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BLACK FEMINIST THOUGHT AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: NARRATING MY FATHER'S PRESENCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BEING RAISED BY A SINGLE BLACK FATHER

Dontevia A. HAll
Roserose2292, tevia88@siu.edu

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Dontevia Hall

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Approved by:

Rachel Griffin, Chair
Nilanjana Bardhan

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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I dedicate this work to the daughters of single African American fathers, and all African American fathers who are overcoming stereotypes and labels by effectively raising their daughters as a positive role model and parent. Your voices and experiences are significant in today's research.

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Introduction

For the majority of our lives, my sister and I were raised by our single Black[1] father. Being raised by a single parent was not uncommon in my community. However, two girls being raised by their single African American father was unusual in comparison to the more common dynamic of Black children being raised by a single African American mother. Among single parent African American households in the U.S., 84 percent of children are being raised by single African American mothers, while 16 percent are being raised by single fathers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The role of the father in the African American household is often characterized negatively (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Crawley, 2011; Maldonado, 2006; Robert-Douglass & Curis-Boles, 2012) which implies that Black fathers are mostly absent in Black families and, therefore, fail to support their children. Research and popular discourse addressing contemporary African American fathers heavily emphasizes that African American fathers are uninvolved in their children's lives (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Coles, 2009; Crawley, 2011; Robert-Douglass & Curtis-Boles, 2012). Such discourses indicate that Black fathers are less likely to be engaged with their children amidst the personal and structural constraints they face (Coles, 2009; Crawley, 2000). Overall, there is minimal emphasis and/or discussion of positive aspects of Black fatherhood.

As a Black female who was raised by her single Black father, I resent statements that claim that all Black fathers are absent and uninvolved. From my perspective, slander is continuously directed at all Black fathers. I believe that these comments impact Black fathers negatively, especially within Black communities. For example, one Father's Day, I observed a profuse amount of slander toward Black fathers on Twitter where many of my female friends,

[1] In this paper I use the terms "Black" and "African American" interchangeably to represent Black fathers and Black daughters.

who are African American, insulted all Black fathers because of their personal experiences. My friends continuously bashed Black fathers who were not present in their households and praised the mothers who had acted as both mother and father. One friend wrote, “Happy Father’s Day to my mother, and to my real father wherever you are, kiss my ass.” Another friend wrote, “Father’s Day does not exist in Black families because Black fathers do not exist, only baby daddies.” While it is a tremendous accomplishment when women are capable of taking on the role of both mother and father, I feel these statements are unfair to the Black fathers that are involved in their children’s lives. From my interpretation, the malicious comments that some of these women shared were rooted in the destructive ideological labeling of Black fathers and their assumed absence in their children’s lives. Via experience, I have witnessed fathers in the Black community being labeled as “sperm donors,” “deadbeat dads,” or as the “missing parent.” These are all examples of negative stereotypes that fail to look at fathers in the Black community on an individual level. When Black fathers are accused of being or assumed to be “unfit” fathers, I feel that we as a society forget about the good Black men who are amazing fathers to their sons and daughters.

Appalling statistics relating to Black men in general are what I feel obscure society’s recognition of the many Black men who are good fathers. According to the Morehouse University Male Initiative (2012), 1.46 million Black men, out of a total voting population of 10.4 million, have lost their right to vote due to convictions. As of 2011, there are also more Black men in prison than there were enslaved in 1850 before the Civil War began (Morehouse Male Initiative, 2012). For example, in 2008 there were more than 846, 000 Black men in prison, making up 40.2 percent of all inmates in the nation’s prison systems (Bar, 2012). These statistics indicate why negative stereotypes, such as Black men being lazy, dumb, criminal, and

uneducated, are automatically assumed about Black men (Bar, 2012; Crawley, 2011; hooks, 2004). Taking the statistics alongside negative stereotypes into account, the odds seem to be against Black men in our society being recognized as good fathers (Fine & Johnson, 1997; Freeman, 1994; hooks, 2004).

As a teaching assistant and mentor to African American first year women, I relate these statistics and stories to my young female students who are either pregnant or new mothers raising their children alone. Many of their children's fathers are absent in one-way or another. They are often young single mothers raising their daughters alone, just as their mothers raised them alone. According to Fields (1983), "Men who fail to protect their daughters, who offer no shield of paternal strength, are judged harshly by society" (p. 6). Similarly, from my experiences, absent fathers who have not been present in their daughters' lives will continue to be judged in a negative way, not only by society but also their own daughters who, I think, are deeply affected by the absence of a positive father figure. This reasoning helps me understand why many of my Black female friends hold such negative opinions, not only about their fathers, but about all Black fathers.

A considerable amount of research addresses the struggle of single Black mothers raising young Black males alone in a society where the presence of a father is considered essential (Bush, 2000; Sharp & Ispa, 2009). Likewise, the effects of the absence of fathers in African American households is a topic that has been addressed in recent years (Grantham & Henfield, 2011; Rowe, 2012). However, the idea of a single Black father raising his daughters is rarely discussed, especially within the communication field. This is a topic that I personally relate to as an African American female who was raised by my single Black father. The primary purpose of this research report is to use Black feminist thought (Collins, 2009) and autoethnography

(Adams, 2012) to explore my experiences as an African American woman who was raised in a single Black father household. While the majority of research about Black fathers has originated from the father's point of view (Patterson, Strickland, Morrison, Ruffin, & Perchinske, 1998; Weiner-Levy, 2011), I plan to use autoethnographic narratives to reflect on the single Black father household from my perspective. First, I examine the current literature on fathers and daughters. Next, I define Black feminist thought as a theoretical framework. Third, I situate autoethnography as my method to explore my lived experiences. To conclude, I discuss the importance of future research on this topic, as well as my final thoughts regarding African American women who are raised by single Black fathers.

Literature Review

There is limited research that focuses on African American women raised in single father households. This literature review addresses research that is currently available on fathers and daughters in general since there is very little published about Black fathers and daughters in particular, especially in the field of communication. This literature review is divided into six subsections: father/daughter relationships; father/daughter communication; fathers, daughters, and academics; Black fathers and negative stereotypes; Black fathers in the media; and Black daughters. The first section begins with the broad topic of father/daughter relationships and then the second section focuses more specifically on father/daughter communication. The third section on fathers, daughters, and academics centers the effect fathers can have on their daughters' academic decisions. Sections four and five focus on stereotypes of Black fathers followed by representations of Black fathers in the media. The final section on Black daughters reviews the literature on the experiences of Black daughters raised by single fathers and highlights the scarcity of research focused on this particular relationship. Overall, my attempt to

find literature in the communication field on single African American fathers' relationships with their Black daughters resulted in very little research from which to draw.

Father/Daughter Relationships

The father/daughter relationship is an understudied dyad in family communication and is a relationship that continues to evolve as traditional family structures change (Braithwaite, Schrodt, & Baxter, 2006). The relationship between a father and his daughter strongly influences her connections with other people and her understanding of who she is as a person (Endres, 1997). Edres (1997) asserts that although the father/daughter relationship is not a well-understood relationship, it remains very critical in a young girl's life. While there is an abundance of literature exploring parents' views on the impact of raising and caring for their children, many of the studies primarily present mothers' opinions, with the fathers' opinions conflated with the mothers' (Allgood, Beckert, & Peterson, 2012; Swallow, Lambert, Snatacroce, & Macfadyen, 2011). Research emphasizing the fathers' perspectives is limited, as if it is taboo for a father to speak about his relationship with his daughter (Hrabowski, Maton, Greene, & Grief, 2002; Hurston & Thomas, 1989; Mott, 1994).

The relationship of a daughter with her father is vital to her identity formation and a daughter's relationship with her father plays a major role in her self-esteem as well as her overall life satisfaction. For example, Allgood, Beckert and Peterson's study (2011) addresses the struggles of having an absent father from daughters' perspectives. They find that there is a definite correlation in fathers' involvement and the psychological well-being of daughters in relation to self-esteem, life satisfaction, and psychological distress. Weiner-Levy's (2011) study focuses on trailblazing daughters in Druze society. Although women in the Druze society had little to no authority and, therefore, it was not acceptable for them to pursue education, their

fathers stood by them as they pursued higher education despite the criticism from others in their village (Weiner-Levy, 2011). Despite the beliefs of their culture, the women aimed for higher education with the support of their fathers and their fathers encouraged them to strive. This study represents the positive effects that a father's support can have on a young woman. Another critical factor in father/daughter relationships is father/daughter communication.

Father/Daughter Communication

The communication patterns of fathers have a significant influence on their daughter's competence (Goldwasser, 1993). From my personal experience being raised by my father, communication has always played a major role in my relationship with my father. Arguably, one of the most effective approaches to analyzing father/daughter communication is through impersonal communication motives (ICM). As an approach to understanding satisfaction in father-daughter communication, Rubin, Perse and Barbato (1998) found six ICMs, including control, relaxation, escape, inclusion, pleasure, and affection. The control motive focuses on fulfillment within the relationship. The relaxation motive fosters rest and relaxation during communication and the escape motive serves as diversion and avoidance of other activities. Inclusion within communication allows "the other" into the conversation as a way to express attachment and a connection to the other person (Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1998, p. 521). The final motive, which I believe is most significant, is affection. Affection in father/daughter communication serves as a way to express love and care (Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1998).

The ICM scale indicates that fathers communicate with their sons differently in comparison to their communication with their daughters. For example, fathers and daughters typically communicate for the purpose of affection and pleasure, while fathers and sons typically communicate for the purpose of satisfaction (Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1998). In other words, the

relationship between fathers and daughters cannot be assumed to be the same as father and son relationships. However, Martin and Anderson (2005) found that an equal number of sons and daughters reported that they most often communicate with their fathers for relaxation, control, and escape motives.

