a while and that also drove a wedge between me and Auntie J. and Uncle K. They had to choose a side, so you know the transsexual lost! And B. really tried to be a good husband, but as soon as she got pregnant again, you know he called me. And we agreed to just try to get together when we could because he said the magic words: "I need you and I don't want anyone else but you". Girl, my pussy gets wet just thinking

about it. Last time we were together was the first time he saw me completely transitioned, like looking totally like a woman. Well a total woman with a little something extra that he loves to suck on!

Girl, I even toned down my look: I had black long braids down to my ass, I gave a basic makeup face, a sensible bohemian fitted sun-dress, flat sandals, girl, I was so proud of myself. I looked like a cool mom. He was so turned on! He's become so dad-like, and boring, so we looked like a couple. And he talked about wishing he could leave his wife and be with me, but yada yada yada...and girl, I just stopped him, and told him that he was too comfortable with her now. Shockingly, he agreed. Then he gagged me and said, "if you were more of wife material, I woulda left her long time ago for you. I need someone who can take care of me too! You're always more concerned about you than us. In our relationship, it was always about you. Baby, that's not a marriage. A wife has a role and you don't want to play that role. If I leave her for you, I'm leaving everything! And baby, I don't feel like I can trust or depend on you."

We haven't spoken since then. Girl, that was so intense, and so fucking painful because I knew he was right. And that's when I realized how fucking impeccable I would have to have been to fucking get this fairytale marriage. That was the first time I realized how incredibly hard Black women must work at all things. Like that was my first time having a real, really fucking real, Black woman moment! I wanted to be mad at the system or someone else, but I couldn't look any further than myself because I had never thought about what it really meant to be gendered in a

relationship. I had never been that emotional, feminine woman who built relationships with her heart. Nor had I been the Black girl who begged and worked for love. Everything had just come to me so easily as an androgynous being or gay male, and now as a woman I had no idea how to do the things that people look to Black women for. My mother was like me or I'm like her. She had been raised working the fields unlike most girls, moved away unlike most girls, found work and a man easily, became an activist-artist, and her world was just that. At points she didn't know how to be a mother, but she was always a good sister and friend. She didn't know how to attract the men who wanted grown-adult-wives, because she had only been married for 3 years in her first teenage love affair. We are the Shug Averies of the world, but now I want to be Claire Huxtable, and I have absolutely no idea how to do all of that...how to balance of this shit. How can I think about cooking dinner for him, when I'm having PTSD episodes? So when I saw you in your heels looking all fucking cute and Clair Huxtable I wanted to hate you! I wanted to ask you how the fuck do you do it...it's hard enough just getting out of bed, you're daring to be! That's what Black transwomen and girls need to know, how do we go through all this shit, then, find a way to be? Please teach us girl! Because I'm tired of hurting and I don't want to be alone. I want to be happy. Rich and happy! (She laughed)

Class. Lotus' thoughts on class were much more terse than other sections of the interview. Lotus began: *I hate answering questions about class, socio-economic status, money...any of that because it's not an accurate depiction of who I am. Like for example, I'm technically middle class: I have an MFA, I went to elite schools, I*

trained in Paris, I was somewhat of a celebrity in Europe, I've sold \$1,000 art pieces, I've been paid thousands to walk runways and take pictures! I've done so much, yet I have so little to show for it. I keep eating your food because I'm literally hungry. Your food is amazing, but girl, I was literally starving. I have not eaten real food in like 3 weeks. I'm fucking broke. I've been surviving off of fucking ramen noodles and peanut butter...sometimes jelly. I can't, I won't ever go back to homelessness, so I make sure I pay my rent. I'm lucky enough to have the Master bedroom loft suite in an SRO building...SRO's are your basic working poor dwellings for those who can't afford to live in the City. I'm excited to have my own bath, a large room with studio space, a Juliet balcony, I mean I feel like I'm living the life! But there was a time when I lived in Penthouses! There was time when I wasn't ever hungry because I was coked-up all the damn time. I miss the luxury! I miss everything...especially the money! In Europe, I was star! I did it all! I did it big! But it was all rented time. The craze of me being a waif androg model had a short shelf life. That's what really brought in the money. My painting brought in sporadic money. My dancing brought in less money sporadically. My writing brought in no money. All of my artistic talent brought in the least amounts of money. But being a Black fetish, a surreal image of sexualized misanthropy, is what brought in the big bucks. It hurts to admit it. When I moved back to the US, to the Big City, so I needed a steady gig to carry me in between trying to model and paint and stuff ...but gee, I was 29, with little practical experience, what was I going to do? So, I tried to teach. I lasted a month before I almost lost my mind. What made me think I could teach public school? So, I got a job

at this Draq Queen Cabaret restaurant where many of the girls were actually trans or transitioning, and girl, that was all she wrote. That's how I discovered I could transition. But I didn't know how expensive transitioning would be, and all that came with transitioning. Girl, if I knew transitioning would be this hard, I wouldn't have, but I can't imagine life any other way now. I got into sex work: I did porn. I've done Burlesque and stripping and would do it again, but I wouldn't do porn again. I've done some high-profile escort work, but wouldn't do that again either because both require me to be high off my fucking ass to fuck men I don't want to be fucking. And, I don't like being on heavy drugs. I don't like feeling like a crack head. I don't like feeling like all strung-out, and I don't like feeling like I'm going to be homeless again. I don't like this feeling of uncertainty. All this weight is on me, and class is one of the scariest and heaviest parts of this suffocating weight. I've reached some of my dreams, but at the end of the day, class, power, and privilege have me right back in the same place I started from. The fucking bottom. I literally came back to where I was born. I have almost nothing here, but at least I feel somewhat safe.

Stigma. Lotus's responses indicates that she has experienced each stage of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs in no specific order, and she is now currently back in a position of working to attain each stage. She is working to supply her physiological and safety needs; she is searching for love and belonging; and she is trying to redefine her self-esteem and self-actualization. Lotus is one of the outliers of the study because in some ways she reports lower instances of stigma and the brutal violence than other participants, but she maintains: *It's impossible to be a Black*

transwoman or a Black anything and not have a stigmatized life...well unless yo ass is blind or pretending. Seriously. Even Uncle Tom, coon-ass-motherfuckers know deep down inside that their Blackness is stigmatized and that's why they tried to avoid Blackness and perform Whiteness. This whole area, fuck this whole State is filled with Uncle Tom ass motherfuckers who try to pretend they're White, try to assimilate, marry White, you name it, and guess what, the world always reminds them that they some fuckin niggas! I've done all kinds of art work on fucking Uncle Toms and Aunt Tommasinas. They always know their ass is just playing a role to survive. Not even Clarence Thomas believes that he aint White folks good nigger. Shit, he know his place. Shit even fucking Obama knows his fucking place. Ohmygod, love him as I do, he has so been White folks good nigger. Remember that fucking bitch governor of Arizona, Jan Brewer, put her fucking finger in his face, and that motherfucker just stood there? He never even addressed it! Didn't even make that hoe apologize. He shoulda just walked off on that hoe and been super fucking sexist to her ass in return, but no, he was benevolent...see that's a good fucking nigger knowing his place. I don't care how you mix it, yea, you can say it's politics or whatever, but as soon as Black person has humble themselves beneath other people to make everyone else happy...that's fucking stigma! Stigma, is to keep motherfuckers in subordinate places. If we give into it, then they win. Stigma wants to keep me from coming to this part of the town. I say fuck you assholes. Stigma wants me not to leave the house. I say fuck that! Stigma wants me to be on fucking drugs, ashamed of myself, feeling ugly, not able to get out of bed. I say fuck that! It gets me down, but

I'll be fucking damned if I just let it win! I have a bunch of fucking disorders, I'm fucking crazy, sometimes I just want to fucking kill myself, I've tried before, but I keep getting up and saying fuck you to stigma and everything else!

Willow (the Makeup Guru)

Willow is 35, newly transitioning and looks very different to the average eye than she identifies herself. She is tall, but identifies as short or average height; she is full figured, but describes herself as little and petite. She is a dark skin African American with African American parents, yet she identifies as White. Willow, like Lotus, was recruited at a predominantly White Community Center, and she is not connected to any other participant enrolled in the study. Willow was recruited as a last-minute replacement to the participant Azalea who revealed that she was not honestly of African Descent, but instead, she was full Asian, and only enjoyed identifying as of African Descent because she saw Black identity as “cool”, and giving her entry into the entertainment industry. Willow, however, is the exact opposite: she identifies as non-Black because she sees being Black as a limiting, oppressive identity that will prevent her from achieving her goals.

When I approached Willow to recruit her for the study, Willow was interested until she heard that the study was for Black transwomen only. She exclaimed, *“oh no, I'm not Black! I thought this was something for women of color because I'm Brazilian, Ecuadorian, and Indian.* I apologized for assuming that she was Black, thanked her for her time, and walked away. When I was leaving the facility, Willow stopped me outside, and confessed that she was actually Black, but she didn't want anyone at the

Center to know. We completed the intake outside the Center, and met soon after for the interview. Willow indicated that she was very busy with several “celebrity” makeup jobs, so she needed to meet in between her jobs.

Willow suggested that we meet at 9:00 am at a high-end Mall. Willow was 30 minutes late for the interview and insisted that she was late because she was doing makeup for a famous celebrity client who dropped her off in a limousine. However, I saw her exit public transit from the window inside the Mall. After obtaining breakfast, Willow guided us to a secluded corner on the top floor of the Mall. Willow works in the Mall part time at a Makeup counter in a Department Store. Willow stated: *This should be a good place, nobody ever comes up here. I always come up here to relax, and it's total peace and quiet, and if someone comes, I'll just shoo them away. Ohmygosh this is so exciting! I feel like Bobbi Brown being interviewed by Oprah. Baruch Hashem! You know I'm a good Jewish girl! A pretty little Jewish princess. And thanks for this lovely breakfast! I rarely have time to eat. I'm so little and petite. I've lost 5 pounds just this weekend. Ohmygosh. I'm treating myself today to all of this because I don't usually eat gluten and meat. I'm mostly vegan...you know macrobiotic. But yea, so what I can do for you? You know I love participating in these studies because I think it's so important that research is being collected on professional transgender women like myself who are not sex workers, and whores, and credit card or check frauders, and all of the other negative examples the media is bombarded with of transgender women. Some of us are very high-class ladies! I balked at the idea of being in your study because you said it was only for black (she*

whispered) *transwomen, because I totally do not see myself as Black. You know when I think Black, I think ghetto, I think street walker, I just don't think of myself. When I think of myself, I think of a Debutante, a beautiful White Debutante with a dark tan. Oh it has been my dream to appropriately debut into society as the belle of the ball. When I launch my makeup line, I will have a big, grand ball, and I will be the Debutant in my uninterrupted white gown from head to toe! Size 4, Marchesa...or maybe Vera Wang.*

When asked to describe herself, Willow responded: *I'm misunderstood. I'm a White person trapped in this dark body. I'm creative, I'm artistic, I'm a Diva, I'm beautiful. I'm petite. I'm hardworking. I think that about sums me up?*

When asked the question, "Did you have any role models growing up? If so, who were they?" Willow offered: *Ohmygod yes! I loved Mary Tyler Moore. I just loved, loved, loved that show, and I wanted to be like her. Loved Jackie Bouvier Kennedy Onassis! Sophia Loren, Elizabeth Taylor, Bette Davis...you know, old Hollywood glam divas. I love the classic glamour and the Art Deco appeal they had. I actually really liked Mariah Carey until she became ghetto. I kind of felt like she was like me...you know White with a lil Black thrown in ruining everything! Loved Angelina Jolie...ohmygod, I so totally think I look like her. It's the lips and the eyes. I'm blonde right now, but I could totally be a jet-black Brunette tomorrow, and you'd totally see the resemblance. Brittany Spears! And I absolutely I love the Kardashians! I think I look like Kim too. I just don't have that ass she has! I have like zero ass and hips, so that's how you know I'm not really Black. Now, my idol is Bobbi Brown! She*

is my biggest inspiration. I'm starting my own line just like she did. Right now, I'm just mixing colors from other brands to get my own colors, but soon I will have a chemist and everything working on my creations. It's going to be really expensive, so I doubt Black women will be able to afford it. It's going to cater mostly to White women. White women need more beauty options you know. Somebody has to look out for White women.

Race. Willow occupies the Pre-Encounter Stage of Cross' Black racial identity model. She tries to remain unaware of her Blackness. She indicated: *I don't dislike Black people. Some are good, but I just think a lot of Black people are really mean and classless. Yuck! I just hate low-class, credent behavior. I also feel like Black people are the most homophobic and transphobic, and abusive. My biological family is Black, and they were abysmal. Such hateful people. My biological father beat me every day of my childhood. He almost killed me. I had to be rushed to the hospital. My biological brothers used to beat me and bully me too. So did my cousins. My biological father's brother molested me. When I was in the hospital, my best friend's mom told me I could come live with them if I told the authorities what happened. So I did. I was removed from the home, but had to stay with another family member first, which meant more abuse, then finally I got to move in with my White family. Life became amazing! For a whole year I got to be a princess! Then I went to college, and then my White mom and dad got divorced, then it was like I didn't have a family anymore. The divorce was so hard on my mom that she withdrew. My dad remarried the day after the divorce was final. He had been waiting until my sister*

“M.” and I graduated high school. So I don’t really feel Black, or see myself as Black. I’m not as close to my White family anymore either, but I still see myself as more White than Black. I know people don’t see me as White, but I don’t care! I just keep on living my life as pretty little White girl. I say I’m other things too: Brazilian, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, East Indian. I just don’t say I’m Black or African American. I’d rather be Brown before Black. Black is just the worst! (She laughed and pointed her thumbs downward.)

Gender. Willow ranked herself low in feminist identity orientation, but high in gender group connectedness. She stated: *I don’t really see myself as feminist. I’m for equal treatment, but it’s not really something I think a lot about. I’m a moderate to conservative Republican, so feminism is something we really don’t deal in. I guess feminism and women’s rights are like civil rights: it’s something that I just expect to be there, but if it’s not how I like it, I’m not going to make a big stink about it. Like people try to discriminate against me in the workforce, but I don’t make a big stick about it, I just work harder. I do feel really close to my gender group. My girlfriends mean the world to me! They are my family! And as a makeup and beauty guru, I have to love women to do what I do. I’m very popular. Everybody knows who I am. You didn’t notice how everyone spoke to me in the café (she was referring to the food court)? They all just love me. They’re like the paparazzi! Everybody loves me because I’m White and blonde and because I have these piercing blue eyes. I only date White or European men with blue or green eyes. I’ll do a Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, or South American man, but he has to be very Euro. Black men don’t like me. They*

can tell I'm too high class for them. They always look at me in threatening ways. I've never liked Black men. I never liked my biological male family members. They beat me every single day. Every day for 10 years. I never had one moments peace with them. It was always somebody making fun of me or beating me. Holidays were even bad. If I didn't seem excited about boy toys, I was beaten severely. I preferred the belt over the fist or the foot or other objects.

My biological mother allowed my father to beat me with extension cords, boards, sticks, anything. I tried not to speak, tried not to allow my hips to sway...I tried, but I always failed, and I always got punished severely. I felt like a slave. I had more chores than my siblings, and I was tormented every single day. When I told my biological mother that I couldn't use the bathroom because my uncle had been molesting me, she slapped my face as hard as she could, and told me not to tell such lies, and to get on my knees and pray as hard as I could that God would take that evil homosexual spirit off of me. My entire biological family was very religious. One time my biological grandfather told them to tie me to a tree and whip me all night long like they whipped Jesus. It was like the Black people version of an exorcism I guess? They whipped me for hours with lashes and switches and belts. My biological grandmother sang Church hymns and praised the beatings. I was unconscious for a lot of it, but I distinctly remember calling out to my biological mother while she stood and watched.

My biological sister and I were close for a time: we would sneak off into foresty area behind the family house, and play with her dolls and play princess. It was so much fun...then one day she became mad at me because I told her that I kissed

the boy she liked, and then, she told on me. She laughed as I was beaten. That incident taught me the importance of friendship and loyalty. My White sister was always loyal. She never told my secrets. I'd go over to her house almost every day after school, and help her clean her room and do her chores. She got paid to do her chores. I never got paid. She'd buy me a doll or something girly for helping her. Well, I didn't take those gifts home, they were really hers, but they were always in her big, beautiful pink and purple room waiting for me. Our mom was so amazing to me. She would tell me that it was ok to be different. She was a saint. She actually likes Black people and felt that Black and White people were the same. She has Black friends too. Our father was nice to me, but he didn't like certain Black people—ghetto types. He liked Bill Cosby type Black people. He would always tell me not to grow-up and be like lazy ghetto types. Well he may have said the n-word a time or two. Mom would get so angry when he did. They fought a lot, but not like my biological parents. If my biological mother disagreed with my father, she was liable to get slapped or thrown up against a wall or something. My White parents would argue as if they were debating. Dad usually stormed out of the house, and didn't return until after I was gone. When I moved in with them, dad was rarely home, and when he was home, he said little. Mom tried to pretend everything was still perfect. I loved that about her: she was always so positive, but now, she's sullen most times. I forgot to mention that dad left her for her younger sister who she was very close too. My biological father cheated on my mother with everyone. He had so many kids we stopped counting. From those experiences, I learned to never trust women around your man, and to

always be the whore who steals someone's man rather than the woman who gets left.

