



I'LL JUST WEIGHT ON THE LORD:  
SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH BEHAVIORS IN OBESE  
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

# COURSE OBJECTIVES

**Examine**

Examine some common health misconceptions in the study population.

**Assess**

Assess the role of community level interventions for this population.

**Discuss**

Discuss the implications of obesity in this population.

# KNOWLEDGE & OPINION CHECKPOINT

- Which diseases are linked to obesity?
- What is the annual estimated costs of obesity related medical care?
- For every five African American Women, how many are likely to be overweight or obese?
- Do you think there is a relationship between “soul food” and affection for one’s family? Why or Why Not?
- How much time and effort do you invest at a beauty/barber shop? Why?
- Does discrimination occur in the healthcare setting?



# OBESITY



*Four Stars*

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Obesity is a multifaceted, pervasive, chronic health condition
- Obesity has reached epidemic proportions
- The health-related risks associated with obesity increases

## PURPOSE

To reflect and discuss a phenomenological study that explored the lived experiences of obese African American women with attention and focus on their weight, health behaviors, and the role that spirituality plays in those decisions.

“He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.”

~Friedrich Nietzsche



# LITERATURE REVIEW

- Distinctions between black Americans
- Obesity in African American women
  - Perception of obesity
  - Strategies
  - Barriers
- Health care for obese African American women
- Financial Cost
  - Poverty vs Middle Class

# LITERATURE REVIEW CONT.

- Spirituality
  - Religious
  - Theistic
  - Existential
- Health Behaviors
  - Physical Activity
  - Nutrition
- Gaps

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the lived experience of obese African American women?

- Perceptions of spirituality?
- Perceptions of weight status (obesity) and its impact on health?
- Perceptions of health behaviors?