Also focusing on communication amongst fathers and daughters, Punyanunt-Carter (2007) investigates communication motives within father/daughter relationships and their perceptions of satisfaction. This study investigates two types of satisfaction: relational and communication. The relational satisfaction is based on the connection between the father and daughter, as well as the perceived quality of their relationship (Punyanunt-Carter, 2007). By comparison, communication satisfaction is based on how effective the communication is between the father and daughter (Punyanunt-Carter, 2007). The levels of satisfaction within father/daughter communication were assessed by exploring the levels of relational and communication satisfaction. In a similar study concentrating on attachment to examine communication motives, Punyanunt-Carter (2008) finds that secure attachment styles create a more interactive relationship between fathers and daughters. More specifically, daughters with secure attachment styles will utilize their positive relationships with their fathers as a way to communicate in an attempt to alleviate stress in unfavorable situations (Punyanunt-Carter, 2008).

Similar to Punyanunt-Carter (2008), Dunleavy (2011) has also conducted research on daughters' communication in response to positive relationships with their fathers. Dunleavy's (2011) study focuses on how fathers and daughters communicate and how often they communicate. In doing so, Dunleavy (2011) indicates that when daughters perceived their communication skills as similar to their fathers', they were more likely to report conversation orientation in their communication practices with their father. This communication is more

satisfying for fathers and daughters because conversations are open and remain positive for the long run. The positive communication between these daughters and their fathers influenced their identity and daily decisions (Dunleavy, 2011).

In another study, Hutchinson and Cederbaum (2011) examine adolescent girls and communication with their fathers regarding sex. They assert that fathers' communication with their daughters has crucial effects, although mothers' communication about this topic is more common. A healthy father/daughter relationship has also been found to have significant correlations with drug refusal and self-efficacy (Boyd, Ashcraft, & Belgrave, 2006). Taken together, these studies further illustrate the necessity of healthy and open communication between a daughter and her father. The following section focuses on the impact a father's involvement can have on his daughter's academic achievement and goals.

Fathers, Daughters, and Academics

Although mothers have traditionally played the primary role as the academically involved parent, fathers have begun to be more involved in their children's academic lives (Grantham & Henfield, 2011). My parents' roles were the opposite of "traditional." My father has always played a major role in my academic career, while my mother remained in the background. Lee and Kusnher (2008) focus on children's academic achievement in single parent households and interestingly their findings indicate that daughters in single father households performed better academically when compared with other parent-child combinations (Lee & Kushner, 2008). In *Overcoming the Odds* (2002), Black mothers and fathers are centrally focused on raising academically successful African American women. Of all the factors that contribute to their success, the daughters most commonly mention: (1) the importance of reading, (2) high

expectations, (3) demonstrating personal interest, (4) parents' interaction with teachers, and (5) extracurricular activities (Hrabowski, Maton, Greene, & Grief, 2002).

As a Black woman in higher education, I have also found several of the factors mentioned in *Overcoming the Odds* (2002) beneficial to my success. Mirroring my experiences, daughters who have had fathers present in their lives to offer advising and mentoring tend to perform better academically (Allgood, Beckert, & Peterson, 2012). Furthermore, some of the daughters in *Overcoming the Odds* (2002) viewed their fathers as supportive, while others reported that their father was uninvolved and absent due to his involvement with drugs, alcohol, or abusive behavior. These daughters' negative experiences with their fathers can be understood to substantiate the negative labels often placed upon all Black fathers. Nielsen (2007) calls for more research in higher education that focuses on father/daughter relationships to better prepare young female scholars to deal with negative father/daughter relationships. The next section focuses on the literature that addresses Black fathers and the negative stereotypes that are forced upon them as a collective.

Black Fathers and Negative Stereotypes

Connor and White (2005) describe the negative associations often inked to Black fathers which includes: absent, missing, nonresidential, noncustodial, unavailable, non-married, irresponsible, and immature. As previously noted, I have often been present in spaces where all Black fathers have had such conceptualizations forced upon them regardless of what kind of parents they are to their children. These conceptualizations cause me to question where these negative ideas of Black fathers originate alongside considering the causes for the abundance of single Black mother households, which I believe encourages the negative conceptualizations of Black fathers. Crawley (2011) writes about the abundance of negative research addressing Black

men, as well as the scarcity of research on Black fathers. Refuting negative stereotypes, Crawley (2011) focuses on the perspectives of African American fathers, as a Black father himself, and discusses their role in raising their children. He speaks about preconceived notions of Black men and Black fatherhood. For example, he says "when my son was born, all of a sudden I began to get advice and information from friends and colleagues about the things that I would need to do to ensure that my son and I did not become a part of the black man, black statistics" (p. 189).

Further contextualizing the circumstances surrounding many Black fathers, Madhavan and Roy (2012) discuss the increase in parents having children with multiple partners and the high rates of unemployment among Black men, which is 40% compared to an overall unemployment rate of 27%. Madhavan and Roy (2012) state, "increasing rates of unemployment among Black men have made it increasingly difficult to solidify relationships resulting in a pattern of serial or concurrent unions with different women" (p. 803). In "Empowerment Opportunities for Black Adolescent Fathers and Their Nonparenting Peers," Freeman (1994) reviews risk factors for Black fathers and possible causes for the high rate of young Black male fatherhood. Freeman (1994) discusses the high vulnerability of Black males due to poor educational achievement as well as other negative social factors (e.g., household problems, peer pressure, and stress) that they could possibly encounter due to their systemic hardships. This research suggests that a father's inability to financially take care of his family may be key to understanding the absence of many fathers in the household.

Although there is substantial research that addresses negative stereotypes about Black men and Black fathers, alongside research that theorizes absent Black fathers, there are also Black men who have created positive outlets for other Black men through writing, websites, organizations and social groups (Bar, 2012; Crawley, 2011; Saving Our Daughters, 2012). For

example, a website emerged to counter the claim “there are no good Black men” (A Good Black Man, 1997). This website highlights Black men who have a positive influence in society. The organization itself hosts uplifting events for Black men that include a mentoring group for young Black men and an annual award ceremony for Black men who have made positive contributions to society. In the long run, this may help to decrease negative stereotypes surrounding Black men and Black fathers, especially within the media, where many of the stereotypes are continuously portrayed. The next section focuses on the positive and negative representations of African American fathers in the media.

Black Fathers in the Media

Stuart Hall (1996) discusses how cultural narratives, such as those about Black fathers, are represented in accordance with dominant White racial ideology, which often forefronts negative racial stereotypes. From my perspective, mediated images of Black fathers in U. S. American society are often degrading. For example, Carter (2010) analyzes *The Cleveland Show*, which portrays all Black cartoon characters but is written by all White writers. Carter (2010) compares the family dynamics depicted in the media in the past compared to the dynamics depicted today. The family dynamics represented in past television shows such as *The Cosby Show* and *The Brady Bunch* have typically represented the father positively as a family provider. However, Carter (2010) argues that *The Cleveland Show* reproduces racism and classism as a means to produce comedy that perpetuates negative stereotypes of Black fathers.

bell hooks (2004), also concerned with media representations of Black fatherhood, writes about fathers in *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. hooks (2004) discusses the representations of Black fathers in relation to White fathers who she believes are constantly presented in the media to Black children as the ideal father figure. hooks (2004) also touches on

fathers in relation to Black single mothers and the struggles these mothers face when raising children because the Black father is absent.

Adding to the negativity of African American fathers in the media is a reality show from the Oxygen network that was scheduled to debut in 2013. This show, called *All My Babies' Mamas,* featured Atlanta rapper Shawty Lo and his relationship with the 10 mothers of his 11 children. The show clearly reproduces stereotypes of Black women as the "baby mamas" of Black men who have not married them, but have had sexual relationships that resulted in a child. From my perspective, this show also perpetuates the idea of Black men as "baby daddies" who do not support their children and are absent in their lives. When the show was announced in December 2012, an advocacy group successfully petitioned to cancel the show (Markman, 2013). Shawty Lo, an African American father, is currently fighting back to have his show aired on national television (Markman, 2013). The negative representations of Black women and men in this proposed reality show further illustrate the stereotypes of Black fathers in the media and the idea that these negative images are acceptable in not only White but also African American eyes.

Another relevant reality show that depicts Black fathers and mothers is *Housewives of Atlanta*. One specific episode during season four focuses on Sheree Whitfield, a mother of two and the ex-wife of a professional football player named Bob Whitfield (Hersh, Eskelin, Sanchez-Warner, Kahangi, & Weinstock, 2011). Sheree confronts her ex-husband about child support as viewers witness her portray him as a "dead beat" Black father who does not support his children. From my perspective, she wanted to embarrass her husband on national television when she confronts him about child support and his lack of involvement in their childrens' lives. I do believe her ex-husband should be willing to support his children, however, I also believe that

exposing him on television was not the best way to address her issues with him. The representations on this reality television show illustrate Sheree as the stereotypical angry Black woman and her husband as the "dead beat" African American father. My issue with such representations is that African Americans will suffer in the end due to these continuous negative portrayals in the media, while television networks continue to gain high ratings by reproducing negative stereotypes.

Although there are many negative representations of Black fathers in the media, there are also media portrayals that deviate away from the common stereotypes of the Black father as the "deadbeat dad." Shifting to a more positive example of a Black father is rapper Snoop Dogg's reality show *Fatherhood*. In Snoop Dogg's reality show, producers wanted to capture "real" day-to-day activities of a rapper who was also a father (Smith, 2008). The show featured obscene language, Snoop Dogg's memories of confrontations with the law, as well as conversations with his children about illegal drug use since Snoop Dogg wanted to emphasize that his parenting skills were much different than those of *The Cosby Show* (Smith, 2008). Smith (2008) critiques the show and its representation of a Black father in reality television. Smith indicates that this show touches on important issues, such as race and class, while also keeping it "real" as a rapper who is also a Black father. Snoop Dogg, along with other rappers who are fathers, expresses his goal of wanting to be displayed in a more positive light given the obscene content of his music. I feel that this show represents Black fathers in a more positive light. When Snoop Dogg's show was canceled after two seasons, he made a statement saying, "I believe the show was too positive and too enlightening. They wanted some drama" (Snoop Dogg, 2009). Considering many of the previously mentioned depictions of African American fathers in television, perhaps the lack of negativity was indeed a cause for the cancellation of the show.