I've never really been a whore. I've been having sex since I was child, but I've never been a whore. I was always a precious little White girl. I've always felt like a girl...or rather, I've always felt feminine. I didn't always think I would transition. I didn't really see much difference between transwomen and fem gay men until a couple years ago. I feel more free as a transwoman than I did as a fem gay male. As a fem gay male, I would be made fun of for wearing this long beautiful blonde hair, but as a transwoman, people actually give me compliments. If you want me to be completely honest, it is harder being a transwoman than it is being a fem gay male, but as a transwoman people actually see me; I had never gotten compliments as a fem gay male. Never! People would say all kinds of derogatory things to me, and call me "big fella", "big guy" or even see me as a threat if I was walking at night in the City...they'd talk about how big and dark I was...it just never felt good. And when I transitioned, I finally got to be a pretty White girl...I got to be seen. Sure, I know people don't see me as I see myself, but I don't care because now they see me!

Class. Willow's thoughts on class were brief. She indicated that she had been raised middle class by her biological family, and that her White family was upper class. She also stated that she was now upper class as well. Willow offered: *Class is important. This great country we live in has a strong middle class, and a solid working class who are mostly pulling themselves up by their boot straps, and some of us are lucky to be upper class. I became a Republican because my White dad is a Republican, and he told us republicans will always be the wealthy class, so that was*

all the convincing I needed. As a makeup guru and entrepreneur, I cater to the wealthy. Everything I do is luxury. Class is as much a feeling as it is your actual money, and I feel like a glamorous celebrity. My money is tied up in my investments, which is why I have roommates, and I sold my brand new BMW to also invest in my business, but I am doing very well. Once my new makeup line drops, I will be golden! I'm surprised you haven't heard all the buzz. I'm a socialite and an Instagram model as well, so everyone knows about it. I really wanted to do this interview in preparation for all the press I'm about to get. I also really wanted to do it because after I drop my line, I'm going to write a book, and thought this would be helpful, and it is. How am I doing?

Stigma. Willow suggested that she has obtained the hierarchy of needs in one moment, and in the next moment she indicated still trying to obtain the hierarchy of her needs. For example, during the demographic section of the interview she admitted to having financial difficulties, but at various other points during the interview she states that she is very rich, etc... At one moment, she reports having achieved her goals of being a celebrity Makeup Artist and Guru, but at other points she acknowledges the reality of working at a makeup counter in the Mall. It is clear that her story is inconsistent: she tries to hide or forget the painful, stigmatized parts of her life, and replaced them with the façade of what she perceives to be a happy, successful life. Unfortunately, she (like many others) believes and perceives happiness and success only being available to, and possibly for White/European Descended or appearing people who are also heterosexual and cisgender.

Willow was mostly disingenuous during the interview, meandering between remembering and denying the pain of her stigmatized, intersectional identities to maintain the façade of the positive, rich, happy White life that she created. However, she briefly became very candid in her response to questions on stigma. Willow became agitated when a Black male janitor approached; he kindly spoke to me, she kindly spoke back to him, but Willow attempted to degrade and brandish him for his interruption. He simply responded by saying, “I’m sorry Sir.” He then responded to me by saying “have a good day Miss.”irate, Willow continued: *Yes, I have experience stigma because of who I am, which is why I’ve chosen to not acknowledge that part of myself. If I don’t acknowledge that I’m Black, that I’m dark, that I’m really a non-pass transwoman that people still gets call “sir and he” on occasion, and if I forget all the past, then none of that can hurt me. I’ve shared some honest things with you because I know you probably know my tea; you probably already read through my files from the Center; you probably know all the things that have happened to me and just trying to see if I’m ok in the head or something...I know how you psychologists are. You’re sitting there all calm like you’re really listening to me, and not being offended when I tell you how much I hate Black people, because they probably told you that the last Black case worker and I got into a heated argument...that ghetto trash bitch wanted to fight me. So you’re trying to be all nice and sweet, so you can hypnotize me or something...see I know how you all are. Just because I needed food stamps and free medical assistance, you all probably trying to run some kind of background check on me because you all can tell I’m an upper-class*

transwoman, and not one of these lowlife two bit street walking trollops. I remember how the social workers used to come snooping around my biological parents' house, and I know you all are probably doing the same thing. So, you tell them that I'm still the same pretty little White blonde head Jewish rich cunt that I was when I first came to the Center. My life may be difficult because of how people see me in the world, but you tell them I'm not crazy. Please tell them I'm not crazy. (For the first time during the interview, her eyes welled-up with tears that streamed slowly down her perfectly made-up face without ruining her foundation nor eye make-up. She repeated several times, I'm not crazy, please tell them, I'm not crazy.)

While Willow has the shortest narrative of all participants, her interview was not the shortest: however, she did not elaborate as much as other participants. Willow also spent a great deal of time praising Whiteness and White women, and talking about her forthcoming makeup line that would cater to them. She retrieved her phone during the interview to show pictures of White women celebrities to talk about their beauty and how she would do their makeup. There was not a relevant way to capture those moments in the presented data, but it is here mentioned because it demonstrates the depth of how stigma has shaped her life and thinking.

Daisy (the Recording Artist)

Daisy is 25 and she is mixed race, identifying as half Latina and Black, or Afro-Latina. She admitted that she felt more connected to her Latina identity, but in recent years she feels the need to connect to her Black identity as well, and that that was her initial interest in taking part in the study. I recruited Daisy during a guest

lecture on Black transwomen at a local Community Center. After my talk, Daisy approached me by jumping into her arms while crying. She stated: "*Ohmygod, I needed this so much! I needed to hear you speak!*" Daisy initially scheduled her interview for a Saturday afternoon on Halloween; Daisy contacted me late Thursday night to say that she had been scheduled for an adult entertainment opportunity that she was being flown to a nearby city for, which meant she could only guarantee participation in the study if she did the interview on Friday morning. She indicated that the employment opportunity was paying her so well that she didn't know when she'd be returning. I told Daisy that I would clear everything for her to have the interview at her preferred time. Daisy arrived for the interview 3 hours later than the time she had scheduled. Upon arrival she stated, "*Ohmygod mama, I'm so sorry I'm late. I just wanted to get everything done before my trip tomorrow, and I didn't want to be rushing our time. I'm all yours and you're all mine now.*"

Daisy's personality is upbeat, and she projects a laissez-faire attitude. Her speech is a mix of "trans-ebonics," and what she calls "chola" (a term she used meaning a "hood" Latina). She affectionately referred to the interviewer as "Mama" during the interview. She requested delivered pizza and soda for lunch, and she stated, "*Mama, I got to enjoy my favorite food today because you a know a bitch will not be eating real food during this entire gig!*"

Daisy is well connected among young transwomen, and she recruited both Jasmine and Azalea for the study. While her aesthetic is usually very glamorous, she came to the interview dressed down in jeans and sweatshirt, with her long hair pulled back,

and little makeup. She acknowledged that she passes well now, and she knew she passed well when she could walk through certain parts of town dress down, without being “clocked”.

When asked to describe herself, Daisy offered: *Oh ok...mama, you aint playin! You comin right out the gate with these deep ass questions. Ok wait, see, this is too deep! I don't know? Well first I want to say, I made it to your house from the train without being clocked, and I'm dressed like this, so I'm feeling fabulous mama...yes! Work! Ok, but, I still feel fat sometimes even though I had lypo. I still feel ugly sometimes even with the FFS (facial feminization surgeries). Mama, I've had two fucking nose jobs! Hay Dios Mio, I can't do no fucking more. It's still looking too fucking big. My lips look good, but I still can't feel my top lip. Doctor say it might take another 2 weeks. Can't feel my fucking forehead...still...its been 7 months. Love my fucking tits! Ohmygod mama look at them! (She exposed her breast) They're soft now, and they feel good. I'm not gon even talk about the terrible shit I had last time. Mama, it's so much cheaper going to other countries to get work done, but that shit is fucking Russian Roulette. Girls have died getting bad work! And then it's fucking bitches like me who get fucked up work, then have to get that shit fixed again for even more money. It's really fucked up. We have to do all this just to walk down the street. I mean sure I don't need double D tits, but a A cup would get me so fucking clocked. Well it did get me fucking clocked. Ooh I hate being clocked! That shit makes me feel so fucking ugly! The really fucked up thing is that once I transitioned people stopped assuming I was Latina, and just assumed I was Black. That's been so hard for me*

mama, no lie. Please don't be mad at me, I'm trying to learn to love myself as a Black woman, but that shit really fucking fucked me up. Motherfuckas would tell me, "oh you look hard that's why people don't think you're Latina! You just look like a light skin Black woman with hard features." Ohmygod mama, that fucking killed me! It wasn't the looking Black part. I think Black women are fucking beautiful! But I was like ohmygod, people really think fucking Black women are really ugly, and they think I'm ugly. And as a boy, people thought I was cute and soft and called me pretty, and everybody assumed I was Latino, then as soon as I transitioned, nobody thought I was Latina. Like it's so true: Black women have it hard and Black transwomen have it harder...especially on looks. Like people just be treatin us like shit. Like my Latina girlfriends who actually look Latina, ohmygod, some like totally don't pass and they still be treated better. Like this one girl I know, bitch like 6'4", built like a fucking linebacker, size 15 or 16 shoe, and nobody fucks with her. Her face is nice and she is really light and her hair is really long and pretty, but I'm like bitch if you was Black, you could fucking forget it. I don't really go out with her because she gets me clocked, and because I'm the "Black" one, motherfuckers give me fever. I'm like bitch I'm giving you Nicki Minaj and she is giving you linebacker, why yall draggin me? I fucking hate that shit.

I'm sensitive, sweet, sexy, seductive, I'm just a all around cool chick! I'm a Recording Artist: I sing, I rap, I write, I produce. I'm a future business woman...like you mama...yes! And I'm just a down ass chick...like you mamacita! I can tell you gets down! Like I love that shit! You real fancy and bourgie and shit, but you still a

down ass bitch and you look out for the girls. Like I so want to be like that. I want to help the girls, you know. So even though I rap about fucking niggas and getting money and material shit, I do a lotta positive music too. I might spit a lil for you later.

When asked the question, “Did you have any role models growing-up? If so, who were they?” Daisy responded: *Yes, definitely. Beyonce! Ohmygod fucking love her! I’m her number one fan! I think I’m a lot more like Nicki (Minaj) or Rihanna, but Beyonce is the Queen of all things. Isis Taylor! Fuck yes! She’s my fucking pornspiration! Let’s see... Christina Milian, Eva Mendez, and Jessica Alba. Jennifer Lopez was my fucking girl! I still kinda love JLo, but not as much as I used to. Like, I used to live for that bitch, but then she started trying to be White, and I didn’t like that shit. Fucking NewYorican puta! You a fuckin Bronx bitch, you aint white! I mean she can be White and Rican, but you know that puta is not White! Right now, I’m fucking loving Taraji P. Henson! I like her character on Empire, Cookie. She gives me so much life. I could see myself running a empire like her! That bitch rootless! I fucking love Janet Mock too! Ohmygod...Janet is so fucking everything! She’s like trans Beyonce!*

Race. Daisy identifies as Afro-Latina, of African Descent, Mixed Race, Black and African American. Daisy added: *I like woman of color too. That sounds fancy and kinda incorporates all of my race without me picking a side. I really don’t like picking a side. Inside, I feel like both, but because of how I look, I’m really just Black. I kinda don’t like that. I’m working on it though. I know I don’t like it because people look down on Black people. Growing-up it was so much easier being Latino. I*

skipped a lot of bullying because of it. Like at school, lil Black gay boys would get their asses whipped! But nobody even noticed me. I was just the quiet, shy, nerdy kid. I avoided almost everything because I didn't want to be clocked. I had like no friends until like senior year. My mom made me get a girlfriend...the daughter of someone she knew. I had to play along because I didn't want her to put me out. She caught me up in drag one time the summer of my junior-senior year, and she threatened to put me out. I was really lonely anyway, so I didn't mind the company. Mi Madre es Latina of course, y Mi Padre es Africano...puto! He left when I was like 1 or 2, I think? I've only seen pictures of him. Mi Madre es very traditional. Loca! Muy Loca! She no like lesbians, but she ok with the gays if they're doing her hair, but she think they are wrong, and going to hell, and she hates transgender women! Hates! I came out to her on my 19th birthday, and she kept her word: she put me out. I was kinda in shock, but I kinda wasn't. Like it still hurts to this day (she began to cry), I haven't seen her in six fucking years. I fucking called her when I was in trouble 2 years ago, I was fucking crying like please help me, and she had to fucking think about it. Like she literally sat on the phone thinking about whether or not she was going to help me. Ok, so this what happened: when she put me out at 19, I went to live with my boyfriend at the time. Latino dude, into all kinda illegal shit. He pretty much turned me out. He was my first. Well, actually I had sex with fish on prom night because I had to, it was so gross, ohmygod I hated it! But my boyfriend "J." was my first love, my first real friend, my first sex, everything! Well J. loved me in drag, and he saw me as a girl, and he encouraged me to transition. So I was going to start my transition,

but I kinda didn't want to move in with him yet. I barely knew him at the time. So she put me out, I go to live with him, and then he tells me how he also pimps transsexuals and real fish prostitutes. So of course, I gagged down! Gagged down the motherfucking house! Mama, something in my spirit knew he was too good to be true. So I had nowhere else to go. I was working at a fastfood restaurant, making chump change, so what the fuck was I going to do. So mama, that's how I got into sex work. I didn't like it at first, so he introduced me to coke, and X, and Tina, and Molly so once I was doing that shit, it became fucking great. And he was a really good Pimp...nothing happened to me while I was with him. I felt like I was fucking Isis Taylor! It was ovah! I'm not gon even lie Mama, it wasn't like sex work, it was like the glamorous life. I felt like a fucking rock star. He helped me to grow musically, he had me in the studio, he had me writing...everything! It was bad that he was pimpin me out, but I don't know, I felt good? Like I felt like I was finally me...a girl...and I felt like I had a sexy, big dick man, and I finally had money. Then, after 3 years, I guess I got old, and it was time for him to train a new girl, but I wanted him all to myself, so I went off like any wife would, and for the first time, he beat me up. He didn't beat me as bad as he could have...I know now...but Mama, it hurt so bad. Then about 2 weeks later he told me I had to go. I cried, I begged, I pleaded, I told him I'll do anything, and he said, "I know you will. I'm not putting you out because I want to, I'm putting you out because I have to. You want to be the only one, but this is business mami, and I don't want to beat you or treat you bad. I'll give you some bread to get set up, but you gotta go mami".

Mama, I cried so hard. I wanted to kill myself. I tried taking pills and getting high, but it didn't work. That was the beginning of the worst year. I started escorting on my own, making ok money, but not like I was when I was with him. So then I got with this Black dude "S." who was kinda on the same level as J. but he traveled back and forth from here to the East Coast, and he was like we bout to go on tour, so I'm excited right, thinking it's a real tour. Mama, he meant a hooking tour. So I went to the Big City with him. Worst mistake I ever made! This nigga had me working the fucking streets! Mama I felt so downgraded, so humiliated. It was just the worst feeling ever! So one night, it was a good night, I had fucked and sucked all night, so I'm ready to go to bed. Then why this black bitch cheap ass prostitute whore...fucking dark ugly puta madre...wanted to fight me over turf! Mama, you know I wasn't from there, I had no idea it was her turf, and I had fucked one of her clients. So me being the girl that I am, I apologized, and told her I wouldn't work her street anymore...now, I did say it in a sarcastic way, because I'm like bitch, it's a public fucking street? What-the-fuck-ever! Ohmygod, mama, she beat the fuck outta me. I barely got any licks in. So S. comes and pulls her off of me, and I'm thinking it's over, thinking he's come to save me...why this nigga tells me I have to fight her until I whip her ass. So a crowd of escorts around now cheering it on, her pimp and S. making bets...it's a all-out brawl. Mama, girl, we fought up and down the street! It was terrible! That puta whore dragged me up and down the fucking street! And the worst part was everybody was calling me fucking fat and ugly. When I couldn't fight anymore, S. slapped me around and called me fat and ugly, and tried to make me

fight some more. Then luckily her pimp said, “she gassed man, her fat ass gassed. Take that fat bitch back to the West Coast. She caint hang with these bad bitches out here!” S. motherfuckin ass told me I had to find my own way home, and he would beat my ass when I get there to teach me a lesson. He took my money, paid the bet, and left me.

