

Research Statement

My research examines the interplay of four topics; trauma, resilience, multiculturalism and attachment. Trauma and resilience serve as the center piece of my research while multiculturalism and attachment complement and adds an innovative perspective for understanding trauma and the effects on individuals and systems; more specifically the Black Community. I am interested in the effect's trauma has on development. For example, the killings of Black Americans and how these deaths traumatize Black American's by the masses. Trauma literature, more specifically the growing research around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and the inclusion of historical and societal trauma in the extended ACE's pyramid, highlights the importance of utilizing a multicultural perspective and including racism and oppression as a form of trauma.

My research seeks to support this movement and elucidate both large and subtle structures that assist in the replication of traumatic events. My inclusion of a multicultural perspective in my research provides the lens in which to highlight these trauma inducing systems, structures and/or forces. One area that I bring a multicultural perspective to is our current understanding of attachment. For instance, reading the attachment literature without the use of a multicultural perspective would deduce that ethnic groups outside of the Caucasian Western Culture are "insecurely attached;" which connotes less than adequate parenting skills as well as a increased risk of maladjustment for the child later in life. My research in this area suggest that a *cultural meaning of attachment* is needed within the attachment literature. Finally, my research on earned security, which is based in attachment but translates nicely into a kind of resilience, looks at factors within relationships that support positive development despite challenging significant parent-child relational problems. I see resilience as a relational term rather than an individualistic one. Another way in which I seek to support the development of resilience is through healthy relationships, more specifically sibling relationship for youth in foster care system. In addition, my utilization of the Mutli-Phase Model of Psychotherapy, Counseling, Human Rights and Social Justice (MPM) Model seeks to support the development of resilience through the support of a therapist and their cultural competence.

Three foundational articles that describe my research agenda are (a) *Mass Trauma in African Community: Using Multiculturalism to Build Resilient Systems*, (b) *Attachment & Multiculturalism*, and (c) *Earned Security in Adolescence*. *Mass Trauma in African Community: Using Multiculturalism to Build Resilient Systems* purports that the killings of unarmed Black American's is a mass trauma for the Black Community each time it occurs and uses the Mutli-Phase Model of Psychotherapy, Counseling, Human Rights and Social Justice (MPM) as an approach to treating individuals and families in therapy to help strengthen resiliency in this community. *Attachment & Multiculturalism* examines attachment using the Cultural Deficiency Model (CDM). The CDM emphasizes a monoculturalism orientation which biases Western Caucasian culture as the standard of health which is reflected in attachment research and literature. I suggest in *Attachment & Multiculturalism* that using a qualitative postmodern phenomenological approach in understanding the cultural meaning of attachment is needed in attachment research that reflects a better understanding of attachment across cultures. Lastly,

Earned Security in Adolescence looks to better understand the positive formation of identity in spite of difficult relational experiences and assess attachment beyond dyadic structures. Specifically, investigating systemic structures such as religion and parents' career that can have a major impact of the parent-child relationship. In general, my research is focused on addressing and better understanding the misfortune of negative life experience, or trauma, and looking at such negative experience through alternative lenses. I utilize a multicultural and social justice lens, to develop innovative, culturally relevant ways for working with individuals from diverse backgrounds to enhance their resilience. Other relevant research projects that I have engaged in include: *Trauma informed schools: Building resilience using a whole school approach* which looks at how to incorporate and improve trauma-informed practices in schools at the elementary level and *Sibling Relationship in Foster Care: Foster Parent Perspective* which is a qualitative study that captures the importance of sibling relationships for those in the foster care system and seeks to develop an intervention to help support sibling relationships.

Throughout my doctoral education, I have worked with Dr. Armeda Wojciak on two major research projects; trauma-informed care (grant funded) and sibling relationships in the foster care system. In both research venues, research teams were formed in order to enhance the research experience and progress in research goals. Research in the trauma-informed care has consisted of working with the Community College School District. Monthly trainings were established for both teachers and para-professionals which included topics such as self-care, toxic stress, compassion fatigue and an explanation of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's and their effects on the brain). This project consisted of a mixed methods research design and included a pre-and post-survey to capture teachers understanding of trauma-informed care and what it means to work in a trauma informed environment as well as focus groups to capture staff's perspective of the training. The project that examined sibling relationships of youth in the foster system consisted of interviewing foster parents, caseworkers and former foster youth about their experience and recommendations for the foster care system. These interviews were transcribed and grounded theory was utilized for the purpose of creating an intervention to help support sibling relationships for youth in the foster care system.

My passion for research comes from a social justice and multicultural orientation which is to better understand those that are most often misunderstood and address the systemic forces that continue to oppress and marginalize these misunderstood groups. As an African American first-generation college student, who has experienced significant levels of trauma, I have personally witnessed the impact that a lack of knowledge and understanding of different cultures has across many societal institutions. Unfortunately, without such insight and research to bring awareness to the misinformation or lack of inclusion of marginalized groups, institutions can become laced with intentional or non-intentional biases that help to further marginalize disadvantaged groups.