Another example of a positive image of Black fathers in the media comes from President Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. The campaign was not only focused on him and his wife but also his two daughters. I believe that Obama was aware of the journey ahead for his family, which is why he wrote an open letter to his daughters. In this letter, Obama expresses his goals for his daughters as young ladies growing up during his candidacy (Obama, 2009). By writing this open letter, Obama (2009) deviated away from the negative connotations of Black fathers. Addressing how he changed when he became a father, Obama (2009) writes:

> All my big plans for myself didn't seem so important anymore. I soon found that the greater joy in my life was the joy I saw in yours. And I realized that my own life wouldn't count for much unless I was able to ensure that you had every opportunity for happiness and fulfillment in yours.

In this letter, Obama writes positively about the changes in his life once he became a father of two daughters. He also shows compassion for and support toward his daughters as a Black man, which is rarely depicted in U.S. American media.

Another positive example of Black male fathers in the media is Tyler Perry's *Daddy's Little Girls* (2007). This film portrays a Black father in a position that is seldom represented. Not only is the main character, Monty, a single Black father, but he is also a single Black father raising three daughters. In the film, Monty battles the mother for custody of their children and the mother is portrayed as a sapphire. According to West (1995), when Black women are depicted as sapphires they are characterized as violent, loud, evil, and bitchy. In response, Monty does what he can to balance his life and his girls' lives. This film shows a Black father taking care of his daughters, while also struggling with financial difficulties. Eventually, Monty wins

custody of his girls and begins a new positive life with them. Through this film, Cannon and Perry (2007) introduce an unusual Black father figure who would do anything for his children.

In May of 2012, platinum award winning rapper Nas also shed some positive light on African American fatherhood. Nas released a song and video entitled "Daughters" (Nas, 2012, track 5). He raps about Black fathers with daughters and the trials and tribulations their daughters' experience in today's society. He stresses the importance of a Black father's presence in young girls' lives and illuminates how their life decisions can be affected by relationships with their fathers. His sentiment is similar to Boyd, Ashcraft and Belgrave's (2006) assertion that a father's involvement in his daughter's life has a major effect on her life decisions. In this song, Nas' hook implies that the song was created for Black men raising their daughters as single fathers. For example, he raps:

> It aint easy to raise a girl as a single man
>
> Nah the way mothers feel for they sons, how fathers feel for they daughters
>
> When he date, he straight, chip off his own papa
>
> When she date, we wait behind the door with the sawed off
>
> Cuz we think no one is good enough for our daughters (Nas, 2012, Track 5)

According to NasVEVO (2012), this video has had over five million views. There have also been several fathers who have spoken about their reactions to the song. On the website "Saving Our Daughters," which is an organization focused on providing young girls with tools to survive in a world of adversities (Saving Our Daughters, 2012), one father speaks about the impact of the song and how it affected him as a single father who recently lost his young daughter to cancer. This particular father is also the executive director of the organization, which Nas has become involved with. From my perspective, I believe messages like these are vital as a

means to change and challenge dominant understandings of Black fatherhood. Overall, the works of individuals such as Snoop Dog, President Barack Obama, Tyler Perry, and Nas have produced positive messages in the media about African American fathers.

From my perception positive representations, such as those mentioned, are key in improving media representation for Black fathers as well as Black men overall. I believe that since there is such a large number of African American children in fatherless homes that it is vital for them to witness positive images of African American fathers in the media. These positive representations of Black fathers are important to me personally because I was raised by my Black father who worked hard to take care of my sister and I. I am a prime example of a daughter who was raised by my father and I believe that he continues to have a positive effect on my life decisions. As such, it is vital for me to speak out as an African American woman and daughter who was successfully raised by an African American father. The following section will focus on the voices of Black daughters and their relationships with their fathers.

Black Daughters

The majority of studies on fathers focus on fathers and their sons; only recently have daughters been included in this research (Coles, 2009). Addressing this absence, I feel there is a necessity for African American women in particular, such as myself, to have a voice in research on fatherhood. Over the years, the phrase "Daddy's little girl" has become a common phrase that appears in movies, songs, and social media as a label for girls who have close relationships with their fathers. Despite the common nature of this phrase, there is a continuous assumption that fathers, Black fathers in particular, are not present in their daughters' lives and there is very little academic research that indicates otherwise.

Dow and Wood (2006) focus on the family dynamic and the voices of Black daughters in the household. They find that the older the daughters get, the less they tend to share with their parents, especially their fathers. In another study fore-fronting Black daughters, Latchman (2011) focuses on identity development in the novel *Paule Marshall's Daughters*. In the narrative, the main character Ursa is a young Black girl who has a very close relationship with her father. Ursa is in the process of finding her own voice and making her own life decisions, although there are others who believe they know what is best for her. This story illustrates how young Black women are often silenced because their decisions may not be viewed as feasible within society, or in Ursa's case, within her family.

Overall, I anticipate that my research will help change the idea of the current family dynamic, as well as offer new perspectives on Black fatherhood. For years, the voices of Black women have been silenced in academic research (Collins, 2009; Griffin, 2012; Madriz, 2000) and our absence is exceptionally scarce in research on fathers and daughters. Speaking as a Black woman, who has often detected my absence in research, I passionately believe that it is time for more research to include the voices of Black women discussing their roles as daughters of Black fathers. In the following section, I focus on Black feminist thought as a theoretical framework that emphasizes the voices of Black women.

Black Feminist Thought

Generally speaking, Black feminist thought (BFT) is a framework that focuses on the experiences of African American women (Collins, 2009; hooks, 1989). It provides a space for African American women to write about their lived experiences at the intersections of race and gender. Black feminist thought encourages African American women to speak on matters that may be difficult, rare to hear about, and/or controversial (Collins, 2009; Lorde, 2007). This

research report uses BFT as a theoretical framework to examine my experiences as an African American woman raised in a single Black father household. Black feminist thought provides a framework for me to explore my experiences in a society where such a phenomenon is very uncommon. The following section will focus on the three main commitments of BFT: intersectionality, voice, and self-determination.

Intersectionality

Black feminist thought highlights the oppressions that Black women face at the intersections of race and gender, while creating a space for our voices as Black women (hooks, 1989). Collins (2009) writes:

> Black feminist thought demonstrates Black women's emerging power as agents of knowledge. By portraying African American women as self-defined, self-reliant individuals confronting race, gender, and class oppression, Afrocentric feminist thought speaks to the importance that oppression, Afrocentic feminist thought speaks to the importance that knowledge plays in empowering oppressed people (p. 11).

Reflecting on BFT and African American women, Orbe, Drummond and Camara (2002) write, "Black feminist thought constitutes a conceptual approach that reflects the special standpoints that African American women use to negotiate their positioning of self, family, and society" (p. 123). As a theory, BFT does something that other theories do not by offering a foundation from which to speak about issues that Black women face, without the worry of speaking too freely.

Collins (1986) discusses the "outsider within" (p. 14) as a position from which Black women can speak. She believes our intersectional identities such as race, gender, class, etc., can be used in our favor. She writes, "Black feminist scholars may be one of many distinct groups of marginal intellectuals whose standpoints promise to enrich contemporary sociological discourse"

(p. 15). As a result of our social location, African American women face systemic oppression based on race and gender (at minimum) simultaneously. Speaking from my standpoint as a Black woman raised by my single Black father, I believe BFT provides a useful space for my personal experiences. More specifically, since oppressive circumstances that Black women have been vulnerable to for years are still prevalent in today's society, BFT serves as an effective framework for me to address the negative assumptions about Black fathers as a Black woman whose experiences differ from the norm. Most importantly, I feel that BFT emphasizes that my experiences and my voice matter. For example, Carby (1996) calls for Black women to narrate their experiences. She writess:

> It is only in the writings by Black feminists that we can find attempts to theorize the interconnection of class, gender and race as it occurs in our lives and it has only been in the autonomous organizations of Black women that we have been able to express and act upon the experiences consequent upon these determinants. (p. 46)

By focusing on intersectionality, BFT emphasizes: interlocking oppressions (Collins, 1986) which have also been understood as "multiple consciousness" (King, 1990, p. 69). When interviewed about multiple consciousnesses, Black women offered their insight on what it means to be oppressed at the intersections and how they deal with this oppression (Orbe, Drummond, & Camara, 2002). Some women described past experiences that "left them wondering if the problems were caused by racism, sexism, both, another issue, or simply a personality conflict" (Orbe, Drummond, & Camara, 2002, p. 128-129).

Similar to these women, I have also left situations wondering why I was treated negatively. This has often caused me to become angry and frustrated within my marginalized identities which, from my experiences, can lead to Black women deciding not to voice their

experiences. To me, BFT serves as an outlet for my frustrations and the otherness I often feel. Through BFT I am able to read the work of other Black women and, most importantly for this project, speak to and with Black daughters who were primarily raised by their Black fathers.

Voice and "Community Cognizant Scholarship[2]"

Exemplified by Carby (1996) and Hrabowski, Maton, Greene and Greif (2002), BFT provides a basis for scholars to offer narratives on their lived experiences as Black women. Additionally, in Griffin's (2011) chapter, "Placing my Brown Body on the Line: Painful Moments and Powerful Praxis," she references hooks (1989) to encourage us to think beyond what is assumed, and to challenge the silencing of African American women. From my perspective, an outstanding advantage of BFT is that it theoretically liberates Black women and allows a space for our voices. Via this theory, voice is encouraged (Griffin, 2011; Griffin, 2012; Hopson, 2009) which is vital for sharing my lived experiences about being raised by my single Black father.

