



“They Just Keep Coming”: A Study of How Anti-Black Racial Violence Informs Racial Grief and Resistance Among Black Mothers

Seanna Leath¹ · Sheretta Butler-Barnes² · Latoya Haynes-Thoby³

Accepted: 15 August 2022 / Published online: 9 September 2022

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2022

Abstract

Scholars have begun to address how exposure to vicarious racial violence influences stress and coping processes among Black families in the U.S. Yet, fewer scholars have considered the importance of racial grief as a component of the coping process. The current study drew upon semi-structured interview data from 31 Black mothers in the U.S. (25–52 years; $M_{\text{age}} = 35$ years) to explore how mothers processed and responded to vicarious anti-Black racial violence. We used consensual qualitative research methods and identified the following themes: (a) recognizing the endemic nature of racial violence, (b) feeling frozen in fear after a new case of racial violence, and (c) transforming grief into grievance as a route to racial justice. The findings contextualize Black mothers’ concerns about the racial violence that they and their children might experience during their lifetime, and how they channel this grief into actionable change against racial injustice. Authors discuss strengths-based ways to frame the role of grief and loss in the context of racism.

Keywords Black mothers · Racial violence · Racial grief · Reproductive justice · Maternal health

Highlights

- The endemic nature of anti-Black racial violence in the news informs Black mothers’ racial socialization practices. In addition to monitoring the content of their children’s social media intake to limit their exposure to vicarious racial trauma, Black mothers may also intentionally counterbalance messages to their children on racial bias and discrimination with affirmations that their children should live authentically and joyfully.
- Theories of racial stress and coping should include conceptualizations of racial grief and trauma for Black mothers, which may differ based on their exposure to racial violence, their general sense of racial coping efficacy, as well as available personal and interpersonal supports.
- Our findings extend current studies on Black families’ race-related coping processes by framing Black mothers’ vicarious exposure to anti-Black racial violence as a reproductive justice and maternal health issue.

“Love is profoundly political. Our deepest revolution will come when we understand this truth. Only love can give us the strength to go forward in the midst of heartbreak. Only love can give us the power to renew weary spirits.” (Hooks 2001, p. 16)

On April 11, 2021, 20-year-old Daunte Wright (Table 1)¹ called his mother just minutes before ex-officer Kimberly Potter, shot and killed him during a routine traffic stop. In an interview, his mother stated, “A police officer asked him to hang up the phone. I tried calling back-to-back because I didn’t know what was going on. That was the last time I heard from my son” (Yan, 2021). Wright’s murder occurred a mere 16 miles away from where former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd the year before. Moments before his death, Floyd shouted out,

✉ Seanna Leath
leath@wustl.edu

¹ Psychological and Brain Sciences Department, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, USA

² School of Social Work, Brown School, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, USA

³ Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, USA

¹ Given the focus of the study, we intentionally name several individuals who were harmed or killed due to anti-Black racialized violence. Table 1 includes brief, specific details about each case for those who are less familiar with these incidents.

Table 1 Incidents of racialized violence cited in study

Name and age at time of incident	Month and year of incident	General Details
Daunte Wright, 20	April 2021	Pulled over for a traffic violation. Officer allegedly mistook a taser for a handgun and shot him. Died of a gunshot wound to the chest.
George Floyd, 46	May 2020	Pulled over for alleged counterfeit transaction with a \$20 bill. Died after being handcuffed and pinned to the ground by an officer's knee for over nine minutes.
Ma'Khia Bryant, 16	April 2021	Officer called to residential home for physical altercation between teenage girls. Died after being shot four times.
Shakara*, 16	October 2015	School resource officer wrapped his arm around her neck, flipped her over a desk, dragged her across the carpeted ground, and put her in handcuffs.
Trayvon Martin, 17	February 2012	Chased and gunned down by neighborhood vigilante while walking home from a trip to the convenience store. Died after being shot at point blank range.
Breonna Taylor, 26	March 2020	Officers forced entry into her apartment as part of an alleged drug dealing investigation. Died after being shot by at least six bullets.
Tamir Rice, 12	November 2014	Officers called to recreational center about an "adult male pointing a pistol." Died after being shot once in the torso. Alleged pistol was a toy gun.
Daniel Prude ^b , 41	March 2020	Officers called to neighborhood in response to man walking naked in the street. Prior to his death, it was confirmed that Daniel was having mental health episode from ingested substances. Died from aphysixiation after being physically restrained using a spit hood.
Michael Ramos, 42	April 2020	Officers called to neighborhood on false drug deal allegations. After officer fired "less lethal" bean bag ammunition, Michael got into his car and began driving out of a parking spot. Died after being shot three times while in the vehicle.
Dreasjon Reed, 21	May 2021	Dreasjon exited car after a mobile police chase on a highway. Officer used his service weapon after a taser deployment was "ineffective." Died after being shot in the back while fleeing the scene.
Tony McDade ^{a,b} , 38	May 2020	Tony was approached by an officer as a suspect in a crime that had taken place earlier in the day. Died after being shot by officer who stated that Tony allegedly pulled a gun and "made a move consistent with using the firearm."
Aiyana Stanley-Jones, 7	May 2010	During a night police raid for a suspect who was not in the apartment, Aiyana was shot in the head and killed by an officer. She was asleep on the couch at the time of the raid.
Ahmaud Arbery, 25	February 2020	While jogging in a neighborhood, Ahmaud was pursued by three vigilante White men in a truck who believed he was "suspicious." Died after one assailant shot him three times after refusing to let him return on his jog.
Michelle Cusseaux ^b , 50	August 2014	During a welfare check, Michelle refused to let four officers into her apartment. When officers tried to remove her door, Michelle opened it while holding a hammer. Died after being shot point-blank range in the chest.
Jamycheal Mitchell ^b , 24	August 2015	Died in jail after being arrested for stealing \$5 worth of snacks. When he was found dead in a feces-smear cell, he'd lost a fifth of his body weight, while still awaiting trial or treatment.
Sandra Bland, 28	July 2015	Arrested and forcibly detained during a routine traffic stop. Found hanged in her jail cell three days later. Death was ruled a suicide. Family settled wrongful death suit for \$1.9 million.

Note. Table is organized in order that each person is introduced within the study. To maintain consistency in the "General Details" column, we pulled information from a *New York Times* article for each incident. Authors confirmed that additional details on each incident can be found through a general internet search

*Last name not included to protect youth's confidentiality in news reports

^aIdentified as a member of the Black LGBTQ QIA+ community, who are more likely to be targeted by police for stops and arrests than non-LGBTQ individuals and are overrepresented in prison populations as a result (Mahowald, 2021)

^bKnown diagnosis or challenges with mental health disorders prior to incident of racial violence

“Momma! Momma! I’m through,” invoking his deceased mother’s spiritual protection and love (O’Neal, 2020). These are but two of the myriad examples of highly publicized anti-Black racial violence that have occurred in the United States (U.S.), and scholars have begun to examine how exposure to *vicarious racial violence* (i.e., indirect exposure to racial violence such as witnessing police brutality on social media) influences racial stress and coping processes among Black parents and their children (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Lawson, 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). This scholarship highlights the collective racial grief that reverberates through Black communities when a new story of anti-Black racial violence by police officers (Ma’Khia Bryant), school officials (Shakara at Spring Valley High School), or White vigilantes (Trayvon Martin), is broadcast on television news sources or goes viral on different social media platforms (Harrell, 2000; Waldron, 2020). As stated by Grinage (2019), “when Black people attempt to mourn, new losses often emerge before they can process the old ones” (p. 228).

The current qualitative study adds to this body of work by bridging racial stress and coping literature (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Anderson et al., 2019) with a Black feminist framework of racial grief (Nayak, 2019) to contextualize how Black mothers process highly publicized incidents of anti-Black racial violence. How do Black mothers mourn the preventable losses of Black children in a white supremacist society, as they welcome, raise, and love on their own? As some of the earliest racial socialization agents for their children, Black mothers have a foundational influence on how Black youth understand, process, and navigate racial bias and discrimination (Jones & Neblett, 2017; Neblett et al., 2008; Varner & Mandara, 2013; Varner et al., 2020), and scholars have documented Black mothers’ critical role in preparing youth to cope with racial discrimination in ways that support a strong sense of self (Brown et al., 2010; McHale et al., 2006) and protect their psychological wellbeing (McNeil Smith et al., 2016; Saleem et al., 2020; Smith-Bynum et al., 2016). Yet, less of this work considers the influence of vicarious racial trauma (Leath et al., 2021; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015; Threlfall, 2018), or the ways that Black mothers may use racial grief as a resource for sociopolitical change (Joe et al., 2019). Drawing on in-depth interview data from the summer of 2020, we consider the possibilities of Black maternal politics (Lawson, 2018) by exploring how Black mothers’ exposure to vicarious racial violence informs their narrations of racial stress, coping, grief, and resistance.

Vicarious Racial Violence and Black Maternal Health

Racial violence against Black Americans is a public health crisis in the U.S., and the proliferation of news coverage on

anti-Black racial violence through television sources and social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok), may increase Black parent and children’s exposure to vicarious racial violence (American Public Health Association, 2020). *Vicarious racial violence*, such as witnessing an incident of police brutality in-person or replayed on a television screen, is emotionally, physically, and psychologically taxing for those who experience and/or witness it (Anderson et al., 2018; Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Carter, 2007; Helms et al., 2010). Amidst growing calls to recognize and address the negative effects of vicarious racial violence on the health and wellbeing of Black Americans (American Public Health Association, 2020; Mosley et al., 2021; Sosoo et al., 2022), a few scholars have begun to highlight how vicarious racial trauma represents a maternal health issue (Joe et al., 2019; Mehra et al., 2022; Tyler, 2022). From a reproductive justice standpoint, Black mothers should have: (a) the right to maintain bodily autonomy, (b) the ability to choose whether to have children, and (c) the freedom to parent their children in safe and sustainable communities (Rogers, 2015). Thus, vicarious racial trauma represents a Black maternal health concern, in so far as it restricts Black mothers’ capacity to raise their children safely, free from the concern that they or their children will experience racial violence or other forms of racial bias and discrimination.