Mama, I was too through. Fortunately, this older Black transsexual was out there, and she took me back to her place to get cleaned-up, and she gave me some clothes too. I called mi madre because that was the only number I knew by heart. And I was crying and telling her what happened, and that puta started telling me how I got what I deserved, and saying all this really hateful shit in Spanish, it was horrible. So she told me she’d buy me a bus ticket back to the West Coast, but that was it. Basically saying, don’t call her no more. Luckily the older Black transwoman had my back. She got us a cab from the part of town we were in to closer to the main part of the Big City, then she swiped me into the train station, gave me \$50 and that’s how I got back out here. Then, about month later, I’m walking down the street, and S. jumps out a car and tries to kidnap me! We was tusslin, then I got my taser out, and I tased his ass. And ran, but he caught me, and he kinda dove on me, but I had my switch blade out, and I stabbed him 18 times! I didn’t stop until the police came! I almost killed him! Mama, I sat in prison...in a men’s prison for a month, and it was worth every minute of it! It felt so good stabbing him! I felt like I was stabbing everybody that had done me wrong, and like I was paying him back for how he did me in the Big City. That experience in the Big City made me tough though. Being with S. made me

super tough. Like in a weird way, that was preparing me for life as Black woman. Like when you a Black woman, you have to be tough. I can't really explain it, but it's fucking real. Like especially Black trannies, like people be after us. Like no fucking joke!

But when I was jail, ohmygod, I met the finest motherfucker ever! "T."! Mama, T. fucking took care of me! He was on some whole other pro-Black shit. I fucking love him. Like he was my jail husband, my therapist, everything. He even hooked me up with his homegirl "E."! Ohmygod, E...that's my mothafuckin bitch right there! She the one who started making me feel good about my Black womaness. She one of the badest transsexuals I know. That bitch got so lucky! She was in school, she had a lil job, and she was doing high-end sex work. She was like, "you can't get caught-up in that life Daisy, you gotta keep you a lil job, and just trick to get a head until you can stop all together. You gotta have goals!" Then that bitch got a fine ass Black man. She did the damn thing! Like no lie, really Mama, I'm sad to say that mi madre never tried to build me up, never told me about having goals and stuff. It's like she was so ashamed of me because she knew I was gay...or transgender...she knew, and she would just ignore me. And then these random Black people that I barely knew were the ones building me up. Teaching me how to make it. As much as I hate people thinking I'm a ugly Black woman, I'm proud to be a Black woman! I'm proud to be Latina too, but Black women just be like fuck it, I'm gon make it. Latinas, we still be so connected to our families, and to the Church and religion, and shit. Latinas do stick together more than Black women girlfriends though. I will say that.

Unfortunately, I don't really have any really close Latina transwomen friends because they see me as Black. And realness and passing is a part of it too. Some trans Latinas I know or more real than me, so they don't want to be close, and some are less real than me, so I don't want to be out with them. Out here, you kinda have to "look Latina" to be accepted. In the Big City there were plenty dark Afro-Latinas who were mixed in with the morenas. They still were a lil funny actin toward the darker Latinas, but somebody who looks like me was accepted as a morena out there. That felt good. I always kinda wanted to fit in.

Daisy occupies the Encounter Stage of Cross's Black racial identity model. She is still encountering her Blackness, and she is trying to find ways to become more accepting and immersed in her Blackness. Similarly, Daisy is encountering her feminist identity.

Gender. Daisy identifies as a transwoman, woman, transgender, transsexual, and heterosexual. Daisy ranked herself as having high feminist identity, and she indicated she was connected to her gender group. Daisy offered: *Yea Mama, I'm definitely with that feminism ok! That's my shit! I had heard about it, but didn't know much about it until I got in school, and really not until I met Jasmine. That's my sista! She doing the study right? She better! She is so fucking smart! That bitch is brilliant! She is a student at the elite university. I'm just at junior college, so she be schoolin me for real! I'd say I'm about a 9 (out of 10) in feminism. Like I'm still learning ya know? Like I don't know if I'm a Latina feminist or a Black feminist or a womanist or all 3, but I like it all. My big sis E., she's definitely a feminist. She never said it, like*

the word, but everything she did was very feminist. I feel like real feminist love and help other women, and don't be all jealous and shit. E. and Jasmine like the two best friends I've ever had. Me and Azalea tight, but she a shady...no shade...but she is. Me and her more business-close than girlfriend close. Like, I'd go to the club with her, but I wouldn't pig out on pizza and chill with her. I don't really trust her on no deep level. And I told her to her face that she sometimey. She say she Black and Asian, but that bitch don't know shit about being Black. Nothing! She like the fucking Asian Kim Kardashian: she keeps a Black man and Black friends, but she don't know shit about being Black. This bitch didn't know who Coretta Scott King was! Like what Black person don't know Mrs. King? That's like Black person 101! She need this study because she need to find herself. When I heard you speak that time, ohmygod, I learned so much. She needs that. She got a rich Asian family, so she real entitled. Her dumb ass do sex work purely for the joy of being in the game. She likes ghettoness. She like mess. That bitch stay in mess! I didn't tell her or Jasmine about my gig this weekend because Azalea a fuckin hater! Her as would be trying to come or sabotage. And Jasmine so fucking naive! I love her, but this bitch still be thinking being trans is fucking unicorns and butterflies. She woke, don't get me wrong, but her ass would be like "ohmygod, so youre going to have sex with all of them?" and I'm like bitch yes! Do you know how much money I'm about to make, and I'm bout to be around other recording artists too...bitch this is the life! Ohmygod, yes! She don't understand how hard trannie work to get to this level in the music industry. Like all she see is sex work, she don't see this as a huge opportunity for me. She still got mommy and daddy

and grandmommy taking care of her, so she don't know what it's like yet to have fend for yourself. But oh yes, when they cut her ass off after graduation, she gon see how hard it is. A lotta girls like her just don't get it. They just think we all just like being whores and fucking strangers because we sluts. But bitch we don't have no other choice. Shit, if I didn't have to, I wouldn't. But this one weekend or week could pay my rent for a few months! She like regular fish sometimes...she just be clueless. I like talking to other trannies more than real fish sometimes because other trannies understand more. Yes, some real fish be more hip than trannies like Jasmine, but still...you know if I want to tell her girl how a dude sucked my pussystick, she get that, and it's no tea. But I don't feel comfortable telling real fish a dude or a client or my man sucked my pussystick. I don't like real fish knowing I haven't had a sex change. I kinda want one, but I kinda don't. Like I want me a big fat pussy, but all the girls be having complications with the surgery or post- surgery, and it just aint worth it. Plus, most men that want us want a pussystick. I don't feel like I have a dick. I never did. I've been tucking since I was like 2, and I got a small one so, it don't really matter that much. Me, I always felt like a girl. Even when I fucked fish that time, I felt like I was having a lesbian experience. Every girl needs one.

Well, to be honest, if I'm getting paid, I might dyke a lil, but just a lil! Dudes love that shit! Its two-three other trannies coming this weekend, so the guys might want us to dyke around. It's cool, I'll be high. I'm just gon have as much fun as I can this weekend. I love Halloween! I'm going to be a Nun if we go to any costume parties. With red lingerie and slutty red heels. Might put some anal beads in as the

rosary? I've always been freaky. I think that's part of being trans? Being on hormones makes us more horny too. Sometimes, hormones fuck up your sex drive, but sometimes, I be like wanting to fuck all night. I don't know? If my recording career don't take off, I'm probably going to get into doing real porn...not just sex tapes. But I want to be a business woman. I want to be like you and prance around in my heels and look cute on them hoes! Mama, I love heels, but I cannot wear them that long. My feet small, but wide and flat like man feet. I wish I could have a foot-change surgery. I hope I can one day stop getting work done! This shit addictive and painful and time consuming. Like really, honestly Mama, I kinda hate being trans! I love being a woman but hate being trans. I would not go back to being a boy again for nothing! No things, Mama! Once I got my name and gender change, that was like my sex change. I just wish that I could be happy you know? I just be so depressed and I'm tired of feeling depressed. I'm tired of being sad. I'm tired of being scared some nigga gon kill me! It's so fucking crazy! This crazy nigga killed my girlfriend last year just because she was trans. She told him she wasn't interested in him and I guess he got embarrassed or something, and this nigga followed her, and was calling her tranny and shit, and she kept walking, and when she got in her car, he shot her...it's like no matter how hard we work to look like the perfect woman, it's always something.

That's the only thing I don't like about Black people...they just so fucking cruel and evil to the girls...Black men just be so evil, and Black women just be so jealous of a beat, ovah transsexual. When I didn't pass, it was drama, and now that I

do, and I'm eating it honey, they can't take it! It's pure hateration mama! They cannot take you daughter! And I know I'm beautiful, I know I'm a woman, but sometimes I just feel so bad about myself. And it's not just Black people that make me feel bad, they just be so mean, and they go out of their way to be evil. And the sad thing is, I feel like Black people be hateful to both cis and transwomen. Like my girl "K." is real fish, and she is beautiful! Ohmygod that bitch is Beyonce beautiful...but Black people be hating on her. Everywhere we go, somebody got something to say about us. That's another thing: when I'm with K. or Jasmine or E., I feel super Black, and I'm more aware of things. When I'm with Azalea I just feel insecure because she fucking Asian Kim K., and everybody loves that bitch, and I look like her fucking ugly sidekick. K. is prettier than Azalea, but people respect Azalea more because she Asian. K. is tall too, so if I get clocked, they assume that she a tranny too, and they'll be threatening us...same with me and Jasmine or E...But Azalea, no mam! They always let that bitch through. Always. I don't want to say I'm jealous, but I definitely get mad about it because I'm like bitch, you aint all that. This bitch get tans to make herself look more Black, and I'm like bitch, they still gon treat you like you Asian no matter what. Nobody looks at you and sees Black! Now Jasmine, you can tell she got a lil Black in her. Part of it is her attitude. Like even though she's valley-proper-ivy league fish, something about her says I'm Black. And it's no shade...but I think it's because she still a lil clocky, and since she still a lil hard people just think she BAsian girl. Just like they do me. It's just something about being a Black woman? No matter who we are, or where we come from, no matter what we got, people always

assume things about us based on how we look. White girls can look any kinda way, and unless their homeless, anybody would assume they're rich. And some White trannies be lookin straight toe-up from the flow-up, but nobody ever mess with them. Like I'm Latina, but I feel more Black and more like a Black ciswoman because I feel like we have more in common. See like take Caitlyn Jenner...I think it's cute for her and how she had her microwave transition, but that bitch don't know shit about being a transsexual. What the fuck we got in common? But take my girl Rihanna for example, we both been in abusive relationships and treated like Black women get treated. I look at Rihanna or Nicki and see myself...I don't look at Miss Caitlyn or none of her lil trans-celebrity White girlfriends and see myself. To be honest, them bitches work my nerves. It's like Jasmine always says, they're part of the system, they maintain inequality, and we're who the system shits on and walks all over. They live, we die.

Class. Daisy excitedly answered questions on class. She mentioned having recently taken a sociology course that explored class. Daisy offered: *Ohmygod Mama, I just took this fire ass sociology class! The professor was a Black woman too, so she kept that shit all the way real. She was talking about all kinda shit I had never even heard of or thought about. Like I thought class just meant whether or not you were classy or ghetto...I'm so serious, and she was like well it kinda does, just in bigger terms like the socio-economic class you were born into controls a lot of how classy or how ghetto you are...and that because White people have been dominant, class has been shaped around them, so we they're always perceived as more classy and they*

have the financial means to do things that are seen as classy, and people who are poor...usually Black people...are seen as ghetto. Ohmygod, did I say that right? I hope I did because that was like the first class I felt really smart in. Like I never really spoke in class before because I was always so afraid of being made fun of, but she made me feel comfortable and accepted. I loved her so much. But yea, so, I love talking about class because I feel that it's one of the things in American Society that keeps people down...especially Black people, especially Brown immigrant Latinos, especially transsexuals...well trans women you know. Like racism is bad, but like I learned, it can be hidden. But class is like an accepted form of discrimination because it comes in so many forms. Like mi madre y mis familia, they're poor Brown immigrants and they all have service jobs. So that controls what schools we went to you know. Like I look at Jasmine, and she went to all top schools her whole life, and her parents some rich Black-Asians, so of course she at the super top school, and I'm at the junior college. And we not gon even talk about Azalea family...that bitch...they fucking run the City. Like even when White people think they so fucking poor, they still fucking White, and that's a automatic privilege. Like even in the music industry, everybody on top, like the execs, they White. Ohmygod, I can't stand it. And some Latinos are White and they be on top too. And they be fucking racist just like other White people. Like I had this one in my class: did not know he was Latino! This motherfucker would be saying all kinda racist shit, and then I heard his last name, and I was like ohmyfuckinggod are you fucking serious? Like I'm telling you college is a trip! I feel like I've learned so much, and I've become like more worldly...but

then I think, if I had never met T. and E., I wouldn't even be in college, and I wouldn't even know how to do better for myself or how to speak better, and all other kinda stuff that's high class. Like even, you know, when I'm fucking rappers and shit, sometimes they pick me because I seem more high class. I fucking love it. Like when a dude thinks you're smart, that is the best feeling! I don't know? I feel like mi madre was always ashamed of me, so she never told me I was good or smart. I think she regretted fucking with mi padre because he was Black and left us, and mis familia are very racist toward Blacks. They don't think so, but they always used to say racist shit. And then the whole trans thing...I think just made mi madre hate me. Like I couldn't be the son to grow-up and take care of her. I think she's happier without me. I think my whole family is. They never ever even tried to see if I was ok. It's religion you know? That's class too. Like...religion is used to control and certain religions are higher class. I hate it! It's like White people created system after system to keep us down. Like, I'll fuck with a White dude, I'll of course fuck a high-profile White dude that's paying...no tea, no shade...but, I can't really see myself with one? Like I always feel like some racist shit gon happen. Like Black and Latino men be some straight fucking drama, but, White men, that's some whole other shit. I was fucking with one on some chill shit, and this motherfucker told me, "that's right, give master that nigger pussy, give master that hot mulatto pussy". Mama, I was so over it. I stopped right in the middle, got dressed, and left...ole lil dick ass! It's always about them owning shit, about them being on top. That's why I don't fuck with White transsexuals on no deep level either. Shit Azalea is bad enough! She think she own

*every fucking thing. I like that that bitch gives me her hand-me-downs, and other lil shit, but Bitch aint never around when you need her. But let her need you, Oh then it's "bitch I helped you pay for this or I bought you that...", bitch get on my nerves with that. It's like she Black when it's convenient, Asian when it's convenient, and White when it's convenient. I'm telling you fucking Asian Kim K. Speaking of, the Kardashians a good example of being White, and automatically having class! Them bitches aint work a day in they life, but somehow bitches making \$20 million a year? Bitch made a sex tape that's it! Bitch you know how many sex tapes I've made and only got like \$500 for it? And see that's the thing too, sex work is about class! If you aint a bomb bitch, you aint making no big money! If you busted, you still on the street sucking dick for \$20. Fucking for \$40. Bitch what bills that's gon pay? Shit that's barely a couple meals. People don't realize how expensive it is to be a transsexual woman, and then if you Black, you got to look good, you go to buy hormones, you got to do everything fucking possible to fucking pass or else your life gon be super fucking miserable. Shit bitches already be suicidal! And when you don't pass, you be even more suicidal. I'm fortunate to pass a lot, but there were times when I was clock city that I just wanted to fucking slit my wrist! If I didn't have boyfriends and stuff, mama, I woulda killed myself long time ago. And I'm just now meeting fucking classy role model bitches like you! Like no lie mama, you really made me feel like I could be somebody. And that means so fucking much to me! (She began to cry) **Stigma.***

Daisy expressed having challenges with her self-esteem and selfactualization. She also expressed having financial challenges that affect her physiological and safety

needs, as well a desire for love and belonging. Although all of the participants have expressed challenges in obtaining and/or maintaining these needs and goals, Daisy's case is unique because she is only 25 years old, and thus, she has not lived as long as the other women, which changes her ability to completely self-actualize at this point in her maturation. Consequently, she is not occupying one specific stage of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, because she in many ways she is still in a state of late adolescence. One of the goals of this study is to help eradicate the stigmas placed upon African American transwomen, so that young women like Daisy—and generations yet unborn—may be able to reach all of Maslow's stages, and live quality self-actualized lives.