Centering African American fathers and daughters through BFT, I can revisit the stories that I have heard about Black women who did not grow up with fathers and speak to how my experiences differ. Focusing on the scholarship offered by Houston (2000), I borrow the concept of "community-cognizant scholarship" (p. 674). This concept creates a space to write with the purpose of empowering the Black community in general, and Black women in particular. Additionally, González, Houston and Chen (2007) highlight "community of practice" (COP) as a means to theorize engagement amongst individuals who come together for common purposes. Community of practice is defined as "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, and power

[2] This term is drawn from Houston (2000).

relationships, in short practices emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor" (González, Houston & Chen, 1997, p. 245). From my experiences, I believe this is a model that is heavily practiced within the Black community, especially among African American women. It has been a tradition for Black women to come together for storytelling as an outlet to cope with particular hardships (Madison, 1993; Ellyn, 2007). Thus, community-cognizant scholarship and COP are concepts that further BFT by bringing Black women together to use their voices to uplift and empower the community and each other.

Black feminist thought also allows writers to express emotional truths that are otherwise disregarded in scholarship. An example of this can be seen in Griffin's (2012) article "I AM an Angry Black Woman: Black Feminist Autoethnography, Voice and Resistance." Addressing emotion through the commitment to voice that BFT calls for, Griffin (2012) addresses her anger head on. She writes:

> I AM Angry that the world remains locked in scornful gaze upon Black women.
>
> I AM Angry that marginalized populations remain entrapped in divisive politics that mask the potential of building coalitions in the midst of our differences.
>
> I Am Angry. Not a hysterical, ill, harebrained, eccentric, nutty, foolish, childish, juvenile, wild, savage, primitive, uncivilized, boorish, crude, inept, asinine, screwy, loony, cracking up, or crazy sapphire but justly and justifiably angry. (p. 25)

Black feminist thought provides this space for Griffin (2012) to express such anger. I relate with Griffin's (2012) position as an angry Black woman due to our systematically marginalized positions as Black women in society. Given that negative constructions of Black femininity are often imposed on Black women, how are we to move forward from such obstructions? To me,

BFT offers a means for Black women, such as myself, to move forward as a cohesive force to challenge these labels and speak for ourselves.

Also focusing on the voices of Black women, Black feminist scholar bell hooks (1989) describes the notion of "talking back" (p. 9). She says:

> Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of "talking back," that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice. (p. 9)

hooks' (1989) call is relevant to my project because I position my writing about Black fathers and Black daughters as means to engage in "talking back" (p. 9) to resist negative stereotypes and oppressive assumptions. Trudier Harris (1982) touches on the significance of Black women, such as myself , speaking up when she writes:

> Called Matriarch, Emasculator and Hot Momma. Sometimes Sister, Pretty Baby, Auntie, Mammy and Girl. Called Unwed Mother, Welfare Recipient and Inner City Consumer. The Black American Woman has had to admit that while nobody knew the troubles she saw, everybody, his brother and his dog, felt qualified to explain her, even to herself. (p. 67)

I bring hooks (1989) and Harris (1982) into the conversation because I find it vital to address the oppressive forces that can silence Black daughters. While acknowledging how raced and gendered politics impact our voices, BFT also encourages Black women to be liberated via self-determination.

Self-Determination

Self-determination consists of a combination of knowledge, skills, and a belief that empowers one to actively engage in goal-orientated behavior (Denney & Daviso, 2012). Within BFT, self-determination is key to uplifting African American women, while also providing encouragement for us to speak for ourselves (Collins, 2009). Collins (2009) discusses the negative stereotypes surrounding Black women that go hand-in-hand with race and gender and subsequently function to impede our voices being taken seriously and our ability to engage in self-determination. In particular, she focuses on the mammy, matriarch, welfare queen, and jezebel (Collins, 2009). For years, Black women have been objectified via these controlling images which, similar to negative stereotypes of Black men, are often reproduced in the media (Collins, 2009; Quinlan, Bates, & Webb, 2008). For example, Quinlan, Bates, and Webb (2008) highlight the objectification that even our First Lady, Michelle Obama, has endured as an African American woman during her husband's presidency. The media has criticized her every move while she has been in the White house, ranging from what she wears to the statements she makes (Quinlan, Bates, & Webb, 2012; Williams, 2009). Such criticism can be understood to limit First Lady Obama's ability to define and speak for herself.

Pulling from my personal experiences with these labels, as well as the experiences of other Black women who write about them (Collins, 2009, hooks, 1989; Madison, 1993; West, 1995), one cannot help but become angry with such markers that are placed on us to deflate our abilities to define and determine our own realities. Collins (2009) focuses on the power of self-definition amongst African American women. She asserts that we have always been forced to mask the reality of our struggles, and as Black women we "become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor" (Collins, 2009, p. 97). By using BFT, I am able to offer my autoethnographic perceptions of being a Black daughter who was raised by my single Black

father. In the section that follows, I focus on my methodology of using qualitative research and autoethnography to carry out my work.

Methodology

Qualitative research does not belong to a single discipline, nor does qualitative research have a distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This kind of research exists in multiple disciplines and allows for diverse methods to be used to conduct research. Such methods include, but are not limited to: authoethnography, interviews, observations, and ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Ellis, Bochner, Denzin, Lincoln, Morse, Pelias & Richardson, 2008). For this project, qualitative methods are useful for expressing my personal narratives, providing depth to my work, as well as creating a foundation from which to conduct interviews in the future to build upon my work. I have chosen to qualitatively narrate my experiences to challenge the stereotypical assumptions about Black fathers and their involvement in their daughters' lives.

Autoethnography describes and analyzes personal experiences while engaging in cultural commentary (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Adams (2012) and Jones (2005) situate autoethnography as a space for self-reflexivity for researchers to dissect their own unique lived experiences, while also connecting their lived experiences to those of others. Autoethnography also aims to deeply engage the researcher and the readers in pursuit of greater understanding and multiple truths (Adams, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). For example, Ellis (2004) writes, "to me, validity means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible" (p. 124). For this project, autoethnography provides a method for me to connect with myself, my memories, and my readers.

Autoethnography

This autoethnographic project will be an emotional roller coaster that I encourage you to experience with me. There are times where I may seem biased towards Black fathers or embody an accusation that I hear often, which is, "you give them too much praise." However, these are my experiences and the only experiences that I know which is why Black feminist thought (BFT) and autoethnography are vital to my research. Through autoethnography, I address the experiences of Black women from my perspective as a Black woman raised by my single Black father. My autoethnographic reflections serve as my rebuttal to all of the negative stereotypes of Black fathers including "deadbeat," "sperm donor," and "baby daddy."

Tony Adams (2012) defines autoethnography as "a research method that uses personal experience in order to understand and critique cultural experience" (p. 181), which is why I have chosen autoethnography as a method. Through auotethnography, researchers are able to speak to their own experiences in relation to their work (Boylorn, 2008; Jones, 2005). This method also fosters self-reflexivity and self-observation and has been advantageous to researchers who offer their personal understandings of the topics they explore (Adams, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). My personal, social, and cultural experiences with my family, especially my father, will offer readers insight into my lived experiences.

By writing autoethnographically, I will wholeheartedly offer my personal narratives without being filtered in terms of right and wrong. As such, there are no limitations to what I am able to include in regard to my relationship with my father. My narratives may come off as unrelatable, inconsiderate, or biased, but they are the narratives that have molded my identity and as such they are important. To help focus my thoughts on this topic, I journaled about personal narratives, experiences, and memories that I find significant to this autoethnographic journey. I journaled at all times of the day and I was sure to keep my journal close to me throughout this

project because I wanted to document any experiences and emotions that were relevant as soon as they came to mind. Given the lack of research on single Black fathers who raise daughters in the communication field, I offer my narratives to spark conversation about how single Black fathers can influence their Black daughters positively.

John T. Warren (2001) discusses the lack of information brought to light in the media "until certain people, from certain families, from certain neighborhoods have to go through specific situations for the rest of the world to hear about it" (p. 40). As a Black woman who grew up in a lower class, poverty stricken environment, but now lives in a middle class neighborhood and has an educationally privileged background, I intend to use my access to education to bring this topic of Black fathers into a positive light through my research. More specifically, I will use my writing as a form of agency to address fatherhood in the Black community. I am hopeful that my voice assists in challenging and improving societal portrayals of Black fatherhood. Connecting experiences consistent with negative macro portrayals of Black fatherhood to my personal experiences, over the years I have heard several stories of young African American women who have had an absent father in their household. These young women were raised by their single mothers because their fathers, in one way or another, embodied the stereotype of the Black father as absent, irresponsible, or nonresidential.

Boylorn writes, "Autoethnographers look in (at themselves) and out (at the world) connecting the personal with the cultural" (2008, p. 413). Drawing upon her insight, I connect my personal experiences with cultural traditions within African American culture. Doing so allows me to look in and out conjointly. In Jones' (2005) article, she attempts to create a "noisy and fractious dialogue on and about personal stories" (p. 783); I take a similar approach with my piece. I do not ask readers to erase the negative stereotypes they may hear or witness regarding

Black fathers. Rather, I ask that readers invite those stereotypes into conversation as they read my reflections, which offers an exceptionally different understanding of Black fatherhood. In essence, my narratives will offer an opposing perspective on the stereotypes that negatively mark Black fatherhood.

Building upon Jones (2005) and Boylorn (2008), Toyosaki (2012) introduces readers to praxis-oriented autoethnography. He defines it as "a methodology of identity both for research and living for those who have something meaningful to remember and to hope for the in future. It is a methodology for doers who critically engage in their doing of their identity" (p. 249). Toyosaki 's (2012) conceptualization of autoethnography provides a space for the memories that I find most memorable, as well as space for considering how being raised by my father has influenced my embodiment of Black femininity.