For instance, in a recent study, Mehra et al., (2022) found that Black pregnant women (21–45 years; $M_{\text{age}} = 32$ years), reported feelings of anticipation, fear, and stress regarding police brutality towards their children – before their children were even born. The mothers’ perceptions of how police might treat their children in the future were based on personal beliefs, familial experiences, and community-level policing norms; yet even participants who reported positive experiences with police anticipated negative treatment towards their children based on their racial group membership. Their findings expand upon a few other studies indicating that vicarious racial violence can contribute to significant forms of psychological distress among Black mothers (Joe et al., 2019; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015), particularly as mothers think about what to communicate to their children about the disparate racial norms in a society that devalues Black people (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; McNeil Smith et al., 2016). Evidence suggests that the psychological distress that some Black mothers experience in response to vicarious racial violence, derives in part, from the uncertainty of whether they or their loved ones will have the same type of racialized encounter in the future (Joe et al., 2019; Leath et al., 2021; Mehra et al., 2022). Thus, as more scholars consider how vicarious experiences of racism influence Black family processes, it is necessary to examine the interplay between Black mothers’ exposure to vicarious racial stressors and their

racially specific emotional regulation and coping skills (Anderson et al., 2019; Blackmon & Thomas, 2015).

Racial Stress and Coping among Black Mothers

Anti-Black state and community violence negatively affect Black mothers' psychological and physical health (Davis, 2016; Jackson et al., 2017), and may alter their parenting behaviors (Jackson & Turney, 2021; Joe et al., 2019). For instance, Joe et al., (2019) found that African American mothers in their study relived the psychological trauma of media exposure to anti-Black racial violence involving African American boys and young men, even though most of their sons had not had harmful interactions with police officers or been directly exposed to racial violence. Several mothers stated that they tried to mask their anxious and fearful emotions at home with their sons because they were concerned that their sadness would negatively affect them. They also described several ways that they coped with their racialized fears, such as engaging in self-care, journaling, prayer, and connecting with other Black mothers. In all, the findings from this study and related work (Mehra et al., 2022; Tyler, 2022) suggests that Black mothers may struggle to process vicarious racial violence—both personally and with their children—and scholars have called for more culturally grounded evidence on the best ways to effectively support Black families in coping with racial stress and trauma (Anderson et al., 2018; Malina et al. 2017).

In the current study, we draw upon Anderson and Stevenson's (2019) theory of racial stress and trauma (RECAST) to consider how Black mothers process and respond to vicarious racial violence in the news. This model of racial stress and trauma highlights the importance of the *racial stress appraisal process*, or the process by which individuals recognize that an encounter is racial and process how the encounter influences their cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions. In addition to the initial appraisal process, RECAST includes *racial coping reappraisal* and *decision-making processes*, which refer to the cognitive strategies that individuals use to reevaluate a situation and determine its threat potential and manageability. Specifically, individuals evaluate racial stressors as "benign, beneficial, and/or meaningful" (Garland et al., 2011, p. 60) during the reappraisal process, and strategize potential resolutions to a racial stressor that are within their capacity during the decision-making process (for visual model, see Anderson & Stevenson, 2019, p. 67).

For instance, following a highly publicized incident of racial violence (e.g., the murder of Mike Brown), Black mothers may appraise the racialized nature of the situation (i.e., 18-year-old Black teen was walking down the street with a friend and was gunned down by police), and notice

their mental and physical responses (feelings of anger, shock, fear, or disbelief). During the reappraisal and decision-making process, they may assess their available coping resources (i.e., disengagement from the issue, venting to others, expressing emotions, or participating in a protest), and start to engage in various behaviors to help resolve their sense of racial stress. In line with this, studies find that Black parents often have conversations with family members, friends, or their children in which they recount personal experiences of racial discrimination (Dunbar et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2020), communicate fears for their safety (Kincade & Fox, 2022; Mehra et al., 2022), and offer information about coping-related strategies (Leath et al., 2021; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015; Threlfall, 2018). Overall, we use this theory to explore the nature of Black mothers' responses to vicarious racial violence, with a particular focus on racial grief as an understudied, but critical component of the racial stress and coping process.

A Black Feminist Framework of Racial Grief

Black mothers raise their children in a society that benefits from and continues to maintain the legitimacy of anti-Black racial violence (Lawson, 2018; Waldron, 2020). As scholars draw more attention to the physically and psychologically traumatic effects of racism (Metzger et al., 2021; Wilkins et al., 2013; Williams & Mohammed, 2009), some have articulated how *racial grief* represents a normative and adaptive coping response to living in an anti-Black, racist society (Dumas, 2014; Joe et al., 2019; Lawson, 2018). In the current study, racial grief refers to individual's cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual responses to loss due to racism and intersectional violence.

We use Nayak's (2019) Black feminist framework of racial grief as an entry point to explore Black mothers' coping responses to anti-Black racial violence, with a particular focus on Black mothers' occupation of racial grief as a resource to challenge the oppressive social practices and systemic structures that contribute to the loss of so many Black lives in the U.S. Nayak writes:

To occupy something means to live, reside, lodge or dwell somewhere and to be occupied with something means to be busy or working with something. Thus, the idea of occupying racial grief is to recognize that living within racism produces loss and grief; racial grief is a symptom of living within the context of racism. However, rather than being busy in the work of getting rid of the grief that racism causes, an alternative idea is to be occupied or busy in the work of understanding how racial grief can be harnessed as a force for collective

action directed against the multiple interconnected social injustices of racism (p. 353).

This framework encourages scholars to make sense of Black mothers' racial grief and coping processes from a strengths-based perspective, given its articulation of racial grief as an agentic, collective, and healing-focused response to societal racial oppression, rather than an individual and pathological response that requires a remedy. Within the metaphor of occupation, Nayak explains how contemporary racial injustice connects to the legacy of historical racial trauma that Black communities have experienced in the U.S., particularly in trying to reconcile the fundamental tension between the country's democratic ideals and the ongoing normalization of anti-Black racial violence (Martinot, 2010). Furthermore, Nayak's framework of racial grief acknowledges the dialectic reality of racial violence and anti-racist efforts; specifically, the same systemic injustices that contribute to experiences of grief and loss, often ignite the emotional energy and collective action of Black feminist movement building (Hill Collins, 2000; Smith, 2017). Finally, it offers the theoretical space to explore how and why some Black mothers transform the private pain caused by racial violence into a politically focused, maternally informed activism (Lawson, 2018).

For instance, within this framework, we can understand the significance of Mamie Till's decision to host an open casket funeral for her son, Emmett Till, after he was brutally murdered in August 1955 by white vigilante citizens who felt protected by anti-Black cultural and legal practices in the U.S. She insisted that she "wanted the whole world to see," and in doing so, brought herself and her son into a community of mourners who intimately understood the fragility of Black lives within the U.S. racial state (Feldstein, 2000). Emmett's lynching galvanized civil rights movements in the 1950s, in much the same way that the murders of Trayvon Martin, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd spurred the emergence and resurgence of Black Lives Matter protests in the 21st century.

Thus, in relation to the current study, Nayak's framework of racial grief provides a nuanced lens to contextualize Black women's maternal politics in response to vicarious racialized violence. As Leader (2008) stated, "the cliché that losses need to be worked through so that we can move beyond them suggests that mourning is something that can be done and dusted...living with loss is what matters" (p. 99). We propose that some Black mothers learn to 'live with loss,' by channeling their grief over anti-Black racial violence into personal and political activism. Our study findings will add to broader literature on racial stress and coping processes among Black families, particularly regarding how Black mothers socialize their children to understand grief and loss in the context of anti-Black racial violence.

Method

Study Overview

This study emerged from a larger mixed methods study (*The Black Mother's Conscious Parenting Study*; PI: Dr. Seanna Leath) examining how systemic racial inequalities influence Black mothers' parenting practices, with a particular focus on how Black mothers integrate sociopolitical awareness and socioemotional development into their relationships with their children. While some researchers have suggested that harsh disciplinary practices (e.g., spanking) are common within Black communities, many of these studies lack a sociohistorical understanding of the challenges associated with raising and protecting Black children within an anti-Black society (Patton, 2017). Within the larger study, Dr. Leath set out to challenge the narrative that "corporal punishment is a Black thing," by highlighting how many Black mothers use disciplinary methods that focus on children's positive socioemotional development rather than physical violence or shaming strategies. During the interviews, we explored intergenerational disciplinary practices and Black family dynamics, by asking the mothers to elaborate on how anti-Black racism may have informed their parents' childrearing practices, as well as their own. Data collection occurred in the summer of 2020, during a surge of protests against anti-Black systemic racism and police brutality after the murder of George Floyd.

