AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN’S ENDORSEMENT OF THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN IDEOLOGY: THE INFLUENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND ATTITUDES TOWARD SEEKING MENTAL HELP

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Abstract: In the African American community, stigma exists about mental illness and those who seek and receive professional help. African American women who are experiencing depression may be especially susceptible to the stigma of mental illness and may therefore hold negative attitudes about professional help. Furthermore, endorsement of cultural ideologies (i.e., Superwoman, “Strong Black woman”) may mediate (i.e. reduce the strength) of the relationship between anhedonic depression and help-seeking attitudes because the script heightens concerns about stigma and affects attitudes towards seeking help from professionals. The Mood and Anxiety Symptom Questionnaire (MAS-Q), Stereotypic Roles for Black Women Scale (SRBWS), and the Inventory of Attitudes toward Seeking Mental Health Services (IASMHS) were employed in this study with 95 African American women ages 18-65 (M = 30, SD = 15.75). Regression analyses were used to investigate the research question: does the endorsement of the “Strong Black woman” ideology mediate the relationship between anhedonic depression and help-seeking propensity? The findings did support evidence consistent with the extant literature; anhedonic depression was associated with less help-seeking propensity. In addition, endorsement of the “Strong Black woman” ideology was associated with less help-seeking propensity and anhedonic depression was positively associated with endorsement of the “Strong Black woman” ideology. However, evidence of mediation was not supported.

Key words: African American women, cultural ideology, Strong Black woman ideology, help-seeking attitudes, Superwoman

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