Many of the narratives that I discuss lead me to spaces in my life that involve several different emotions that I confront through my autoethnographic writing. The sharing of these stories requires me to review events in my life that have had a strong emotional impact on me, most of which are due to the challenges of being raised by my single father with an absent mother. As one can imagine, being raised by a single parent can be challenging, especially when a single parent is raising a child alone because the other parent is unfit and extremely careless. These challenges give me the ability to tell my story from a point-of-view at the intersections of race and gender that is not often heard in society. My narratives reflect forms of storytelling that my family and I continue to share today.

Black feminist autoethnography (BFA) (Griffin, 2012), in particular, allows African American women to read and write about our experiences. While BFA offers a comfortable space for me to narrate my lived experiences, it has also become my inspiration to continue on

this journey of allowing my voice to be heard. As a Black woman writing about my lived experiences in the academy where my voice is commonly silenced, I refer to Griffin's (2012) account of BFA's obligation. She says:

> Black feminist autoethnography as means to voice is obligated to: raise social consciousness regarding the everyday struggles common to Black womanhood; embrace self-definition as a means for Black women to be labeled, acknowledged, and remembered as they wish; humanize Black women at the intersections of multiple forms of oppression; resist the imposition of controlling images; and self-reflexively account for how Black women can reproduce systemic oppression. (p. 12)

I believe BFA provides a nuanced space within autoethnography to comfortably narrate my experiences as a Black woman. Although there is a lack of research in the field that offers space for the voices of Black women (Davis, 1998; Griffin, 2012; Houston & Davis, 2002), BFA serves as a useful approach guided by BFT to speak from my perspective as a Black woman. The excerpt above serves as a reminder from Griffin (2012) of the importance of Black women writing about their experiences as Black women. My aim is to keep myself as a Black daughter of a Black single father centered, while analyzing my lived experiences through a Black feminist lens. Continuing to focus on Black feminism and autoethnography, the following section concentrates on African women and storytelling within the African American culture.

Storytelling as a Tradition in African American Culture

Ellyn (2007) narrates the purpose and effect of storytelling within African culture and how it kept cultural traditions alive despite slavery and the African diaspora. She says, "even the slave trade could not kill the indomitable spirit of the African people, and those who survived

tried to keep their culture alive. Storytelling was their mode of transmission. Most of their stories add some kind of message or moral" (Ellyn, 2007, p. 28). While slavery resulted in families being continuously separated, storytelling served as a way for African and African American people to keep a part of their identity and histories known and present amongst each other (Davis, 1998; Davis, 1981; Madison, 1993). This is a method that my family, especially my grandmother, has attempted to keep present in our family traditions. I have constant childhood memories of family narratives concerning customs and histories, which I am expected to keep alive by retelling the stories to younger family members. My narratives in this piece are an example of how I plan to keep our storytelling traditions intact.

Madison's (1993) recounts her childhood memories, which she writes, "were filled with voices from women, including gossip, songs, testimonies, lyrical praise and insults" (p. 213). She continues with, "Sitting together in the kitchen, they told stories to entertain and to survive. These stories were sometimes set in laughter and sometimes in tears, but they never stopped" (Madison, 1993, p. 213). I relate Madison's (1993) descriptions to my childhood memories of listening to my grandmother and aunts share stories and traditions every holiday while preparing meals, a tradition that I did not understand until later in life. My realization of the impact these family traditions had on me occurred unexpectedly. When I realized I had become a part of this storytelling tradition, I felt a different sense of belonging that I had never felt before. For example, we constantly speak about a small house my great grandmother owned in Mississippi before our family dispersed to Tennessee and Illinois. This small house, on an empty road, housed my great grandmother, my grandmother and her five children. My family reminisces about how they too worked hard, grew their own food, and the strenuous duties they had as children. They joke about how us kids today "wouldn't have survived a day in their shoes."

Stories similar to these provided me with a sense of connectedness to my family struggles and our history. To this day, we continue to share family traditions and recipes that we have held close to our family through storytelling.

Through Black feminist autoethnography (BFA), I plan to connect my family tradition of storytelling to my academic work to contribute to the limited research on African American fathers and daughters. In the following section, I share my personal narratives about being raised by my single Black father and reflect on how these experiences have molded me into the person that I am today. Black feminist thought (Collins, 2009) as theory guides BFA (Griffin, 2012) as my method. The next section consists of my autoethnographic writing about my lived experiences. I relate my narratives to Ricoeur's (2004) words on writing a life story. He writes,

> Under history, memory and forgetting
>
> Under memory and forgetting, life
>
> But writing a life is another story
>
> Incompletion
>
> (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 506)

Voicing my Experiences

As previously mentioned, BFT (Collins, 2009) is significant in this work because it positions my lived experiences as an African American woman raised by my single African American father as relevant and meaningful. Therefore, I utilize this theoretical framework to forefront my experiences and organize my reflections into seven sections: (1) Forced to Choose Sides, (2) The Talks, (3) Learning to Be Me, (4) Relationships, (5) Academics, (6) Planning for the Future, and (7) I Am My Father's Daughter. Each section articulates the lived experiences that were most prominent in my life as a Black woman raised by my single African American

father. I understand Collins' (2009) assertion when she writes, "oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group" (p. vii). However, when writing I did not want the worry of being forced to write in a specific way to be heard by a dominant group. I should be able to write in a way that I see fit rather than judging what to say or whether or not others will be familiar and/or comfortable with my stories. As I write, I tell positive stories about my father's presence, but I also tell extremely negative stories. These negative stories address being young and troubled by the idea that I had a parent who cared more about herself than raising her daughters who desperately needed her in their lives. The actions of my mother heavily affected my upbringing with my father. Many of my narratives involve my mother because the majority of my life lessons and most significant experiences with my father were often a result of a negative action from my mother.

Anger and frustration are the constant feelings that I display towards my mother. I do so to cover the hurt and devastation I feel when I reflect on her lack of support during my childhood and adult life. Growing up and still today, I am often envious of my friends who share positive relationships with their mothers through adversity in their lives. I never understood how a parent could have two daughters who needed them but instead makes harsh decisions that only hurt us, her children, in the end. I now realize that I took this anger and hurt that I felt toward my mother out on my father when he was attempting to be an understanding parent. I would like to thank him for being my punching bag during the times when he didn't know the right answers or tried to understand but simply could not relate to my many female teenage phases. I also aspire to "talk back" (hooks, 1989, p. 9) to the years of anger and frustration, fueled by the effects of a negative parent, that I have felt over the years. Openly expressing my feelings toward my mother

through Black feminist autoethnography is frightening because I have kept many of these thoughts secretly locked away for so long. Some of what I share I have not revisited until now, in fear of the emotions that would resurface. The first section below focuses on my childhood and the stories surrounding my sister and I moving in with our father.

Forced to Choose Sides

My father has always been an understanding person who attempted to see the good even when the bad was undoubtedly present. During my childhood, I can recall countless arguments between my mother and father, which I believe affected me at a young age. I carefully observed every argument word for word; they were typically about my mother leaving my sister and I at our grandmother's house to spend time with her friends while my father was working. She often came home late and left my father to do all of the work of taking care of my sister and me. He has always been the supportive and nurturing parent to help us when we were in need.

One particular night, my mother left my sister and I at my grandmother's house to spend time with her friends. In the middle of the night, the house caught fire while we were sleeping. Fortunately, my grandmother smelled the smoke and was able to rush everyone out of the house. Although I was young, I remember this night distinctly as if it happened recently. I recall crying and yearning for my mother and father because we were standing in the cold watching a house burn down. I recall my mother returning with her friends only to realize the night her children experienced. There were no apologies or sympathy for not being there when we needed her. My father, who was at work at the time, immediately rushed to comfort my sister and I when he showed up.

Once my mother and father separated, we lived with our mother while our father moved out. I remember visiting him on the weekends and crying hysterically when it came time for us to

return to our mother's home. My father reassured us that he would eventually move us into his house. The idea of us moving in with my father was not something my mother was fond of; she forced me to make the decision between her and my father. She made me feel guilty for wanting to live with the parent that I believed genuinely cared about my well-being. I eventually made the decision to live with my father during my teenage years. After moving out of my mother's house, I attempted to visit as much as possible. However, the visits usually consisted of her leaving my sister and I home alone while she went out and left us to wake up to an empty house. Although I communicate with my mother occasionally, I still have not forgiven her for being a selfish parent only because she understood that my father would always be there to pick up her parenting slack. As much as I want to forgive and forget the hardships I have faced due to my mother, I still long for this ideal mother/daughter relationship that I often hear about.

Shifting toward an even more emotional space, there was a life-threatening situation that involved my father, sister, and me. This is a memory I have attempted to erase because of the negative effects it has had on me. When writing about Black women Lorde (2007) states, "we are strong and enduring. We are also deeply scarred" (p. 151); her words remind me of the experience that follows. One Thanksgiving, while on our way to dinner, we were involved in a terrible car accident when a lady ran a red light. My sister was not harmed but my father and I were critically injured. However, I sustained the more serious injuries. I blacked out during the accident and woke up to my younger sister in the back seat crying and my father comforting us with his face covered in blood.

This is a memory that immediately brings tears to my eyes. Afraid that this was going to be the last time I saw my father and sister, I immediately panicked. Although my father was cut severely by glass, his only concern was that my sister and I were okay. Eventually I blacked out

again and woke up in a hospital room still afraid, but thankful that we all were okay. Unfortunately, my mother took this accident as an opportunity to make money. She sued my father's insurance company and used the money from the settlement on herself. To do so, she forced me to falsify a story during a meeting between her and my father's insurance company. I believe this incident was the start of an even closer relationship between my father, younger sister, and I but an even more distant relationship with my mother.

I have come across research about Black mothers that represents Black motherhood in a way that is unfamiliar to me given my lived experiences. For example, Collins' (2009) chapter on Black women and motherhood offers insight on motherhood that I could not relate to. Collins (2009) speaks to understandings of Black mothers as the "super strong Black mother" (p. 175). My personal views about Black motherhood oppose hers when I reflect on my mother's reaction to our accident. However, Collins' (2009) Black feminist framework has guided me through many of my thoughts concerning my relationship with my mother and father, and how I have been influenced by each. Returning to the car accident, my father and my sister have always been important in my life, and almost losing them made me appreciate them even more. It took a long time, and plenty of guidance from my father to overcome the anxieties that this accident left me with. The next section centers the many lessons my father attempted to teach my sister and I while growing up, and the effect they had on us.