Scholarly Reflexivity and Positionality

Given the importance of acknowledging how researchers' lived experiences influence every aspect of the research process (Aguayo-Romero, 2021), we offer insight into our positionalities as scholars. As Black women scholars and "outsiders within" academia (Collins, 1986), we have confronted the challenge of having our knowledge claims invalidated within Eurocentric epistemological constraints. Still, our insider experiences as Black feminist scholars, educators, and mothers enhanced our ability to analyze and honor the social and emotional processes that the mothers revealed in their interviews regarding vicarious racial trauma. The lead author and PI is an assistant professor in psychology with over eight years of research experience on the identity development processes of Black girls and women. She is a cisgender Black woman from a working-class background with four children. The second author is an associate professor in developmental psychology with over 13 years of research experience on the impact of racism and the use of strength-based assets on the educational and health outcomes of Black American families. She is a cisgender Black woman with two children. The third author is an assistant professor in human development and

counseling education with over eight years of research expertise on trauma prevention and trauma-responsive counseling, particularly for marginalized communities. She is a cisgender Black woman with three children.

Participants

The current sample included 31 Black mothers (25–52 years old, $M_{\text{age}} = 35$ years) from across the U.S. The women were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including 23 women who identified as African American or Black American, four biracial Black women, two women who identified as African (from Ghana and Zimbabwe), and two Afro Caribbean women. Household income ranged from \$20,000 to \$160,000 (median = \$90,000). Regarding education, three women had at least some college, eight had earned their bachelor's degree, and 20 had a graduate degree (i.e., Master's, PhD, MD, or JD). On a self-report item on neighborhood racial composition (% Black), 12 women indicated they lived in neighborhoods that were less than 20% Black, five indicated their neighborhoods were 21–40% Black, three reported that their neighborhoods were 41–60% Black, and 10 women indicated their neighborhoods were 61–100% Black. In relation to disability status and neurodiversity, 13 mothers reported they had anxiety, eight reported they had depression, four mothers indicated they had attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), and 15 reported that they did not have any known conditions. Some of these conditions were comorbid (i.e., a mother reported anxiety and depression). See Table 2 for demographic information on each mother.

Procedures

After obtaining university IRB approval, the primary investigator (PI) posted announcements on several social media platforms for Black mothers in March - May 2020 (e.g., Conscious Parenting for the Culture and Black Mothers of Black Daughters). She reposted online recruitment ads until the targeted number of mothers signed up for interviews, based on recommendations from Hill (2012) on reaching theoretical saturation with 15–25 participants. In total, 52 Black mothers reached out to the email address provided in the online recruitment ad to schedule a time for an individual interview with a member of the research team. The interview team consisted of two Black women and one Latina woman (the PI and two graduate students). Given the in-person safety restrictions due to COVID-19, we conducted interviews through zoom (a video conferencing platform) or by phone. Before starting the interview, the mothers completed a survey with demographic items (ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious orientation, educational attainment, and racial composition of their neighborhood

(% Black residents)). Interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 50–120 min (mean = 90 min). The mothers were compensated \$30 for participation. The PI sent the audio files out for professional transcription. Once the transcription service returned the written file, a member of the research team reviewed the file for accuracy.

Interview Protocol

The data collection involved a standard set of questions for each interview, and additional probing questions that we asked based on the nature of the conversation. This approach allowed the interview team to collect reliable interview data on the topics of interest, with supplementary questions that interviewers could use based on the natural flow of the conversation. The interview protocol had four main sections: (a) mothers' disciplinary experiences during childhood; (b) mothers' current parenting practices with their children; (c) mothers' race-related beliefs and experiences; and (d) their advice for other Black mothers. In relation to the current study, the protocol included a few specific questions about racial discrimination and racial violence: "In what ways do you plan to prepare your children to cope with racism?" and "In the age of social media, we are exposed to frequent stories of police brutality and violence against Black people and communities. To what extent do these stories influence you as a mother? How do you process them?" We conducted these interviews in March through May of 2020 during a resurgence of Black Lives Matter protests after the slayings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd; thus, many mothers talked about their race-related concerns for their children throughout the interview. With this in mind, we reviewed the full transcripts for coding analysis.

Coding Analysis

The coding team utilized consensual qualitative research (CQR) methods (Hill, 2012) to analyze the mothers' narratives. Six main tenets of CQR made it an appropriate analytical frame for the current study. Specifically, CQR methods involve: (1) using open-ended interview questions to encourage in-depth responses from interviewees, (2) focusing on participants' words and stories rather than numbers as the key sources of data, (3) attending to the entirety of an interviewee's narrative to contextualize specific responses, (4) relying on multiple perspectives with at least three primary coders to conduct the data analysis and at least one external auditor to review the work of the primary team, (5) reaching a consensus among coding team members, and (6) placing a strong emphasis on data trustworthiness through reliability processes like member checking. The coding team included the PI, as well as two

Table 2 Summary of mothers' demographic information

Name	Ethnicity	Children (Gender and Ages)	Neighborhood (% Black)	Education Level
Addie ^a	African American	D - (4) and S - (3)	61–80%	Bachelor's degree
Adella ^a	African American & Puerto Rican	S - (4)	Unreported	Graduate degree
Aicha	African American & Irish	D - (5 & 3) and S - (3 months)	41–60%	Graduate degree
Amanda ^a	African American	S - (6) and D - (6 months)	Less than 20%	Graduate degree
Ayanna ^b	African American	S - (5) and D - (1)	Less than 20%	Graduate degree
Barbara ^a	African American	D - (4)	Less than 20%	Bachelor's degree
Bozoma ^a	African American & Mexican	S - (14) and D - (12)	Less than 20%	Bachelor's degree
Brittney	African American	D - (2)	21–40%	Some college
Cori	African American	S - (3) and D - (3)	Less than 20%	Bachelor's degree
Cynthia ^a	African American	D - (2)	Less than 20%	Graduate degree
Danielle ^a	African American	D - (13, 11, 9, & 7) and S - (4)	61–80%	Some college
Darlene ^a	African American	D - (17 & 8) and S - (15)	Less than 20%	Graduate degree
Ella ^a	Zimbabwean	S - (20 & 16)	61–80%	Graduate degree
Gabby	African American & White	D - (12, 10, & 8)	Less than 20%	Graduate degree
Gwendolyn ^a	African American	D - (6 & 3)	61–80%	Bachelor's degree
Hope	African American & Indigenous	D - (10 months)	21–40%	Graduate degree
Jasmine ^{a,b}	African American	D - (1)	81–100%	Graduate degree
Kamala ^a	African American	D - (2)	81–100%	Bachelor's degree
Kizzmekia	Caribbean	S - (14 & 6)	21–40%	Bachelor's degree
Mahalia ^a	African American	Son (17)	Less than 20%	Graduate degree
Mamie ^a	African American	D - (8 and 2 months)	41–60%	Graduate degree
Marsai	Ghanaian	S - (19 & 18)	81–100%	Graduate degree
Maxine ^a	Caribbean - Jamaican	S - (11 & 9)	41–60%	Graduate degree
Mellody	African American	S - (1)	Less than 20%	Graduate degree
Michelle	African American	S - (8)	21–40%	Trade school
Nia ^a	African American	D - (16 & 3) and S - (1)	Less than 20%	Graduate degree
Rashida	African American	S - (14 & 4)	81–100%	Graduate degree
Serena	African American	D - (2 & 6 months)	61–80%	Bachelor's degree
Shirlee ^a	African American	S - (3 & 1)	Less than 20%	Graduate degree
Sydney ^a	African American	S - (21) and D - (13 & 13)	21–40%	Graduate degree
Toni	African American	D - (12, 9, & 5)	61–80%	Graduate degree

Note. All names are pseudonyms

Children's ages (in years and/or months) at the time of study are in parentheses

D daughters, *S* sons

^aQuoted in article

^bpregnant at the time of study

Black female undergraduate students who received training in the PI's lab on qualitative methodologies. The inductive coding analysis occurred in three main phases (i.e.,

preparing the data for analysis, developing the codebook, establishing reliability, and drawing on an external auditor for a final review).

During the first phase, each coding team member read the entire set of transcripts. While the PI interviewed several of the mothers, the two students had not been involved in the data collection process. Early on, the PI addressed the inherent power differential in the coding team based on her position as a faculty member, as well as her increased familiarity with the aims of the project and the data itself. Consistent with CQR methods, the PI noted that her “role in the consensual team was the same as that of every other team member” (p. 50) and the necessity of everyone contributing to group discussions of the transcripts. During bi-weekly meetings, the team discussed their renderings of the women’s stories, and started to extract excerpts into an excel file that responded to the guiding research questions: (a) How do Black mothers process stories of racial violence against Black people and communities?, and (b) In what ways do mothers describe a sense of grief over vicarious racial violence?

Throughout the coding process, we engaged in ongoing reflexivity about our subjectivity and interpretation of the data (Hamilton, 2020). For instance, we recorded our biases and expectations during the coding discussions (e.g., the PI discussed how she had similar concerns as many of the mothers; one student coder talked about how her parents assured her that she would be safe if she followed the law; all three coders discussed the strong emotional reactions they had to some of the mothers’ excerpts). We also returned to the original transcripts for more context when we had dissenting opinions on a particular excerpt. In addition, the PI created an anonymous option for group member feedback through a shared excel file where we all inserted notes about whether excerpts should be included for final coding. At the conclusion of this phase, the PI created a master file with four columns (i.e., ID number, pseudonym, excerpt, and notes) that included all the data for coding ($n = 56$ excerpts).