Though Daisy is still maturing, she expressed having experienced stigma because of her race, gender, and class. Daisy maintained: *Ooh mama, girl these was some fucking deep ass questions! Ohmygod, I feel like I been in therapy. Shit this was better than my therapy sessions. But yea, I never really thought about stigma...I don't know if I knew what it was as a word or thing, but I knew I had been through it. You know, experienced it. Like stigma is like racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, discrimination all wrapped in one! Basically, everything we talked about today is stigma. That is so fucking deep! I feel like my whole life has been stigma. Stigma has kept me from doing just about everything. It kept me from participating in school growing-up, kept me from going outside when I was growing-up and first transitioning, kept me from getting jobs, all kinds of stuff. No shade, me and many girls face stigma just trying to go to the doctor. Stigma is that thing that makes me*

want to cry when I'm too scared or overwhelmed in public. Like as passable as I am now, mama, sometimes I still be scared as fuck in public. Stigma definitely affects my dating life. Like, if I try to date a guy who I don't meet through sex work, he usually afraid somebody might find out I'm trans, or he might feel some kinda way about me having been in sex work...cuz of course I don't tell them that my ass will still fuck dudes for money. I just say I used to. And see, that's stigma...like, I'm so ashamed of so much of life, and now I see that all that is stigma placed on me. I don't feel like I still do in sex work because I only do it when I want to and on a higher level. Like when I was working the streets, I felt like a prostitute, a escort, a sex worker, a hoe...I felt like all of it. It felt terrible and cheap and dangerous...it just felt horrible (she began to cry)...but now, I feel like a boss-bitch! Mama, see you a real bitch, so you understand, cuz I know you fucks with top shelf dudes too, and it feels so good to be able say, yea this rapper or that rapper flying me here or there to fuck him for the night or the weekend. Like I just feel like a regular diva-ass-bitch with a pussy that bleeds once a month. I don't feel like some cheap street walker. I'm not trying to say you a escort, cuz I know you not, but I can just tell you mess with boss dudes. Like you dont mess with no regular trades, and that's like what we was talking about earlier when it comes to class. Like you classy and bossy, and I love that shit. You don't let stigma hold you down. You don't let shit keep you down, and I that's how I want to be. I want to be strong like that. I want to believe in myself more. I want to have my own place and be fabulous. Like I just really hope and pray things change

for the girls, because if not, we just gon keep gettin killed, keep killing ourselves, keep not living...

I just want to live and be free and be happy and be successful and have a husband who really loves me.

Jasmine (The Princess Warrior)

Jasmine was snowball recruited to participate in the study by her good friend Daisy. She did not meet me until her scheduled interview, but she greeted me as if they had known each other for years. At 21, she is the youngest participant enrolled in the study. Though she has experienced far less trauma and difficulties than the other participants, the weight of transitioning often leaves her melancholy. As she embraced me, she exhaled and explained: *Ohmygod, I am so happy to see you! I am so glad you were able to meet with me the day before Thanksgiving. I was so depressed. My parents are giving me so much drama! My grandmother is visiting her sister, and all of my school friends are traveling. And Daisy has some “photo shoot” and is “working” this weekend. So I was literally all by myself. I was trying to date this total fucking asshole White guy...ohmygod, you don’t mind if I curse do you?...ok good! And I was just feeling horrible. I dyed my hair blonde because he said it would make me look even more “exotic”...ohmygod, I can’t believe I even let him say that to me. My hair looks terrible! I can’t believe I did anything with him, but you know...he accepted me and wasn’t afraid to publicly date me, so I just went along with it. I just wanted to feel loved. It’s like since I started hormones, I’ve been super, super, super, hyper emotional. I’ve also been super horny. Ohmygod, I’ve been masturbating like*

crazy. It's so weird! I've been super hungry too! Ohmygod, I'm totally going to pig out! Ohmygod, I can totally pay for myself because I need to emotionally binge eat right now. (She laughed)

I did not allow her to pay for her lunch, and she ordered a meal that seemed much larger than someone with her classically trained ballet dancer frame would ordinarily consume. Jasmine identifies as Black, but she also acknowledges that she half Asian. The average person might identify her as Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. She is somewhat tall, and though she is early into her transition, she passes fairly well, or as she put it, *“people don't really mess with me because they just think I'm Asian; my girlfriends who are “all Black” get treated badly all the time...especially my girlfriend “C.” ...that poor girl doesn't get a break at all!”* Jasmine was clear and expressive about her privileges throughout the interview, and she showed a great deal of empathy for her Black, non-biracial trans-sisters. She indicated that it was her duty to always speak truth to power, and to always bring her Black trans-sisters with her. After lunch, the interview was conducted at Jasmine's apartment.

When asked to describe herself, she offered: *Ok wait...I don't really feel comfortable calling you by your first name, and I don't want to call you Mama like Daisy does...you know she refers to you as Mama all the time! It's hilarious! The other day she was like, “Mama said all these good things to me” ...and I was like wait...I thought you didn't talk to your Mama...it was hilarious. But I don't want to call you that because I don't want to think about my mother. My mother is just being so ridiculous now. I just can't! I think I want to call you Reyna? Reyna is Tagalog or*

Filipino for Queen. I think that fits you. I'm the Princesa (princess) and your Reyna. I feel like we're having a princess tea party! Wait, I have tiaras...you want to put them on? (after retrieving two tiaras from her collection of crowns, she returned to the question). So, of course I'm a princess. I know it's crazy, but I've been obsessed with princesses since I was a child. And I really do think of myself as a princess...as royalty! I'm just waiting for my prince or my king or duke...I'm a warrior too though. I'm strong. I'm artistic. I'm a dancer. I'm smart...fuck it...I'm brilliant...no shade! Perfect score on the SAT's and 4.0 GPA... People like to think I'm so smart because I'm Asian...you know model minority...and I'm always like no, I'm Black! People tell me I'm pretty, but I don't feel pretty? I feel like I look better now because I'm starting to pass more, and look more female, but I hated the way I looked growing up because I looked like a boy. Some say I looked androgynous, and that kinda bothers me, but I'll take that over looking male any day of the week! I'm lonely. Transitioning is very lonely...I have friends, but my cisgender friends don't get why I'm depressed, and my few trans-sisters have several thoughts and feelings about me...bitches...so I usually just kinda stay to myself. I had "F.", but his White ass was so fucking White and annoying. I miss having a boyfriend though, but I don't miss him at all. I'm a Black woman! A Black feminist woman!

When asked the question, "Did you have role models growing-up? If so, who were they?", Jasmine responded: *you mean other than Disney Princesses? Just kidding. My grandmother for sure...my dad's mom. She is so fucking fierce! She used to be really active in politics in Southern California and in the Black Power*

Movement when she was younger. She's held a few offices. She always loved me. I'm one of her favorite grandchildren, even though my dad utterly works her nerves. Beyonce! Of course! Rihanna...she's my slutty bad girl side! I fucking love her! I've choreographed so many dances to her songs. Naomi Campbell...ohmygod she is so fucking fierce! I fucking love Chanel Iman! Ohmygod, I'm so her! But I walk like Naomi! I don't know, I might give modeling a shot after I more fully transition? I'm the perfect height...just tall enough...and I'm the perfect weight and size with small boobs! I love a lot of models actually: Geena Rocero, Lea T, Giselle Alicia, Arisce Wanzer...all fierce transgender girls! I love them! Janet Mock...love her! I could totally see myself being like her! After college I think I'm going to go to graduate school in the Big City, and after I try dancing and modeling, I might try something entertainment-journalist-quai activist related? Oh I love Zendaya and Kerry Washington too. And Goapele! Totally fucking love her. I love real, smart, strong, powerful women. That's what I always wanted to be. My mom is very smart, very successful, but she is weak as fuck! She's like my dad's fucking chambermaid! I hate it! She never stands up to him!

Race. As mentioned, Jasmine identifies as Black though she has Asian ancestry on both side of her family. She also identifies as African American, of African Descent, and she added both BIAAsian and woman of color. Though Jasmine is young, she occupies Stage 5 of Cross' Black racial identity model: InternalizationCommitment. She has fully realized her Blackness and she maintains that identity. Jasmine continued: *It's funny because I'm actually Black and Asian on*

both sides. My mom's dad was a really light skin Black man, and her mom is Filipino, so she looks like a really light Filipino. People think she's Chinese or Vietnamese sometimes. My dad's mom is Black, and she's light complexioned, and his dad, my granny's first husband, was of Hawaiian descent, but I don't know what all he was mixed with because he was more reddish brown than yellow complexioned. He died in some kinda factory accident, and that's how my grandmother came-up...she went back to school and everything. That's how she met her second husband whom I called grandpa. He died 3 years ago. He was pretty rich too...my granny always brags on how he was a self-made multi-millionaire. I'm not sure he was a multi-millionaire, but he and granny definitely were well-off. Both of them are from the south and pretty much worked their way up. I so admire them. Grampa really came from nothing! He was very dark and manly and sweet and warm and kind...pretty much the opposite of my father. My father is lighter skin, and loves to claim his Asian-model-minority status. He's a lawyer and he's super corporate America. And he's done super well with investments and property owning. My grandmother was hoping he'd go into Civil Rights law, but of course he just helps the rich get richer. My granny said she wasted her money on law school for him! He doesn't like being Black. It's so abhorrent. My mom doesn't either. She almost never tells anyone her father was Black. She's a bit lighter than most Filipinos, so she really enjoys her Asian privilege. Her dad pretty much had White skin, with Black features, and mom pretty much got all Asian features. Then I popped out more Brown than she would have liked. I look more Hawaiian most times, and when I get a good tan, I look pretty much Black.

Kinda like you...like I thought you were Black-Asian mixed. Reyna, are you sure you're not mixed? We might be related! Yay!

Growing-up in a very affluent area of Southern California was hard because people were really racist. Asians didn't like me because they could tell I was Black. There were no other Black kids in school or my dance classes. The White kids were a mixed bag...some would call me a nigger and be like "I'm not racist"...and others were nice but weird. I always felt like an outsider. My grandparents lived in predominantly Black upper middle to upper class suburb, so there I got to be around other Black kids, but that was a mixed bag too...some were homophobic, and would call me a faggot, others were totally White washed and weird, and others were ghetto. My cousins were a mix too: My dad's brother's kids are all mixed, so depending on their mothers, they were either weird or crazy. My oldest Aunt only has two kids and I'm close both of them. They're ghetto-fabulous! Ghetto may not be the best word? Maybe hood or urban? I don't know? I feel like I'm talking to another Black person, so I can say ghetto and you know what I mean, and you know I'm not trying to put them down...in fact, my ghetto cousins are more real and genuine. I wish I had a better word? Like people might think my granny and my aunts are ghetto...I know my dad does...but I just see them as real. I don't know? That's something I'd like to explore if you don't mind? Like what does it mean to be Black? Like, I feel like we're Black because we claim it, we're proud of it, we're real, we keep it real. But maybe I do feel more Black when I'm being "ghetto"? Or maybe I feel more Black because I don't feel Asian, and I damn sure don't feel White! Like when I think of

Black, I think of my grandparents and my aunts. I think of the way they talk, their laughter, their bravery, the discrimination they've face...like when I think of them, I think of family, I think of love. I don't feel any of that when I think of my parents! I feel like my parents work super hard to fit it with White people. All their friends are White. They're not just assimilationist, they like really try to be White. It bothers me. I don't know?

I think growing-up my dad had a hard time with me being gay...you know then I was gay...he was never physically abusive, but he was very emotionally distant and disapproving. Like he wouldn't say I couldn't do ballet, he'd just down-talk it, and never come to any of my recitals. He was upset that I didn't want to play golf. He wanted a fucking Tiger Woods son. He was upset that I didn't want to play the cello. I wanted to play the piano like my youngest Aunt. I didn't want to do any of the things he liked. I didn't see them as male oriented, I just saw them as boring! I did want to play tennis, but once he took me out to play, and I was pretending I was Serena Williams, and he was not happy at all. Serena makes this noise before she serves, and I was making that sound, and he was like, "what are you doing"?, and I was like, I'm serving like Serena! He lectured me for like ten minutes. I was over it. I just didn't even want to play anymore. I still played with my favorite cousin, "G.", and she was Venus and I was Serena, and that was always super fun, but my dad just ruined everything. Maybe I was rebelling against him trying to masculinize me? It's so funny because my dad is not very masculine in my eyes. Grandpa's voice was so deep: you could hear him a mile a way. Dad's voice is light and whiney...(she laughed and

imitated her father's voice). *Grandpa never tried to make me more masculine. No that's not true...a few times when I was younger he tried to group me with my boy cousins so we could play usual boy sports, but granny could tell I was not happy, so she told him to let me play with the girls. He never tried to masculinize me again. I think that was like her way of saying, she's a girl. Me and G. would play dress-up and all the other girl games, and nobody bothered me. Well, my dad's brother did. My dad's brother is a total asshole. He's the worst kinda dickhead! I can't stand him! I don't like his kids either. He's got plenty by different women. He looks a bit more Black than my dad, so he can't play that Asian card. But all his kids are either half White or half Asian or half Latino...etc He doesn't like Black women, and he's been vocal about it, which has caused a lot of tension in the family. It kinda breaks my grandmother's heart that both her sons have issues with Black women. My youngest aunt doesn't care. She's the aunt who doesn't let anything bother her. Nothing. She and her husband are Buddhist. They're total hippie-weed head-natural medicine types. Her husband is also half White. But he identifies as Black. Their kids are younger than me, so I didn't really grow-up with them. My oldest aunt is like super pro-Black! She's G.'s mom. She's younger than my dad and my uncle, but she's the boss. She's the fighter. She handles everything. She's granny's right hand, and she gives my dad and my uncle hell! She says whatever she wants to, and she dares them to try her. She is hilarious. She grew-up in California, but she's very southern. Granny says she my great-grandmother's twin.*

So my two aunts and my grandparents were like my idea of family and they're very Black to me! They came to almost every extracurricular event I had. They really love me. My mom is a doctor, so she was busy a lot. When I wasn't with my nanny who was White, I was with my aunts or my grandparents. My nanny was cool, but she wasn't the brightest bulb in the bunch. Our housekeeper was Latina, of course. She spoke little English, so that's how I learned Spanish. I grew-up in a very multicultural, almost anti-Black community, but I retained all my Blackness because of my dad's family. My mom's family lived in the Pacific North West, and I only saw them like once a year. My mom's mom remarried a White man after my grandfather was killed in the military. So my mom's mom and her younger half siblings are very White-Asians. I won't say they are racist, but they definitely hold some stereotypical views of Blacks, and they definitely say some borderline racist things. I feel totally foreign around them. My step-grandfather...I don't call him my grandfather...definitely has a lot of issues! He's a closet Republican who tells people he's an independent, and he says racist, homophobic, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, sexist, transphobic, things...but then, he'll quickly apologize if he feels like people are offended, and then he'll blame it on old age. I've never like him. He always smelled funny and he like hunting deer and shit, and you know my Disney Princess ass just was not ok with that shit! I don't know?... race is such an interesting and complicated thing for me. I've never really been able to explore it like this...you know with someone who is an expert on race, who is also dope as fuck, and who gets it. My dad's youngest sister gets it, but she's not an academic who knows what questions to

ask and stuff that you know? And my professors...ohmygod, world renowned, but mostly liberal-racist-fucking asshole Whites who totally don't fucking get it. Like they'll be all nice to me and big uppington Asians, and then turn around and say some anti-Black shit...and I'm like what the fuck? I thought you loved Obama so much?

(She laughed)

Speaking of Obama, he's such a fucking tough subject...especially in my family. There's the Black side who's like "he aint do shit for Black people, he's just a figure head, he's weak,, and only want to please the White people...but we love him and they betta not kill him!" then there are the closet republicans like my dad and step-grandad who find the most ridiculous things wrong with him, like what color suit he wears, or that he has rappers at the White House, and then there are the ones who are mostly clueless like my mixed cousins. I feel like my family is an example of the macrocosm of thoughts on Obama. I was personally very happy to cast my very first presidential vote for him in 2012, but now I'm like what does he really represent? I felt like he was like me because he's biracial, but now I just feel like he kinda performs Blackness in a way because Whiteness is not really an option for him? I'll be honest, it's kind of disappointing! Now, the other Reyna, First Lady Michelle...ohmygod...I forgot to mention her as one of my idols! I fucking love her! Like when I think of myself as an older woman, I think of her! Like...race is so important to me, my Blackness is so important to me. I don't know why? Maybe because the people I felt most loved and accepted by are Black, and it's so important to them? Like, I remember when Hurricane Katrina hit...I was 11...and my

grandparents and my aunts talked about it all the time, and the news coverage, ohmygod, I feel like that was one of the most defining moments of my Blackness...like, that's when I really saw how Black people are treated in America, and I just remember it hurting so deeply. We cried, we were angry...that was our people. And I even saw Black people who looked like me! And got to hear all these stories from my grandparents about Civil Rights, and Jim Crow, and about our extended family, and our ancestry. Then, I would go home to fucking stark vanilla Whiteness, and my parents were so unfeeling toward it. My grandmother had to make my father donate money! It was around that same time that my Blackness became a thing at school. That was around the first time I was called a nigger, and that was the first time I actually felt it. I actually felt something in my heart, in my body, in my mind say, you're Black, and this is not ok. Like...Blackness feels like something, and once you're aware of it, it doesn't go away. Just like when I knew I was a girl, or when I knew I liked boys...it was deep and it was profound...and it sat heavily on my shoulders, and weighs heavily on my head, and I knew that I had to wear it with pride like a crown! (Jasmine removed the tiara she was wearing, and retrieved another; it was a Moroccan crown made of melded gold, jade, and turquoise. She purchased it while in Morocco.) This is the crown I'm feeling like serving right now...it's heavy as fuck just like my intersectional identities, but it's one of the most stunning crown's I own! Since I wasn't blessed with "nappy" hair, and since my head is so damn big, it's hard to keep on, can you help me get it on? By the way, my hair looks so much

fucking better now, ohmygod, you saved my life! Thank you so much for helping me out because I didn't know what to do with it!