The Talks

Growing up, my father, unknowingly in alignment with Black feminist thought, was adamant about teaching my sister and I to have our own voice and to speak on what we believed. He taught us to be strong outspoken young women, because he believed we needed to be able to speak for ourselves. My sister and I encountered several sensitive situations where we looked to

our father for answers, but he always encouraged us to make our own decisions. Many of the situations were those that involved boys, disputes with girlfriends, and emotions about our mother. They were understood as learning experiences for our family because they were new to all of us. One of these situations included my first breakup and my treating it like it was the end of the world. This was a major learning experience for my father who, having always been on the other side of the situation, was forced to help his heartbroken daughter get over her heartache. My father was reluctant to comfort me because he did not want to say the wrong thing. However, he quickly learned what worked and what did not work and was more prepared when my younger sister was in similar situations.

Dealing with my broken heart, I was taught to never depend on a man or let a man think I "need" him. Although I was only in high school, my father's words have followed me for as long as I can remember. He has always said, "Always have an independent mindset" and "as a young Black woman people will try to break you down but you must remain strong." When I go over these words in my head, I can hear my father's strong and serious voice. His guidance is similar to Collins (2009) who writes, "Black women are programmed to define ourselves within this male attention to compete with each other for it rather than to recognize and move upon our common interest" (p. 48). Both Collins (2009) and my father speak on the importance of Black women having our own minds and leaning on each other because society could make us believe we should think and act a certain way, based off what someone else believes. This advice that my sister and I have received from our father has always encouraged us to never define ourselves in relation to someone else, because having our own understanding of the women we want to be should come first. As I often tell my sister, we were raised to be hard like boys and strong like our father.

Unintentionally, I believe my father raised two Black feminist daughters. White (2006) focuses on African American feminist fathering and their narratives of parenting; she says, "African American feminist fathers have taken the lead in applying radical, alternative fathering practices that some fathers may want to consider" (p. 65-66). I believe while raising us my father was an African American feminist father because he taught us the importance of voice, not only as women, but as Black women in particular in today's society. We were taught that because we were Black women we would possibly encounter more challenges than our Black male and/or White female peers. I believe that my father frequently engaged in such practices by being involved in our lives as the primary parent and teaching us to have tough skin during hard times. For my sister and I, we believe these practices were positive in today's society given the negativity that Black women can face. Neal (2006) speaks on being an African American feminist father to his daughter, and how other fathers can become feminist. He writes, "Black men seeing themselves as nurturing fathers is only the beginning of a process in which a black feminist fatherhood can be realized" (Neal, 2006, p. 115). I believe the birth of my sister and I was the beginning of my father's explicit advocacy for the agency of Black women. In particular, he emphasized heavily on voice, intersectionality, and self-determination as it is understood within BFT (Collins, 2009). For example, not only did my father encourage us to use our voices for ourselves, he also encouraged us to speak to and against all of the negativity aimed at Black women.

Although our immediate family consisted only of my dad, my sister, and I, we attempted to spend as much quality time together as possible. My father made sure we ate breakfast together every weekend and dinner together every night. This was something that my father found very important because he did not have the opportunity to have these moments with his

family when he was younger. Each night at the dinner table he was sure to ask about our day, and discuss what was going on in our lives. I appreciated these moments mainly because in my mother's household, we ate in our room and were never asked about our days or school. During these times, my father struggled to pay all of the bills, pay my mother child support, and support my sister and me. Although my father was working hard to be attentive to us, while also working overtime every day, we were never burdened with the worries that my father had in order to take care of us. His main focus was for my sister and I not to stress about those things because he believed we had experienced enough as children. In the next section, I focus on my upbringing and how I discovered my identity and learned about self-determination as a young Black woman being raised by my father. I will also touch on the fears that came along with this discovery.

Learning to be Me

How can a man raise you to be a woman? He doesn't know what women go through or how women feel. Growing up, I was constantly challenged by the idea that a man raising two daughters was not the best idea, as if it was impossible or unethical. Although my family was often critical of how my sister and I would grow up, I defended my father as much as possible. However, my family's negative words eventually began to affect me. During my teenage years I feared not becoming the "right kind" of a young woman because I did not have a mother raising me. My father raised us tough and taught us that Black women should always have thick skin. Like hooks (1989), Lorde (2007), Collins (2009) and many other Black feminists, my father believed in liberation and was aware of oppression. While growing up, my sister and I were emotional young girls; if something hurt us we cried. More specifically, if my father hurt our feelings we immediately displayed our emotions, and this was not something that sat well with my father. He believed we should show no emotion because in the "real world" no one cared

about emotions, and if they could they would feed off of them as weaknesses. Harris (2007) mentions that African American women need to live a "double life" (p. 57) due to our race and gender. Although my father's tactics may seem too rough for two young girls, I have found them essential while growing up in this society. Similar to Harris (2007), my father understood the oppressions my sister and I would be up against in our society because of our race in gender.

Growing up, I never understood this lesson my father wanted to teach us. I never understood why he believed Black women needed to be the strong people he was trying to make us into. I now realize why it was important to my father that he raise us to be strong and show minimal emotion. Thus as a Black woman, my words, ideas, and credibility have constantly been challenged at the intersections of race and gender. I have been challenged in the classroom, workplace, and in social settings. Collins' (2009) notion of the "matrix of domination" (p. 99) refers to the various intersections of social inequalities; many of which my father attempted to forewarn me about from a young age. His guidance, which I interpret as African American feminist fathering (White, 2006), has been useful when I find myself feeling the need to prove and defend myself in oppressive situations. For example, over the summer, myself and another African American male earned a summer long internship. One day the district manager decided to visit the store. We introduced ourselves and as I was explaining my goals, the male intern instantly cut me off. He attempted to joke about it to continue his conversation with the manager, but I had to speak up to continue my conversation with the manager. I eventually confronted him about his actions. To do so effectively, I had to keep myself together, just as my father taught me, because I was expected to give up or break down. I now appreciate this lesson that I never understood as a young girl.

Unfortunately, as a Black woman, I have to be prepared for the unexpected and prepared to defend myself because I am often expected to fail. Although there are African American women who have exceeded far beyond negative expectations, I feel that we are still considered African American women who are "relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy" (Collins, 1998, p. 72). As Garvey said long ago, "be not discouraged Black women of the world, but push forward, regardless of the lack of appreciation shown you" (2009, p. 579). As frustrating as it is, we will continue to be challenged, questioned, and negatively marked in society. However, as my father taught me, it is up to us to face these labels head on and find our voices in these situations.

During my teenage years, I remember wondering what kind of young woman I wanted to be. It was very important to me that I did not become like my mother. I wanted to be respectful and caring to family and friends. Over time, this became a major concern and it took me years to express my concern to my family. I focused on my own identity and who I wanted to be within my relationships with my family as well as outside of my family. I realized that my ability to define myself was based on my own decisions regardless of my relationship with my mother and who she is as a person. Therefore, I ultimately decided to be myself, a woman who chooses to be like my father. Although I yearned for a female to be a constant role model, I decided to be a hard-working and dedicated person despite my mother's absence. I relate my experiences as an individual to Lorde's (2007) views on the struggle for Black liberation. Lorde (2007) believes that we, as Black women and men, must define ourselves for ourselves before others begin to define us in any way that they see fit. In essence, with my father's guidance, I have decided to define myself no matter what others may think or assume based off my family structure or my parents' actions.

Although I sometimes find myself slipping into angry places, similar to those that my mother was constantly in, I attempt to control myself and my feelings within these spaces. As Lorde (2007) says, "anger is loaded with information and energy" (p. 127). I believe that I have a profuse amount of anger and energy built up because of unresolved conflicts with my mother. One day, while reevaluating my mother's moods, anger, and violent actions, I began to believe that she may have a disorder. From my perspective, this could possibly be the cause of the many outbursts and sudden changes of temperament. I discussed confronting her with my father, because I believed she could possibly be bipolar. My father pleaded against even bringing the thought up with my mother, but I wanted to try and help her to become a better mother. My idea ended in a major argument between my mother and me. She cursed me for assuming she was "crazy" even though I attempted to explain this was not my intention. At this point I realized that you cannot help someone who does not want to be helped, even if it means sacrificing a relationship with that person. Being raised by my father and having an absent mother has affected many of my relationships, as well as the ability I have to trust others within relationships.

Relationships

Over the years, my father has dated women that I was constantly reluctant to accept. Any woman that was brought around usually did not receive my support because I feared losing another parent. I was sure not to be disrespectful but I never opened up to these women like my father and sister did. I struggled with the idea that a new woman could come into our lives to become a mother to my sister and I. I feared another inadequate relationship and did not want to get attached to someone that could possibly hurt me or my family. My father was very open when he was dating someone and wanted my sister and me to feel comfortable to honestly

express our feelings. However, my feelings usually included negative thoughts. My selfishness and inconsideration for my father and his efforts are prime examples of me not being mindful of everything he sacrificed for my sister and I. Looking back, I regret not being understanding and open to new people becoming involved in our lives.

As a child, I did not realize the sacrifices my father made to assure that my sister and I had a positive upbringing with at least one involved parent. My father made it his business to successfully raise his two daughters as a single father minus any support from my mother. Before my father took us in, my mother had complete custody of us. This is how she illegally forced my father to continue to pay child support. Once my father took us in, my mother refused to stop the child support and threatened to force us to live with her again if he attempted to stop the payments she received each month. My father made the decision to take us in and continue to pay my mother child support payments. He did not want to force us to sit through family court or possibly be forced to live with my mother permanently. My mother used the money for her own benefit and never helped with anything financially in our lives. There was a period of time when my father threatened to take my mother to court for custody of my sister and me. Then, out of anger, my mother prohibited my father from seeing us and threatened to permanently take us away if he proceeded with a custody battle. She kept us from our father for weeks, which was a risk my father was not willing to take again.