In the second phase, each coder reviewed the same 20 excerpts and developed a list of themes and notes that represented the most prominent patterns they saw in the data. This inductive approach allowed us to stay close to the data as we developed the core ideas; after this independent review, we met to compare notes and explicitly discuss the themes we pulled from our excerpts. This process involved considerable debate about the intended meaning of the data, so we turned to the research literature on racial stress and trauma (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019), racial socialization in Black families (Minnear & Soliz, 2019; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015), and race-related coping (Anderson et al., 2019) to help guide our discussions and finalize our themes. We realized that we were not adequately categorizing the mothers’ discussions of pain and sorrow, since their children had not experienced similar harm or violence as Black youth like Trayvon Martin and Ma’Khia Bryant, but the

mothers reported significant feelings of grief. In response, the PI turned to literature on grief and coping, with a particular focus on racial grief and intergenerational loss among Black communities (Grinage, 2019; Nayak, 2019). After bridging the racial stress and coping literature with a framework of racial grief, we finalized the codebook themes (i.e., the endemic nature racial trauma, feeling frozen in fear, and transforming grief into grievance), and independently assigned codes to the remaining 36 excerpts ($n = 12$ each).

The third phase involved drawing on the expertise of an external auditor (a Black, female community leader who worked for a family service agency) to provide an additional layer of review and enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. The PI sent the guiding framework articles (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Nayak, 2019), the codebook, and the final excel file with codes, for their independent review. During a joint meeting with the coding team, the auditor provided feedback on how to improve our articulation of the coding themes and offered thoughts on the “big picture perspective” (Hill, 2012, p. 140) of our project. During this auditing session, we recognized that our organization of the coding themes mattered, in that many mothers described an ongoing process of navigating their exposure to anti-Black racial violence in relation to their parenting practices and their community engagement. We chose to use the RECAST theory framework to organize the results section, by highlighting the mothers’ appraisal, reappraisal, and decision-making processes in relation to vicarious racial violence.

Finally, we engaged in member checking (i.e., returning our rendition of the participants’ words to them; Birt et al., 2016) to ensure that we correctly represented the mothers’ voices and perspectives in the manuscript. Specifically, we sent the final coding files and the drafted manuscript to all mothers ($n = 18$) who indicated that they wanted to receive follow-up information about the findings from the data. Within the email to each mother, we provided a brief overview of the study, the aims and scope of the journal we were submitting to, and we highlighted the specific places in the manuscript where they were quoted. We asked them to return the manuscript file to us within three weeks with any recommended changes to their pseudonyms, direct quotes, or our discussion of the results. We also noted that if we did not hear back from them within three weeks, we would move forward with this study and that we would reach out in a similar fashion with future papers. Of the 18 mothers contacted, one requested a pseudonym change, three asked us to modify details in their excerpts, five mothers responded with enthusiasm and appreciation for our results, and the nine remaining mothers did not respond. After the three-week period, we integrated the requested changes and moved forward with the journal submission.

Results

The present study drew upon theories of racial grief (Nayak, 2019) and racial stress and coping (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019) to explore Black mothers' responses to instances of anti-Black racial violence in the U.S. We identified three predominant themes: (a) recognizing the endemic nature of racial violence, (b) feeling frozen in fear and the racial reappraisal process, and (c) transforming racial grief into grievance as a route to racial justice. Mothers' responses revealed the cyclical and non-linear process, in which they "occupied themselves in understanding how racial grief can be harnessed as a force for collective action directed against the multiple interconnected social injustices of racism" (Nayak, 2019, p. 353). We used pseudonyms for all names and locations. Theme definitions and additional excerpt examples are provided in Table 3.

Recognizing the Endemic Nature of Racial Violence

In the first theme, mothers discussed how the endemic nature of anti-Black racial violence in the U.S. meant that they knew they would inevitably hear about new incidents of a Black child or adult being harmed or killed. Their concerns were well supported, given that in March through May of 2020 alone, there were multiple highly publicized instances of police brutality against Black people in the U.S. (Breonna Taylor on March 13, Daniel Prude on March 30, Michael Ramos on April 24, Dreasjon Reed on May 6, George Floyd on May 25, and Tony McDade on May 27; Ater, 2020). As stated by Bozoma, an African American and Mexican mother with a son and daughter, shared, "They just keep coming. I saw a story this morning about a father telling his son that Chad Boseman died [Marvel's *Black Panther* star who died from prostate cancer in August 2020], and apparently, this man's son was like, "Was it COVID? Was it the police?" His son was eight! And it's like - this is too much." Bozoma's reflection highlighted the specific severity of race-related trauma in 2020 (i.e., the disproportionate impact of COVID-related deaths and cases of police brutality in the Black community; Laurencin & Walker, 2020), as the 8-year-old in the story assumed that Chad Boseman died from either COVID-19 or a police officer altercation.

While the mothers hoped that they and their children would never experience deadly racial violence, many of them also recognized that could be the next Breonna Taylor—or worse—that their child could be the next Ahmaud Arbery. For instance, Ella, a Zimbabwean mother with two sons, shared:

They've always affected me, but for whatever reason...maybe because of all the horror of 2020...I

was most affected this year, and so were my children. From Breonna Taylor to George Floyd to Ahmaud Arbery. All these deaths in succession and in the middle of everything else that we were dealing with. It was too much. We ended up doing a little reading in our backyard right after the lockdown was lifted. We had all our kids—mine, my nieces, and my nephews—maybe 20 kids at most. We sat in the backyard with our masks, and we opened a space for our children to talk about how they were impacted by everything. I thought I knew because I hear my kids talk a lot. But I was shocked by how much our kids had been affected. Them saying things like, "I don't want to go jogging in the neighborhood." And my soon-to-be 16-year-old son now being afraid about getting his driver's license. It was so painful to hear.

Ella discussed how the health and safety restrictions related to COVID-19 significantly changed how she and her family gathered to process the losses of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery. As she discussed the pain that she felt in hearing how vicarious racial violence affected their youth's sense of safety doing everyday activities (i.e., jogging or getting their driver's license), she highlighted the importance of communal grieving practices among Black families and the bidirectional and reciprocal nature of racial socialization between Black parents and youth. In addition, excerpts in the first theme drew attention to mothers' racial stress appraisal process, in which they recognized the cognitive, emotional, and physiological toll of anti-Black racial violence. Gwendolyn, an African American mother with two daughters, lamented:

It's crushing. Especially with recent events. We have a strong activist network in my city. We're going to show up to vote and we're going to show up to hold people accountable and all of that. But a lot of the things that I've watched in the past couple of years is too much. They released completely different footage of the George Floyd incident this morning. It was crushing because the mom in me is like, he was doing all the steps. He's telling you, "I have anxiety." He's trying to count down to catch his breath. He's trying to lay down and calm his body and you, as a professional, aren't listening. It's one thing after another after another. We can't even be halfway okay before more bad news comes. Another video comes out and it's another case not going to trial. It's like we're voting and we're waiting on this process to work. We're doing everything y'all told us to do. You got to give us something. Give us some type of something.

Table 3 Summary of themes and excerpt examples

Theme and Definition	Excerpts
<p>Recognizing the endemic nature of racial violence Referred to the mothers' awareness about the cyclical and ongoing nature direct and vicarious racial violence against Black Americans</p>	<p>"I'll be honest...knowing that George Floyd was a native son to the Houston 3rd ward...I just had to pause. I'm still crying over Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor. I'm still hurting. I feel unraveled." (Sydney, African American, two daughters and a son)</p> <p>"My oldest is on social media. We talk about those things and I've had conversations with her about what she's heard and seen. I remind her, "I know this stuff is heartbreaking. I know it seems like it's a never-ending cycle. At the end of the day, I want you to be aware and know what's going on, but I also want you to remember that you're a teenager. These things should not consume you just yet. You have plenty of time to carry these burdens. I want you to focus on school and your mental health." (Nia, African American, two daughters and a son)</p>
<p>Feeling frozen in fear and the racial reappraisal process Referred to the mothers' immediate mental, emotional, and psychological responses of fear and anxiety after hearing about racialized violence</p>	<p>"I don't go in-depth with them. It hurts too bad. I'll tell them that another Black person has been murdered, but I stop at that because I don't want to give an excuse as to why they were killed. I don't care if they were minding their business or committing a crime. I'm not telling my kids, "Make sure you don't do this, this, and this." It doesn't matter. I'm already scared enough, and I don't want to parent out of this fear." (Mamie, African American, two daughters)</p> <p>"I'm still figuring out how to process them. It is so deep right now. I'm not a person that just lives in fear, but the visibility of these videos and these conversations...hearing all these experiences. I'm kind of stuck here, as a Black woman. And this tension comes up since I raise my child in a way that she is very Black...when I know that the system is not going to respond to her in a way that is accepting of her Blackness." (Barbara, African American, one daughter)</p>
<p>Transforming racial grief to grievance Referred to the mothers' discussion of how they channeled their emotional responses and sense of racial grief into a commitment to fighting against racial injustice</p>	<p>"The first thing that I want is to talk with my child about this stuff and also monitor our intake of the news. One of the hardest things was to see a lot of women at different protests have teargas thrown at them...and now they're having irregular periods and reproductive issues. That's so disgusting to me. It all just makes me think, "Well how am I getting involved and what am I doing? What will I be able to share with her [daughter] that I have done?" (Cynthia, African American, one daughter)</p> <p>"For example, Breonna Taylor, she lived in Louisville, so we went to a protest for her. I can't go to protests all the time, and I can't always take her [daughter], but I can do other things like calling the attorney general, who's crappy. I participate in city council meetings and school board meetings and all these other things because I have a voice. As a citizen, you can't complain about something without doing something." (Jasmine, African American, one daughter)</p>

Witnessing anti-Black racial violence in the news ("it's one thing after another after another") made Gwendolyn feel overwhelmed as a mother, and incidents from the prior couple of years made her question the effectiveness of certain modes of civic participation (e.g., voting) in bringing about racial justice. Furthermore, she highlighted the secondary trauma from such events, in that most police brutality cases against Black individuals in the U.S. do not go to trial despite the availability of eyewitnesses and/or video recordings (Alang et al., 2017). She noted that Floyd was "doing all the steps" that should have kept him alive, and yet, the police murdered him. This contradiction underscored a key area of the mothers' racial socialization stress, namely, that they had to make sense of historical and contemporary anti-Black racial violence and decide what messages or practices they would communicate or model for their children to help them navigate the unfair racial dynamics in the country. Within the second theme,

the mothers described their racial reappraisal process, or the emotional and cognitive strategies they used to effectively survive and manage the racial stress of anti-Black violence in the U.S.