Gender. Jasmine identifies as a woman, transwoman, trans, transgender, and heterosexual. She indicated that she has a high feminist orientation, and that she is moderately connected to her gender group. Jasmine maintained: *Such a good question...it's a layered for me actually: I first knew I was a girl as early as I remember...like 4? But I didn't know I was trans till I was like 13, almost 14. I didn't really know being trans was a thing. I thought I was just going to have to be a really fem gay male, and just be a woman on the inside. At school and in dance, it was very acceptable to be a very fem gay boy, and saying I was a girl only meant to people that I was a fem gay boy or a future drag queen. Even in my family...the gay thing is not an issue, so I was very fortunate to be very accepted growing-up...until I was almost 19, and announced that I was beginning my tradition. Going away to college was like the awakening for me. That's when I met trans people, that's when I found out that one could be transsexual...it was epic! I didn't like college in some ways because the campus is really douchie and elitist in some ways, but in other ways, it was exposure to completely new realities. The Black people on campus are a mixed bag: some are really cool and others are just douchie fucking spoiled rich kids. The Asian people are super diverse in terms of their Asian identity and performance, but mostly all separate themselves from the Black people and connect themselves to the White people. My treatment is fine compared to my girl C.: the Black people are total assholes to her...most people are, but the Black people are particularly abhorrent, ignorant*

assholes to her. She doesn't pass, and she's big, and much darker skinned, and it's just really fucked up because she's really a great person! She's super sweet, super smart, super artistic, and for a big chick she can dance! That bitch can twerk, that bitch can give you African, she can give you a Modern, a lil Contemporary...bitch can even Vogue and Step. She's was meant to be a dancer! She's just a bigger girl, so that's another strike against her. Sometimes I feel bad because I have it so easy compare to her! I eat like a horse sometimes, but my I stay thin. I'm passing already, and I just started hormones a year ago. I'm not that tall, I have small feet and hands, like I'm really lucky! The only thing I really got from my dad is this fucking beard! Ohmygod, I hate it. I'm starting my laser in January and cannot wait! They told me to wait til I was hormones for a year to get the best result. I'm getting my name and gender changed in January too! Got my court date! I'm just so looking forward to it. I didn't realize how hard transitioning would be and how long each process would take. And I know I still have it way easier than a lot of girls, because a lot of this is at my fingertips.

My parents are totally not ok with me transitioning. My dad is being worse than his usual asshole self. He told me if I go through with this I'm fucking dead to him. And my mom of course is obeying whatever he says. But she doesn't like it either. She keeps saying I won't be successful, I won't have a career. I'm going to be a streetwalker...you know every bad thing she can think of. And in our last conversation, as I was telling her about my breakup, she pulled the trump card: well J...she still calls me by fucking dead name..."nobody is going to love you. You're

going to be alone and miserable. If you get the vagina no one still will want you. It won't work, and you're going to be very very miserable, and your father and I will cut you off." And she said it all in her English doctor voice, so she definitely meant business. She told me that they were ashamed of me, and didn't want me to come home for Thanksgiving. They told me that they are going to cut me off financially after graduation. It really fucking hurts. My granny threatened to cut my dad out of her will if he cuts me off. I don't think he really cares. His brother is shitty to me, but his broke ass definitely cares about being cut out of the will, so he keeps his fucking mouth closed now. He used to call me a fucking "he-she" and a "shemale" and all other kinda fucked up shit. His older kids who are older than me and close to my age are all fucked up assholes too. I could swear their moms were fucking crack whores.

(She laughed)

I say I'm moderately close to my gender group because I'm not really fucking with anybody right now. My best cousin G. is really like my sister. We're still tight, but she's pledging her sorority right now, so she's all wrapped up in that. I so wish I could pledge! I asked our campus' Chapter if they'd take me as a transgirl, and them bitches looked at me like I had two heads. They were like...um...we don't know about that? Let us get back to you. Of course they never fucking did. G. attends an HBCU. I went to visit her, and it was total culture shock! It was the first time I've ever been close to fist fighting. Some guys were trying it, and G. is a fucking gangsta, she was not having it! Her line sister are fucking gangstas too! They're really prissy, but they get real ratchet, real quick! They stood with me ready to fight! These bitches came out of earrings and shoes and shit faster than I could blink! I didn't even know how to

prep for the fight. I just knew I was going to standup for myself! Other than that incident, the weekend was fun...it was interesting as fuck. Ohmygod, I hooked up with this guy. It was my first time hooking up. I had only had sex with like two other guys before then. I lost my virginity at 17. It wasn't fun. He was mixed Black and White. He just kinda rammed it in and fucked me hard on their fucking pool house floor. We had sex a few times but it was always rough and barely intimate. Then the next guy was in college. Ohmygod, Black guy from the south...we had fun together. I loved talking to him. He had a small dick, so it was way easier, and enjoyable, but he freaked out, and totally fucking ghosted me. He would see me on campus and totally ignore me. Then before he graduated he was like, "I'm sorry boo, I just can't handle this, I don't want to be gay and shit, but can I make love to you one last time?" Of course I was on my back before we ended the call. Then there was my East Coast hookup! Ohmygod, Reyna, it was like the best sex I've ever dreamed of! He was the kinda Black guy I've dreamed about! He was really tall...like 6'5"...nice brown skin...like cinnamon caramel color, muscular, handsome as all fuck! Ohmygod! I don't know if you know who Bradley Beal is, but he kinda looked like that! Bradley is my pro-athlete crush! I fucking love him! And he was so fucking respectful! He was serious husband material! His dick was so big, ohmygod...but I was high...he had that good weed! Ooh that shit was fire. The way her made love to me felt like my first time. He treated me like a real girl. Ohmygod, I felt like fresh pussy! He stayed till like 5am, then when he was leaving, I asked if he wanted to hangout again before I left maybe go out, he said, "Boo I gotta girl, I can't go out, but I try to see you

again”...I gagged so hard! I was like but I love you! I’m Princesa Jasmine, don’t you want to marry me and live happily ever after? I didn’t really say that, thank God! I couldn’t say much of anything really. I just gagged. G. came back to the hotel later that morning, and I told her everything that happened, and I felt like I had been such a used little whore, and she was like, “Bitch please, you got you some good dick right? Fuck that nigga...it’s on to the next! Bitch this is how it goes...fucking real bitches with real pussies don’t get that much sometimes, so just enjoy what it was, and don’t be sad about it. Trust me, if it’s meant to be, he’ll be back or yall will find each other again. Shit I got fucked good last night too!” And in that moment, I realized she was the baddest most feminist bitch I knew! (She laughed)

G. is the best! My other bestie is Daisy. I really like Daisy. She’s like my closest trans girlfriend, but we live totally different lives. She is like hoodest bitch I know. I’m sure she told you she still does sex worker...ohmygod, sometimes I’m so amazed by it, and other times, I’m like you fucked all those guys? We’re kinda like Carri and Samantha on Sex and the City. We met at a support group, and she introduced me to that fucking lying ass, culturally appropriating, wanna-be-Black, fake ass, silicone floatation device, Asian fucking Kim Kardashian knock off bitch Azalea! I can’t stand that fucking lying as whore-bitch! Daisy told me last night that you interviewed that bitch. I was so fucking mad because that bitch is not Black! That lying ass bitch stole this opportunity from a real Black girl that could have really used this opportunity. I texted that bitch and told her that I was going to out her fucking lying ass!

That bitch lies and says her dad is Black...ohmygod...do you know her fucking Chinese parents are still together? Do you know her fucking racist ass dad killed a fucking Black child...shot him fucking dead in one of their stores because they were arguing or some shit...and he got off scott fucking free. Yes, I researched that bitch once I found out her dead name. Found that bitch's arrest record and all kinda shit. That bitch is not fucking Black! That bitch just like pretending she's Black because she thinks it's fucking cool, and she likes Black guys. That bitch goes to the tanning salon like twice a week. I fucking hate her. I didn't like her before because she's shady as fuck and slutty as fuck, but then when I found out all her tea, I fucking hated her! Her family is like 5th generation here, so you know they rich...they're fucking rich as shit! And they've made their fucking money largely off of Black people! And see Azalea is like a lot of transgirls out here, so I just don't fuck with them bitches. So that's why I say I'm moderately close to my gender group...I'd say I'm a 7(out of 10), but I'm definitely a 12 (out of 10) in Black feminism. I just started learning about intersectionality and stuff, but I've always known about Black feminism because of my granny and my 2 aunts. My granny might be more womanist, but my aunts are definitely feminist. My oldest aunt's husband I'd say was anti-sexist, and my youngest aunt's husband I'd say was pro-feminist. The difference is my older uncle is like my granddad: he won't keep women down, and he builds Black women up, but he still might say or do some sexist shit and not realize it. My younger uncle, he's like all up in feminist literature and shit. He and my aunt read Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks...they even read Janet Mock's book with me and we discussed it. Both are

great guys, but my younger uncle is more hip and cool. Like one time he told me, “aye baby girl, don’t you be out there fucking raw unless it’s your boyfriend or your husband”! I almost screamed! My older uncle would not even dare think about discussing any type of sex with me or G. He does talk to G.’s brother about sex though, and sends him boxes of condoms. G. was like where are my condoms...he spit out his drink! He was like, “young lady you better not be having sex!” G. lied and said she wasn’t to make him feel better.

I don’t know? I see myself as wanting to have a circle of close Black women friends...both cis and trans...but I just don’t foresee that happening right now. Right now it’s basically G., Daisy, and C. that’s really all I fuck with, fuck with...and that’s really all I can handle. I get tired of explaining why I’m depressed, and why I’m afraid to go certain places, and why I don’t want to get out of bed sometimes, and why I hate taking hormone shots, and why I’m afraid to shop in certain stores. Like explaining the challenges of being trans to ciswomen is hard, but it’s sometimes hard explaining to transwomen too. Sometimes transwomen expect me to be so super fucking advanced because I’m part Asian and come from money. Like at the support group in the City...bitches act like I don’t have struggles. Well that group is mostly Black. I went to one that was mostly White and Asian...ohmygod, it was like so fucking White! I went to one that was mostly Asian and it was shade. And the support groups on campus is transwomen and transmen...and gender non conforming and non binary... so that kinda takes away from the experience in some ways, because it’s many totally differently realities trying to exist in one space. The transmen who pass

are basically living as cismen. The ones who don't are kinda lesbian-esque, so they aren't talking about really traumatic stuff like somebody like C. They're woe is meing over shit that me and C. look at like, bitch if you only knew...they're mostly White too. So now, I just kinda stay to myself. I had that asshole boyfriend, but now I think, I'm just going to be single for a while, and be the Princesa of my own castle!

Class. Jasmine reported having grown up upper class and wanting to remain financially comfortable. She also indicated that almost all of her family members have been to college, and many are graduates. Jasmine shared: *I definitely grew-up very upper classed. I'd be lying if I said I didn't. My grandparent and my aunts consider themselves more middle class, but they definitely have money, and almost everyone has been to and/or graduated college. My grandmother went back to college. She wanted to go to law school, but she said having 3 children and a husband and family businesses, and being in her 30's just didn't allow for it. Then she got pregnant again with my youngest aunt, so that really wasn't happening. After she had my youngest aunt, she went back to get her Master's in Social Work. Granddad got his Bachelors. It took him a long time because he had the business, and he just kept taking business and finance classes, then granny finally put him on a degree path. He graduated before I was born, but he was old...like 50 or so when he finished. My dad's brother is the only one not to get a graduate or professional degree of the kids, and he's the only one to go to a low ranked state school. I'm not sure he really graduated? He's the family fuck up. He's a car salesman. My oldest aunt is a PhD/JD...she's a judge now and super badass! And my youngest aunt a*

natural medicine doctor...I forget what it's called...she's like D.O not MD?... but yea, she makes herbal remedies and stuff. Her husband is a physical therapist. G's dad is an engineer. He's the first in his family to go to college. His dad and his older brothers are all construction workers, and they have a family business. G's brother is studying to become an architect. G is artistic like me, but she said she's probably going to law school. My dad went to all ivy league schools and so did my mom. My oldest aunt went to an HBCU undergrad, then she came here to my school. My youngest aunt was kind of the rambler, she went to a smaller ivy league school, then studied abroad, she did a semester at the same HBCU that G. goes too, then she graduated, then she studied in South America, and that's where she met her husband. Education is totally my family's thing. Like we don't talk about class and money a lot, but education and colleges are always on the table. Every Christmas we all take pictures in our college sweatshirts, and those in sororities and fraternities take pictures together too. It's my granny's dream come true.

I don't really think about class, because I grew-up upper class you know? But now that I might be financially cut off, it's starting to creep in a little. Like, what if I am poor? What if I did have to engage in sex work? It gets really scary! Reyna, I have a tiara and crown collection, I have a Tiffany's tea set...how can I go from this to walking the streets? I've bypassed so much trauma and drama and difficulty in life because of my family's socioeconomic status, because of my mostly Asian appearance, I don't even think I could live any other way? I look at Daisy, and I'm like ohmygod, I could never live your life. It's no shade, I love her, but she's like

really life in the fast lane. Ohmygod, I don't know if she told you this, but whatever, she would'nt mind me tell you, but this bitch answered her phone while she was getting fucked by a John. I thought she was being attacked, I was so scared at first, and this was bitch like, "ohmygod, his dick is so fucking big, this nigga is fucking me so good, ohmygod I can't stop coming! Best \$250 I ever made!" Then she sent me a video of his humongous cock going in and out of her, and I was speechless. I thought to myself, only \$250 to take all that inside you? She was sore for a week! And I thought to myself, there is just absolutely no fucking way! So, I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I'm going to stay upper class! I need a posh life! I was born to be Reyna not kalapating mababa ang lipiad...that's a very derogatory way to say prostitute in Tagalog, but I don't think badly or look down upon sex workers, I just don't want to be one. Class is the best kept secret oppression. It's every ism in a fucking bottle. I feel bad that I'm so attached to being upper class...well to be rich...well to be comfortable. I need to be comfortable! And for so many trans-sisters, especially Black trans-sisters, comfort is just not a reality nor a possibility.

Stigma. At only 21 years old, Jasmine, like Daisy, has not lived long enough to experience the full range of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The fact that she is upper class has afforded her the opportunity to have reached Stage 4: Esteem, and to have bypassed Stages 1 and 2, Physiological and Safety. In many ways, being upper class also has allowed her to reach Stage 3 of Love and Belonging. However, whether she is able to fully self-actualize and reach the many goals she listed will not be known until she experiences the "real world" and lives as an independent adult transwoman.

Further, the “real life” test will also dictate if she can maintain Stages 1-4. Jasmine is fortunate to have not experience much stigma in her life, however, she did respond to the questions on stigma in theoretical and hypothetical ways pertinent to her life. Her most profound statement on stigma was: *Yes, my intersectional identities are very stigmatized, but, I am very fortunate to be able to conceal those stigmatized identities, and when I cannot conceal them, they are either protected by environment or my family or they are embraced. As much as I am Black, the world loves me as Asian. If I face racial discrimination, I am protected as a model minority Asian. I’m stigmatized and stereotyped as smart, the best, pseudo-White and people see me as someone deserving of respect. As much as I am trans, I am fetishized and desired as the perfect Asian sex slave; I am seen as beautiful, exotic, rare; I am seen as androgynous in a good way. I am young, but I am seen as the future, and not as target practice for the Police. I have psychological issues, but my depression is seen as normal angst and not something to be ridiculed; my anxiety is seen as part and parcel of Asian genius; my agoraphobia is seen as a normal reaction to new environments. Doctors on campus at the Student Health Center are nice to me, say nice things, help me out, they are mean to C. Everything that they normalize in me, they problematize in her. I know what stigma is, I experience it in little pieces, and unfortunately, I am so fragile, and so sheltered that the little that I do experience is debilitating. I can’t get out of bed sometimes because I feel ugly and bad about myself. But C. is told that she is ugly day after day, and even though she can’t get out of bed sometimes too, she is expected to. If she misses class, if she misses anything,*

professors write her off as lazy, incompetent, pathetic...no one is ever nice to her, yet she is expected to perform at the same levels as the rest of us. She was in the hospital, missed a midterm, and the professor's racist ass told her she needed to drop the course. A White frat bro missed the same exam because he was hungover after Halloween, and the same professor told him that he could come to office hours to take the same exam as everyone else. I failed that exam because I was super late, and didn't finish, but I was offered a retake to protect my A in the class. C. experiences real stigma all day, every day because she is Black, darker skin, from the south with an accent, trans, and not passing yet, etc... I love her and honor her for continuing to fight despite the odds against her! She is my sister and I love her!