After I turned 18, the child support that my mother received for me automatically stopped because I was considered an adult. My father then took my mother to court to stop the payments for my younger sister who was 14 at the time. My sister describes her experience of being in court and being questioned by a judge about which parent she lived with and who supported her financially as, “feeling like I had to choose between our mother and father.” After telling the

truth about living with my father for years and receiving no support from our mother, my mother refused to talk to my sister for months out of anger. Despite my mother's desire for my sister to lie to the judge, she decided to tell the truth. At 18, I accepted the fact that my mother would never be the mother I longed for but I was thankful that I had at least one devoted parent. On the other hand, my younger sister was heavily affected by my mother's actions and her lack of support. Time after time, she attempted to reach out to my mother despite her negligence, but my sister's efforts were not successful. Although theorists have found that mothers are typically nurturing and are friends with their daughters (Boyd, Ashcraft & Belgrave, 2006; Collins, 2009; Hurston & Thomas, 1989; Sharp & Ispa, 2009), this was never the case for us.

Over the years, I was very involved in sports and organizations where I was constantly surrounded by other girls my age. There were continuous stories about how their mothers were their best friends and how they knew their mothers would do anything for them. I understood young women being close to their mothers because I always believed if a mother birthed a daughter, she would automatically become close to her. I found myself envious of my friends' relationships with their mothers. I have attempted to develop a relationship with my mother, despite years of wrong doing on her behalf, but my attempts have continuously failed. After years of my mother's problematic actions, she is still the same person and may never change. Even when she was in life threatening situations, she has not changed her outlook on life or her relationships with us.

During the beginning of my second semester of graduate school, I received a phone call from my sister explaining that my mother was admitted into the hospital because she had breathing and chest problems. The next day I received another phone call saying that my mother suffered a mild heart attack; I decided to leave school immediately to tend to my sick mother.

Her harmful habits such as smoking, not exercising, and unhealthy eating, contributed to her visit to the emergency room. The doctor encouraged my mother to stop smoking and to change her unhealthy eating habits, but she refused. My father offered to help her stop smoking by paying for any treatment that would assist in her efforts. At this moment, I gained a new level of respect for my father because he was willing to help her despite everything my mother has put our family through. He was willing to do whatever it took to help the mother of his children; I interpret this as another example of African American feminist fathering (Neal, 2006; White, 2006). This was not the first time that my father has offered a helping hand to someone in my life by embodying what I interpret as an African American feminist fathering stance.

When I was a sophomore in high school, one of my best friends became pregnant. She was a friend who visited our house often and spent a lot of time with my family. My father immediately prohibited me from spending time with her in fear that her negative ways would influence me. He was very adamant about me not spending time with her and would not allow her to come to our house. After having a sit down with my father, he then realized that he had nothing to worry about. I explained the absence of my pregnant friend's father and how she struggled with his absence daily. As Krohn and Bogan (2001) point out, young girls in fatherless homes tend to be more sexually active at an early age and become pregnant out of wedlock. My father eventually became a father figure to my pregnant friend; she visited often to get advice from my father and he was happy to help her out in any way possible. This situation caused me to realize how fortunate I was to have my father in my life. I believe many of my personal relationships have been heavily influenced by my father because he has always been present and aware of the people who were in my life. Although my friend had a great mother, she longed for

a father just as I longed for a mother. The following section concentrates on my academic journey and the influence my parents have had on my journey as a student.

Academics

Growing up, I seldom recall my mother being involved in any part of my academic career unless it was for a mandatory parent report card pick up. This was never a discussion I thought she found interest in, perhaps because her education did not proceed beyond her first year of high school. On the other hand, the reason could simply be the lack of relevance she believed education could bring to her daughters' lives. She never attended school meetings, asked about my day at school, or created any kind of relationship with my teachers. She was always under the impression that she did not have to be involved because she was aware that my father always would be.

In contrast to my mother, education has been one of the most important aspects of life stressed by my father for as long as I can remember. My sister and I were rewarded for good grades and questioned about grades that could have been better in my father's eyes. I recollect countless late nights of him helping us study, Saturdays in the library, and my father giving my younger sister the extra help that she needed. He constantly encouraged us to aim for more than a good job. He wanted us to have more and to work hard to reach our goals, which meant a career that we enjoyed and were satisfied with. He encouraged us to use my mother's actions and educational decisions as motivation to and supersede the negative statistics of African American women in higher education (Grantham & Henfield, 2011; Hrabowski, Maton, Greene, & Grief, 2002). For example, the nation as a whole is faced with challenges regarding the academic achievement and performance of African American girls, as well as the well-being of African American women in general (Hrabowski, Maton, Greene, & Grief, 2002). More specifically, my

father encouraged us to aim for educational achievement beyond high school and a bachelor's degree. We were pushed to assist in creating more positive role models for young African American girls by pursuing multiple college degrees.

When I struggled academically I often used my mother's academic decisions to motivate myself to excel. I can also recall several situations where my mother pushed me to believe school was not important. I clearly remember her screaming the words, "Dontevia, I don't care about this school shit, get out of my face" one day when I asked her for homework help while she was with her friends. I then realized that my mother was never someone I could connect with on an educational level. This was not something that was important to her, or anything she wanted to be burdened with. Although she has attended all of my graduations thus far, I wholeheartedly believe she does not deserve any of the accolades that she constantly receives as a "parent" because she has done absolutely nothing to contribute financially, mentally, or physically to my academic success. However, she constantly boasts of my success to friends and family as if she has contributed to my pursuit of higher education. Not only does this make me angry, I become very frustrated because she is clueless about my journey and has expressed no desire to understand it.

I have awful memories of my college graduation, which should have been a great day, turning into a weekend dedicated to me driving my mother around to "prepare" her for my day. I think it should have been a great day for my father, sister and I. Although I am one of the only people in my family to graduate with a college degree, my mother showed no support. On my graduation day, I decided to take the opportunity to display my gratitude to my father for all of his support by decorating my graduation cap with the words "thanks dad." However, this was not meant to make my mother angry or be disrespectful toward her. My only intention was to display

my gratitude towards my father for all of his support throughout my educational journey. My thoughtful gesture turned into an opportunity for my mother to slander me on my graduation day. She described how "rude" and "ungrateful" I was toward her. As usual, my father stepped up to comfort and encourage me to enjoy the moment and not focus on the negativity. The role that my father has played in my academic career has been a clear display of his commitment to Black feminism. Thus, he has encouraged me to continuously focus on work and research in the academy that encourages and advocates for further work on African American women. The final section of my analysis focuses on situations in my family that urged my father to better prepare his daughters for future decisions.

Planning for the Future

When I was in high school, my father watched my mother's family struggle to deal with the death of my grandmother and the expenses of her funeral. Considering my mother has no insurance or a steady job, my father offered to provide her with health insurance just in case something was to happen. He did so because he did not want her daughters to be in a situation where we were burdened with similar stress at young ages. I believed this to be a very thoughtful gesture from my father given the lack of support my mother has given my father. I presented the news to my mother assuming that she would be thankful for my father's offer. To my surprise, my mother slandered my father and me and then accused us of trying to earn money from her death. I was devastated with the outcome and fed up with my mother's foolish ways. My father advised me to do what I felt was best for me and I decided to stop reaching out to my mother. Although we speak on occasions, I have accepted the fact that we will never have the mother-daughter relationship that I have always desired. However, I remain hopeful that she will one day

realize the hurt she has caused over the years, and attempt to establish somewhat of a relationship between us.

Realizing the impact my relationship with my mother has had on me I attempt to be a sister and mother figure to my younger sister. I am there for advice, lessons, and friendship because I believe it is important for her to have something that I did not have. At a young age, I began to notice how emotional my sister would become when a conversation about my mother surfaced. Now at 21-years-old, I notice my younger sister making the same attempts to reach out to my mother that I made to create a better relationship with her. Her reaching out typically results in disappointment followed by empathy from my father and I. Today the relationship between my father, sister, and I has become an unbreakable bond. There are no words or gifts that could express the appreciation and gratitude my sister and I feel when we think about our relationship with our father. The many experiences that I have shared involving my mother and father exemplify how the distant relationship with my mother has created a close relationship with my father.

I Am My Father's Daughter

To Black fathers who have tried to provide and protect. Stay strong.

To Black fathers who continue to encourage and empower their children. Continue.

To Black fathers who love Black mothers. Thank you.

To Black fathers who practice what they preach. Set the example.

To Black fathers who reach out and reach back. Continue to uplift.

To Black fathers who are honest and honorable. Remember Martin King.

To Black fathers who are determined and disciplined. Remember Malcolm.

To Black fathers who have not given up. Remember Mandela.

To Black fathers who are courageous and demanding. Remember Douglass.

To Black fathers who are systematic and work hard. Remember DuBois.

For Black fathers who are self-determining. Remember Booker T.

For Black fathers who have decided to win, who have decided to fight back, who don't make excuses and who promote and practice the essence of Black fatherhood/manhood/brotherhood.

(Richard Rowe, 2012)

Rowe's (2012) piece is one that I believe honors all Black fathers who are a positive figure in their children's lives, despite tribulations. I believe there should be more work that praises these fathers to challenge the negative attention they often receive. Throughout my life, I have been questioned as to why I speak positively of African American fathers and act as an advocate for all fathers who support their children. I have always been willing to explain my situation to anyone who questions my reasoning. I do not question my peers when they continuously praise their mothers for taking care of them, but I am questioned because a mother raising her children alone is expected opposed to a father raising his children alone. I have always been a firm believer that it is vital to advocate for African American fathers and against the negative conceptualizations that are often placed upon them. For example, from my perspective in the Black community, Mother's Day is typically filled with joy of the praising of supportive mothers. On the other hand, Father's Day has become a day where mothers are praised for fulfilling roles of both parents and fathers are bashed for being absent. I believe that any single parent deserves to be recognized positively when raising children alone, but I also believe the negative stereotypes of Black fathers as absent and uninvolved should not be forced upon all African American fathers.