# RESEARCH STUDY DESIGN

Qualitative,  
Phenomenological  
Study

Critical Social Theory

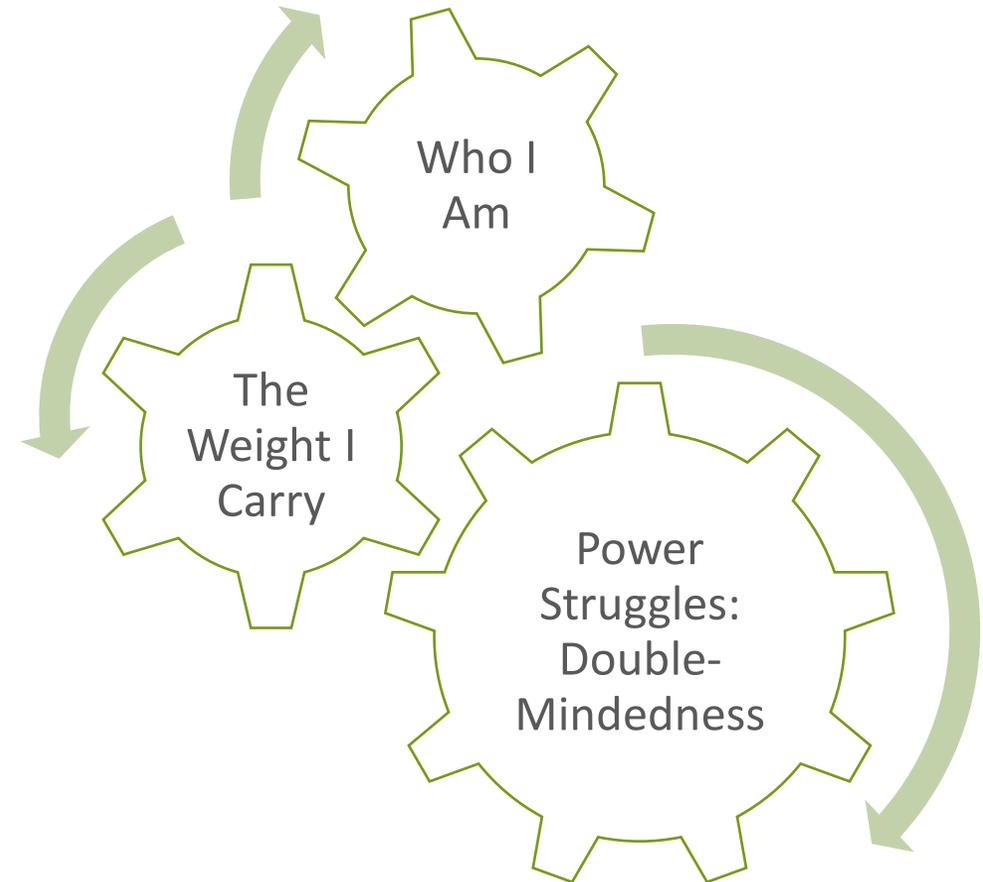
Study Population

African American  
women, southern  
middle TN area

Inclusion and Exclusion  
Criteria

# FINDINGS

- Who I Am
  - Spiritual and Religious Guidance – Shaped by my Family and History – Cultural and Environmental Influences
- The Weight I Carry
  - The Burden on my Life – Burden on my Family
- Power Struggle: Double-Mindedness
  - Intrinsic Factors – Extrinsic Factors – Health Care Experiences



# FINDINGS: WHO I AM



- Definition:
  - Who I am, encompasses the most frequently described attributes of how these women see themselves, who they are, and why they do what they do.
- Sub-Themes
  - Spiritual and Religious Guidance
  - Shaped by my Family and History
  - Cultural and Environmental Influences

# FINDINGS: WHO I AM

## SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS GUIDANCE

- A spiritual/religious being:
  - “I believe in treat others as you would want to be treated. And so spirituality is very important to me. That is a part of me trying to live...”
- God requires certain things from me:
  - “I know that I did not get myself up. I know that... So I have to extend grace to others because of grace that is given to me”
- Shaped by my Family and History
  - “as a black woman, have to take the world and then also the plight and responsibilities of black America and put it on your back and you have to soar...”
- Cultural and Environmental Influences
  - “I spend a lot of time at the hair dresser so the thought of sweating out my hair is stressful to me.”

# FINDINGS: THE WEIGHT I CARRY



- Definition:
  - The weight I carry is represented as the consequences of who I am. The consequences include the struggles, the problems, and the disappointments experienced by these women.
- Sub-Themes
  - The Burden on my Life
  - Burden on my Family

# FINDINGS: THE WEIGHT I CARRY

- The Burden on my Life
  - “... I give everybody what they need because I know I’m not getting it. So somebody needs to get it.”
- Burden on my Family:
  - “I can’t go many places and my family doesn’t understand”



# FINDINGS: POWER STRUGGLE

- Power Struggle: Double-Mindedness
  - Power struggle is defined as the disagreement between situations and concepts be it in thought, word, or behavior stemming from the same individual. In this study the overarching power struggle identified was double-mindedness.
  - Secular (Within one individual resides two identities)
  - Religious (James 1: 3-8)
- Sub-Themes
  - Intrinsic Factors
  - Extrinsic Factors
  - Health Care Experiences



# FINDINGS: POWER STRUGGLE

## INTRINSIC FACTORS

- “I have congestive heart failure, I have cholesterol problems. Uh, it hasn’t moved and it hasn’t gone because God’s not going to allow that to happen. This is happening to me because it’s supposed to.”

## EXTRINSIC FACTORS

- Nutrition:
  - “I cook how my momma cooked and that’s just how my granny cooked too”
- Exercise:
  - “It’s hard to exercise because I have to go to work and my hair is a process”
  - “I don’t have wash and go hair”

## HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCES

- “My parents won’t go to the doctor because of things that happened a long time ago. The trust just don’t exist. They just prefer to wait on God to do whatever He’s going to do.”



## DISCUSSION: WHO I AM

Spiritual Identity

Self-Care denied for Self-Sacrifice

Superwoman

Aesthetically pleasing hair

Perception of the “curvy” woman



## DISCUSSION: THE WEIGHT I CARRY

The impact on family

Must be a means to  
an end

Service is an act of  
love

# DISCUSSION: POWER STRUGGLES

- Power Struggles
  - Intrinsic
    - Will He or Won't He
    - Two-Identities
  - Extrinsic
    - Different Motivation
    - Nutrition: Communal Acceptance
    - Exercise:
      - Acceptable Hair
      - Means to an End
  - Health Care Experiences



## Practice

- Diversity in Healthcare Providers
- Direct Community Interactions
- Focus Groups