I'm a Princess, but I'm also a Warrior...a Warrior for my people, for my sisters, because I know privilege has blessed me with the opportunity to stand up and fight while facing little consequence. In fact, I am often praised for it. So, I will continue to stand for my people! I will continue to fight!

This chapter of life history-based, fully embodied narratives clearly evidence the impact of stigma, racism, sexism, transphobia, and various other oppressions in the women's lives. Each interview went beyond what was expected in terms of the depth of the reflection, openness, and the comparisons the women were willing to make. In beginning of the project, I imagined needing a framework to adequately characterize the multiple layered reactions and responses of the participants. I recognized during my initial community visits and pilot testing that these women's lives were very different from the lives of transgender women being portrayed in the

media via celebrities such as Caitlyn Jenner and Laverne Cox. While Cox has been vocal about the abuse, violence, and dire conditions that transwomen of color face, she is portrayed as a very happy, Hollywood starlet, thus, giving the plausibly false impression that the life for transgender women is easy. Caitlyn Jenner does make it seem like being a transgender woman is very easy and always fun, and for her, and transwomen with her level of privilege, life may be mostly fun (Boylard, 2015; Brooks, 2017; Jackson, 2016). To the contrary, this chapter tells a different story, one that vividly illustrates the way that the women's stigmatized, oppressed, intersectional identities could be maddening and painful. Chapter 5 offers an analysis of the study's important findings.

CHAPTER 5

THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS UNSEEN: SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

“Terror is the thing the mind tries to forget.
Terror is that mighty boulder of pain that is mostly unseen. Here
I present to you the evidence of things not seen.”
—James Baldwin (Baldwin, 1981, p. xiv.)

Summary of Study Findings

This intersectional, phenomenological study evolved in unexpected yet marvelous ways: the women were aching to share their life histories, and did so in great depth. In this chapter, I summarize, analyze, and discuss the study’s main findings. The interview questions were initially organized around seven thematic frames:

- (a) Personal identity;
- (b) Gender/transsexual or gender spectrum identity/female identity/feminist understandings and/or identity, gender group connectedness;
- (c) Racial group identity and community connectedness;
- (d) Identity disclosure, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) community connectedness, and political associations;
- (e) Self-esteem, self-actualization, and self-concept;
- (f) Relationships and love;

(g) Stigma, discrimination, racism, sex work, violence, trauma, suicide ideation, and isolation.

As the interviews progressed, the women's narratives focused on certain themes over others. For example, violence (from group (g)), became the most salient, overarching, and shared theme. Eight participants had experienced various forms of direct violence. The two who indicated that they had not experienced violence also indicated that they had narrowly escaped acts of physical violence in their past. They also indicated that their families were somewhat accepting of their gender identity. Lotus and Jasmine had very different life experiences, yet there were still similarities to their experience as Black transwomen (Collins, 1991). For example, they both first experienced potentially violent situations while in college. They were also both at historically Black colleges. All of the women suggested that the most violent experiences they had were within the African American community (Brooks, 2017; Jackson, 2016).

Racial group connectedness and racial group identification was another prominent theme for the participants despite negative treatment and experiences from the African American community. Eight of the women reported strong connections to Black racial identity and community. The two who did not, Ivy and Willow, both publicly identified as White or non-Black, though 'technically' Black. Ivy and Willow have very different backgrounds as well, but have similar desires to escape the stigma of blackness (Blay, 2013; Quinn, 2006). Ivy had fewer instances of negative treatment by African Americans than Willow, who had been first abused physically,

sexually, and emotionally by her biological Black family. Both Ivy and Willow expressed having had childhood girl friends who were affluent and White, and being impressed by their level of privilege. Ivy boldly expressed that she wanted power, and whiteness gave her that. Willow had reconstructed her narrative to believe she was White, possibly so she could forget the terrors of being a Black transwoman. Thus, for Willow, whiteness appeared to be more a coping mechanism or a survival mechanism (Maslow, 1954).

Two of the key questions that seemed to open the participants to sharing deeply and emotionally were when they were asked if they had role models, and asked them to describe themselves. The question about role models seemed to place the women at ease, taking them to a more joyous time in their lives. It connected strongly to the theme of personal identity as well. Selecting role models informed their self-concept (Cross, 1971; Mock, 2014). Lotus, who gave one of the longest responses to that question, suggested that it was the type of question she, as an artist, has been waiting to be asked. As many African American transwomen have spent most of their formative years hiding their gender identity for personal safety, they have tended to find sanctuary in connecting to popular (and usually African American) women (Mock, 2014). They begin to see themselves in that woman, and see their connections as (Black) women (Collins, 1991).

Likewise, gender identity was a prominent category that proved one of the foundations of this research. All participants identified as women and wanted to be seen as, and treated as, women. They were also pro-gender binary (Bornstein, 2006),

which is outside the contemporary dominant narrative of the transgender community which mainly seeks gender fluidity, queering, and decolonization of gender (Stryker, 2008). Because all the women experienced intersectional oppressions living as Black and transfemale (Crenshaw, 2015), this affected how they felt about themselves and, subsequently, how they described themselves. When asked to describe themselves, eight had negative feelings.

Most articulated that they felt badly because of reasons associated with being a Black transwoman. Lotus, who was verbally harassed on her way to the interview, expressed that that the verbal harassment impacted how she felt about herself, which also affected her responses. Likewise, this question tended to influence the women's initial responses to the interview. For example, if they became saddened by the question, the more they delved into later questions. There were two participants who did not seem to be made sad after responding to this question: Ivy and Jasmine. Perhaps Ivy was not saddened because she had such strong feelings of domination and aggression (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In Jasmine's case, she had a somewhat higher self-esteem than most of the women. She was an excellent straight-A student at an elite college, and an elite dancer. Even though her self-esteem was higher, and had fewer instances of sadness, she admitted to bouts of depression because of the androgynous stage of her transition (Jackson, 2016).

Feminist identity was also an important theme because it informed the ways the women talked about their personal identity and sexual identities. For most, being feminist meant being a strong Black woman, and they really connected to that trope

(Harris-Perry, 2012). Discussing their feminist rankings, eight women ranked themselves as moderate to high in feminist identity. Many also connected their feminist identity to their girlhood role models. For example, role models who were portrayed as (or portrayed themselves) as strong, made the greatest impression on the women in regards to feminism or feminist orientation (Hyde, 2014).

Relationships with mothers and older female family members were also part of the women's role models and feminist identity orientation. Only two, Lotus and Magnolia, saw their mothers as role models. Likewise, they were the only two participants who did not have a difficult, strained, or abusive relationship with their mothers. Three of the participants (Lily, Lotus, and Jasmine) had aunts whom they saw as role models. In Camellia's and Jasmine's cases, their grandmothers were seen as role models.

Romantic relationships and love was also a very salient theme: All the women expressed deeply desiring a long-term relationship, such as marriage, or some type of committed involvement with a heterosexual, cisgender man. Violet, for example, has modeled her life around the dream of being a housewife, and she endures a physically and emotionally abusive relationship to feel close to that dream. This theme was also connected to self-actualization. All the women saw reaching their ultimate goals in life as connected to having such a relationship. The women expressing the desire for a romantic relationship as an ultimate goal connects to Maslow's (1954) theorizing that people need love and belong to thrive.

The theme of identity disclosure was not as deeply discussed, but consistently applied to the women's narratives. For example, all of the women suggested that they had a stealth identity in some way. They preferred passing, and preferred people not being able to recognize that they are transgender. However, when they disclose their gender identity, and how they disclose it was not frequently discussed. They preferred stealth because it allows them to conceal (albeit temporarily) the stigma of being transgender (Quinn, 2006).

Discussion and Analysis

In the following pages, I focus more in-depth on the research questions around which this study was framed, using specific examples taken from the interviews. The first research question raised was: How does stigma impact the lives of African American transwomen? Perhaps the strongest and most consistent finding was the way that nearly every facet of the women's lives had been dramatically impacted by stigma. All of the women suggested that stigma impacted their life in multiple ways, and literally none felt they could truly reach their full potential in life because of stigma.

At the outset, I hypothesized that stigma (that derived both from being Black and transgender) would significantly impact the women's lives. However, their narratives demonstrated that the intersecting layers of stigma were much broader and deeper than anticipated, and its impact was felt more profoundly than initially hypothesized. For example, as Rose described it:

Stigma. I have spent my entire life running from stigma. All these questions could have been one question. Girl, you must have planned on interviewing young girls with no real life experience to ask all these questions about experiencing stigma or feeling stigmatized? (She laughed) It is nearly impossible for a Black transsexual to answer any of these questions with a NO? Girl the place in between my fingers hurt. That's how hard life has been because of stigma. Stealth was supposed to be the shelter from stigma—it was in some ways, but you cannot hide from your mind and the thoughts and fears that produces because of stigma. Black transsexuals can never escape stigma. White transsexuals can because they are White. When they are not seen as White women, they are still WHITE MEN! Nobody fucks with White men. Hell, nobody fucks with White women and gets away with it. Stigma is that feeling of constant anxiety.

She said that the pains of stigma were so intense that even the spaces between her fingers hurt. She suggested that stealth had allowed her to conceal some the stigma of being transgender (Quinn, 2006), but ultimately, there was no escape. Rose said she felt so physically and mentally encumbered by the effects of stigma that this could be the reason she is not living a quality life. Rose indicated that she lives below the poverty line and in very undesirable conditions. The stigma from which she has suffered may help to account for her compromised economic position. Eradicating stigma for her and for the other women in the study might provide them with better opportunities to attain the kind of life they desire and deserve (Crenshaw, 1993, 2015; Maslow, 1954).

Similar to Rose, Lily indicated stigma impacted every part of her life. Lily said:

Do I think I have faced stigma because I am Black transsexual?
Hell Yes! I can't tell you one thing about myself that is not stigmatized and that is not related to me being Black or being

me trans or me being a woman. My whole entire life my entire existence has been marked by stigma. I was never even really loved as a baby. My mother told me she wanted a light baby. My Grandparents were mean to me because I was feminine. I'll be honest with you, I think they knew my Uncle P was having sex with me. I mean that first time he put his whole big dick in me, I swear I screamed loud enough for the whole state of Florida to hear, but nobody heard anything? And if I had said something the shame would have been on me. Even in law school, I came in with a 4.0 GPA yet my talents were down played and I was dismissed as the affirmative action admittance. Even when I am giving my best performance taking 2 dicks with a 3rd in my mouth, the other guys are cheering me on saying things like "you a know a fat black bitch a do anything"...even when I'm doing my absolute best at something my race, gender, or class are always present and stigmatizing.

Lily clearly articulated how much the stigma based on her intersectional identities had impacted her life. She felt that stigma impacted her professional life starting in law school, when she felt she was seen as having been admitted merely because of affirmative action. As Herek (2007) suggested, there is a stigma that is felt and not observed, and of which the public is not aware. Lily indicated that she also experienced that her identities were stigmatized in her sex work (or in her acting profession, as she liked to call it).

Even when she was doing her absolute best, her male co-stars would say things to reduce her excellence. Falk (2001) observed the ways that women are seen as deviant in the sex industry. Miller-Young (2014) observed that, even in this industry, Black women receive biased treatment. Black transwomen engage in sex work because the stigma they receive impedes them in obtaining other employment.

They also face stigma in sex work because of their race. Likewise, they face stigma from other Blacks and the LGBT community because they engage in sex work (Jackson, 2016; Miller-Young, 2014; Schmader & Lickel, 2006).

Camellia was equally as clear about the impact of stigma in her life. She became overwrought when describing the interlocking stigmas that constrict her life:

I can't stand this living all alone. Stigma is being a Black transsexual. Stigma basically means leprosy...to have some disease that marks you...to be cursed, to be on the outside. That's being a Black tranny. A transwoman. Being Black...not really Black transmen, they live fine lives most times, but Black transwomen, we get it every day. From the minute you step out yo house to the minute you get back in it, you getting it...you getting yo ass whipped and reminded how you aint worth shit! I can't walk through Walmart without a fight...that's stigma. I caint go to the doctor's office without drama...that's stigma. I caint go to school without drama...that's stigma. I caint get my own apartment...that's stigma. I caint have nothing...I gotta be somebody's fuckin house girl, just to have a fuckin roof over my head...that's motherfuckin stigma. Everything I do in life is judged negatively...that's stigma. Oh Oh...I can't stand this living all alone...Oh I can't stand this living all alone!

Camellia also alluded to stigma being an isolating force, and stated that she often felt alone. Many of the women indicated that they felt alone, felt unloved, and exiled from kinship.

The next research question was: How do African American transwomen conceptualize their racial identity, and how does their transgender identity intersect with the African American community? I hypothesized that if a Black transwoman possessed a positive and high racial self-concept (i.e., immersion/emersion, or internalization, or internalization and commitment stage, or all of the above), she had a greater chance to self-actualize (Cross, 1971; Jones & Brown, 2016; Maslow, 1954;

Moore, 2012). However, the women's narratives indicated that although many of them had highly positive racial identity awareness, their multiple oppressed identities weighed them down, and prevented their self-actualization. Having a highly positive racial identity did help them, and make them more resilient (Mock, 2017; HarrisPerry, 2012), but a strong sense of blackness did not open the doors to the promised land of self-actualization.

Mock (2014, 2017) considers herself to be one of the fortunate Black transwomen who was able to self-actualize and achieve her goals. She also admits that being proud of her blackness, and looking at legendary Black women trailblazers before her helped her to be resilient. Mock argued that transwomen of color should not have to feel lucky because they achieved their dreams. Instead, they should feel entitled to obtaining their goals. Mock, like Jasmine, is half-Asian, and both women acknowledged how being seen or read as mixed race and beautiful, has helped reduce the level of stigma in their lives. Mock (2014) called this *pretty privilege*. Beauty and appearance are very strong factors in Black women's experiences, and beauty, or pretty privilege, dictated how the women in this study began to shape their selfconcept and racial self-consciousness (Clark & Clark, 1947).

Thus, there were several inter-related answers to this research question. Black transwomen conceptualized their Blackness first by familial relations, then by societal engagement. Familial relations may have been negative, which sometimes negatively affected the women's racial self-consciousness. Overwhelmingly, though, social engagement reinforced the stigmas from which they suffered. Ultimately, social

engagement negatively influenced all the women (Herek, 2007; Schmader & Lickel, 2006). Beauty, skin color, and role models were also very significant factors in how the women conceived their blackness.

Concerning this dimension, Ivy and Willow were outliers among the participants because they both identified as White. Their cases speak to the impact of stigma because the stigma of blackness is what makes both women identify as White. Their cases also speak to the issue of how Black transwomen conceive of their blackness. What I have learned is that Black transwomen conceptualize and construct their blackness in a myriad of ways, and their familial connections are as responsible for how they see this aspect of themselves as the outside society that maintains stigma against blackness. That being said, an important finding of this work is how horribly abusive Black families can be toward young transgirls (or pre-transition transgender girls).

Willow, who identifies as White (though she is a dark skin Black woman), indicated that she was tied to a tree and beaten for hours by the men of her family while her grandfather preached, her grandmother prayed, and mother watched. This is a classic example of post- traumatic slave syndrome (De Gruy, 2005). This type of beating was also described in various slave narratives (Hurstun, 1981). Contemporary Black transwomen's narrative should not read like slave narratives of the 1600-1800's. However, the painful similarities between slave narratives and the women's narratives in this study were what inspired this embodied narrative. Black transwomen's lives

are so layered by stigma that they are bound and disenfranchised in destructive ways similar to the system of slavery (De Gruy, 2005; West, 1993).

Before addressing the ways Black transwomen's gender and racial identities intersect within their communities, I should acknowledge and discuss the unexpected findings with respect to Cross' model of Black racial identity. One of the most unexpected findings (and something to be pursued in future research) is that many of the women simultaneously occupied multiple stages. The encounter stage, for example, became a recurring stage for the women because many admitted trying to move through the world in a colorblind way (Crenshaw, 2015). However, they were consistently reminded of their race in usually very dramatic ways. The internalization and commitment stage, is one that I would like to explore more fully in future research because of how Cross (1991) conceptualized/re-conceptualized it to suggest that Black racial identity and the fulfillment of blackness was a destination that could be reached. Once reached, the goal was to move towards multiculturalism. The women in this study agreed that even when they tried to be more multicultural, deny blackness, and/or date outside their race, they were still constantly reminded of it in negative ways. Thus, multiculturalism is not necessarily an ultimate, ameliorative goal; it seems to encourage Black erasure and movement toward assimilation—and assimilation guarantees Black women (both cis and transgender) nothing (Crenshaw, 2015).