Feeling Frozen in Fear and the Racial Reappraisal Process

In the second theme, the mothers described the immediate emotional and psychological aftermath they experienced after hearing about a new case of anti-Black racial violence. They mentioned a range of emotions, including feelings of sadness, anger, overwhelm, fear, and anxiety. These descriptions were consistent with prior literature on the spillover effects of police killings and racial violence on the mental health of Black Americans (Bor et al., 2018), and corresponded with the racial reappraisal process (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019) in which individuals reevaluate a

situation to determine its threat potential and their coping capacity. After asking mothers how they responded to hearing about an incident of racial violence, many stated that they felt frozen and that they struggled with findings ways to relieve the physical symptoms of somatic stress (i.e., shaking, headaches, muscle tension, stomach problems, and trouble sleeping). Kamala, an African American mother with a daughter, recounted:

I can't function. I know the truth of what it is. I know that we're not safe in this world, clearly. It's anxiety on 10. I know that I can't control what happens to me or to her. I'm not trying to make a bubble, because what's that going to do? Because then when you get out the bubble, you're like, "What the fuck?" I don't want her anxiety to be like mine, because it gets to where you're just so overwhelmed. What about this, and this, and this? All the what ifs. Just trying to keep them safe...no, no, no. [shaking head side-to-side]

Kamala's words trailed off as she presumably thought about the racial harm that could befall her or her family and her inability to guarantee their safety. In general, many mothers felt unsure and hesitant about the 'right' messages to communicate to their children about racial violence, even as they felt these conversations were necessary. Shirlee, an African American mother with two sons, stated, "It makes me afraid for my boys. I hope that they never deal with it, but I have to prepare them. And I don't know how because you can't even be prepared for it, right? Sometimes, we're just existing." Shirlee's comment on how some folks were "just existing" before they experienced racial violence (i.e., sleeping on the couch, walking home from school or work, leaving a store, and going on a jog) touched on why some mothers felt frozen initially, or engaged in what would traditionally be considered maladaptive forms of coping, such as avoidance, rumination, or emotional suppression. They were unsure of how to communicate their racial fears to their children in ways that would offer youth the necessary psychological protection. Addie, an African American mother with a daughter and son, shared:

It is traumatic to see Black bodies being abused and killed. It is traumatic. It shuts me down a little bit. When I was a kid, I never heard of people dying for stealing candy, right? That was not my truth, but that has been true today. Your kid might die for stealing a piece of candy, and that is something that White parents do not have to deal with at all. If you caught your kid stealing, you would want them to know they can't do that because of fear—fear of their death, maiming, or some type of destruction. Please do not do this again. I don't want to lose you.

In her account, Addie referenced Jamycheal Mitchell, a 24-year-old Black man with diagnosed bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, who was arrested in Portsmouth, Virginia, for stealing a Mountain Dew, a Snickers bar and a zebra cake (Grammer, 2019). Although a judge deemed Mitchell unfit to stand trial, he was jailed due to a shortage in hospital beds. The jailers denied Mitchell his medications and during a mental illness-induced struggle, he was forced to the ground, dragged, sprayed with mace, and physically assaulted by staff. He later died in the jail cell. In mentioning "someone dying for stealing candy," Addie recognized that she and her children could experience life-threatening consequences for small transgressions that would raise little concern for White parents and their children, and she described the negative emotional toll that this had on her psyche. Similarly, Amanda, an African American mother with a daughter and son, shared:

It influences me a lot. When George Floyd happened, it influenced me because Harlem was old enough to understand. When Ahmaud Arbery happened, he was old enough to understand. It's hard because I'm like, "What age is appropriate?" When I think about Tamir Rice...he was 12. There was never a time where we could not talk to him about it because it's naïve to think that because he's six, he's never experienced racism... because he has. Being a parent during this time...it's like you're always sitting on the edge because you don't know when the next death is going to happen. It's very difficult. It's probably not that different from any other era of being a Black parent because the only difference is that now social media is prevalent. But that fear and that anxiety is always there.

Several mothers in the sample echoed Amanda's sense of fear and anxiety, therein suggesting that anti-Black racial violence is a maternal health issue that may have a significant and harmful toll on Black mothers' emotional and cognitive capacities. While the mothers might have initially felt immobilized from their exposure to vicarious racial violence and the painful reality of racial oppression, many of them discussed how they drew upon this sense of racial grief as a resource and as a catalyst to contest anti-Black racial violence. They were adamant that they did not want to parent their children from a place of fear about the prospect of racial violence, and they felt an imperative to equip their children with adaptive coping strategies for race-related stressors.

Transforming Racial Grief to Grievance as a Route to Racial Justice

In the third theme, we highlighted the myriad ways that Black mothers occupied racial grief and loss as a force for

personal and political mobilization. A core part of Nayak's (2019) theory of racial grief involves understanding "how and why racial grief is a product of the context of racism and can be used to challenge racism" (Nayak, 2019, p. 352). Likewise, many of the excerpts highlighted the complex emotional and cognitive coping strategies the mothers used to process their exposure to racial violence, as well as the parenting practices they engaged in to help protect their children from the realities of racial violence. Some, like Danielle, an African American mother with four daughters and a son, limited their children's news and social media intake, "We've stopped watching the news. It's a constant threat of fear and I don't want to instill that into my children. I want them to be aware but not fearful, so I try to make sure they're not overloaded." Similarly, Darlene, an African American mother with two daughters and a son, said:

The news stories make me more protective, in terms of parenting. Just making sure my kids have that sense of discernment and know their history. To be safe, but also to understand that you are entitled to your humanity. The purpose of all this stuff on social media is to terrorize Black people, and the purpose of terrorism is to make people scared, so that we move how they want us to move. I know that they [her kids] may fear the White man doing whatever to them. But if they're scared, they may have an angry or scared response and not a smart response or a strategic response.

Danielle and Darlene recognized and validated the sense of fear that their children might experience from too much exposure to racial violence in the news and on social media. They considered the constant news cycles of violence against Black people a form of psychological terror, and Darlene discussed the importance of providing her children with a strong knowledge of their racial and cultural history to mitigate the psychological consequences of witnessing such violence. In addition, their words highlighted the difficult balance that mothers discussed in their racial socialization practices. They did not want their children to be overloaded with repeated exposure to negative racial events, but they also wanted to help them develop a sense of self-efficacy and the problem-solving skills to know that they could navigate future experiences as necessary. In Darlene's case, she wanted her children to understand that 'being Black' was not the problem; but rather, their vulnerability to racial violence due to systemic anti-Blackness in the U.S. In addition to their conscientiousness about the news stories their family consumed, several mothers mentioned internal and interpersonal coping mechanisms (i.e., crying, therapy, venting to friends, and exercise) that helped

them process their racial grief. Maxine, a Jamaican mother with two sons, reflected:

Any mom will tell you that once you become a mom, it's a core part of you. When I view stuff on social media, I'm viewing it through the lens of a mom. What would my kids say if they saw it? How would it affect them? What do I say to them about it? Everything has a deeper meaning. A bigger meaning and a bigger consequence. Another part of motherhood is never being alone. I'm at work and I'm still thinking about my kids. I've started meditating, because it gives me a chance to get inside myself and tune into myself, and I've introduced my kids to meditation, yoga, journaling, and exercise to help us decompress.

Maxine discussed the salience and centrality of her identity as a mother in how she viewed news, and how she modeled various mindful self-care practices for her children as a response to stress. Similarly, other mothers shared how they created a safe space at home to help their families process their emotional and psychological reactions to vicarious racial violence. These examples draw attention to the mental, physical, and spiritual tools that mothers used to restore a sense of personal agency and peace amid racial injustice, as well as the intergenerational knowledge being shared between themselves and their children. Finally, several mothers used racial grief as a resource for transformation and purpose in their professional lives. For instance, Adella, an African American and Puerto Rican mother with a son, stated:

I can't watch the videos anymore. It is a living nightmare...a living fucking horror show, and I do not need those images, because they cannot be unseen. It takes a heavy toll on me. I cope with it in therapy. I cry. I give myself space to feel my feelings. I talk with my partner about it. It hurts because I have no delusion that one day, it could be my family. It could be my child...it could be my husband...it could be me. It gives me a sense of pain and purpose at the same time. The world has to change. I do the work that I do to help build a space for Black parents to figure out what we can say to our kids and how we can make schools and the world safer for Black parents and Black children.