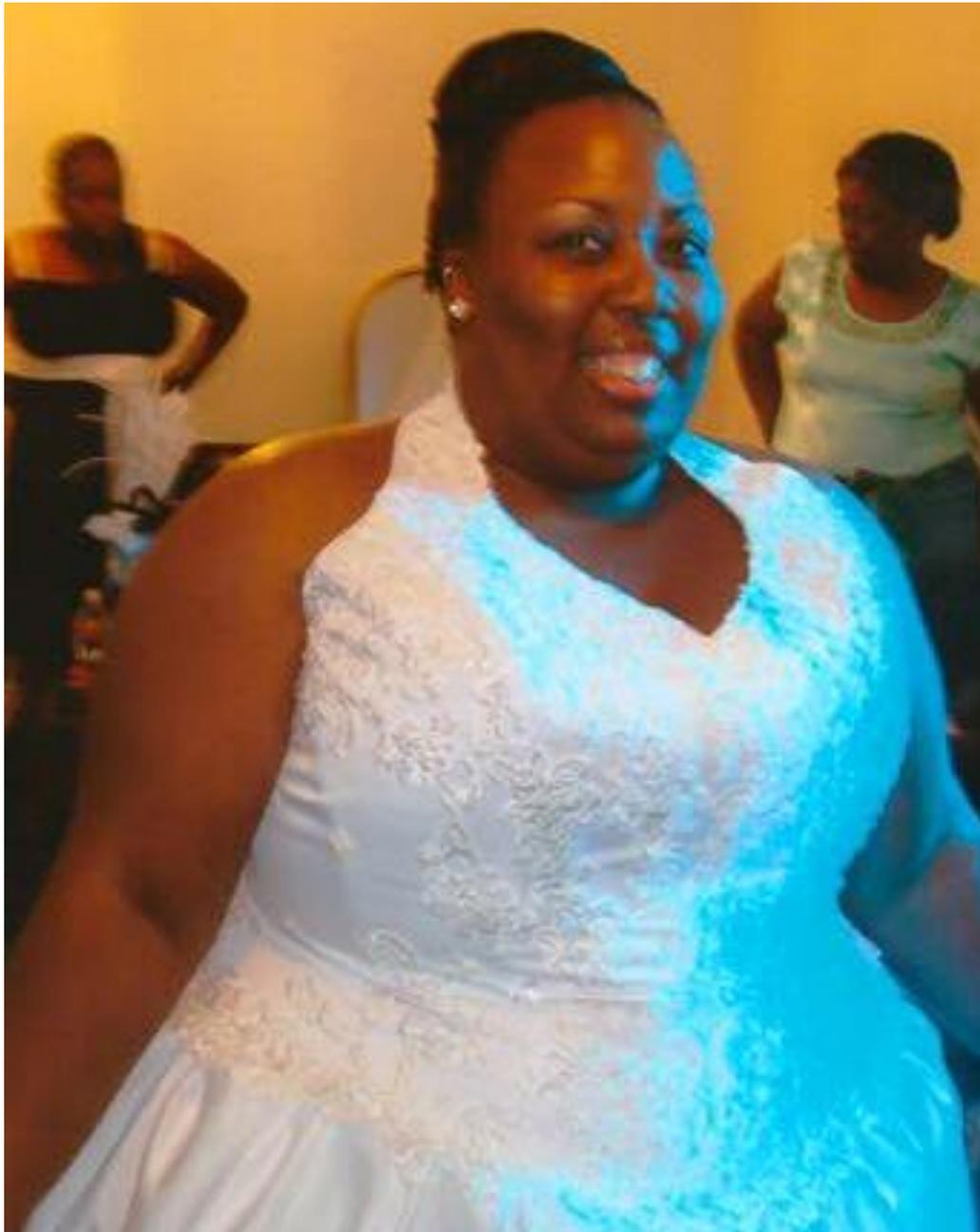
## Policy

- Financial Cost of Health Behaviors
- Culturally Relevant Meal Prep
- Educational Television Programs

## Research

- Community Based Research
- Two Identities that Exist with African Americans
- Partnership with Beauty Salons

# NURSING IMPLICATION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS



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“THE CLIMB MIGHT BE  
TOUGH AND CHALLENGING,  
BUT THE VIEW IS WORTH IT.  
THERE IS A PURPOSE FOR  
THAT PAIN; YOU JUST CAN'T  
ALWAYS SEE IT RIGHT AWAY.”

~VICTORIA ARLEN

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION!!!