As others have noted, trying to move toward multiculturalism and away from blackness has not necessarily moved African Americans closer toward liberation

(West, 1993). Instead, it has helped continue many oppressive cycles in society. Cross (1971) frequently used the term self-hatred to describe the effects of racism and stigma on the Black psyche that made African Americans manifest certain negative qualities. Contemporary language would describe it as internalized oppression (Jones & Brown, 2016). De Gruy (2005) would describe all this as symptoms of posttraumatic slave syndrome. All of the above diagnoses could adequately describe the relationship between Black transwomen and Black communities.

Many Black communities have been disturbingly hateful and violent toward African American transgender women (Jackson, 2016). This painful fact surfaced in a number of the participants' narratives. For example, Camellia indicated that she was violently attacked several times by African Americans. There was one example she gave that involved a community of Black people cheering on a group of Black men who were beating her. Camellia indicated that she felt like she was going to die; she probably would have had Lily not intervened in time:

I was downtown minding my business and this group a men starting messing with me, and we went to fightin. Girl, it started off as like 3 of them and then the crowd just got bigger and bigger! Girl, I was hanging for a minute, but then they was whippin my ass! Had me on the ground feeling like I was bout to die! I screamed helped me Lord, and girl, and just when I didn't have no mo left in me, who come running down the street singing Patti LaBelle and pitching bottles...Lily! Girl, she got them niggas good! She was like a fuckin military man throwin grenades! Girl, she hit people who was just standing there watching, she hit the niggas who was beating me, she just kept pitching bottle from the trash can until it was empty! This one nigga who had kick me all in my head was trying to run away, and girl, Lily threw a 40 ounce brown bottle at the back of his head like a football! Girl, that nigga hit the ground so hard its like his brains was all over the side walk! And when the trash can was empty, she pulled this metal rod out the can and went to swinging it like sword! Girl,

the same people who came to cheer on my death were runnin for they motherfuckin lives!

Camellia and Lily are women of great strength. Yet, they should not have to fight like army veterans simply to walk down the street—and especially not among their own communities (Graham et al., 2014). If Lily had not been there, Camellia may have died. Many of the women reported various types of violent attacks suffered at the hands of other African Americans. Rose, Lily, Violet, and Willow indicated that family members abused them. Rose, Lily, Violet, and Daisy experienced partner abuse. All of the women suggested that existing in African American communities is extremely difficult (Graham et al., 2014).

The African American community has been stigmatized and oppressed for centuries (Cross, 1971; Collins, 1991). Also, the situation has been exacerbated by a deeply repressive Christian religious tradition (West, 1993) in which many have internalized the mindset of the oppressor (DeGruy, 2005). As a result, they tend to enforce social hierarchies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Those at the bottom of the hierarchy are also measured against a rigorous, puritanical, biblical morality. Black transwomen, being among the dominated, face such violence because they are seen as a threat (Green et al., 1998) to masculinity, to femininity, to social order, and a threat to sexuality and sexual desire. So the threat must also be met by violence (Green et al., 1998). Thus, this research posited that once Black transwomen are accepted as women by the Black community (and the larger society), violence and stigma will decrease.

The stigma and maltreatment that Black transwomen experienced from members of the Black community is not limited to overtly violent acts. Some of the negative experiences that Black transwomen had with other Black people are as simple as being mis-gendered in public, or being outted or shamed in public.

Magnolia mentioned a time when a Black female bank teller not only mis-gendered her, but also assumed she was a sex worker:

Sista, I was in the bank making a six figure deposit, and girl, why the ole hatin ass Black cheesy crusty bitch teller gon ask me what I do for money? Not what's my profession or career, what I do for money? Sista, I looked at the hoe like bitch what? And this bitch gon tell me, "cuz I know yall mostly be prostitutes, but aint no hooker making this kinda money", and sista she laughed like that shit was funny. Sista this bitch thought that was ok. And yea, I rung fish up, and told the manager and shit, but sista it hurted me to my motherfuckin heart that I got mo money than this bitch can ever imagine having, and this bitch think she better than me cuz she make \$12 per hour...counting my damn money! And when I was carryin on saying she assuming shit, girl, why this bitch gon say "well I knew you was tranny because your account and your ID got a man's name on it, so I didn't have to assume, it says you a man, so I was being nice". Sista, I felt so humiliated!

Magnolia also indicated that this happened in a crowded bank lobby. This type of humiliating public exchange is common for Black transwomen.

Unfortunately, many people (of all races) feel comfortable showing this type of disrespect to Black transwomen (Dinno, 2017; Jackson, 2016). Many of the transwomen enrolled in this study indicated that they have faced being outted in public or being shamed because they are trans, and how deeply it hurts them and has lasting mental and emotional effects (Singh & McKelroy, 2011). Lotus, for example,

mentioned that she had been 'clocked' on the way to her interview with me by a Black man who decided to tell everyone that she was not a cisgender female:

Miss Thing, girl...bitch...when I tell you that that walk from the train station was so fierce! Girl, I love coming to this part of town because I get so inspired. You know I live in fucking whiteville in the City, and I'm so not inspired! Then I come to this area, and I see all of this beautiful diversity...but you know yo people always gotta try it. Fucking dumb ass niggas always gotta fuck shit up! I'm minding my business leaving the train station and this motherfucker gon yell out, "that's a nigga", and of course everyone started staring and snickering. Girl, I felt bad at first, but then I just paid it nootch, and strutted harder. You know ignorant ass niggas cannot stand it when the girls are unbothered honey!

Lotus pretended to be jovial in telling this sad story. She used humor to diffuse the hurt, but the situation was painful to her. She also expressed that she lived in a predominately White area where she felt safer, but felt more at home in a more diverse and predominately Black part of town (Brooks, 2017). Lotus' experience is not uncommon for Black transwomen. The experience of stigma and microaggressions (Katz, 1981) make basic living difficult for Black transwomen (Singh & McElroy, 2011).

The third research question examined whether African American transwomen are more connected to their identity as Black women or to their identity as transgender, and whether a feminist identity impacts their connection to a woman/female identity. I hypothesized that Black transwomen felt more connected to their Black woman identity than to their transgender identity. Both identities happen simultaneously for the women. Though they tend to suffer more stigma, abuse, and maltreatment than Black cisgender women, they indicated that their race, and the

oppressions they experience because they are Black, more closely connects them to Black womanhood, than the shared experience of transness with White transwomen (Brooks, 2017; Collins, 1991; Moore, 2012).

Eight of the women indicated that they felt more connected to their Black woman identity than to their transgender identity. One reason for this may also be because most of the women in the study expressed that they were stealth. Some also suggested that being stealth limited their contact with the transgender community, and/or being associated with women who did not pass. Most indicated that they saw themselves as transsexual, which was considered a higher echelon of transness (Mock, 2014; Jackson, 2016).

Identifying as transsexual was not limited to those who had gender confirmation surgery (or sex changes). Being or identifying as transsexual was more about realness or the ability to be seen as a real woman or cisgender. Lotus, for example, was against people who live a more transvestite-oriented life (crossdressers, drag queens, part time), being considered on the same level of transness as her, because she had worked to be seen as a woman. She contended that the struggle for womanhood was real, and that living as a woman was not easy. Lotus felt that living as a woman was filled with constant work on every level of one's life— especially as a Black woman (Collins, 1991; hooks, 2000; Jackson, 2016). One of the more interesting findings of this research was that many women did not feel completed by gender confirmation surgery. The three women (Rose, Lily, Camellia) who had had the surgery all expressed dissatisfaction with their vaginas, and stated that it did not

change how they were seen. Lily, for example, was identified as a man when in a bar by Black patrons and then assaulted by her cisgender Black male date. She noted that he had sex with her in her vagina, so she could not believe he still saw her as a man. Violet and Daisy were considering gender confirmation surgery because they saw it as potentially solidifying their relationships. Ivy and Magnolia were against the surgery because they enjoyed having and using their penises. Willow and Jasmine were ambivalent about gender confirmation surgery. This finding was discussed here because it related to their construction of womanhood.

Friendship groups also played an interesting and unexpected role in the study. In many ways, they allowed the women to be more comfortable with me because they had been introduced to the study by their friends. Their reactions to me varied: the women who were over age 45, tended to see me as a younger sister, and an inspiration for the future. Those between ages 36-44, saw me as a friend or sister, but they often compared themselves to me. Some were adversarial toward me. The women younger than 35, tended to see me as a mentor or mother figure. The friendship and sisterhood aspects also had a Black feminist quality to it (Combahee River Collective, 1982; Wallace, 1982) which I thought important to show. Eight women saw me as possessing an aspirational Black womanhood. They saw me as upper-class, and having obtained the hierarchy of her needs (hooks, 2000; Maslow, 1954). I did not inform them of what hooks (2000) and Collins (1991) observed: that as a Black woman, my experiences with stigma were not very much different from theirs.

Feminist orientation or identity definitely impacted the women's connection to Black womanhood, which answers the second part of research question two. In psychologists Bill Peterson's and Eileen Zurbriggen's (2010) study of the impact of the authoritarian personality on gender and sexuality, they found that people with a high authoritarian personality held rigid constructs of gender and sexuality. While many of the women in the present study may not have an authoritarian personality, they speak to Peterson's and Zurbriggen's claim because they have had to exercise authoritarianism from within in order to survive—especially those who engaged in sex work. So, if they are rigid with gender boundaries, as Bornstein (2006) and other transgender scholars would suggest, it is not because they necessarily wanted to be, but because their survival depended on it. As Lotus and other participants noted, for a Black transwoman to survive she must be nearly perfect, especially regarding gender appearance and performance (Mock, 2014; Mock, 2017).

Violet also evidenced Peterson & Zurbriggen's claim of maintaining a strict gender role; Violet aspired to be a housewife, and she even accepted abuse from her heterosexual, cisgender Black male partner because she believes it's a woman's role. Again, we see how internalized oppression has negatively impacted the lives of Black transwomen. Stigma also makes her believe that her abusive partner is the best she can do, because the voices and forces of stigma constantly tell her that she is unworthy of love and deserves to be treated poorly (Jackson, 2016).

The issue of how the women in the study connected to their Black woman identity is further illustrated by the interviews done with Daisy and Jasmine. Both

women are biracial: Daisy is Black and Latina, and Jasmine is Black and Asian. Both women cling to their Black woman identity in different ways and for different reasons. Daisy connects to her Black woman identity because she was told she looked like a Black woman. Jasmine, however, appears more Asian, but clings to her Blackness because she sees it as strength. Daisy said:

The really fucked up thing is that once I transitioned people stopped assuming I was Latina, and just assumed I was Black. That's been so hard for me mama, no lie. Please don't be mad at me, I'm trying to learn to love myself as a Black woman, but that shit really fucking fucked me up. Motherfuckas would tell me, "oh you look hard that's why people don't think you're Latina! You just look like a light skin Black woman with hard features." Ohmygod mama, that fucking killed me! It wasn't the looking Black part. I think Black women are fucking beautiful! But I was like ohmygod, people really think fucking Black women are really ugly, and they think I'm ugly. But it's ok Black women are strong and beautiful, and we handles our business!

Daisy acknowledged being hurt by the stigma of Blackness and how she is seen as less attractive than women of other races because she is perceived as Black, but she has turned the positive stereotypes of Black womanhood (Harris-Perry, 2012) into her coping mechanism. Jasmine uses Blackness as a coping mechanism, or a reminder of her resiliency. Like Daisy, she has had negative encounters with racism that cemented her idea of Blackness but, unlike Daisy, Jasmine grew up with positive Black female role models as family members, so she was able to attach positive associations to Blackness early on (Jones & Brown, 2016).

Jasmine offered:

Like...race is so important to me, my Blackness is so important to me. I don't know why? Maybe because the people I felt most loved and accepted by are Black, and it's so important to them? Like, I remember

when Hurricane Katrina hit...I was 11...and my grandparents and my aunts talked about it all the time, and the news coverage, ohmygod, I feel like that was one of the most defining moments of my Blackness...like, that's when I really saw how Black people are treated in America, and I just remember it hurting so deeply. We cried, we were angry...that was our people. And I even saw Black people who looked like me! And got to hear all these stories from my grandparents about Civil Rights, and Jim Crow, and about our extended family, and our ancestry. Then, I would go home to fucking stark vanilla Whiteness, and my parents were so unfeeling toward it. My grandmother had to make my father donate money! It was around that same time that my Blackness became a thing at school. That was around the first time I was called a nigger, and that was the first time I actually felt it. I actually felt something in my heart, in my body, in my mind say, you're Black, and this is not ok. Like...Blackness feels like something, and once you're aware of it, it doesn't go away. Just like when I knew I was a girl

Though Jasmine's Black identity was largely cemented by the fatalities of Hurricane Katrina, her positivity stems from her strong Black family acceptance. Though her parents are somewhat anti-Black, and anti-transgender, Jasmine was fortunate to have accepting Black grandparents and aunts who nurtured and accepted her. Acceptance is a large part of one's ability to self-actualize, or believe one can attain their hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954).

This leads to the final research question: Are African American transwomen currently able to self-actualize, reach their goals, and live healthy lives? In conceptualizing the study, I speculated that African American transwomen experienced difficulty in self-actualizing, meaning obtaining their goals, and/or living healthy, having a better quality of life. However, I did not expect that every woman in the study would suggest that they could not fully self-actualize. There were three women who created false narratives as a coping mechanism to survive: Lily created

the false narrative that she was a multi-award-winning Broadway and film actress to cope with pain of having to engage in sex work. Her fantasy helps her to believe she is successful in life, though she admits she knows it is a fantasy, and that stigma made it implausible for her to do the things she wanted to do. Ivy and Willow have both created the false narrative that they are White and, as White women they say they have it all and are happy. But in many ways, they are not. They are unable to self-actualize and to live freely. Willow pretends to be a famous celebrity makeup artist who is producing a new multi-million dollar line. Ivy pretends that she is Queen of the streets (meaning illegal moneymaking). Though they have created these elaborate false narratives, they are still unable to reach their goals.

Half of the women have had various amounts of career and financial success (Rose, Lily, Ivy, Magnolia, Lotus) but, with the exception of Magnolia, they all have also lost those careers and finances. Magnolia, however, still contends that though she is financially successful, she is still looked down upon as a woman who engaged in sex work. Many of the women have had romantic relationship success (or love and belonging on Maslow's scale), but have also lost those relationships as a result of stigma. This brings us to the fourth stage in pursuit of self-actualization, and that stage is self-esteem. Nine of the women indicated having struggles with self-esteem. Self-esteem for these women is not a constant. Even after achieving passing, realness, or stealth, the women still acknowledged fears of being compared to men, or told they look masculine or male. For these women, self-esteem fluctuates based on their social and economic situations. Self-actualization in contemporary times has everything to

do with economic conditions (Crenshaw, 2015; hooks, 2000). Crenshaw (2015) noted how the average Black women's net worth is \$100, compared to an average White women's net worth of \$44,000. The numbers are so disparate that we do not need a calculator to see the disparity, and how this financial difference makes it implausible that they will self-actualize.

In sum, the interviews that comprise the present study clearly indicated that African American transwomen are multiply oppressed and impacted by various levels of stigma on their intersectional identities. These forms of oppression and stigma essentially prevent them from living the lives they want and deserve. In order for the participants, and other Black transwomen like them, to have opportunities to selfactualize, it is imperative that these societal prejudices and structural disadvantages be addressed.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

“Stony, the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,
felt in the days when hope unborn had died”
—James Weldon Johnson (Johnson, 1899)

The above quote from African American studies titan James Weldon Johnson’s iconic “Lift Every Voice and Sing”, which is now known as the African American National Anthem. This very excerpt was read by distinguished civil rights activist, Dr. Joseph Lowery, at the first inauguration of President Barack Obama. President Obama ran as the nation’s first Black President, and Crenshaw (2015) termed his inauguration a critical intersectional moment. It seemed to signal a move toward liberation for Black Americans (Crenshaw, 2015). Many of the participants the present study mentioned of Obama’s presidency and what were, for them, his intersectional failures. In 2008, Obama’s presidency was hailed as a capstone in the transgender liberation movement, simply because he said the word “transgender.” During his presidency, many things did improve for transgender Americans. However, Black transwomen, including the women in this study felt excluded from this progress; they were still impoverished and disenfranchised (Brooks, 2017). In Chapter 1, I introduced the myriad of challenges faced by African American transwomen and set the stage for the empirical, interview-based study that followed. I also noted, among other things, that African American transwomen face the

highest homicide rates among transgender people (Dinno, 2017), and I explored the cases of a few of those murdered women.