Adella discussed how she "turned the pain into purpose," by sharing her knowledge about racial inequities in U.S. educational systems with other Black families in her community. As an educator, she was well equipped to talk with parents about racial coping strategies and committed to

effecting positive change in the school where she worked. In some cases, the mothers articulated the importance of challenging racial discrimination and encouraging cultural and political change across various domains, including housing, healthcare, education and policing. These excerpts highlighted their awareness that eradicating anti-Blackness in the U.S. required a strategic and multidimensional approach. Mahalia, an African American mother with one son, described:

I process it by sitting there dumbfounded, and then going, this is ridiculous! I always look at what happened and how we can fight this. When I teach my students, I tell them there are many ways to fight. I am an activist through my teaching and through my workshops with Black students. We need people in the political arena and people in education and people in legal spaces. We need people in banking and finance and real estate. We need to be appraising houses in Black communities so that we can build equity and wealth. We need us everywhere. And that's how I process all of this, because if I didn't, it would make me crazy and angry and pissed off. Until we're all free, none of us are free.

Mahalia discussed her cognizance that emotional repression (i.e., “if I didn't, it would make me crazy and angry and pissed off”) would not help her process vicarious racial violence and talked about the anti-racism activism that she embodied within her career as a teacher and youth advocate. Like other mothers in the sample, she demonstrated a strong sense of *political self-efficacy* (i.e., perceived competence at influencing positive social change in one's community; Sakho-Lewis & College, 2017), as well as a belief in the collective nature of Black people's resistance to racial violence. In all, the examples in this theme revealed how mothers translated their racial grief into ‘grievances’ against anti-Black racial violence through mindfulness and self-care practices, racial socialization messages to their children, and community organizing.

Discussion

“But Black women especially know fear—how to live despite it and how to metabolize it for our children so they're not consumed by it.” (McClain, 2019, p. 5)

The present study drew on a Black feminist framework of racial grief (Nayak, 2019) and racial stress and coping literature (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Metzger et al., 2021) to explore Black mothers' responses to racial violence against Black Americans in the U.S. Given the timing

of the data collection (April and May 2020), we were able to consider how the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter protests in response to the slayings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, informed the mothers' meaning-making processes during the interviews. Consistent with prior research, we found that most mothers reported significant difficulty in processing historical and recent incidents of racial violence; thus, our study adds to the growing literature on the negative emotional and psychological toll of vicarious racial discrimination and harm (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Comas-Diaz, 2016). Still, many of the mothers described a strong sense of resistance amid repeated exposure to anti-Black racial violence, as well as various personal coping mechanisms (meditation and journaling) and interpersonal coping strategies (talking with friends and family). While none of the mothers had lost their children to anti-Black racial violence, their excerpts laid bare how living within a white supremacist society contributed to a sense of racial grief when they learned about other cases (Rogers, 2015; Smith, 2016). Finally, building on Nayak's framework of drawing upon racial grief as a resource, our findings extended prior research by demonstrating how some Black mothers directed their fear regarding anti-Black racial violence into personal and professional activism in their daily lives.

Black Mothers Coping with Vicarious Racial Violence

Consistent with prior research (Anderson et al., 2018; Blackmon & Thomas, 2015), the mothers presented a multifaceted depiction of how they coped with vicarious racial violence, which included various strategies to regulate their sense of stress and prepare their children for racial bias and discrimination. Still, several women mentioned that a significant coping challenge involved the incessant nature of anti-Black racial violence. For instance, thirty minutes prior to Derek Chauvin's historic convictions for the second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter of George Floyd, police officer Nicholas Reardon shot and killed 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant in Ohio after she called for help. In response to the innumerable tragedies, several mothers described feeling ‘frozen in fear,’ when they learned about a new incident of harm or preventable loss. After the initial shock, many women used evidence-based strategies for coping with racial trauma, such as affective expression and modulation (i.e., identifying their feelings and using meditation to distress their bodies), trauma narration (i.e., connecting current events to the historical plight of their racial group), and behavioral strategies (i.e., intentional disengagement from news networks; Metzger et al., 2021). Thus, while vicarious exposure to racial violence contributed to distress for many mothers, they also described

adaptive ways of thinking (e.g., seeing themselves as resilient despite anti-Blackness in the U.S.) to cope with the trauma exposure.

Additionally, a main tenet of their coping processes involved sharing racial socialization messages with their children; this was especially true for mothers with older adolescents or young adult children and is consistent with new research on healing racial trauma (Metzger et al., 2021). In particular, the women discussed providing more preparation for racial bias messages (i.e., messages that highlight racial inequalities and ways to cope with discrimination; Jones & Neblett, 2017), and cultivating an open space at home for their children to talk about their perceptions and emotional responses to anti-Black violence in the news. While in some cases, these conversations increased the mothers' stress and negative emotional arousal to hear their children talking about their own fears and concerns, the discussions also offered them a chance to respond to their children's concerns. Related work on Black parents' *involved-vigilant parenting* in response to racial discrimination (Varner et al., 2018), suggests that such discussions may relate to higher psychological functioning and self-regulation skills among Black adolescents (Varner et al., 2020). While our findings highlight various ways that Black mothers process experiences of vicarious racial trauma with their children, their narratives also draw attention to the need for more research on the intersection between racial and socioemotional socialization processes within Black families (Lozada et al., 2017).

Framing Racial Trauma as a Maternal Health Issue for Black Mothers

Scholars recognize that race-related trauma manifests in a multitude of ways, including direct and vicarious experiences, time-limited events, or chronic experiences, and through transgenerational transmission (Carter, 2007). While researchers have called for specific attention to anti-Black racial violence as a public health crisis for Black Americans (Alang et al., 2017; American Public Health Association 2020; Neria & Sullivan, 2011), there is less research on how the threat of racial violence against their children constitutes a maternal health issue for Black mothers. Scholars tend to focus on the harmful effects of racial trauma from a first-person standpoint (i.e., this happened to me, or I witnessed this), which overlooks Black mothers' potential stress cycle in relation to the racial fears they have for their children (for related work on parents' racial worries, see Anderson et al., 2021). We know little about the extent to which Black mothers experience distress in response to thinking about their children sharing a similar fate to other victims of anti-Black violence. Ahmaud Arbery, Michelle Cusseaux, Atatiana Jefferson, and Daunte

Wright, all had mothers who loved them and were left to mourn their loss, and several mothers in our sample iterated statements akin to, "that could have been my child."

Thus, our findings extend current studies on Black families' race-related processes by framing Black mothers' vicarious exposure to racial violence as a reproductive justice and maternal health issue. Many mothers did not believe that they had the unwavering ability to parent their children in safe communities, free from the threat of racial violence. Moreover, even if they believed that their neighborhoods were relatively safe, they recognized that their children could have racially harmful experiences in other settings like at school (6-year-old Kaia Rolle in Orlando, FL) or in playing outside in the community (12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland, OH). Based on this racial and sociopolitical awareness, many of the mothers used vicarious incidents of racial violence to raise their children's awareness of anti-Black racism and to suggest developmentally appropriate coping responses. Accordingly, in thinking about how to disrupt the intergenerational effects of racial trauma (Heard-Garris et al., 2018; Range et al., 2018), it is important that scholars consider Black mothers' racial fears for their children (Anderson et al., 2021). Our findings add to a handful of studies that address how racial violence influence Black mothers' parenting practices (Joe et al., 2019; Lawson, 2018; Tyler, 2022), and draw a connection between racial coping processes and Black mothers' reproductive justice in the U.S. (Rogers, 2015).

Black Mothering as a Source of Societal Change

Our investigation echoes Black feminist scholars and writers such as Audre Lorde (1984), who wrote, "Raising Black children—female and male—in the mouth of a racist, sexist, suicidal dragon is perilous and chancy. If they cannot love and resist at the same time, they will probably not survive (1984, p. 74). Specifically, excerpts in the third theme on transforming 'grief into grievance,' reaffirmed Botham Jean's mom, Allison Jean, when she stated, "the tears that we shed as mothers will be the tears that break America" (Ghebremedhin et al., 2020). Several mothers described how witnessing anti-Black racial violence reminded them that U.S. sociopolitical structures, including current models of policing and criminal justice, were not designed to keep Black communities or Black children safe (McClain, 2019; Range et al., 2018; Waldren, 2020). In addition, a few women discussed the futility of drawing on code-switching practices (i.e., adjusting one's speech, appearance, behavior, and expression to optimize one's chances of fair treatment; Leath et al., 2021; McCluney et al., 2019) as protective mechanisms against anti-Black racism. They were acutely aware of the compounding nature of Black Americans' racial trauma from enslavement,

socioeconomic disinvestment in areas like housing and healthcare, as well as massive white supremacist violence in response to Black folks' advocacy and resistance (Range et al., 2018; Wilkins et al., 2013).

In response, they felt driven to try and effect positive change in their local communities via family education programs and within sociopolitical sectors. Akin with prior scholarship on Black maternal activism (McClain, 2019; McDonald, 1997), they described social change strategies that included caring for others in the Black community and finding ways to empower the next generation of leadership and resistance through the messages they communicated to their children and the ways they mentored other Black youth. Their words and actions aligned with historical and contemporary legacies of Black parental activism (e.g., Monifa Bandle of *MomsRising* and Rose Aka-James of *Black Mamas Matter Alliance*; Brown, 2020), as the mothers explained how they translated their feelings of racial fear and grief into their parenting, community involvement, and political engagement. The women recounted how they believed that their civic engagement and community involvement in the current moment (e.g., protesting and running for school board positions), would inspire a better society for Black children in the future. Thus, while not responsible for anti-Black racial violence, many mothers felt called to community-based action and described a sense of radical hope for themselves and their community (Comas-Díaz, 2016; French et al., 2020; McDonald, 1997).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study contributes to the relatively small body of literature on racial grief and trauma among Black mothers. However, there are a few limitations worth noting. For example, the interview protocol question focused specifically on police brutality and state-sanctioned violence against Black individuals. While this made sense given the timing of data collection, it would have been equally viable to capture how Black mothers processed racial violence in other contexts, such as workplace and school settings. Additionally, our sample included highly educated Black mothers (90% had at least a 4-year degree compared to the 64% national average in the U.S. for Black women; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016) who did not live in predominantly Black communities (66% lived in communities that were less than 60% Black). While we focused on highly publicized incidents of racial violence that were widely accessible, it would be important to include Black mothers who resided in more racially and socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods to consider the role of neighborhood and community

contexts. Furthermore, we relied solely on mothers' narratives about how they processed racial violence with their children. Future research would benefit from family dyadic data that included responses from children and youth about how they perceive, understand, and internalize their mothers' messages on coping with racial violence (Minnier & Soliz, 2019).