Although the voices of African American women are often silenced in scholarly research (Collins, 2009: Griffin, 2012; Houston, 2000), my goal has been to speak from a Black feminist point of view as a Black daughter who was raised primarily by my Black father. While all of my autoethnographic reflections were not pleasant and surfaced many difficult emotions, I feel obligated as a Black woman to utilize my access to education to positively narrate my experiences being raised by a Black man without the positive presence of my mother. For the first time, I have combined my personal and academic lives within my writing. I have rarely involved my personal life in the academy, especially personal reflections on my parents that I have kept locked away for such a long period of time. After autoethnographically revisiting these narratives, I realize that each parent has shaped the person that I am today, but my father in particular served as my introduction to characteristics of Black feminism. The pain and hurt that I have experienced fuels my fire of desire to become a parent like my father. Through him, I have also learned to seek the positive in situations despite the negative, and gained a sense of how strong I am.

I will never understand how a Black woman who has two daughters, with raced and gendered odds already stacked against them, could decide to be absent in their lives. As angry as I get with my mother, I can't help but be thankful and appreciative to have a present father who has picked up my mother's slack for years. He stepped up to be the parent that my sister and I needed. I will also never understand how he continued to remain in a situation that may have caused other fathers to leave. He stood by his daughters and successfully raised us to be the young women he wanted us to be. My father has been the true definition of a strong Black man who has supported his family. Because of my father, I have accomplished more than I imagined I could and plan to continue to reach for even higher goals. For this I thank him and will forever

be there when he needs me as a daughter and friend, just as he has been for me. In the next section I focus on the lessons I have learned from my father regarding Black feminism.

Black Feminist Lessons Learned

Long before I understood what a feminist was, my father was teaching my sister and me to embody Black feminism. We were taught intersectionality, voice, and self-determination as young Black women. These three characteristics of Black feminism have molded our identities, and still heavily influence us today. Although I assumed these lessons were pointless while growing up, I am thankful that I was taught to be a Black feminist by my father before I knew what feminism was. I have an appreciation for men like my father who challenge negative assumptions of what and who Black women can be. Guy-Sheftall (1993) addresses the silence surrounding Black males significance to profeminist activism; her work indicates that Black males have played a major role in profeminist activism. The participation of Black males has drawn attention to Black feminism. Thus there are Black men, like my father, who advocate for the rights and equality of Black women and they too deserve to be acknowledged. Brown (2008) suggests that men consider the pain of being kneed in the groin, to allow them to understand the daily agony women face. He says, “this is a daily experience for many women, and is even more desperate for those in communities where women have to protect their abusers and their families from social systems” (Brown, 2008, p. 9). Like Brown (2009), I think that my father did his best to anticipate the oppressive experiences that my sister and I are vulnerable to as Black women.

Similar to Brown (2008), my father also found it important for men to understand the challenges women undergo, and to teach my sister and I how to handle any challenges that come our way. Lorde (2007) focuses on the responsibility of Black men to establish their views within spaces where Black women are constantly oppressed. My father was sure to establish his

position once he realized he would be raising two daughters alone. Similar to Hopson (2009), my father was also keenly aware that society could limit Black women through "oppressive power" (p. 31). My father wanted us to understand oppressive powers and combat the challenges we would face at the intersections of race and gender.

Another Black feminist lesson that I learned from my father includes speaking up for myself and what I believe in. Voice was important in our household because my father believed "if we didn't use it we would loose it." He was a firm believer that as Black women we would be overlooked and silenced if we did not speak up for ourselves. My father, on the other hand, used his voice in a different way. He was often silenced by my mother because she threatened to take us away from him if he legally spoke about our situation. Although my father kept quiet during these times when I thought he should speak up, I realize his silence was a form of him utilizing his voice. Thus, his silence regarding the child support and my mother's negative actions fostered a stronger commitment to voice for my sister and me.

The last lesson is one that I believe has pushed me far within higher education and toward larger goals in life. I was taught that I could decide my own destiny, which translates into a Black feminist commitment to self-determination. To overcome such domination, Collins (2009) focuses on self-determination amongst African American women by encouraging women to reject the external influences of what and who they should be. She wants women to engage in self-determination to make their own decisions. I was constantly reminded to be the person I wanted to be rather than someone somebody else wanted me to be. If I wanted a position I was encouraged to go for it, even if I was unqualified or assumed to be unqualified. For example, when I was cut off by my male coworker at my internship acting as if my words were not valid to our supervisor, I made sure to speak up for myself because he attempted to silence my talent

and aspirations. Learning self-determination from my father has encouraged me to be ambitious in life. I was taught to be aware that my ideas would be challenged and that I would have to work harder than my White and/or male counterparts. hooks (1996) writes about the complexity of Black girlhood and the misunderstanding researchers have about Black girls and women. She suggests that Black girls continue to face potential domination in social hierarchies based on race, gender, and age. I believe that my father prepared my sister and me for this. In reflection on his parenting, I also relate to Gale (2012) when he speaks about being seduced by his dad's eyes and the impact their relationship has had on him. Through his piece about his father, Gale (2012) speaks to an emotional connection with his father, which I also have with mine. Like Gale (2012), I believe that my father will always play a major role in the person that I am and shape the parent that I aspire to be in the future.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research report was to reflect on my identity and experiences as an African American daughter raised by a single African American father. Given the scarcity of research on this topic, I positioned Black feminist thought (BFT) to forefront my autoethnograph narratives as means to create a space for my voice as an African American woman and narrate a positive representation of Black fatherhood. This study helps alleviate the lack of research on African American women in the field of communication (Griffin, 2012; Hurston & Thomas, 1989). Positioning the voices of Black daughters at the center of the conversation on Black fatherhood is important because many of us have had life-changing experiences with our Black fathers who have molded us into the Black feminist women we are today.

During the process of autoethnographically writing, I shared several emotional memories that have caused me to struggle. These struggles included strong emotions such as anger and

hurt. There were also powerful moments that forced me to stop writing at times to reflect on how much I really have been affected by being raised by my single father. Although there are struggles I am still battling, many of which are with my mother, I believe I have become a stronger person through my hardships and writing about them has been helpful. Lorde (2007) writes, “Once we know the extent to which we are capable of feeling that sense of satisfaction and completion, we can then observe which of our various life endeavors bring us closest to that fullness” (p. 55). Speaking about my parents has provided me with a sense of fullness that I was not aware was needed. From here, I plan to continue speaking positively about Black fathers, and being a voice for Black daughters being raised by their fathers. Furthermore, the lack of existing research emphasizing Black female voices has made me realize how vital my work is for all African American women, as well as their parents. This research report has taught me that as children we do not realize the struggles and sacrifices parents sometimes make. In addition, it has allowed me to critically reflect on my experiences and how much my father sacrificed to build a comfortable home for my sister and me.

My initial plan for this project was to conduct in-depth interviews with African American daughters raised in single Black father households. With the assistance and guidance from my advisor and committee, I decided to begin my research with my personal experiences as an African American woman raised by my single father before interviewing and analyzing other women’s experiences. By focusing on my background, I have explored my own feelings, childhood experiences, and the most influential memories of my father and mother. By starting with my own experiences, I feel that am better prepared to analyze those of other African American women in the future.

My attempt to bridge the gap between my experiences and those of other Black women raised by their fathers remains slightly limited since there is insufficient research on the topic and I have yet to conduct interviews. However, in the future I plan to conduct interviews to allow other Black daughters to share their personal narratives about being raised by their single Black fathers and use this project as a springboard into a larger conversation. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) write, "The qualitative interview is a storytelling zone par excellence. It is an opportunity for people to tell their stories as they see fit and, in so doing, to achieve some coherence in shaping their own understanding" (p. 174). During the interviews, there are several questions I want to ask the interviewees. These questions include, but are not limited to: "How has being raised by your single Black father influenced the woman you are today?" and "What is your most memorable experience about being raised by your single Black father?" Conducting interviews will broaden the scope of my understanding of the communicative relationship between Black daughters and fathers.

Overall, researching fathers and daughters has brought me a new appreciation for Black fathers and daughters. This is a topic that has always been and will always be a passion of mine. I believe my understanding of my Black father/daughter relationship has been broadened through Black feminist thought and autoethnography. Through this project, I realized that I kept many of my emotions bottled up over the years because I feared the negative reactions that would resurface. For example, there is anger that is still unresolved but I plan to channel my remaining anger into something positive. Put differently, my anger has not ended but rather has transformed into something unique through writing. To me, my anger and hurt have become a source of motivation to write, and more importantly, speak for myself. I have also learned that I do not have to be shameful about my positive relationship with my father or my negative relationship

with my mother. Overall, autoethnographically reminiscing on my life experiences has made me realize how much I have grown into the woman my father wanted me to be. Therefore, this writing process has given me a better understanding of my identity, Black feminism, as well as an even greater appreciation for African American fathers who are present in their children's lives. When I think about this research report, I consider Collins' (2009) words when she urges Black women to work towards "race uplift" (p. 211). I believe that utilizing Black feminism to guide my endeavor to liberate Black fathers from essentialist stereotypes has uplifted the Black community by acknowledging that Black men can be and are good Black fathers. I feel proud to have utilized Black feminist thought to create space for my own voice as well. In the future, I plan to continue my research on daughters being raised by their African American fathers because I believe it is imperative that we are provided a space to speak to our experiences. I am hopeful that my work will encourage others to speak to their experiences, as well as urge our discipline to provide a space for such crucial research.

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VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Dontevia Hall

Donteviah@gmail.com

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Bachelor of Arts, Speech Communication, May 2013

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