Chapter 1 also introduced the term *trans-ebonics*, building on distinguished Black psychologist Robert Williams (1973) theory of ebonics. Ebonics as a theory worked to legitimize the language and communication styles of Black Americans, and this dissertation aims to legitimize the language and communication style of Black transwomen. The language that Black transwomen (and drag queen, and feminine gay men) have historically used (Livingston, 1991), was once stigmatized, and Black transwomen in particular were afraid to use such language publicly for fear of being stigmatized. However, in contemporary times, their language is being coopted, and frequently used by people of all races, genders, and sexualities.

In Chapter 2 I reviewed the relevant literatures to the study in four distinct sections. Section 1 described the historical impact of racism on African Americans, and how that historical racism created contemporary stigma. Section 2 described the intersections of historical racism and stigma on gender. Chapter 2 largely explored Black feminism and intersectionality as the guiding theoretical frameworks for this study. Chapter 2 also emphasized the importance of considering race, gender, and class as dominant factors in defining the transgender experiences. Section 3 described how class played an unexpected role in the study because the women used things like beauty and status in sex work as class markers. This section also described how class is one of the most salient factors in being able to self-actualize: because the ability to self-actualize and reach one's goals, is largely predicated on financial and class

standings. Section 4 described the current state of social psychological research on stigma, and attempted to expand that literature in various ways by privileging the feelings, reactions, and experiences of the stigmatized.

In Chapter 3, I used the term “intersectionality methodology” to describe a combination of qualitative methods (interview, life history, narrative), within the rubric of Black feminist theory and practices, to explore the complex data my study participants shared. Chapter 3 also explained the protocols of the study. In Chapter 3, I also introduce the participants, and explained how their narrative data would be analyzed.

In Chapter 4, the participant’s life history-based, embodied narratives were presented. The women are presented as closely to the ways that they presented themselves as possible. Their languages, their reactions, their symbolic interaction were all expressed. The women’s narratives were presented in four sections similar to the division of the review of the literature: section 1 presented their responses to questions on race; section 2 presented their responses to questions on gender; section 3 presented their responses on class; and section 4 presented their reactions to questions on stigma. The women’s lengthy responses were notable for their clarity and depth, and the way they eloquently and movingly connected to the prior literature on these issues and to the core research questions on which the present study was focused.

Chapter 5 summarized the most important findings, and discussed a largely subjective content analysis of the women’s narratives. I concluded this study on

African American transwomen and stigma by acknowledging the clear lessons conveyed by my participants—they are multiply oppressed and maintain multiple stigmatized and oppressed identities. This research also demonstrated that there are weakened intragroup relations among African Americans concerning issues of gender and sexuality. It demonstrated also that African Americans tend to respond in violent ways to African American transwomen (Dinno, 2017). This research also showed that African American transgender women are more connected to their identity as Black women than they are to a transgender group identity because of the shared experiences of stigma and oppression that they share with Black cisgender women. Overwhelmingly, African American transwomen experience great difficulty in their quest to self-actualize, obtain their most important goals, and to live the quality lives they deserve.

Implications

This research has implications for improving the social relations and legal conditions for African American transwomen. For example, the social stigma that African American transwomen experience directly affects their social, communal, and interpersonal relations. As Ida B. Wells-Barnett would suggest, this study has helped to shine a light on the many injustices and rejections that African American transwomen face in these specific areas, and as a result, change and justice are more potentially imminent. The women of this study and their powerful narratives force readers and scholars alike to begin to consider the lives and well-beings of African American transwomen, and my hope is that it also encourages everyone to treat

African American transwomen with equality, dignity, and respect.

African American transwomen are often treated unfairly in the legal system, and this study has the potential to assist legal scholars, practitioners, enforcers, and law makers in improving the justice system for African American transwomen. This research has the potential to improve the ways health care providers treat African American transwomen—thus, having the potential to improve their mental, emotional, and physical health. Many women in the study indicated that they have difficulty navigating the healthcare system because they are transgender. One reason that healthcare providers plausibly are unable to provide better care for African American transwomen is because they may be under-educated on the experiences and difficulties these women face?—however, this dissertation boldly illuminates those difficulties to now offer healthcare providers the needed edification.

I wrote this dissertation in this Black feminist, Black psychology, social justice, interdisciplinary, embodied narrative way so that the “real” voices and experiences of these women could be heard, and thus, impact the thoughts and minds of the readers while calling them to action. I wrote this dissertation to both save and change lives, and I sincerely hope that that is the greatest and most successful implication of this study.

Lastly, this research recommends that African American transwomen are seen, treated as, and respected as women, both because they deserve this treatment as human beings, and also because it will positively change the trajectories of their lives, and improve the lives and trajectories of legions of Black transwomen yet unborn.

APPENDIX A INFORMED CONSENT

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA C

Name: Eve Lorane Brown
Department of: Psychology
Address: 1156 High Street, Psychology Department, Social Sciences 2,
Santa Cruz, CA 94606
Title of Research Project: African American Women and Stigma

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Introductory section: You are invited to take part in a research study conducted by Eve Lorane Brown from the Department of Psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Before you decide whether or not to participate in the study, you should read this form and ask questions if there is anything that you do not understand.

Description of the project: The purpose of the study is to allow African American transgender (trans/transsexual) women to identify their experiences with stigma and various other social and psychological issues as a result of being a trans woman.

What you will do in the study: If you decide to take part in this study, here is what will happen: We will first go through the pre-screening criteria to make sure that you are eligible for this study; next I will ask you some background/demographic questions; then we will begin the interview with me asking you a series of questions about your experiences; then once the interview has ended, you'll have an opportunity to ask questions, and you will be given your stipend for participating in the project. The type of information that we will be discussing is your experiences with stigma, discrimination, depression, connection to a/the African American community, connection to gender groups, connection to the LGBTQI community, self-esteem, feminism, and your goals. The interview will be audio recorded. You will be referred to be a pseudonym (alias/fake name) that will be assigned to you after you complete this informed consent, and if at any point you need to take a break, stop the tape, or have refreshments, then, we will do so. If there are any questions that you don't feel

comfortable answering we can move to the next question, and you can end the interview at any time.

Time required: Participation will take approximately 2 hours.

Risks or discomfort: There are no anticipated risks in this study. Participants can also choose to skip any interview questions that are uncomfortable.

Benefits of this study: Although there will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study, the researcher will have the opportunity to present information on social issues that affect African American transgender women (and most trans women), which could potentially improve living conditions and social justice for trans women (and trans people).

Compensation You will receive \$25 for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your name will not be used in any report. As mentioned you will be given a pseudonym to identify your responses. Your responses will be assigned a number and pseudonym. I will maintain data for approximately 30 years, but only a pseudonym will be connected to the data. Any information containing your phone number or email address will be destroyed after all data has been coded and analyzed within 72 hours of your interview. I will only contact you once (within 24 hours of your interview) after the interview to ensure that you are doing well, but if in the unfortunate event that parts of your recorded interview is erased or unclear, I may need to contact you to re-ask some questions (within 72 hours of your interview). It is highly unlikely that this will happen. With your permission, I would like to audio tape this interview so that I can make an accurate transcript. Once I have made the transcript, I will erase the recordings. Your real name will not be in the transcript nor my notes. There will be no linkages between your responses and your true identity. If at any point you would like to stop the tape, we will, or if you would like to have something taken "off the record" I will.

Do you agree to being audio tape recorded _____ (please initial)

I plan to develop the data obtained in this study into a book and/or other publications, may I have your permission to keep your data for use in future research studies? All information will again be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used to describe your responses. If you agree, please initial _____

Decision to quit at any time: The decision to take part in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate. Even if you decide at first to take part, you

are free to change your mind at any time and quit the study. Whatever you decide will be fine and you can still receive full payment for the study.

Rights and Complaints: If you have questions about this research, please contact Eve Lorane Brown, MA, Principal Investigator and Doctoral Candidate at the University of California, Santa Cruz, 1156 High Street, Psychology Department, Social Sciences 2, Santa Cruz, CA, 95060; phone number: 347.385.8767; or email: edlbrown@ucsc.edu. You may also contact the faculty member supervising this work: Dr. Craig Haney, Distinguished Professor and Faculty Advisor; phone: 831.459.5084; or via email: psylaw@ucsc.edu . If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Compliance Administration at the University of California at Santa Cruz at 831-4591473 or orca@ucsc.edu.

Signature:

Signing this document means that you understand the information given to you in this form and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the research described above.

Signature of Participant

Date

Please sign both consent forms, keeping one for yourself.

Sisters Defining Sisters

Greetings, my name is Eve Lorane Brown, and I am a Doctoral Candidate at the University of California, Santa Cruz. As part of my doctoral dissertation research, I am asking women like you to take part in research study which explores the impact of stigma in the lives of African American Trans/Transsexual/Transgender women. Your participation is needed in two parts of this interview: the first part is completing this brief questionnaire below that will ask some questions about your background, and the second part consist of you being asked more questions in an interview conducted by me. All of your responses will be kept completely confidential, and you will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name). If you feel uncomfortable with any question, you may skip that question. If you feel uncomfortable at any time we can either stop or take a break.

If you have any questions are concerns, please feel free to contact me at edlbrown@ucsc.edu or via phone at (347) 385.8767 You can also feel free to contact Dr. Craig Haney, my faculty advisor at psylaw@ucsc.edu. Thank you for your time.

Information about you

A. The questions below will ask you some general questions about your background. Please select the best responses that you feel represent you.

A1. How do you identify racially? Please circle the response or responses that best describe you.

1. Black
2. African American
3. African
4. of African Descent
5. Biracial (please specify _____)
6. Multiracial (please specify _____)

A2. What is your age? _____ years (please be honest ☺☺)

A3. Which term or terms best describes you?

1. Transsexual
2. Transgender
3. M-to-F
4. Pre-op
5. Post-op
6. Non-op
7. Trans-female/Trans-woman
8. Woman
9. Tranny
10. Queer
11. Other (please specify _____)

A3. How much schooling have you received?

1. Junior High School (above 5th grade)
2. Some High School
3. GED
4. High School Graduate
5. Some College
6. College Graduate
7. Vocational Training
8. Graduate or Profession School (please specify _____)

A5. How would you describe your employment?

1. full time
2. part time
3. self employment
4. temporary employment
5. seasonal employment
6. non-legal employment

A6. What is your profession? _____

A7. If you are not employed, what would you like your profession to be?

A8. Is there a reason that you are not pursuing this profession?

A9. Have you ever engaged in sex work?

1. Yes
2. No

A10. If you have engaged in sex work, what area of the sex industry were/are you employed in? Please select all that apply

1. Street-corner/the “track” escorting/prostitution/hustling
2. Internet/Newspaper Advertisement escorting/prostitution/hustling
3. “High-End” or Agency escorting/prostitution/hustling
4. Brothel escorting/prostitution/hustling
5. Video Pornography
6. Photo Pornography

A10. What would you say was the primary reason that you were engaged in, or are currently engage in sex work?

A4. How would you describe your income level?

1. Below 10 thousand dollars annually
2. Between 10 and 20 thousand dollars annually
3. Between 20 and 30 thousand dollars annually
4. Between 30 and 40 thousand dollars annually
5. Between 40 and 50 thousand dollars annually
6. Above 50 thousand dollars annually
7. No annual income
8. Public Assistance

A11. How would you describe your sexual identity or sexual orientation? Please select all that apply.

1. Heterosexual
2. Bisexual
3. Homosexual
4. Pansexual
5. Lesbian
6. Gay
7. Polyamorous

A12. Which option best describes your housing? Or who do you live with?

1. I live alone and rent an apartment
2. I live alone and own my home
3. I live with my parents or extended family
4. I live with my boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife/partner and we pay rent
5. I have a roommate or roommates and we pay rent
6. I am currently homeless but do not live in a shelter
7. I am currently homeless and live in a shelter

A13. What state, city, and/or country are you originally from?

A14. Do you have a relationship with your biological family?

1. Yes
2. No

Thank you for completing this part of the study! Now we will begin the interview portion of the study.

Sisters Defining Sisters

So, greetings again Sister and thank you so much for taking the time to participate in my study. I sincerely appreciate it! Once again, all of your information and responses are completely confidential. I alone will know who you are in connection to your pseudonym, and none of this information will be reported to a government agency. For the next group of questions, we will be recorded, and I may write some things down to make note to myself, but you will have un-divided attention. Feel free to say as much or as little as you would like to. If you need me to clarify a question, I can. If you need me to stop the tape so that you might say something off the record, I will. If after you say something that you don't want to become public knowledge, I will omit it. If you need to break for the restroom or any other reasons please let me know. If after the interview you find yourself needing or wanting to speak with a therapist I can help connect you with one. If we have an emergency during the interview, I will call 911. So now that we have all that out of the way, let's begin.

B1: Describe yourself using any words or adjectives that first come to mind

B2: Now tell me about yourself: How would you describe your life

1. When did you first know that you were trans, or different, or born in the wrong body? (meaning time in your life or age)
2. Do you identify publicly as trans? (meaning how open are you about being trans?)
3. Are you more connected to a trans identity or a female/woman identity?
4. How important is passing to you on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being extremely important and 1 being not important at all.
5. Why is passing important to you? Or why is it not?
 - b. What lengths have you gone to achieve passing?
6. What would you say are the stigmas/stressors/difficulties associated with being trans?
7. Which of your identities do you feel is most stigmatized or makes life more difficult for you?

8. Have you ever experienced racism? Please explain?
 - b. Have you ever experienced discrimination? Please explain?
9. How connected are you to a/the trans community on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being very connected and 1 being not connected at all.
 - b. Why are you connected to a trans community? or why are you not?
10. How connected are you to a/the Black community on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being very connected and 1 being not connected at all.
 - b. Why are you connected a/the Black community? or what are you not?
11. Do you feel that there is more negativity or stigma associated with being an African American trans woman than being a trans woman of another race? Please explain?
 - b. Do you feel that there is a hierarchy among trans women involving beauty or other things?
12. Do you feel that the Black community is more hostile toward African American trans women than other racial/ethnic groups? Please explain?
13. Do you feel that the Black community is more hostile toward African American trans women than it is/they are toward African American lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and trans men? Please explain?
14. Do you feel that it is easier being a trans male than a trans female? Please explain?
 - b. Do you feel that it is easier being a drag queen, gender queer, or gay male than being trans female? Please explain?
15. Is it difficult to find legal employment as a trans woman? Please explain
 - b. Is it difficult to obtain housing as an African American trans woman?
Please explain?
16. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being highest or absolutely important, how important is having a long term romantic partner or spouse to you?
 - b. Is it difficult to obtain a long term romantic male partner? Please explain? (if participant is lesbian the question will be changed to female)

17. Why is it important or why is it not important for you to have a long term romantic partner or spouse?
18. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being highest or absolutely important, how important is it for you to have a supportive community or friends/family?
19. Why is it important or why is it not important for you to have a supportive community of friends/family?
20. Is the passing of legal same sex marriage important to you? Please explain? (How do you feel?)
21. Have you been married to a man or would you like to be?
(if participant has been married to a woman while they were living as male that is not important to the scope of this question)

Ok, so now we are about to get “deep” and touch upon some areas that may bring up painful memories for you. We can take a break or pause the tape at any time you feel you need to. 😊😊

22. Have you ever experienced violence because you are a transwoman? Please explain?
23. Have you ever thought about or tried to commit suicide? Please explain?
24. Though it’s difficult being trans, what made you transition and what made you feel comfortable enough as trans?
25. .On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being totally difficult, how difficult was your gender transition?
 - b. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being totally great, how joyous was your gender transition?
26. Have you ever been diagnosed with depression or do you feel depressed? Please explain?
27. Have you ever felt like you couldn’t get out of bed or leave the house? Please explain
 - b. How do you cope with being trans? What makes you get out of bed every day and keep going?

28. Have you ever felt like you couldn't walk down the street for fear of being assaulted either physically or verbally? Please explain?
29. Do you feel like the police or fellow citizens would come to your rescue if you were being attacked? Please explain?
30. Have you or do you have difficulty accessing health care because you are trans? Please explain?

Ok, so now we're going to talk about some more socially related things.

Do you feel like people desire you sexually, but not as a person? Please explain?

31. What does it mean to you to be a "Black woman"?
 - b. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being very important, how important is it to you to be seen as a Black woman?
 - c. Is it more important for you to be seen as a Black woman or a Black transsexual? Please explain?
32. What does it mean to be feminist?
 - b. Do you see yourself as feminist? Please explain
33. If you had to rate your racial identity comfort/acceptance on a scale of 1-10, what would you rate yourself and why?
 - b. Do you like being Black? Please explain
34. Did you have any role models growing up?
 - b. Who were those role models?
35. Do you have any goals for yourself? Please explain?
 - b. Do you think that your goals are attainable?? Please explain?
 - c. In life we all have needs, how would you rank your needs and are they attainable?
36. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being extremely happy, how happy are you with yourself and your life right now? Please explain?
37. What does it mean to be happy?
 - b. What would make you happier or happiest?

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