Implications for Scholarship and Practice

Despite its limitations, the current study provides some important future directions for research and practice regarding racial stress and coping processes in Black families, as well as maternal activism among Black mothers in the U.S. Regarding clinical efforts to reduce racial stress among Black Americans, assessing adolescent and caregivers' prior and current experiences with racial violence and identifying psychosomatic symptoms related to such exposure, may help clinicians screen for necessary cultural considerations in treatment (Metzger et al., 2021). Scholars have also highlighted the importance of raising awareness about how Black women's social positioning influences their experiences with structural oppression (i.e., intersection of racism and sexism), as well as their coping practices (Spates et al., 2020). For instance, Black women may "shift," or enact a set of behaviors to protect their inner thoughts and feelings (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003)—thus presenting a different version of themselves to White clinicians compared to Black clinicians. In addition, clinical training programs and diagnostic manuals should draw more attention to Black women's multi-layered coping methods, such as praying, relying on social networks, and engaging in social activism (Spates et al., 2020).

Finally, as acknowledged in emergent literature on race-based traumatic stress among Black families, discrete incidents of racial violence or the compounding effect of several racially stressful events (including exposure to vicarious discrimination), can trigger negative psychological health outcomes (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Saleem et al., 2020; Varner et al., 2020). Yet, the field still lacks a thorough conceptualization of racial grief and trauma for Black mothers, which may differ based on their exposure to racial violence, their general sense of coping efficacy, as well as available interpersonal supports. Scholars must continue to expand models of self and community care to strengthen Black mothers' wellness by preventing stress-related health issues caused by racism. While this may include greater self-awareness and coping strategies to reduce racial stress among Black mothers, it must also involve culturally responsive practices among clinicians, as well as systematic changes in policies that uphold anti-Black racism.

Funding This research was funded through a Grants Award for Early Career through the Society for Research on Child Development.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

References

- Aguayo-Romero, R. A. (2021). (Re)centering Black feminism into intersectionality research. *American Journal of Public Health, 111*(1), 101–103. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.306005>.
- Alang, S., McAlpine, D., McCreedy, E., & Hardeman, R. (2017). Police brutality and Black health: Setting the agenda for public health scholars. *American Journal of Public Health, 107*(5), 662–665. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2017.303691>.
- American Public Health Association. (2020 October 24). *Structural racism is a public health crisis: Impact on the Black community*. <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2021/01/13/structural-racism-is-a-public-health-crisis>.
- Anderson, R. E., & Stevenson, H. C. (2019). RECASTing racial stress and trauma: Theorizing the healing potential of racial socialization in families. *American Psychologist, 74*(1), 63–75. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000392>.
- Anderson, R. E., McKenny, M. C., & Stevenson, H. C. (2019). EMBRace: Developing a racial socialization intervention to reduce racial stress and enhance racial coping among Black parents and adolescents. *Family Process, 58*(1), 53–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12412>.
- Anderson, R. E., Jones, S. C. T., Navarro, C., McKenny, M., & Stevenson, H. C. (2018). Addressing the mental health needs of Black youth and families: Solutions from a case in the EMBRace intervention. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 15*(5), 898–915. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15050898>.
- Anderson, R. E., Jones, S. C. T., Saleem, F. T., Metzger, I., Anyiwo, N., Nisbeth, K. S., Bess, K. D., Resnicow, K., & Stevenson, H. C. (2021). Interrupting the pathway from discrimination to Black adolescents' psychosocial outcomes: The contribution of parental racial worries and racial socialization competency. *Child Development*. Advanced preprint publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13607>.
- Ater, R. (2020 May 29). *In memoriam: I can't breathe*. <https://www.reneatear.com/on-monuments-blog/tag/list+of+unarmed+black+people+killed+by+police>.
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research, 26*(13), 1802–1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>.
- Blackmon, S., & Thomas, A. (2015). African Americans and Trayvon Martin: Black racial identity profiles and emotional responding. *Journal of African American Studies, 19*(3), 279–297. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-015-9306-0>.
- Bor, J., Venkataramani, A. S., Williams, D. R., & Tsai, A. C. (2018). Police killings and their spillover effects on the mental health of black Americans: a population-based quasi-experimental study. *The Lancet, 392*(10144), 302–310. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31130-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31130-9).
- Brown, T.L., Linver, M.R., & Evans, M. (2010). The role of gender in the racial and ethnic socialization of African American adolescents. *Youth and Society, 41*(3), 357–381.
- Brown, M. (2020 June 15). *6 Black moms on the frontlines in the fight against racism*. Parents. <https://www.parents.com/news/6-black-moms-on-the-frontlines-in-the-fight-against-racism/>.
- Bryant-Davis, T., Adams, T., Alejandre, A., & Gray, A. (2017). The trauma lens of police violence against racial and ethnic minorities. *Journal of Social Issues, 73*(4), 852–871. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12251>.
- Carter, R. T. (2007). Racism and psychological and emotional injury: Recognizing and assessing race-based traumatic stress. *Counseling Psychologist, 35*(1), 13–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000006292033>.
- Collins, P. H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought. *Social Problems, 33*(6), S14–S32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/800672>.
- Comas-Díaz, L. (2016). Racial trauma recovery: A race-informed therapeutic approach to racial wounds. In Alvarez, A. N., Liang, C. T. H., & Neville, H. A. (Eds.), *Cultural, racial, and ethnic psychology book series: The cost of racism for people of color: Contextualizing experiences of discrimination* (pp. 249–272). <https://doi.org/10.1037/14852-012>.
- Davis, D. (2016). *The Bone Collectors'* comments for sorrow as artifact: Black radical mothering in times of terror. *Transforming Anthropology, 24*(1), 8–16.
- Dumas, M. J. (2014). “Losing an arm”: Schooling as a site of black suffering. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 17*(1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.850412>.
- Dunbar, A. S., HaRim, A. L., Coates, E. E., & Smith-Bynum, M. A. (2022). Observed dyadic racial socialization disrupts the association between frequent discriminatory experiences and emotional reactivity among Black adolescents. *Child Development, 93*(1), 39–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13680>.
- Feldstein, R. (2000). Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965. Chapter 12: “I wanted the whole world to see”: Race, gender, and constructions of motherhood in the death of Emmett Till. pp. 263–285.
- French, B. H., Lewis, J. A., Mosley, D. V., Adames, H. Y., Chavez-Duenas, N. Y., Chen, G. A., & Neville, H. A. (2020). Toward a psychological framework of radical healing in communities of color. *The Counseling Psychologist, 48*(1), 14–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000019843506>.
- Garland, E. L., Gaylord, S. A., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2011). Positive reappraisal mediates the stress-reductive effects of mindfulness: An upward spiral process. *Mindfulness, 2*, 59–67. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-011-0043-8>.
- Ghebremedhin, S., Lyons, J., Pelletiere, N., Sher, L., & Messer, L. (2020). Their painful bond: Black mothers speak out together on their unimaginable loss. *abc News*. <https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/News/painful-bond-black-mothers-speak-unimaginable-loss/story?id=71626874>.
- Grammer, S. (2019 June 5). *Federal court approves \$3 million settlement for death of Virginia jail prisoner Jamycheal Mitchell*. Prison Legal News. <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2019/jun/5/federal-court-approves-3-million-settlement-death-virginia-jail-prisoner-jamycheal-mitchell/>.
- Grinage, J. (2019). Endless mourning: Racial melancholia, Black grief, and the transformative possibilities for racial justice in education. *Harvard Educational Review, 89*(2), 227–250. <https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-89.2.227>.
- Hamilton, P. (2020). ‘Now that I know what you’re about’: Black feminist reflections on power in the research relationship. *Qualitative Research, 20*(5), 519–533. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794119891583>.
- Harrell, S. P. (2000). A multidimensional conceptualization of racism-related stress: Implications for the well-being of people of color. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 70*(1), 42–57.
- Heard-Garris, N. J., Cale, M., Camaj, L., Hamati, M. C., & Dominguez, T.P. (2018). Transmitting trauma: A systematic review of vicarious racism and child health. *Social Science & Medicine, 199*–228. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.04.018>.

- Helms, J. E., Nicolas, G., & Green, C. E. (2010). Racism and ethno-violence as trauma: Enhancing professional training. *Traumatology*, 16(4), 53–62.
- Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black Feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Hill, C. (2012). *Consensual qualitative research: A practical resource for investigating social science phenomena*. American Psychological Association.
- Hooks, B. (2001) *Salvation: Black people and love*. HarperCollins Publishers.
- Jackson, D. B., & Turney, K. (2021). Sleep problems among mothers of youth stopped by the police. *Journal of Urban Health*, 98(2), 163–171. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-021-00518-1>.
- Jackson, F. M., James, S. A., Owens, T. C., & Bryan, A. F. (2017). Anticipated negative police-youth encounters and depressive symptoms among pregnant African American women: A brief report. *Journal of Urban Health*, 94(2), 259–265. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-017-0136-3>.
- Joe, J. R., Shillingford-Butler, M. A., & Oh, S. (2019). The experiences of African American mothers raising sons in the context of #BlackLivesMatter. *The Professional Counselor*, 9(1), 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.15241/jrj.9.1.67>.
- Jones, C., & Shorter-Gooden, K. (2003). *Shifting: The double lives of Black women in America*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Jones, S. C. T., & Neblett, E. W. (2017). Future directions in research on racism-related stress and racial-ethnic protective factors for Black youth. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 46(5), 754–766. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2016.1146991>.
- Kincade, L. L., & Fox, C. A. (2022). ‘Runs in the family’: Fear of police violence and separation among Black families in central Alabama. *Psychology of Violence*, 12(4), 221–230. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000420>.
- Laurencin, C. T., & Walker, J. M. (2020). A pandemic on a pandemic: Racism and COVID-19 in Blacks. *Cell Systems*, 11(1), 9–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cels.2020.07.002>.
- Lawson, E. S. (2018). Bereaved Black mothers and maternal activism in the racial state. *Feminist Studies*, 44(3), 713–725.
- Leader, D. (2008). *The new black: Mourning, melancholia, and depression*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press.
- Leath, S., Butler-Barnes, S., Ross, R., & Lee-Nelson, Z. (2021). What Happens If They Come for You? An Exploration of Mothers’ Racial Socialization on Discrimination With Black College Women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 45(2), 194–211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684320979679>.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: essays and speeches*. Crossing Press.
- Lozada, F. T., Jagers, R. J., Smith, C. D., Banales, J., & Hope, E. C. (2017). Prosocial behaviors of Black adolescent boys: An application of a sociopolitical development theory. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 43(5), 493–516. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798416652021>.
- Mahowald, L. (2021 July 13). *Black LGBTQ individuals experience heightened levels of discrimination*. American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/black-lgbtq-individuals-experience-heightened-levels-discrimination/>.
- Malina, D., Williams, D. R., & Medlock, M. M. (2017). Health Effects of Dramatic Societal Events — Ramifications of the Recent Presidential Election. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 376(23), 2295–2299. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMms1702111>.
- Martinot, S. (2010). *The machinery of whiteness: Studies in the structure of racialization*. Temple University Press.
- McClain, D. (2019). *We live for the we: The political power of Black motherhood*. Hachette Book Group Inc.
- McCluney, C.L., Robotham, K., Lee, S., Smith, R., & Durkee, M. (2019 October 15). *The costs of code-switching*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2019/11/the-costs-of-codeswitching>.
- McDonald, K. B. (1997). Black activist mothering: A historical intersection of race, gender, and class. *Gender & Society*, 11(6), 773–795.
- McHale, S. M., Crouter, A. C., Kim, J.-Y., Burton, L. M., Davis, K. D., Dotterer, A. M., & Swanson, D. P. (2006). Mothers’ and Fathers’ Racial Socialization in African American Families: Implications for Youth. *Child Development*, 77(5), 1387–1402. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00942.x>.
- McNeil Smith, S., Reynolds, J. E., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2016). Parental experiences of racial discrimination and youth racial socialization in two-parent African American families. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 22, 268–276. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000064>.
- Mehra, R., Alspaugh, A., Frank, L. S., McLemore, M. R., Kershaw, T. S., Ickovics, J. R., Keene, D. E., & Sewell, A. A. (2022). “Police shootings, now that seems to be the main issue” – Black pregnant women’s anticipation of police brutality towards their children. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-12557-7>.
- Metzger, I. W., Anderson, R. E., Are, F., & Ritchwood, T. (2021). Healing interpersonal and racial trauma: Integrating racial socialization into trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy for African American youth. *Child Maltreatment*, 26(1), 17–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559520921457>.
- Minniear, M., & Soliz, J. (2019). Family communication and messages about race and identity in Black families in the United States. *Journal of Family Communication*, 19(4), 329–347.
- Mosley, D. V., Hargons, C. N., Meiller, C., Angyal, B., Wheeler, P., Davis, C., & Stevens-Watkins, D. (2021). Critical consciousness of anti-Black racism: A practical model to prevent and resist racial trauma. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 68(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000430>.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *Degrees conferred by race/ethnicity and sex*. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=72>.
- Nayak, S. (2019). Occupation of racial grief, loss as a resource: Learning from ‘The Combahee River Collective Black Feminist statement’. *Psychological Studies*, 64(3), 352–364.
- Neblett, E. W. Jr., White, R. L., Ford, K. R., Philip, C. L., Nguyen, H. X., & Sellers, R. M. (2008). Patterns of racial socialization and psychological adjustment: Can parental communications about race reduce the impact of racial discrimination? *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 18(3), 477–515.
- Neria, Y., & Sullivan, M. G. (2011). Understanding the mental health effects of indirect exposure to mass trauma through the media. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 306(12), 1374–1375. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2011.1358>.
- O’Neal, L. (2020 May 30). *George Floyd’s mother was not there, but he used her as a sacred invocation*. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/george-floyds-mother-not-there-he-used-her-as-sacred-invocation>.
- Patton, S. (2017). *Spare the Kids: Why Whipping Children Won’t Save Black America*, chapter 3. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Range, B., Gutierrez, D., Gamboni, C., Hough, N. A., & Wojciak, A. (2018). Mass trauma in the African American community: Using multiculturalism to build resilient systems. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 40(3), 284–298. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-01794493>.
- Rogers, A. (2015). How police brutality harms mothers: Linking police violence to the reproductive justice movement. *Hastings Race & Poverty Law Journal*, 12(2), 205–234.
- Sakho-Lewis, J., & Colledge, C. (2017). Black activist mothering: Teach me about what teaches you. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 41(1/2), 6–19.
- Saleem, F. T., Lambert, S. F., Stock, M. L., & Gibbons, F. X. (2020). Examining changes in African American mothers’ racial

- socialization patterns during adolescence: Racial discrimination as a predictor. *Developmental Psychology*, 56(8), 1610–1622. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000993>.
- Smith, B. (2017). Interview with Keenaga-Yamahtta Taylor. In K.-Y. Taylor (Ed.), *How we get free: Black Feminism and The Combahee River Collective*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Smith, C. A. (2016). Facing the dragon: Black mothering, sequelae, and gendered necropolitics in the Americas. *Journal of the Association of Black Anthropologists*, 24(1), 31–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/traa.12055>.
- Smith-Bynum, M. A., Anderson, R. E., Davis, B. L., Franco, M. G., & English, D. (2016). Observed racial socialization and maternal positive emotions in African American mother-adolescent discussions about racial discrimination. *Child Development*, 87(6), 1926–1939. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12562>.
- Sosoo, E. E., MacCormack, J. K., & Neblett, E. W. (2022). Psychophysiological and affective reactivity to vicarious police violence. *Psychophysiology*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psyp.14065>.
- Spates, K., Evans, N. M., Watts, B. C., Abubakar, N., & James, T. (2020). Keeping ourselves sane: A qualitative exploration of Black women’s coping strategies for gendered racism. *Sex Roles*, 82(9/10), 513–524. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01077-1>.
- Thomas, A. J., & Blackmon, S. M. (2015). The influence of the Trayvon Martin shooting on racial socialization practices of African American parents. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 41, 75–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798414563610>.
- Threlfall, J. M. (2018). Parenting in the shadow of Ferguson: Racial socialization practices in context. *Youth & Society*, 50(2), 255–273. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X16670280>.
- Tyler, E. T. (2022). Black mothers matter: The social, political, and legal determinants of Black maternal health across the lifespan. *Journal of Health Care Law and Policy*, 25(1), 49–90.
- Varner, F., & Mandara, J. (2013). Discrimination concerns and expectations as explanations for gendered socialization in African American families. *Child Development*, 84(3), 875–890.
- Varner, F., Hou, Y., Ross, L., Hurd, N. M., & Mattis, J. (2020). Dealing with discrimination: Parents’ and adolescents’ racial discrimination experiences and parenting in African American families. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 26(2), 215–220.
- Varner, F. A., Hou, Y., Hodzic, T., Hurd, N. M., Butler-Barnes, S. T., & Rowley, S. J. (2018). Racial discrimination experiences and African American youth adjustment: The role of parenting profiles based on racial socialization and involved-vigilant parenting. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 24(2), 173–186. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000180>.
- Waldron, I. R. G. (2020). The wounds that do not heal: Black expendability and the traumatizing aftereffects of anti-Black police violence. *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 40(1), 29–40.
- Wilkins, E. J., Whiting, J. B., Watson, M. F., Russon, J. M., & Moncrief, A. M. (2013). Residual effects of slavery: What clinicians need to know. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 35(1), 14–28.
- Williams, D. R., & Mohammed, S. A. (2009). Discrimination and racial disparities in health: Evidence and needed research. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 32(1), 20–47.
- Yan, H. (2021 April 15). *Daunte Wright called his mother right before he was shot. This is what he said*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/13/us/daunte-wright-family-reaction/index.html>.

Publisher’s note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Springer Nature or its licensor holds exclusive rights to this article under a publishing agreement with the author(s) or other rightsholder(s); author self-archiving of the accepted manuscript version of this article is solely governed by the terms of such publishing agreement and applicable law.